

COUNTYWIDE WATERSHED STUDY BRIEFING
DARLINGTON COUNTY COUNCIL
DARLINGTON, SC

April 28, 2022

South Carolina Office of Resilience awarded Darlington County a grant and contracted with E.L. Robinson Engineering to perform a Countywide Watershed Study. Darlington County Council, Darlington County Municipal Elected Council Members and Mayors, along with Municipal Managers/Administrators, met to receive a briefing from E.L. Robinson on the Countywide Watershed Study on April 28, 2022, at 6 p.m., at Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments, 2314 Pisgah Road, Florence, South Carolina.

NOTICE OF MEETING

In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, a copy of the meeting notice providing the date, time, and place of the meeting was emailed to the local newspapers, persons requesting notification, and posted on the county's website, and on the bulletin board in the lobby of the courthouse.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

Chairman Bobby Hudson, Vice Chairman Marvin Le Flowers, Chaplain Dannie Douglas, Jr., Mr. David Coker, Mr. Albert Davis, III, Mrs. Angie Stone Godbold, and Ms. Joyce W. Thomas.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBER ABSENT

Mr. M. Kirk Askins.

ALSO PRESENT

County Administrator Marion Stewart, III, Clerk to Council J. JaNet Bishop, Emergency Management Coordinator Molly Odom, Codes Enforcement Director Terri Cribb, Mr. A. Carroll Barker, Sr. and Mr. David Brandes of E.L. Robinson Engineering, Mr. James Hardy and Mr. Dexter Stroman of OnPoint Media, Ms. Olivia Barone and Ms. Tessa Baran of South Carolina Office of Resilience, Lamar Mayor James Howell, Lamar Town Manager Tim Dargan, Lamar Council Members Mary Ann Mack, Tyler Cook, and Inez B. Lee, Hartsville City Manager Daniel Moore, Hartsville City Council Members Bobby McGee, Teresa Mack, and Bryson Caldwell, and Society Hill Mayor Dewayne Duke.

Watershed Study Briefing

Mr. Stewart called the meeting to order, and everyone introduced themselves.

Mr. David Brandes, of E.L. Robinson Engineers, explained that South Carolina Office of Resilience awarded Darlington County a grant for a countywide watershed study and contracted with E.L. Robinson Engineering to conduct the study. Darlington County is the recipient of the grant and South Carolina Office of Resilience will manage the grant.

Darlington County Codes Enforcement Director Terri Cribb will be E.L. Robinson's point of contact with the county.

Mr. Brandes reported that E.L. Robinson Engineering company is a privately-owned, full-service engineering firm established in 1978 and specializes in water resources, infrastructure, surveying, transportation, and structural and site/civil services. This company is headquartered in Charleston, West Virginia with offices throughout the southeast, but he and Mr. Carroll Barker work out of the office in Columbia, South Carolina. Subcontractors assisting with the countywide watershed study will include Onpoint Media who will handle all of the community outreach and set up the various meetings, PACE Engineering, and Nesbitt Surveying.

In explaining why they are here, Mr. Brandes talked about state disaster declarations as a result of various hurricanes, federal funding provided by the US Department of HUD for flood mitigation, and South Carolina Office of Resilience being created to accelerate the recovery for the most vulnerable citizens. South Carolina Office of Resilience has been tasked with administering HUD CDBG -MIT grants and E.L. Robinson Engineering selected by SC Office of Resilience to conduct the countywide flood study. The study will focus on ways to accelerate the recovery for the most vulnerable citizens. Mr. Brandes mentioned that FEMA would rather spend \$1 now to not have to spend \$4 later. E.L. Robinson engineers will look at how they can make communities more resilient and have less impact from storms. Although there will never be a zero impact from a storm, the engineers will look at making certain areas survive.

