



Flood Advisory Committee

Minutes of August 27, 2009 Meeting

- *The* sixth meeting of 2009 for the Cranford Flood Advisory Committee (FAC) was called to order by Chairman Mark C. Smith at 7:40 PM in room 108 of the Cranford Municipal Building.
- *The* following people were in attendance:
Deputy Mayor Mark C. Smith, Commissioner Martha Garcia, Ed Trush, Louis C. Lambe, Mike Pender, Tom Mineo, Bob Puhak, Gregory Sgroi, Joe Musillo.
- *The Minutes of the May 26, 2009 FAC meeting* were distributed and individuals in attendance given the opportunity to comment on or correct them. After noting the requested changes, Mr. Smith requested a motion for the acceptance of the minutes with the requested corrections to be made. A motion was offered by Edward Trush and seconded by Mr. Pender. Subsequently, the minutes of the May 26, 2009 meeting were accepted by attending members of the committee.
- *Congressman Lance's Visit* was reviewed by Mr. Smith for members of the committee that were not in attendance. Mr. Smith reported that he was glad that the Congressman took the time to visit Cranford and hear the first hand accounts of our struggle thus far. Mr. Smith added that the Congressman seemed very attentive and sincere and believes that Cranford can benefit from the experience his office has gained by helping Bound Brook navigate the same obstacles. Mr. Sgroi noted that while the Bound Brook project was originally controversial the work done and paid for in the end was quite extensive. Tom Mineo noted that Bound Brook has all funding in place and work is taking place in field. Actual flood protection will be complete in next two years. There is currently a lot of interest to do an upper basin study and put a basin in the area of Watchung, Plainfield, and Scotch Plains. Mr. Sgroi asked if there was any storage now. Mr. Mineo stated that there is not, just a system of dikes. Mark Smith added that he got the sense that now that Bound Brook is fully funded, Cranford should be helped next but acknowledged that there is competition for this money in our district. After looking at the maps prepared for the committee of different political boundaries within and impacting the Rahway River Basin, Mr. Puhak suggested that the committee make the effort to distribute these maps to the offices of these representatives. Mr. Trush stated that Mr. Sgroi and he both feel that the county should be spearheading this project. Mr. Sgroi noted that a Rahway River Commission could be effective because the Morses Creed Flood Commission was and still is effective. Mr. Mineo pointed out that right now the NJDEP is reviewing a project that is for Roselle but is being split evenly by the county.



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- *Mr. Smith* announced to the committee that Congressman Lance's office was able to secure \$300,000 to advance the efforts of the United States Army Corps of Engineer's (USACE) study of the Cranford Flood Project. This bill is through the house and must still be approved by the Senate. Nevertheless, questions remain as to how the money can be used and who can use the funds. Speculation leaned toward the advance of the report and study efforts of the USACE but some remained hopeful that perhaps some money could be redirected to the completion of 2.b. Mr. Pender asked the members if anyone had an idea of how much money is needed to finish 2.b? Mr. Sgroi suggested \$1 million and Mr. Puhak agreed that was a good estimate. Mr. Smith reiterated that 2.b. is shovel-ready but the township can't find a means to fund the remaining construction, asserting his commitment to explore any and all creative means to fund this important work.
- *Mr. Smith* reported that he had finally heard back from the county regarding the second appraisal of the home and property located at 112 Park Drive in Cranford. Both appraisers utilized by the county came back with appraisals in the neighborhood of \$500,000. An offer was made to the property owner and turned down because they are seeking a number near or above \$900,000. Astonished by the news, Mr. Puhak pointed out that the drive way is on the county's property. Mr. Trush commented that he has never seen a clearer case for the use of eminent domain and wants the committee to request that the Township Commissioners begin to proceed in this direction. Mr. Smith agreed to present the idea at the next meeting. Mr. Trush also questioned whether the township could condemn the property and then turn it over to the county. Mr. Puhak suggested that perhaps we could get the county to work with the NJDEP to see if this acquisition could be done through the green acres program and turned back over to the county. Mr. Musillo questioned if anyone knew how they were allowed to build on the county's property in the first place and can the county put a lien on the home to have the driveway removed from their property and repositioned on the owner's property. Mr. Pender questioned as to how the survey ever made it through the title search is a mystery.
- *Mr. Marsden's* absence, Mr. Smith asked Mr. Mineo if he could give the committee a report of any upcoming projects that he may be aware of. Mr. Mineo explained that he and Mr. Marsden still want to reinforce the dike repairs with some landscaping lattice and other means to preserve their work and give the latest repairs the hope of some longevity. Mr. Pender asked if it were possible to have curbing put in along Riverside to stabilize the recent repairs and prevent the soil from running into the street and mucking up the pump station and the river. Mr. Pender also asked the committee members to investigate the possibility of putting an ordinance in place to address the practice of landscapers in the area from blowing and depositing silt, soil, and debris into the town's drainage system where it has the opportunity to inhibit the proper operation of our underground structures and controls. Mr. Smith offered to look into the matter and report back to the committee.



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- *Mr. Smith* reported that the DPW has planted about 6-8 Pin Oak trees near and around the pump station which are expected to improve the shade and cover in the area. Mr. Pender acknowledged the improvement and also pointed out that there were some nice stone placements in the general area which also added to the general aesthetics. Mr. Pender added that it would be nice to have the transformer better camouflaged if it were possible. Mr. Smith would have the DPW look into it.
- *Mr. Smith* informed the committee that he would be meeting with Mr. John Millar to see if we can establish a flood archive in the library. Mr. Musillo suggested that there should already be one because it was part of the early efforts of the advisory committee. Mr. Sgroi added that he turned over a lot of his records to historical society.
- *Mr. Smith* announced that there was another call for volunteers at the last Township Committee Meeting to help with the various ongoing projects in town and there was no response.
- *Comments:* *Mr. Sgroi* stated that two meetings ago we had a discussion about the control structure and there has been no follow up discussion about what he considers a critical topic. Ten years ago Mr. Sgroi suggested that the elevation be raised from 70' to 71' and it was turned down. The tax day storm of 2007 achieved an elevation of 73' and he is not aware of any significant downstream impact. Mr. Coakley suggested increasing the size of the orifice and Mr. Sgroi believes that this is an excellent idea which will improve the effectiveness of that structure by about 20% if we increase to only 71'. Mr. Mineo stated that the basin and structure were designed by Disco and he is slightly defensive of the design. He added that the USACE considers this structure the most significant control structure in the county. Mr. Sgroi suggested that the structure is the county's and the USACE has nothing to do with it. The county has already gotten approval of the NJDEP and the approval of the USACE is not necessary. Mr. Smith will ask Mr. Marsden to get the plans from Mr. Disco and evaluate them with Mr. Coakley. Mr. Puhak suggested that Mr. Coakley report on the structure when he rejoins the group at the next meeting. Mr. Pender noted that the county has been diligent in cleaning this orifice before and after the last several storms.
- *A Motion* to adjourn the meeting was offered by Mr. Lambe and seconded by Mr. Pender at 9:20PM.