

## Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority

**Meeting 9:00 A.M.**

**Centralia-Chehalis Airport**

**900 Airport Way, Chehalis, WA 98532**

### **October 20, 2016 - Meeting Notes**

**Board Members Present:** Ron Averill, City of Centralia; Jen Slemph, City of Napavine; Alan Vanell, Town of Bucoda; Dan Wood, City of Montesano; Frank Chestnut, City of Cosmopolis; Dan Thompson, City of Oakville; J. Vander Stoep, Town of Pe Ell; Julie Balmelli-Powe, City of Chehalis; Edna Fund, Lewis County Commissioner; Vickie Raines, Grays Harbor County Commissioner

**Board Members Absent:** Bud Blake, Thurston County Commissioner; Kathi Hoder, City of Aberdeen

**Others Present:** Kim Smith, Grays Harbor Conservation District; French Wetmore, French & Associates; Rick Sangder, City of Aberdeen; Brian Shay, City of Hoquiam; Jessica Hausman, Ecology; Lee Napier, Lewis County; Emil Pierson, City of Centralia; Trent Lougheed, City of Chehalis; Tom Clingman; Kirsten Harma, Chehalis Basin Partnership; Kathleen Berger, Thurston Conservation District; Stu Trefry, WA State Conservation Commission; Bob Amrine, Lewis County Conservation District; Chris Vandenberg, citizen.

#### **Handouts/Materials Used:**

- Agenda
- Meeting Notes from September 22, 2016
- Centralia Floodproofing Strategy
- Chehalis Basin Strategy EIS Executive Summary
- Chehalis Strategy Economics Study Report
- Financial Statement
- See [https://www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias\\_1492/34798/meetings.aspx#Oct2016](https://www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias_1492/34798/meetings.aspx#Oct2016)

#### **1. Call to Order**

Chair Raines called the meeting to order at 9:20 a.m.

#### **2. Introductions**

Self-introductions were made by all attending.

#### **3. Approval of Agenda**

An incorrect agenda was sent to the Flood Authority members; Mr. Kramer asked to add Item 6: Centralia Floodproofing. There was consensus to add the item.

#### **4. Approval of Meeting Notes**

There were no additions or corrections to the meeting notes and so approved by consensus.

#### **5. Introduction of New Member**

Chair Raines stated that Richard Armstrong, the new representative for Oakville, could not attend. Mr. Thompson was present and the Chair presented him with a certificate of appreciation for all his hard work while he was the Oakville representative. Chair Raines stated Mr. Thompson was one of the Flood

Authority founding members in 2008 and has always provided excellent input and supported projects throughout the Basin.

## **6. Centralia Floodproofing strategy**

Emil Pierson, Centralia Community Development Director, showed slides of the Property Protection Program and the elevation of homes. The presentation can be found at [https://www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias\\_1492/34798/meetings.aspx#Oct2016](https://www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias_1492/34798/meetings.aspx#Oct2016), Item 6. Mr. Pierson stated there are numerous issues with FEMA's program for floodproofing after flood events, one of which is there are many people who would like to participate but do not qualify. In other cases, homeowners who did elevate their homes had to wait a very long time to be reimbursed from FEMA.

Mr. Vanell asked how many properties are rentals. Mr. Pierson stated about 50% of the homes in Centralia are rentals so there are a lot of them. Mr. Wetmore stated rental rates for flood insurance are rising much faster than owned properties.

Mr. Boettcher stated in Bucoda, because of vent installation and having an elevation certificate, the average reduction in flood insurance rates is 50%. Flood insurance rates were reduced so the homeowners gained. He suggested that perhaps there is a way to get a return when people sell their homes. The Flood Authority can talk about local contribution when it talks to the Legislature.

## **7. Lower Basin Activities/Partners**

Chair Raines stated a question came up about the submission of a project for the city of Hoquiam. The issue is: How far does the Flood Authority want to reach up a tributary. Is this particular project in the basin or in the bay?

Mr. Kramer stated the Flood Authority's work has been on riverine flooding. The levee design in Aberdeen has been expanded to cover Hoquiam and Aberdeen coastal flooding, and a project for pump repair in the city. In other areas, there has been talk about internal drainage issues which have not been considered up to now. The Flood Authority must determine the magnitude of interest it is expanding to before it supports projects.

