



DATE: August 23, 2018

TO: Taco E. Pope, AICP, PEO Director

FROM: Adrienne D. Burke, Esq., Asst. PEO Director

CC: Board of County Commissioners
Michael S. Mullin, Esq., Interim County Manager/County Attorney
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Sue Ann Alleger, CFM, Planner II
James Ray, Emergency Management Mitigation Coordinator

SUBJECT: Floodplain Management and Community Resiliency Planning Activities

Overview

As a coastal and riverine county, Nassau County is highly susceptible to coastal weather events and flooding. The vast number of wetlands across our county are a reminder of our topography and vulnerability to these types of events. We are already seeing and experiencing effects from storms like Matthew and Irma, to daily flooding in certain parts of the community after heavy rain. These issues impact community health, safety, and welfare, and touch all aspects of County infrastructure. With increased growth pressures facing our community, a comprehensive strategy to address these interrelated issues is imperative. Because these issues are complex and involve so many layers, working together across County Departments is especially important. The Planning and Economic Opportunity Department is already working on a variety of initiatives in this area, as mentioned below, and suggests several others as possibilities for tackling this increasingly important issue. These are starting points for discussion; PEO staff will continue to evaluate other opportunities to add.

Definitions

- **Floodplain Management** - a decision-making process that aims to achieve the wise use of the nation's floodplains. "Wise use" means both reduced flood losses and protection of the natural resources and function of floodplains. (FEMA)
- **Community Resilience** – measure of the sustained ability of a community to utilize available resources to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations. (RAND)

Planning Activities/Actions

- **Continue Community Rating System Community Participation – *In process***
 - Under the leadership of Sue Ann Alleger, our PEO CRS Coordinator, we successfully recertified our CRS status this year. We are continually looking for opportunities to increase our CRS rating, which would offer citizens even more of a discount on flood insurance policies. Currently we are a Class 8; moving to a Class 7 would result in an additional 5% flood insurance discount for citizens in a Special Flood Hazard Area. www.nassaucountyfl.com/floods
- **Update County Comprehensive Plan with “Peril of Flood” Statutory Language – *In process***
 - In 2015, state legislation added language to Comprehensive Planning requirements in F.S. 163.3178 regarding Coastal Management Elements. This “Peril of Flood” statutory language requires counties with these elements, of which Nassau is one, include sea level rise as one of the causes of flood risk that must be addressed. Other requirements include more comprehensively addressing flood risk overall. PEO staff will be working on these required amendments in Fall 2018.
- **Update Development Review Regulations – *In process***
 - PEO Staff is currently working on a substantive Land Development Code update, completely overhauling development review procedures. This significant undertaking will not only streamline and simplify processes for applicants and staff, but will also incorporate best planning practices, and more fully address issues related to flooding, drainage and stormwater. This change is also significant as it will incorporate the Roadway and Drainage Standards ordinance into the Land Development Code. Ms. Bray and the Engineering Department are concurrently working on suggested updates for that code language. Staff has been working on these updates since early Spring and due to the complexity and scale of these changes, it does take time. Staff is hopeful that initial drafts will be shared with the Planning and Zoning Board in Fall 2018.
- **Work with Building Department on Updates to Floodplain Management Ordinance – *In process***
 - PEO Staff is in discussions with the Building Department on potential updates to the County’s Floodplain Management Ordinance. This includes addressing freeboard requirements for new construction.
- **Apply for DEP Resilience Planning Grant – *In process***
 - PEO Staff is applying (due 9/7/18) to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for a Resilience Planning Grant for a Phase I Vulnerability Assessment. This assessment would look at the County east of I-95 (excluding the island, as a preliminary vulnerability assessment was completed there by the Regional Council several years ago), and west of I-95, south and east of SR200/301. A vulnerability assessment looks at the “potential for loss of or harm/damage to exposed assets largely due to complex interactions among natural processes, land use decisions, and community resilience (NOAA, 2010).” These areas were chosen by staff as a Phase I assessment because they are the areas experiencing the most rapid growth, and they are areas for which Flood Insurance Studies (FIS) have not been done, so Base Flood Elevations (BFE) have not been established. Because BFE’s are unknown, a vulnerability assessment can be especially valuable until FIS are completed. A Phase II assessment for the rest of the County west of I-95 would be a secondary study.

- **Include Floodplain Management, Stormwater and Resiliency in All Planning Initiatives – In process**
 - PEO staff currently has a number of long-range planning initiatives underway. Because flooding, stormwater, and resiliency are not issues that can be isolated from any planning activity, these will be incorporated into all of our planning initiatives. These initiatives include: Western Nassau Heritage Preservation Committee, SR200/A1A Corridor Design Plan, Recreation Planning, and Conservation Land Acquisition planning.
 - **Increase Community Outreach and Engagement around Flood Risk and Resiliency – Suggested**
 - Community outreach and engagement is one of the core principles of the Community Rating System. The County should look for new and expanded opportunities to continue our outreach to the community about flood risk and resiliency, working with all related departments to do so. One positive step that will help the County in doing so for part of the County is a formalized partnership with the City of Fernandina Beach around floodplain management outreach.
 - **Update Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code (General) – Suggested**
 - PEO Staff should evaluate the Comprehensive Plan for any other needed updates relative to natural resource protection, particularly as it relates to floodplain management best practices. Besides updating development review procedures, the Land Development Code also needs reviewed, especially considering any recommended Comprehensive Plan policy changes. Clearly identified needs, as an example, are a serious evaluation of wetland policy in the County and looking at implementing impervious lot coverage standards. State agencies such as the St. Johns River Water Management District and Florida Fish and Wildlife have offered technical assistance in reviewing suggested changes.
 - **Identify Grant Opportunities - Suggested**
 - There are many grant opportunities available relative to floodplain management and mitigation, drainage and resiliency. A coordinated approach to seeking and applying for these grants in conjunction with Emergency Management and OMB would be of benefit.
 - **Form Resiliency Task Force – Suggested**
 - One of the first steps in effective resiliency planning as recommended in the Florida DEP’s Adaptation Planning handbook is forming a steering committee to work on these issues, because they cannot be siloed. As a suggestion, County departments and other identified community partners and technical experts, could meet quarterly, identify needed improvements and collaborate, and work on identifying and preparing for upcoming grant opportunities, etc. One specific example would be to work on projects like the vulnerability assessment outlined in the DEP grant application. This collective approach could also include looking at County infrastructure and facilities and preparing for future planning.
 - **Encourage More Staff to Obtain CFM Designation – Suggested**
 - Having more staff members with a Certified Floodplain Manager designation would not only help in Community Rating System participation, it would mean more staff members are educated and equipped to address floodplain issues throughout the County. This designation can be obtained by staff in a variety of departments that handle County infrastructure, building and planning.
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