

BOROUGH OF MANVILLE

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Borough of Manville

November 30, 2023

Resilient Communities Program Grant 2023: Systematic Overhaul of Stormwater Programs for Manville

Time: 6:30

Location: Manville Public Library

Joseph A. Brosnan introduced the grant as the Resilient Communities Program Grant, funded by the Department of Communities Affairs. The Borough of Manville will be requesting a total of \$4,999,999.99 from the DCA to overhaul its stormwater programs in a direct response to Hurricane Ida and its Aftermath.

Joseph A. Brosnan outlined the problem with Manville's current stormwater issues by presenting a map of the overall watershed sending water to Manville. The area is approximately 780 square miles and includes areas as far away as Princeton and Budd Lake. Due to a combination of climate change, land development patterns, and the vast size of this drainage area, Manville is extremely susceptible to flooding.

The "Systematic Overhaul of Stormwater Programs for Manville", or "SOS Manville Program" addresses this in three main ways. First, it helps with RESPONSE, so that residents can evacuate when a flood is imminent. Second, it helps RETAIN stormwater that floods in Manville, so that Manville does not actively contribute to more flooding in the Raritan and Millstone Rivers. Third, it helps RECONSTRUCT the damaged community by helping people get out of the flood areas and other legal areas as defined by State agencies.

Brosnan discussed the RESPONSE agenda first. There are currently flood sirens that are functional to alert residents, and an app that notifies them via phone, but the flood siren is manually activated and has limited technology to inform the operator of incoming floods. The SOS Manville Program will allocate some of the funding for new instrumentation to automatically alert residents and provide warning far in advance when a rapid increase in runoff rate is occurring. Currently, these gauges only measure elevation, but can be modified to also assess flow. Two existing gauges will have additional instrumentation. A third gauge on the Royce Brook will be updated and reinstalled at the Hillsborough MUA building which should provide extra time for notification.

The next item Brosnan discussed was RETAIN. As a stormwater engineer, Brosnan expressed enthusiasm with this section. The intent of the SOS Manville Program for the RETAIN agenda is two-fold. First, there are stormwater management facilities that will be constructed directly with funds from the grant that will prevent excess runoff from ever reaching the Raritan and Millstone Rivers. This will help locally reduce flooding conditions, especially in areas already outside of the 100-year flood hazard elevation. While one area is already selected for stormwater management – the Weston Elementary School, there are many other locations that may be suitable, and a study is warranted to determine how much money is needed to construct each of them. This study would effectively be a capital improvement plan for stormwater management basins, at least one of which will be constructed using funds directly from this grant, but the study will advise construction of future basins.

The second phase of the RETAIN agenda is to properly set up a Stormwater Utility Program within the Borough of Manville.

Stormwater Utility Programs are extremely effective tools at ensuring funds are available for construction and maintenance of basins. Manville, like every municipality in the State of New Jersey, has many, many costs associated with stormwater and no funding system in place to fuel it. Brosnan admitted that this topic is a sensitive one, as no one wants to or deserves to have their taxes raised in a “rain tax”, but the funding has to come from somewhere. Brosnan pointed out that, without a program like this, it will come from the tax base regardless, due to State requirements. Therefore it is advised that some of the money from this grant help set up this Stormwater Utility Program and determine the best-fit solution for all of Manville, hopefully with plenty of public participation.

Lastly, Brosnan described the RECONSTRUCT agenda for the SOS Manville Program. There is one main item within this part of the program, but it has different approaches. Brosnan described the recent changes in legislation that are adding constraints to the area known as the Lost Valley. In his words, he called the actions probably sensible, but also punitive. The Lost Valley has too few entrances and exits to safely evacuate people, and there are difficulties in mitigating the flood elevations there because of the proximity of the Millstone River. Brosnan referred to the areas defined as “Additional Flood Risk” by the New Jersey State agencies as the “Manville Exclusion Zone”. On one hand, the RECONSTRUCT agenda seeks to get around this “Manville Exclusion Zone” by attempting to fund the elevation and restoration of some homes, if possible. If that money cannot be used to raise households, then the remainder should be distributed to the rest of the SOS Program.

In addition to elevating some of the homes, the Housing Plan Element of the Master Plan for Manville needs to be updated. This is partially due to this “Manville Exclusion Zone” that wants to remove all housing from the Lost Valley. Brosnan stated that while this is impractical, it would be a very powerful tool in securing future grants. By conducting a “Critical Loss Assessment”, or, how many homes and taxable lots would be lost by following through on this State mandate, the Borough of Manville could better identify possible lots for redevelopment and how many dwellings would need to be added into the existing, already built-out framework of the rest of the Borough. This may result in extra demand for developers, which could help facilitate the local economy.

Brosnan added one final note to the RECONSTRUCT agenda. He stated that, when researching this grant, and looking at some of the legislation such as this “Manville Exclusion Zone”, there were oddities in

some of the Low to Moderate Income (LMI) and other data. Brosnan pointed out that the Lost Valley was considered one of the highest income areas in Manville, which did not make sense. Because this data is generated based on the Census, it is strongly suspected that there is a large chunk of the minority population in that area that did not report to the Census, and is thusly artificially inflating the income level of the area. Part of the RECONSTRUCT agenda is to “reconstruct” the Census information through a supplemental survey of that region. It is very possible that the “Manville Exclusion Zone” is biased to this allegedly artificially high income area.

Brosnan opened the forum for questions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G.P. Caminiti".

G.P. Caminiti
Borough Administrator/Clerk

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing accurately represents the meeting held at 325 N. Main St., Manville NJ 08835 on November 30, 2023.