APPROVED by a GENERAL MEMBERSHIP VOTE 16 FEBR 2021:
52 'AYE', 1 'NAY', 6 ABSTENTIONS/NO RESPONSE

Stormwater Management/Flood Mitigation Work Group
of the Arlington County Civic Federation Public Services Committee
DRAFT Stormwater/Flood Mitigation Implementation Resolution
February 16, 2021

Introduction

Flooding fueled by stormwater runoff during intense rain events has become one leading indicator of climate change in Arlington County. Extreme floods in 2018, 2019 and 2020 and their significant impact on residents and businesses throughout the County highlight the urgent necessity to mitigate stormwater runoff.[1] Accordingly, the Arlington County Civic Federation (ACCF) developed recommendations pursuant to earlier ACCF resolutions, approved by members in November 2019 and October 2020, to support County planning for and the implementation of more robust stormwater mitigation and flood resiliency.

We applaud the County's initial response to increasingly urgent climate and development-based challenges and to the ACCF's earlier resolutions, which culminated in voter approval of the $51 million, November 2020 stormwater bond referendum that will provide funding for several mitigation projects: https://budget.arlingtonva.us/bonds/bond-referenda/.

The ACCF resolution below is intended to assist in following up on stormwater priorities in preparation for the multi-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) already taking shape and to promote actions that will enhance the County's ability to make the best use of the bond and other funds to combat flooding and the related damage resulting from excessive stormwater runoff.

ACCF members are resolved to work in partnership with Arlington County to establish management best practices and accountability benchmarks that will help maintain public support for these urgently needed infrastructure improvements, to benefit all Arlingtonians.

Resolution

Whereas, recent weather events have repeatedly overwhelmed Arlington's aging and inadequate infrastructure that, without expansion and improvement, will result in repeated flood-related disasters at an unacceptably high cost to County government and taxpayers.

Whereas, many flood-prone areas remain throughout the County, requiring holistic planning, strong community engagement and greater County intervention to protect neighborhoods as well as public assets.

Whereas, during decades of urbanization when funding for stormwater mitigation has been insufficient to meet the impacts produced by that development, both open-channel stream health/stability and maintenance of underground pipes have suffered.

[1] http:// Arlingtonva.us/flooding ***accessed 1-22-21****Story Map*

Whereas, residential and commercial development, together with County and school projects, continue to increase lot coverage and grow the percentage of impermeable surfaces, which threatens the remaining tree canopy and generates more runoff.

Whereas, revisions to County land-use and other regulations and strengthening of inspection and enforcement capacity to reduce stormwater runoff and better mitigate flood risk have lagged behind the County's increasing pace of development and redevelopment.

Whereas, the County should expand the means and tools for systematic collection of data from all sources, to assemble and apply technical, public-origin, federal agency instruments, and new County instruments. More rigorous data collection and interpretation will enhance the County's ability to inform the public, identify vulnerability, provide broader emergency options, develop meaningful policies, and advance long-term planning.

Therefore, be it resolved **that the ACCF urges the County Board and Manager to adopt proactive strategies to sustain funding required for infrastructure and capacity improvements and to establish effective management systems that will enhance information collection, improve structural and operational efficiency, and provide accountability in reaching stormwater and flood mitigation goals. Recommended actions include (but are not limited to) the following:**

1. *Establish an aggressive schedule to update land-use, stormwater and watershed policies, regulations and programs* to reduce runoff, expedite completion of infrastructure projects and accelerate flood mitigation.

2. *Maintain the County Manager's Stormwater Interdepartmental Working Group* for at least three more years to facilitate needed structural, operational, and cultural changes that will foster a more coordinated, sustained flood prevention response in the County over time.

3. *Address the County's Stormwater Infrastructure Needs Comprehensively on a Watershed Basis.* Consistent with Arlington County's 2014 Stormwater Master Plan, the County should update the infrastructure needs for the eight watersheds that were the subject of Storm Sewer Capacity Studies between 2012 and 2015. In addition, the County should complete similar capacity vulnerability and/or risk studies for the remaining County watersheds to identify and address any additional structural and operational improvements.

4. *Consider a stormwater user fee based on impervious area* to provide a stable source of capital and operating funds to support the stormwater program and that will provide a mechanism to incentivize the reduction of stormwater runoff being generated across watersheds.

