

Meeting Summary
Policymakers Workshop
Monday, February 8, 2016

Policymakers Attending:

City: Councilmembers Hedberg (Mayor), Keeney, McGuire and Morton

Township: Supervisors Kelley, Kowalski and Berens

Watershed District: Managers Breitbach, Corrigan, Hennes, Howley and Spitzmueller

Staff Presenters: Katy Gehler (City), Kathy Nielsen (Township) and Diane Lynch (Watershed District). Q & A Assistance: Greg Wilson, Barr Engineering, Study Consultant; Pete Young, City; Carl Almer, District Engineer

Facilitator: Karen Chandler, Barr Engineering

1. Should public dollars be used to protect public infrastructure?

Comments:

- If a home is within the 100 year flood level, it should be protected
- Lift station, sewers, manholes etc. should be protected
- Spring and Prior Lakes are regional recreational lakes. Should we protect their recreational attributes?
- The City should put an emergency plan together based upon “lessons learned”
- The City should develop a flood response plan/protocol and clearly communicate this to the public
- Are we understating or overstating flood problems? It is a greater risk if we are understating
- Should try to minimize peak flood elevations on Spring Lake

2. To what degree should access be provided?

Comments:

- Worried that Atlas 14 is already out-of-date, since TP-40 was the latest model and it was developed in the 1960s. It took about 55 years to get a new model

- How has development in the subwatershed impacted flood levels?
- Priority should be on public safety, transportation and local access
- Streets cannot be retrofitted/elevated without causing a lot of other problems
- Provide incentives for access, when needed. Expect local communities to assist by providing them a “road map” What does “incentives for access” mean?
- Emergency vehicles can traverse water that is 18” deep, but the first responders cannot see if there are road failures under that water. This creates a potential safety hazard. Standing water 18” deep or more for long periods of time can affect road integrity
- Neighbors living on low-lying roads should take responsibility with the City to raise the road

3. To what degree should public dollars be used to protect or assist in the protection of private property?

Comments:

- Some people need help, but don’t hold their hands
- Low-lying homes eventually take care of themselves with tear down/rebuilds
- How much of the problem is caused by policies which allowed people to build in the floodplain?
- Residents should take their own initiatives
- Loans could be provided to help residents get out of the floodplain
- Flooded out homes create public problems and homeowners could be given 5 years to flood proof. In a way, this may be seen as a temporary “taking” of land
- Homes lower than the lowest flood level (907.1) should not be bought out
- Flooding happens infrequently and doesn’t justify the cost
- How many homes on Spring Lake have flood insurance?

Options

- Option #3 Upstream Storage provides a lot of water quality benefits (3)
- Give serious consideration to Option #3
- Since it is probable major rain events will occur every 25 years, we need to plan for that
- Optimize storage that is already out there
- Was there an intermediate option such as rate control with active management on Spring Lake?
- What happened to Arctic Lake storage as an option?

Funding

- If using an ad valorem tax, the entire watershed would pay

- If money from the state bonding bill was approved, how will the local match get paid for?
- Where are the funds coming from for upper watershed storage?
- This is a lot of money we're considering and we already struggle to stay within our means with current projects
- How much will landowners need to spend? How do I explain this to landowners?

Other Comments

- 1988-89, water levels were under 900 feet on Prior Lake. In 1981-82, they were even lower. In the 1930s, there was a drought and the lakes were dry
- During the 2014 flood, the City could not respond fast enough
- Should public money be used for economic productivity and property values?
- Why is this conversation limited to two hours? I suggest we meet again
- Big money/big problem

Facilitator's Wrap-up

- Protect public access
- Buying out homes below 907.1 is generally not supported
- Some support for upstream storage
- Homeowners should take responsibility for their properties