

**BLANCHARD RIVER FLOOD MITIGATION COALITION
MEETING 3/10/10, 8 am @ESC**

Attending:

Steering Committee: Gene Hovest
Clyde Schroeder
Nick Schroeder
Deb Bauer

Facilitator: Jeff Loehrke, Community Development Director
Village of Ottawa

Members:

Denise Balbaugh	Flood Plain Administrator, Village of Ottawa
Barb Brickner	Clerk-Treasurer, Village of Ottawa
Joe Burkhart	Putnam County Information Technology Officer
Don Croy	Ottawa Resident, Croy's Mowing
Jeff Giesige	Putnam Soil & Water
Jim Heringhaus	Heringhaus Furniture
Dan Irwin	Irwin Real Estate
Nancy Kline	Editor, <i>Putnam Voice</i>
Gary Lammers	Prosecuting Attorney, Putnam County
Jim Leopold	Ottawa Township Trustee
John Love	Putnam County Commissioner
Ken Maag	Mayor, Village of Ottawa
Steve Odenweller	Director, Putnam County EMA
Jason Phillips	Water Director, Village of Ottawa
Ken Pollitz	Pastor, New Creation Lutheran Church
Bill Roberts	Ottawa Resident
Terry Schroeder	NRCS

Adjunct Members:

Tony Iriti	Director, Northwest Ohio Flood Mitigation Partnership
Laurie Collins	Project Coordinator, Putnam County Emergency Grant
Dick Meyer	Supervisor, " " "
Dave Cross	Crew, " " "
Josh Knoll	" " "
Linda Llewellyn	" " "
Jeremy Siebert	" " "

+10 Additional Crew (Illegible handwriting or did not sign in)

Guests:

Cathy Fortman	Ottawa Resident, Fortman Insurance
John Fortman	Ottawa Resident, Fortman Insurance
Dennis Schmenk	

Denise Balbaugh presented Ottawa's HMGP (Hazard Mitigation Grant Program) project report. According to Ms. Balbaugh, 4 of the last 5 houses have been demolished. The last house is awaiting asbestos abatement so is taking a little longer. The Arrowhead HMGP grant has been closed by Ohio EMA. OEMA has asked Ms. Balbaugh to provide photos of this project which OEMA intends to show FEMA this successful HMGP project when they report to headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Linda Llewellyn, member of the Putnam County Emergency Grant crew, reported that, to date, they had cleared the following from Putnam County waterways: 12,983 tons wood debris, 5,487 cords of wood cut into lengths, 12 tons of recyclable materials, and 3.9 tons of waste. Currently, the PCEG crews are located near Cloverdale just off of Rd. I-18 and near the Miller City cut-off. Putnam County Commissioner John Love stated that the program will continue through June, 2010, and possibly beyond.

With a nod to Jason Phillips, who represented Ottawa on this trip, Tony Iriti, NWOFP Director, spoke about the meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers in Buffalo Feb. 3-4. Mr. Iriti said that the Army Corps of Engineers like to get everything in place and then move forward. The NWOFP convinced them to share information as they go along so that the NWOFP can start working with that information in order to expedite the process. Col. Snead, Commander of the Buffalo office, had 25 subordinates in attendance, each reporting on a part of the Ottawa/Findlay/Blanchard Watershed project. Over the next few months, the NWOFP, Village of Ottawa, and City of Findlay will utilize video conferencing, graciously provided by Marathon Oil, to aid communications with the Army Corps of Engineers. The Army Corps of Engineers is still working on the H&H (Hydraulics and Hydrology) report, which will be used to model the alternatives for flood mitigation.

Jeff Loehrke displayed a large preliminary map of the “community preferred” plan showing possible locations of flood walls and levees through Ottawa. Mentioning that the HMGP properties are highlighted, Mr. Loehrke reminded the audience that it would take an act of Congress to allow flood mitigation structures to be placed on HMGP properties. Mr. Loehrke said that there will be a public meeting in Ottawa in the late spring or early summer to allow public input in the preliminary flood mitigation design.

Jason Phillips announced that Ottawa’s flood warning system is in place with the three gauges working and collected data. USGS is still working on the inundation mapping which will show how high water affects specific properties in Ottawa. Barb Brickner added that there is a link for the river gauge system on the Village of Ottawa’s website: www.ottawaohio.us followed by clicking on the “Blanchard River” tab. Tony Iriti advised that if Ottawa has reverse 911 in place, phone calls could go out to properties that are forecast to be affected by high water, using the inundation mapping.

Jeff Loehrke reported on the recent meetings in Washington, D.C., attended by Mayor Maag, Gene Hovest, and Mr. Loehrke, along with Tony Iriti (NWOFP) and Findlay Mayor Pete Sehnert. According to Mr. Loehrke, the group met face to face with Sen. George Voinovich, Congressman Bob Latta, Congressman Jim Jordan. They also met with the top aides of Senator Sherrod Brown and Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur. As in the past, the meetings were set up by B&D Consulting firm. Tony Iriti commented, “Since we’ve been there so many times, legislators seem very in tune with our project and were very supportive.” The NWOFP/Ottawa/Findlay group has requested \$2,000,000 for the Blanchard Watershed General Investigation Study, an earmark for the Army Corps of Engineers. The Cincinnati region of the Army Corps of Engineers has put the Ottawa/Findlay flood mitigation project on their priority list and forwarded it to Washington, D.C. headquarters of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Gene Hovest added that the private sector involvement of the NWOFP carries much clout with the federal legislators.