5. *Consider other mechanisms to fund stormwater infrastructure needs in addition to bonds*, including the pursuit of state and federal grants and an increase in site-plan and other construction or site-specific fees to address stormwater management deficits where development is occurring.

6. *Continue refining the County's information collection and research on stormwater-related matters*, including stream monitors and flood gauges to improve the understanding of flooding threats, information on innovations in environmentally sustainable approaches for stormwater management, and enhanced public notification systems for real-time flood warnings.

7. *Identify effective, equitable County-sponsored incentives, such as education and tax incentives, to encourage property owners to adopt runoff-reduction measures* like planting or preserving trees, increasing pervious surfaces, and installing green infrastructure to reduce demands on public stormwater systems.

Be it further resolved **that ACCF urges the County Board and Manager to establish and communicate to the public the standards and general objectives that the County uses to plan and design watershed-level stormwater systems. Recommended actions include (but are not limited to) the following:**

1. *Explain and seek comment on the mitigation standard for protection against flooding.* The County has adopted a 10-year-storm design standard (i.e., a system capable of managing runoff from a storm with a 10% chance of occurring in any one year) as a minimum standard of protection. It has further indicated that it would pursue protection against a 100-year storm (i.e., impacts related to a storm with a 1% chance of occurring in any one year) to the "maximum extent practicable". For both standards, the County plans to use updated rainfall data reflecting more intense storms associated with climate change. The County should explain how these standards would be applied in practice and provide an opportunity for public comment.

2. *Identify preferred forms of stormwater controls* which can prevent localized flooding in a watershed while reducing adverse impacts on downstream communities. Specifically, stormwater retention and detention approaches along with green infrastructure should be adopted to the extent feasible.

Be it further resolved **that ACCF urges the County Board and Manager to review and update existing policies and establish new policies for the review and approval of new development and redevelopment in order to prevent increased burdening of the existing stormwater management system and, where possible, expand system capacity. Recommended actions include (but are not limited to) the following:**

1. *Assess the net increase in stormwater generated by each site's design* and assure that such information is shared with the public during the review process.

2. *Thoroughly integrate a review of all potential stormwater impacts along with any proposed site-based controls into the site plan review process* and create a mechanism allowing the public to track any subsequently requested modifications or administrative changes to site plan or permit conditions that may impact stormwater management.

3. *Provide the public with an analysis calculating the cumulative (combined) net increase in gallons per year* that all development and redevelopment projects within a watershed will add to the public stormwater system.

4. *Establish and or review site-based standards for calculating and reporting the impact of impermeable/impervious surfaces*, standards for detention/retention structures, and best management practices for controlling site runoff through regulatory measures and policy guidance.

5. *Consider capping a lot's impermeable/impervious surface area* during the building permit process to retain water and sediment on site and incentivize development that maintains permeable/pervious surfaces and on other measures to retain stormwater on site.

6. *Require assessment and documentation of on-site trees* (in a format readily accessible to the general public). The County should continue to aggressively support state legislation that provides for greater urban tree protection and incentives for overall canopy maintenance and development. Explore and consider possible local incentives for retaining mature trees and planting additional vegetation as part of site-design approval.

Be it further resolved **that ACCF urges the County Board and Manager to provide greater public access to information and more opportunities for the public to contribute factual information and perspectives on stormwater management solutions. Recommended actions include (but are not limited to) the following:**

1. *Ensure online access to key documents* that explain the status of ongoing planning, data analysis and implementation activities of the stormwater program, including contractor and consultant reports, data on storm events and other technical information.

2. *Provide systematic public comment opportunities* on proposed actions and options under consideration, before the County has reached final decisions.

3. *Work with community representatives to create a method for residents to submit data documenting the performance of existing stormwater infrastructure,* the conditions experienced during individual storms, their impact, and other stormwater-related information. Develop protocols for the collection and dissemination of such data to County planning and permitting staff.

Respectfully submitted by Public Services Committee Members: John Ford, Chair; Jesse Boeding; Michael Bruce; Mark Greenwood; Eric Harold; Mike McMenamin; Jackie Snelling; Suzanne Sundberg; and John Vihstadt.