Brian Shay, City of Hoquiam, stated many of the things that apply to Centralia also apply to Hoquiam. Hoquiam would like to have a seat at the Flood Authority table. Chair Raines stated a seat at the table does not necessarily preclude a project for a community.

Mr. Shay explained the issues in Hoquiam. He showed an area on a map that would benefit from a pump station, which would protect a school and more. He pointed out where the North Shore levee extends up the Hoquiam River to within ¼ mile of the proposed pump station. Hoquiam has paid out \$2.2 million in flood insurance.

Mr. Chestnut stated the Flood Authority might want to take into consideration the nature of the problem and not limit it to a distance. Mr. Averill stated the Flood Authority started off with a narrow scope. At this point the solution to flooding is a basin-wide solution. If small projects will fix small problems than all jurisdictions in the basin should be eligible.

Mr. Wood asked what other public facilities besides the school, and how many people, are affected. Mr. Shay stated the food bank, a distribution center, a pump station at the waste water treatment plant, about 700 homes, a state highway, a low-income housing complex are all affected.

Chair Raines asked if this is a river issue or a city issue. Mr. Kramer stated it would be expanding on the Flood Authority scope. Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated membership should not have anything to do with a project; however, depending on funding, projects on the Chehalis River should take priority.

Mr. Vander Stoep stated this is a good project.

## **12. Approval of Proposed Projects for 2017-2019**

Mr. Averill stated there are several projects that were started with funding for a study; there was no money for the continuation of the project in this cycle. The Projects Committee went back to those projects and asked for a submission. Many projects cross over lines. Some are for flood mitigation; others do habitat restoration. There were projects that solved local problems. We need an inventory of those projects.

Mr. Boettcher stated initially we had \$10 million in requests and there were others that did not submit. The projects are not in priority order within the bucket of money. The projects in Bucket A can proceed, at least partially, in the 2015-2017 biennium. (Please see Project Committee recommendations on EZview).

After reviewing the projects to fund now, Chair Raines stated there is \$3 million in unspent funds. She asked Mr. Shay if his entire project could be done in 2017. Mr. Shay stated it could be spent by July of 2017. Mr. Kramer stated if there is money remaining and Hoquiam can do the project that is still a possibility.

Bucket B -- Mr. Boettcher stated these are proposed 2017-19 projects, many of which are placeholders.

Bucket C -- Mr. Boettcher stated these are culvert projects with a presumed habitat benefit. Mr. Clingman stated purely fish passage culverts should go to a larger bucket.

Bucket D – Mr. Boettcher stated these are local flood proofing projects to be funded by a separate funding bucket.

Mr. Boettcher stated the Projects Committee is trying to stay within \$13 million (+/-) for 2017-19 because that is usually what the Flood Authority receives.

Mr. Kramer summarized comments:

- Move full Hoquiam project to Bucket A
- If possible, move the work to create a comprehensive list of projects in the basin (habitat work schedule) to Bucket A
- Add Rice Rd Culvert to Bucket B
- Include Flood Elevations at \$1.9 million

Mr. Boettcher suggested reevaluating the bucket. If they go into bucket 2 then prioritize them. Mr. Thompson stated the study done in Oakville was not far enough advance to give good alternatives. He believes it is in the right place. Rice Rd will go to Bucket B. McBride to Bucket A; Oakville stays in Bucket C.

There was consensus on the above projects.

## **11 – Comments on Ecology’s EIS**

Mr. Kramer stated the Executive Summaries were sent out and a public hearing was held last Tuesday in Chehalis with over 200 people attending. The comment period ends October 31. A recommendation will go to the Governor by mid-November.

Mr. Kramer summarized the four alternatives.

No Action. The result of no action will create unprecedented damage to aquatic species and local communities.

Alternative 1 – A combination of: Flood retention facility; airport levee; Aberdeen/Hoquiam levee; habitat restoration.

Alternative 2 – No dam but levees along I-5.

Alternative 3 – Local projects only.

Alternative 4 – Restorative flood protection which involves moving several thousand acres of farm land, businesses and homes out of harm’s way.

Mr. Kramer stated a different combination of actions than the four in the EIS could be chosen. He asked if, as a group, the Flood Authority was interested in making comments on the EIS or a recommendation to the work group.

There was consensus for Alternative 1 – Flood retention facility; airport levee; Aberdeen/Hoquiam levee; habitat restoration.

