

**PASQUOTANK COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA
OCTOBER 15, 2018**

The Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners met today in a work session on Monday, October 15, 2018 in the Community Room at the WC Witherspoon Memorial Library.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cecil Perry, Chairman
Dr. William R. Sterritt, Vice-Chairman
Jeff Dixon
Lloyd E. Griffin, III
Joseph S. Winslow, Jr.
Frankie Meads
Charles H. Jordan

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Sparty Hammett, County Manager
R. Michael Cox, County Attorney
Shelley Cox, Planning Director
Christy Saunders, Emergency Management Coordinator
Lynn Scott, Clerk to the Board

The meeting was called to order at 2:30 PM by Chairman Cecil Perry.

Planning Director Shelley Cox explained that the new Flood Insurance Study (FIS) and Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMS) have been approved by FEMA, and will take effect December 21, 2018. She said Pasquotank County is required to adopt a new Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance with the new FIRMS.

Ms. Cox noted that in recent years we have been seeing higher storm surges, wind tides, and more rainfall during storm events. Therefore, there are a lot of questions out there regarding what is the real "100-year storm event". The City of Virginia Beach has performed a lot of studies and research on this and they have found through data that we are experiencing a lot more wind tides and rainfall more frequently. They say the table is incorrect and the 100-year storm events are happening more frequently. In a four month period in 2016, Virginia Beach had two 500-year storm events and one, 100-year storm event.

Ms. Cox stated that our current maps show that Pasquotank County has approximately 3,024 buildings in the floodplain in Pasquotank County. Under the new maps, there will be approximately 1,660 structures in the floodplain. There are currently 908 properties that have flood insurance. Under the new maps, there are 426 properties that have flood insurance.

Ms. Cox noted that the flood maps are available online at NC FRIS, as well as a link on the County's website. One of the changes we are seeing in Pasquotank County is a wave action zone. She noted that it does not affect any land area, but mainly affects the Pasquotank River from the Coast Guard Base to Bateman Estates. She stated that there is also an area of shallow ponding called AO. This is also mainly along the Coast Guard Base as well, and should not have an impact.

Ms. Cox said there is a significant reduction in floodplain throughout Pasquotank County on the new maps; particularly in waterfront neighborhoods. She said in her opinion the new maps are at least 1-2' low, and the current maps provide much more protection. Unfortunately, FEMA has approved the new maps and they are saying we must approve them as well. She provided examples of neighborhoods which are currently vulnerable to flooding that have been either taken out of the flood zone, lowered the based flood elevations, or made no changes at all on the current maps, such as Glen Cove, Elizabeth City Waterfront, New Land, Foreman Bundy Road, Bateman Estates, Hall's Creek, Rabbit's Corner, and Oxford Heights.

Ms. Cox said her concern is that we have a lot of areas being taken out of the floodplain completely. She said if someone comes in her office that is not in the floodplain they do not have to elevate their home at all, including no foundation vents. In ten years, if FEMA comes back and changes the maps and put the property in the floodplain, the property owners will have

a house that is not compliant and they can be charged \$8,000 to \$10,000 in flood insurance every year. Some surrounding counties are so concerned about these maps that they are creating a rule that if you are in the 500-year floodplain, you have to elevate. Emergency Management Coordinator Christy Saunders said the maps were drawn based on modeling and not on historical data. Sea level rise, wind tides, and storm surge were not considered. Ms. Cox said it is very important for everyone in the county to have a flood insurance policy.

Ms. Cox said the state's draft model ordinance included some optional language the Board can consider adopting. She stated that there are four big policy decisions that need to be made at this point.

1. Freeboard – An additional height above the FEMA mandated minimum elevation in flood prone areas to afford an extra measure of protection from storm surge and flooding. The State and Planning Board recommends a 2' freeboard.
2. Substantial Damage/Improvements – Current threshold is 50% damage or improvements within one year – based on tax value of the structure. Recommend retaining current standard.
3. Fill in Flood Zones – Ordinance can prohibit fill in the floodplain. Not recommended.
4. Cost Threshold for Accessory Structures having to Meet Floodplain Requirements (elevation certificate, flood proofing, etc.) Current ordinance exempts structures less than 150 sq. ft. \$3,000 recommended by the State and Planning Board.

The Board discussed increasing the cost threshold for accessory structures to \$4,000.

Ms. Cox said she would like to schedule a public hearing at the first meeting in November. The Planning Board reviewed it last month and approved the staff recommended changes. She stated that as part of the process we are required to notify the public of the changes. We must run a half page ad in the *Daily Advance* twice before the public hearing and we have to notify, by mail, all of the property owners that own property within the floodplain in Pasquotank County who live outside the newspaper publishing area. She said this equates to mailing 1,200 letters to property owners to notify them of their changes.

There was a consensus amongst the Board members to approve staff's recommendations for items 1-3 and to exempt accessory structures less than 150 sq. ft. or valued at less than \$4,000.

Ms. Cox stated that FEMA has a program called the Community Rating System (CRS), which is for communities that choose to do more than the minimum that is required by the NFIP. Credit is assigned for activities beyond minimum. Points are awarded for public information efforts, mapping and regulations, flood damage reduction, and flood preparedness. Rate classes range from 10 to 1, with a 5% reduction in flood insurance premiums (community wide) for each class. She noted that Pasquotank County already does more than the minimum. She said if we join, the County residents will get a reduction of 5% off their annual flood insurance policy rate for each level the County is at.

Ms. Cox said should we choose to join the CRS, it is reasonable to expect to go in at either a nine or even an eight. If that is the case, our property owners could have their flood insurance reduced by either 5% or 10%. She said the application process is a little labor intensive for Planning and Inspections, but they are willing to do it, because they feel it is important. There are no costs to the County other than staff costs. She recommends the Board move forward with joining. She said with the changes we are seeing in our flood maps, staff wants to encourage as many property owners in the County as possible to retain their flood insurance, and any reduction in cost will hopefully help.

Motion was made by Jeff Dixon, seconded by Joe Winslow to move forward with joining the Community Rating System. The motion carried unanimously.

There being no further business;

Motion was made by Frankie Meads, seconded by Jeff Dixon to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 PM.

CHAIRMAN

CLERK TO THE BOARD