

Kathleen M. Feldman-Chair
Hannah L. Bowen
Steven M. Crowley

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PUBLIC SERVICES / CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

Wednesday, May 11, 2022, 7:00PM
City Council Chambers, 191 Cabot St.

Feldman called the meeting to order at 7:01pm.

Members present: Hannah Bowen, Steven Crowley, Kathleen Feldman

Other Councilors present: Julie Flowers (arrived 7:30pm)

Order Number	Date to Committee	Description	Action Taken
#033	2/7/2022	Councilor Rotondo and Councilor Crowley-Consideration request to hold a Public Service forum to address the flooding in Ward 1 and Ward 3	

Feldman gave an overview of the agenda item and stated this information will be provided to the engineering department. They have been working on their long term plans. The goal is for constituents to share their concerns tonight. The engineering department will be doing a presentation on stormwater management on Monday night at 6pm.

Feldman stated that Councilor Rotondo let her know that the Ward 1 portion of the original order is complete and taken care of. Feldman read a statement from the City Council President who could not be here tonight. The letter expressed her support for the residents, although she had a scheduling conflict and could not attend the start of the meeting tonight.

Elsie Vasapolli, 22 Jordan Street, stated during the past storm she had a couple of feet in her basement, which is where her daughter and grandson live. Another storm before that, there was four feet of water in the basement. The brook has constantly been overflowing for years, and nothing has been done to rectify it. When the high school was built, that side of the brook was built up. Elsie Vasapolli stated she has lost \$50,000 worth of treasures, family heirlooms and things that can never be replaced. Not only is the water coming from the brook, but it is also coming from the street, which only has two drains. Senator Lovely had suggested at one time the option of re-grading the street. Mr. Crowley and Stacey Ames came and put sandbags on my property. The water comes from both ends every time it rains, and the problems started when they put in the high school.

Kristen Tripoli, 18 Jordan Street, stated that 2011 was the worst but it is going back further than that. Tripoli stated she has emails to city officials going back to 2007. We are just looking for the city to do something like dredging the brook, putting wider pipes on the street, and clearing the drains at the Cummings Center. We get water from all sides and are losing money in damages every time it floods.

James Matz, 10 Victor Avenue, stated he did not want to take away from the Ward 3 issues, but he lives in Ward 4 and wanted to mention an issue his neighbors are facing. At the corner of Victor Ave. and Corning St, the neighbors have to keep two pumps running 24/7 to keep water out of their basement. There is a clay pipe between 5 and 7 Victor Ave. and a pipe that comes out a driveway at the back end of Leonhard's. Something has been blocked or naturally filled in, and the conveyance channel needs to be excavated and the culvert should be restored.

Mike Goodall, 5 Victor Avenue, agreed with the issue at Victor and Corning and expressed support for those in Ward 3. We just want to keep the water moving.

Dawn Goodwin, 26 Jordan Street, said she is here at the meeting to support her neighbors. Goodwin stated she does not have a finished basement but has a sump pump and water all the time. Water comes in the front of the house and also up through the floor of the basement. The street condition is a problem. Work was done on the street, and water pools at the front of the walkway. Anywhere there is a dip, there is a pool. None of the damage any of us experience is covered by national flood insurance. Goodwin stated she cannot store anything in the basement and there is a mold issue because it is never dry.

Judy Sampson, 20 Jordan Street, stated her sister lives in her mother's basement at 22 Jordan St. and a mold company had to come tear things out at 22 Jordan Street. It cost \$15,000, and the last time it cost \$25,000.

Ann Marie Vasapolli, 22 Jordan Street, stated the flood insurance will not cover it until it hits the top of the house. If there was another foot of water, the oil tank would have burst. We have small houses and have to live in our basements. Flood insurance won't cover anything. The indent made to divert water to the drain instead diverted the water into the backyard.

Flowers joined the meeting.

Goodwin said that with how the weather is changing, it will get worse and expand into other homes.

Stephen Drohosky, the general manager at the Cummings Center, stated there is a long and involved story as to what is going on here. It is going back to the North Beverly drainage brook project which was finished in 2009. The North Beverly watershed was changed by that. What has happened since then is the culverts under Cummings center have not been addressed. More water is coming faster to this part of the city. It backs up before it goes under the Cummings Center, where we have had three massive floods causing millions of dollars of damage. The water cannot get to the ocean/Bass River fast enough. That water from the North Beverly project needs to get to the Bass River another way than just under the Cummings Center because the pipes are not designed to carry that much water. The culverts are full of sand and sediment, and, even if they were clear, are not satisfactory to take on the volume of water. Drohosky offered to work with people from the city, give tours, and provide any additional information.

