



COMPREHENSIVE FLOOD MITIGATION BOND REFERENDUM
STATEMENT OF POSITION
Adopted October 8, 2021

In consideration of the significant risks posed to the city and its citizens by recurrent flooding and projected sea level rise, the Virginia Beach Vision Board of Directors supports passage of the November Comprehensive Flood Mitigation Bond Referendum.

While not a formal part of the pending bond referendum, we are concerned with language contained in Council's resolution that calls for an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan as follows. "An amendment to the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan that will recommend denial for any project or development that generates a net increase in water discharge demand in any watershed or in any drainage system in watershed over the capacity of net of margin to meet the modeled discharge baseline of the drainage system at build-out, and further requiring the Planning Department to recommend denial of any submission that does not conform to the former."* Such an amendment would significantly impact future business growth and development and must be structured in a way that does not prevent future greenfield development, redevelopment or result in a de facto taking of development rights on existing by-right zoning.

We recognize that numerous studies have concluded that Virginia Beach's in-place drainage capacity is severely inadequate to protect structures from being flooded on a city-wide basis. FEMA estimates that currently 1 in 10 buildings is at risk of damage if a large storm hit today. That number climbs to 1 in 4 buildings with a sea level rise of 1.5 feet and to 2 out of every 3 structures at risk with a sea level rise of 3 feet. Average losses due to stormwater flood hazards are already \$437 million annually and are projected to climb to \$616 million under 1.5 feet of sea level rise. At 3 feet of sea level rise, that estimate reaches \$1.66 billion.

The risks posed by flooding impact every citizen of Virginia Beach whether they currently reside in a flood prone area or travel through the city for work or leisure. It influences business development desirability and the city's bond rating. It impacts flood insurance rates and infrastructure costs.

Already the city is investing more money in stormwater projects than it invests in any other area, but it is inadequate to meet the growing need. To accelerate and expand work to address flood challenges, the city has endorsed a voter referendum to be included on the November 2 ballot to authorize the issuance of \$567.5 million in General Obligation bonds. The funds will speed up both existing flood and stormwater controls and maintenance and finance 21 major flood protection projects. Those projects will be completed within a 10-year time frame with about half completed in the first 6 to 7 years.

To support the \$567.5 million bonds, we can expect the real estate tax rate to increase 4.3 cents for a twenty-year debt issuance. The impact of the increase on the average homeowner will be \$10 per month. Revenues generated by the increase in taxes will be placed in a lock box. Deposit and withdrawal information will provide “sufficient granularity” * for oversight by the City Council and a Citizen Oversight Board. The Citizen Oversight Board will be composed of seven members who will have access to all financial, contract documents, acceptance and deliverable and certifications documentation and will receive monthly briefings.

An acquisition strategy will “streamline and expedite design and construction of the projects, including using a single prime contractor, watershed bundling, and project bundling.” * A separate contractor will conduct quality assurance and recommend deliverable acceptance.

Should the citizens deny this bond issuance, these 21-projects will take up to 40 years verses 10 years to complete. The risks of such delay are significant and include increased FEMA insurance costs, loss of property values, loss of business growth and investments, flooding of homes and businesses, impassable streets, and potential loss of life.

For these reasons, the Virginia Beach Vision Board of Directors supports the passage of the November Comprehensive Flood Mitigation Bond Referendum.

Signed,



Ann K. Crenshaw
President



Martha S. McClees
Secretary

* A Resolution Making Certain Commitments Regarding The Comprehensive Flood Mitigation Bond Referendum, adopted 9/7/2021 by Virginia Beach City Council