Jurisdiction representatives gave their opinions on why they chose Alternative 1.

*Bucoda* – Mr. Vanell stated he considered how the Skookumchuck dam works. History has shown that early in the season the reservoir will hold enough water to not allow flooding before January. Afterwards it is a little different but it has increased the water through the dam for more consistent water flow and an increased amount of fish can go upstream.

*Cosmopolis* – Mr. Chestnut stated the decision was a process of elimination for him. Alternative 4: no. Alternative 3: not a complete answer to the problem. Alternative 2: excises the notion that we would consider retention. That leaves Alternative 1.

*Grays Harbor County* – Chair Raines agreed with Mr. Chestnut.

*Montesano* – Mr. Wood stated he liked the idea of a compromise between reducing flood threats and improving fish habitat and Alternative 1 works for that.

*Chehalis* – Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated she agreed with everyone, and none keep I-5 open except Alternative 1.

*Centralia* – Mr. Averill stated no action continues the problem and makes it worse as there will be neither flood mitigation nor fish restoration.

Alternative 4 grossly underestimates its already prohibitive cost and while minimally reducing flooding in the I-5 corridor, actually increases the incidents of flooding in the upper basin.

Alternative 3 offers \$5 million for small flood projects and \$6 million for habitat and does nothing to address the major problem of repetitive flooding and the depletion of fish species.

Alternative 2 only protects the freeway and leaves the remainder of the basin vulnerable to flooding.

Alternative 1 provides the best opportunity to mitigate against major flooding and improve fish populations by habitat restoration.

*Pe Ell* – Mr. Vander Stoep stated Alternative 1 is a basin-wide alternative and it ties in Aberdeen and Hoquiam for protection. Also, it includes the most aggressive habitat restoration plan.

*Thurston County* – Commissioner Blake sent a text to Commissioner Fund stating he favored Alternative 1.

Commissioner Fund stated at the public meeting the County Prosecuting Attorney and the Public Works Director spoke. She suggested that if the other jurisdictions have not gotten comments from their people they should be asked.

Mr. Kramer suggested that staff draft a letter for signature to be sent along with background reasons. A draft resolution can be used by jurisdictions. Mr. Vander Stoep reminded the group that most jurisdictions passed a resolution a couple of years ago supporting a project similar to Alternative 1.

#### **10. Estimating Local Contribution.**

This is in response to a question from Senator Braun about what local jurisdictions are doing to contribute to the capital budget dollars. Commissioner Fund stated some jurisdictions have stepped up their CRS points.

What is the average CRS rating and how can that be quantified in dollars? Mr. Boettcher stated Public Works people are doing things and suggested we demonstrate what they are doing above and beyond their normal activities.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe state the Conservation District put money in along with the state for farm pads. Mr. Boettcher stated that counts, plus CRS points. Mr. Boettcher will talk to other jurisdictions to see how each shouldered its share.

#### **13. Financial Report**

Ms. Napier summarized the financial report and asked for questions. There were none.

#### **14. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

#### **15. Reports**

##### a. Chair's Report

Chair Raines urged members to talk to people about the EIS public hearing in Montesano on October 27.

*Lewis County* – Commissioner Fund stated the 2016 flood bulletin is available. The County is working on rivers and roads apps and they should be done next week. It is also working on modifying the river section to simplify it.

*Chehalis* – Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated it is very important to get comments in on the EIS. She complimented the City of Chehalis for attending the hearing – and it was not just people who have been flooded.

*Pe Ell* – Mr. Vander Stoep asked to have the slide shown again of the 2007 flood in Centralia, and how it would look if the dam had been in place.

*Oakville* – Mr. Thompson will attend the council meeting to inform the council of the EIS.

*Montesano* – Mr. Wood thanked everyone for their support of Aberdeen and Hoquiam projects. He stated he would ask the council for its support [on the EIS Alternative].

*Bucoda* – Mr. Vanell stated he was pleased with the decision to return the money for Bucoda's project. After the engineering was done it came back too expensive.

*Centralia* – Mr. Averill stated the City manager is providing a letter on the EIS.

c. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

d. State Team Report

Ms. Hausman stated it is critical to comment on the EIS. Also, Mr. Clingman is back to help in establishing the Office of Chehalis Basin.

Mr. Amrine stated the Boistfort Valley Water project is under way.

The business before the Flood Authority concluded and adjournment was at 12:00.