Cynthia Savary, 51 Simon Street, stated that Simon St., Grant St., and Ropes St. drain to a dead end but it does not drain out. Savary said a pipe was put in towards the railroad tracks, but it is blocked and not draining.

Elsie Vasapolli said that many years before Jordan Street was completely built, they had discussed piping the brook by Shore Country Day School. That was approved but never happened. Tripoli stated she has been told the creek is conservation land but it is not clear why or what can or cannot be done.

Crowley stated he has heard that too and has a call scheduled tomorrow with the conservation commission to talk about it. Crowley said he was down there the other day and it does need clearing.

Tammy O'Brien, 3 Tudor Road said her family has owned her house since 1952. There have always been flooding issues in the neighborhood. We have a pump running 24/7. O'Brien stated her father-in-law was Essex County Commissioner John O'Brien. He had talked for a long time about a grant that was given to the city to put a pipe in to help. It used to be a large brook that flowed well and people used to canoe in. In that area, there are only two drains for the whole neighborhood. O'Brien asked if it is possible to put in more drains. O'Brien stated the water used to come all the way down the street but her husband dug a drainage system himself down to the trees instead.

Shelley Zarella, 15 Windsor Road, stated she lives on the upper half of where Jordan St. is and can see water coming down those streets, flowing down Snell and Jordan. When it flows, it is taking the dirt, pieces of the street, rocks; everything is going to the corner towards those two drains. There is not a single drain on Windsor Rd., and something up above would help down below. There are people on Windsor Rd. who have pumps, but then it pumps out to the street and down Snell. It is bad in the winter because it turns to ice, then when the ice melts it all runs down that way too.

Several constituents stated that in the winter plows cover the drains with snow.

Matz added that he can attest to the fact that the drains running under the Cummings Center are antiquated and undersized for today. Those drains should have been sized up when the project was done. There is also increasing peak flooding, and the climate is changing quickly and exponentially. Matz stated the brook is not conservation land. It is surface water. Work can be done there with a notice of intent submitted to the conservation commission. Dredging can also be done with a DEP permit. Work can be done to mitigate that problem. Coastal resiliency is also important. Boston is all over the storm water issue; their drain system is antiquated, and they are getting ahead of it. We are a coastal community and are already behind. We need to think about coastal resiliency and address stormwater management.

Stacey Ames, former Ward 3 Councilor, said this is a citywide problem that needs to be addressed. We need to try to see what can be done. Hopefully there will be state aid and funds because this is a community issue. These folks need commitments and deadlines.

State Senator Joan Lovely spoke about her experience at the local level in Salem and Peabody with putting plans together to address flooding. Lovely offered to be a state resource. Creating more capacity can be done, and this can be prevented.

Crowley talked about what can be done now going forward, like short term trying to find a way to get the brook clean and also working on a long term solution.

Feldman stated she is curious to hear about any fiscal plans in the upcoming budget to address this.

Bowen confirmed some items to follow up on in terms of solutions including cleaning the drains regularly and deeply around Simon St. and Jordan St., cleaning up the brook whether dredging or removing debris, long term cleaning and upgrading pipes and culverts including at the Cummings property and others, and short term support before upcoming storms.

Ames suggested that for Jordan St. there is a false street that sits higher than the adjacent backyard. That could hypothetically be at least a short term path to divert some of the water.

Lovely said it sounds like a paper street where one neighbor owns half and the other owns half.

Tripoli stated that Beverly High School drainage needs to be looked at as well because those fields flood.

Ames recommended seeing if those drains were cleaned out after the turf renovations.

Matz advocated for the Victor and Corning re-excavation and repairs as well.

Bowen noted two things in terms of the budget, there is some funding in the regular department of public services' budget for maintaining regular property, and there is also the capital improvement plan where there is a section on water, sewer and drainage. Bowen mentioned there is also a stormwater committee who last met in January.

James Matz suggested there may be funding options through the bipartisan infrastructure law that was passed and the coastal resiliency program through MassDEP.

The councilors expressed their support for the residents and their commitment to addressing this issue.

The motion to adjourn Public Services Committee was made and seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried (3-0). The meeting adjourned at 8:25pm.