Jeff Loehrke reported on the recent meetings in Washington, D.C., attended by Mayor Maag, Gene Hovest, and Mr. Loehrke, along with Tony Iriti (NWOFFMP) and Findlay Mayor Pete Sehnert. According to Mr. Loehrke, the group met face to face with Sen. George Voinovich, Congressman Bob Latta, Congressman Jim Jordan. They also met with the top aides of Senator Sherrod Brown and Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur. As in the past, the meetings were set up by B&D Consulting firm. Mr. Loehrke remarked that the trip was informative and educational, and the legislators were impressed with the partnering of Ottawa and Findlay, and also the partnering of our public and private interests in the NWOFFMP. Mr. Loehrke continued, saying that our legislators are very tuned in to our situation and that both the legislators and the Army Corps of Engineers want our project to be successful. Tony Iriti added that the importance of having the elected officials come to Washington, D.C., to meet personally should not be underestimated. The NWOFFMP/Ottawa/Findlay group has requested a \$2,000,000 earmark for the Army Corps of Engineers which would benefit the Blanchard Watershed General Investigation Study and other projects in the Western Lake Erie Basin.

Tony Iriti explained that the NWOFFMP has recommended that the Army Corps close out the Sec. 205 studies for both Ottawa and Findlay 6/1/10, and merge them into the Blanchard Watershed General Investigation Study. Deb Bauer pointed out that these Sec. 205 Continuing Authority Programs (CAP) each have a maximum Federal contribution of \$7,000,000, while the General Investigation Study would not have a maximum Federal contribution. Also on the subject of funding, Jeff Loehrke stated that an additional \$3,000,000 has been requested by State Representatives, Lynn Wachtmann and Cliff Hite to benefit flood mitigation in Ottawa/Findlay in the next State biennial budget. Mr. Iriti remarked that the dollars appropriated in the current biennial budget have already been spent in Findlay, and Ottawa's property purchases are in progress. Dan Irwin has been selected as the buyer's agent for Ottawa.

Tony Iriti said that the NWOFFMP was formed in 2008 and funded for three years to expedite the flood mitigation process. The idea was to then turn operations over to a public entity to continue the project. We are now moving into the next phase of the project where a government entity with bonding power is needed to finance property purchases and the building of the project. The NWOFFMP is pressing to find the appropriate authority to administer the G.I. Study and construction. To that end, the NWOFFMP hired the Indianapolis law firm, Baker & Daniels, to research all public entities that could, according to the Ohio Revised Code, govern a flood control project. On Monday evening, 3/9/10, the NWOFFMP convened a public meeting of elected officials in Findlay to hear the presentation by Baker & Daniels, explaining their research and conclusions. About 80 people attended (including Mayor Ken Maag, Commissioner John Love, Deb Bauer, Gene Hovest, Jeff Loehrke, Jason Phillips, and Jeff Giesige from the Blanchard River Flood Mitigation Coalition) and approximately 50% of those attending were elected officials. The purpose of the meeting was to inform the officials so that a decision can be made to move forward. At this meeting it was announced that a "study group" has been formed to discuss the various authorities which could govern a flood control project and try to come to a consensus as to which one to support. The first meeting was held on March 1, and included Ottawa Councilman Gene Hovest, Findlay

Councilman Randy Van Dyne, Putnam County Commissioner John Love, and Hancock County Commissioner Phil Riegel. The group will meet next on Monday, 3/15/10, at 7 p.m. at the Hancock County Council on Aging office in Findlay. An open invitation to join the study group was extended to interested parties in the Blanchard Watershed. Deb Bauer stated that the Baker & Daniels presentation was very informative and that she would email a copy of the power point presentation to the members of the BRFMC. (Baker & Daniels presentation emailed 3/11/10.)

Jeff Loehrke asked Deb Bauer to talk about the presentation by the Spicer Group 1/18/10. Ms. Bauer reported that the Spicer Group is a civil engineering firm established over 75 years ago and headquartered in Saginaw, Michigan. The firm specializes in assessment methodology for storm water infrastructure projects. Once the boundaries of the project area are determined, assessments could be determined considering benefiteres and contributors.

Jeff Loehrke announced that the Village of Ottawa is setting up a meeting with bond counsel to investigate bonding options.

Don Croy questioned what Ottawa will do if the “full-blown” flood project falls through. What is the plan B? Mr. Croy continued, saying that the I-9 bridge seems to be a major factor in Ottawa’s flooding problems in that the approach to the bridge holds the water back. He mentioned that he had kayaked the Blanchard River recently, and it appeared that the river clean-out by the Putnam County Emergency Grant crews had helped. He suggested that the group look for smaller fixes, such as lowering the bridge approach, and then continue on with the larger fixes.

Next meeting of the Blanchard River Flood Mitigation Coalition is scheduled for 8 a.m., Wed., 4/14/10 at the ESC.

The BRFMC Steering Committee will meet next on Mon., 3/15/10 at 8 a.m. at the Ottawa Municipal Bldg.

(Full BRFMC Meetings on 2nd Wed. of each month.)

Meeting Notes by Deb Bauer, Secretary