

MEETING SUMMARY

PROJECT: Bristol Stormwater Management Study

MEETING #: Steering Committee Meeting #1

DATE: Tuesday, November 3, 2015

TIME: 7:00-9:00 PM

LOCATION: Bristol Town Hall

ATTENDEES: Steering Committee Members – Joseph Coelho Jr., Anne Kellerman, Ray DeLeo, Peter Wilbur, Steven Roth, Stan Dimock, Andrew Tyska, Bob Aldrich, John Rego, Tony Morettini, Edward Stuart Jr. (Town Councilman)
Project Management Team Members – Tony Teixeira, Diane Williamson, Edward Tanner, Jose DaSilva, Kevin McBride, Julie Goucher
Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) – Elizabeth Scott
Horsley Witten (HW) – Rob Roseen, Russ Chateauneuf
Amec Foster Wheeler (Amec) – Rich Niles, Elizabeth Flanary
Blue Sky Engineering – Jean Lambert

The steering committee meeting was held at the Bristol Town Hall on Wednesday November 3, 2015 to introduce the concept of a comprehensive municipal stormwater management enterprise fund (SMEF) to members of the steering committee and to obtain feedback from the committee.

Summary:

Project Introduction:

- Russ provided an overview of the agenda, introduced the project team members from Horsley Whitten Group, Amec Foster Wheeler, Blue Sky Engineering, Town of Bristol and RIDEM.
- The Steering Committee members provided brief introductions including name and affiliation.
- Russ outlined project expectations, Bristol SMEF work to date and explained the goal of involving both Stakeholders and the Town in the effort to create an SMEF in Bristol.
- The stakeholders were asked to provide their input on stormwater related issues.

Steering Committee Member Comments:

- Climate change is having impacts on existing infrastructure.
- Concern raised about economic impacts to new development and job creation in the Town in relation to new fees that may be incurred as a result of the SMEF regulations.
- Concerns about flooding issues related to Sea Level Rise.
- Concerns raised with flooding issues as they relate to impacts on property values. At risk properties may be devalued as a result of sea level rise. In addition, the 2014 flood zone remapping increases the number of properties requiring flood insurance. Increasing flood insurance costs may impact the affordability of property in Town.
- The protection of natural features is highly important – these features are a major asset for the Town. Bristol Harbor in particular has seen recent improvement.
- Sea level rise needs to be considered as the Town moves forward with solutions to Town flooding - local estuaries and wetlands (receiving waters) may see significant change in their ability to mitigate stormwater runoff. Tanyard Brook and Silver Creek flooding concerns will worsen with projected sea level rise.
- Bay health (water quality, aquaculture, marine systems) is a primary concern. Would like to see definitions of SMEF criteria and associated costs.
- Chronic flooding issues in Town with respect to safety issues. Bristol is a peninsula and evacuation routes are important. Certain areas of Town are expected to flood (Hope Street, Tanyard Brook) but the Town has also been experiencing flooding on major roads.
- Kevin McBride notes that DPW is responsible for infrastructure maintenance and improvements but program has limited funding. Much of the stormwater infrastructure is reaching its functional life limit and is undersized. Old corrugated metal pipes are severely deteriorated and often found collapsed. Cleaning of some pipelines is difficult and time consuming because of extensive sedimentation and blockage. Current maintenance and improvements are reactionary to problems instead of based on an analysis of the needs of the entire Town system. The Town budget typically includes only one capital improvement project each year and these are often partially funded with grants. Planning for improvements to and routine maintenance of roadways, stormwater system and sewer systems in the Town are a concern.

Break/Steering Committee Member Voting on Issues:

- During the break, members were asked to vote on their top three issues of concerns. The results were as follows:
 - Aging infrastructure (14 votes)
 - Chronic flooding (7 votes)
 - Infrastructure maintenance (7 votes)
 - Wastewater issues (3 votes)
 - Ecological concerns (2 votes)
 - Development pressure (1 vote)
 - Preservation of property values (1 vote)

Stormwater Costs, Funding Options and General Discussion:

- Current funding of stormwater programs in Town was discussed. Options for future funding could include several sources – general taxes, a separate stormwater fund, a combined sewer/stormwater fund, grants or loans. Committee members agreed that moving forward an emphasis should be placed on grants for funding.
- Two questions were posed to the committee members.
 - Do you feel that the Town has critical unmet stormwater management needs? Answer: a consensus “yes”
 - Should the Town explore additional/alternative funding sources for stormwater management? Answer: a consensus “yes”
- General discussion about the process and the next steps.
 - How/when to involve the press?
 - The steering committee needs to agree on priorities and be able to present and discuss these points to members of the public.
 - There will always be a portion of the community that is uncomfortable with a stormwater fee. The cost has to be equitable and the program being funded must be clearly defined.
 - What are the costs (“opportunity costs”) associated with “not” proceeding with timely stormwater improvements and continuing the status quo?

Meeting conclusion

- Russ provided a wrap up of the meeting. Members were thanked for their participation and an outline of the next steps was provided. The program team will analyze data and develop a draft plan. A meeting with the Town Council and a second Steering Committee Meeting are planned.
- The committee members requested additional information as the project moves forward.
 - What are the program priorities?
 - What are the costs associated with the program priorities
 - What could be the range of costs to homes and businesses?

Next Steps/Action Items

- Provide on-line access to the steering committee presentation for members of the public.
- Distribute talking points to the committee so they can discuss with members of the public.
- Complete draft report for presentation to Town Council and steering committee.
- Schedule next steering committee meeting and date for Town Council presentation.