



Flood Advisory Committee

Minutes of May 26, 2009 Meeting

- *The* fifth meeting of 2009 for the Cranford Flood Advisory Committee (FAC) was called to order by Chairman Mark C. Smith at 6 PM in room 108 of the Cranford Municipal Building.
- *The* following people were in attendance:
Congressman Leonard Lance, Mark C. Smith, Ed Trush, C. J. Decotiis, Rick Marsden, Ellen Hunt, Louis C. Lambe, Mike Pender, Tom Mineo, Bob Puhak, Gregory Sgroi, Joan Varanelli, Leo McMahon, Jo Ann Boyle, Kristen Wolansky, Leslie Murray (Cranford Chronicle), Amanda V. Woloshen, and David Glass.
- *Congressman Lance* graciously met with the members of the FAC to get a better understanding of the history of our flooding problems, familiarize himself with the steps taken thus far, as well as define our funding needs to finish the 5 stage plan laid out by Hatch Mott MacDonald (HMM). The Congressman began by introducing his two staff members, Amanda V. Woloshen and David Glass, and providing the address and phone number of his Westfield office. He encouraged the members of the committee to feel free to contact that office for anything that they might need. The congressman went on to explain that Bound Brook had just received 13 million dollars to finish its flood work and expects to be completed with that work by around 2011. He further explained that this flood project is coming to a finish early in his first term because the groundwork and appropriations were obtained by his predecessor, Congressman Mike Ferguson and Bound Brook has historically taken substantial damage. He also made the point that the entire process took over 20 years. Congressman Lance assured the FAC that he is aware of Cranford's flooding problems and the need for funding and he wants to lay the groundwork to deliver the same success that Bound Brook just realized. Congressman Lance assured the committee that he has listed the de-silting project in his short request list but warned that there is a strong national opposition to political projects.

Mr. Bob Puhak thanked the Congressman for keeping his promise to work with Cranford and emphasized our need for his continued support. Mr. Puhak explained that Cranford realizes that it needs the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to get our project done but needs the Congressmen and his staff to keep the project on Mr. Woodley's radar. Ms. Woloshen stated that she spoke with Mr. John O'Connor of the USACE and feels that our project is not going to pose as much of a challenge as Bound Brook had.

Mr. Puhak, stipulating that Mr. O'Connor must be very busy, expressed that Mr. O'Connor lives only fifteen minutes away and it would be helpful if he could attend our meetings and provide a constant dialog. Mr. Marsden then provided the Congressman with a brief but comprehensive history of the Cranford flood relief project and its various phases ending with the fact that we have endured (3) separate 100 year storms in less than 10 years. Mr. Puhak gave a brief and comprehensive history of the struggle to find funding for our project estimating that we would probably need somewhere in the neighborhood of \$20 million to finish all of the phases. Mr. Smith added that while Phase 2.B. was submitted for stimulus consideration it is low on the list of projects and may be perhaps more likely to be eligible for a low interest loan. Mr. Puhak finished by stating simply that unlike Bound Brook and similar projects, Cranford can't afford to wait until there is a death toll to act.



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Mr. Smith stated to Congressman Lance that he respects and understands that the USACE must conduct its studies before it can act but would really like to see the process go much faster. At this time, Mr. Marsden asked if the lack of funding has slowed the USACE. Mr. Sgroi added that in the 1970's, Cranford proceeded without the USACE but now we must go at their pace to advance the project. Congressman Lance warned that the process is a continuum and things will not happen as quickly as we would like them to. He added that he has a great relationship with the county freeholders and would like to continue to work with them until the end of our project. At this time Mr. Trush asked the Congressman, "Are we missing anything?" To which Congressman Lance replied, "Not to my knowledge."

Mrs. Varanelli asked the question, "Does the USACE come in after the study and just take over the project until it is finished?" Mr. Mineo stated that typically there is a 75% / 25% split when the USACE is involved meaning that the remaining 25% of the funding will have to be made up locally from municipal, county, and state sources. Mr. Marsden pleaded with the Congressman to help Cranford re-form the Rahway River Coalition or create some sort of regional authority to address the needs of the river and the surrounding towns. The Congressman stated that he was a good friend of the original authority's founder, Mr. Richard Bagger. He suggested that we should attempt to address the problem regionally and seek the help of our state representatives as well as other members of congress. Ms. Woloshen added that her experience with the Bound Brook project has taught her that you must take the specific steps laid out by the USACE or they won't be able to help us. She recommended that Cranford send representatives to Washington to present our case directly. At this time the Congressman thanked the committee for allowing him to sit in on our meeting and promised that his office would be in touch.

AT 7 PM THE COMMITTEE CONTINUED WITH THE REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS.

- *The Minutes of the April 23, 2009 FAC meeting* were distributed by e-mail prior to the meeting and individuals in attendance given the opportunity to comment on or correct them. Mr. Smith requested a motion for the acceptance of the minutes with a correction to be made at the bottom of page 2. A motion was offered by Mr. Pender and a seconded by Mr. Lambe. Subsequently, the minutes of the April 23, 2009 meeting were accepted by attending members of the committee.
- *Mr. Smith* Formerly thanked Mr. Puhak for all of his efforts to help the committee get to the place we are and attracting the involvement of Congressman Lance to help our cause.
- *Mr. Marsden* reported on the **Cooperative effort of the Township and the County to restore the dike** to its original elevations by redistributing and reinforcing the soil. Mr. Marsden happily reported that the job should be done by the end of the week and all that is left is to maintain the work going forward. Mr. Puhak took this opportunity to thank Mr. Mineo personally for his efforts in helping this project get the attention it deserved from the county. Mr. Sgroi acknowledged that the county originally built the dikes in 1948 and they have been restored several times over the years at his request. Mrs. Varanelli asked if it were possible for the soil paths along the river to be paved. Before anyone could respond, Mr. Smith pointed out that time was running out and that we should discuss the dikes further at our next meeting.



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- *Mr. Smith* announced that there was a call for volunteers at the last Township Committee Meeting to help with the various ongoing projects in town and there was only one response from a resident. Mr. Smith will again make an announcement that volunteers are need at the next Committee meeting.
- *The Meeting* was adjourned by an apologetic Mr. Smith so that he may attend another meeting which started at 7:30 assuring the committee that all unaddressed topics would be added to the next agenda.