Mr. Carroll Barker, of E.L. Engineering, reviewed the flood study tasks which include conducting workshops/four public meetings; identifying flooding issues throughout the county; selecting areas and conducting a field survey of infrastructure; assessing/analyzing existing and proposed stormwater systems; developing conceptual designs; prioritizing projects; considering "green" and resilient infrastructure designs; considering buyouts as a solution, and establishing a strategy for construction grant submissions. The meeting tonight began the data gathering event to get as much information on flooding locations and issues that communities know about. Everyone was asked to mark known problem areas on the maps available at the meeting. Once areas are prioritized, Nesbitt Surveyors will go out to locate the infrastructure, measure, and obtain other conditions of the infrastructure to be included in the modeling. They will then make a computer model to come up with existing conditions which should match where flooding is occurring. This will be based on various flood frequencies. From this, conceptual plans will be developed that will be ranked with the costs associated with the plans. A benefit-cost relation analysis will be conducted to determine the benefits and cost of the infrastructure improvements. The ratio has to be one or greater to be a viable project. Therefore, they will look at areas of concern and come up with costs to find out whether the projects will be beneficial to do.

A mailer/card and questionnaire have been developed that will be mailed out countywide. The dates and locations of four public meetings are listed on the mailer/card along with a QR code that will take you to a questionnaire, public meeting registration, and an interactive map to plot the location of flooding issues.

Mr. Stewart asked everyone to post the card on their web pages and distribute it. Over 400 cards were at this meeting for individuals to take and distribute. Everyone on the county tax roll will receive a card via mail. Unfortunately, renters may not receive a card. Therefore, everyone was asked to distribute and post the information. Information can also be found on the website at www.DarlingtonCountyFloodStudy.com and social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.).

Mr. Brandes talked about strategies to obtain grants such as repetitive loss and critical infrastructure; projects that meet the definition of a mitigation strategy; social vulnerability in low to moderate income areas; and vulnerable populations. The engineers will also look at pipe sizes, rain gardens, bioswales in parking lots, constructed wetland ponds, bioswales at street curbs, porous asphalt pavement, rainwater harvesting, stream restoration, and underground detention. He encouraged everyone to attend the public meetings to provide known locations of flooding issues.

Mr. Brandes also talked about ditches being the primary means to move water and should hold the water long enough to ultimately infiltrate the groundwater table. He talked about flooding from ditches that may block roads, etc. Mr. Brandes asked everyone present to plot problem areas on the map or email the locations. A follow-up email will be sent to everyone in attendance to ask for feedback.

Individuals present conversated about ditch maintenance, clogged pipes, flooding, etc. in various areas of the county, including Society Hill area. It was pointed out that the grant will not cover maintenance. However, the engineers will look at areas that need maintenance. If people tell the engineers where the problem is, they will investigate, but will not determine who's responsible. It will not matter who owns the infrastructure, if it meets the requirements, a grant can be provided. The grant recipient will be Darlington County.

Ms. Tessa Baran, of South Carolina Office of Resilience, indicated that there will be a prioritized list of solutions. The study will not fund or implement solutions. The list will go through four pillars to be funded. She talked about the different pillars to obtain funds for projects.

Individuals conversated about homeowners needing assistance to purchase/install gutters, home buyouts, vegetation to help absorb water, flooding problems in the Hartsville area, problems with lift stations, etc.

Mr. Stewart confirmed that there will be available staff at the public meetings to assist individuals with completing the survey manually (paper copy). During the public meetings, there will be an introduction, discussion, small group discussions, and maps available to plot problem locations.

The group talked about ditches on private property. It was indicated that these types of ditches are just as important. The engineers will document all drainage problems because private ditches may meet the eligibility of the grant. Darlington County would be the grant recipient and responsible for hiring a contractor to clean the ditch as long as the particular ditch impacts a greater area and not just one house. If not, other resources would have to be used. It was also stated that the watershed study would not solve everyone's problem. This first step would identify problems and find out whether a grant can be obtained. There are no guarantees. The Office of Resilience staff will talk about potential grants after the problems are identified.

Mr. Stewart asked everyone to distribute/post the cards containing the information regarding the public meetings. The schedule for the public meetings is as follows:

- May 10th at 6 p.m. at St. John's Elementary School, 140 Park St, Darlington;
- May 12th at 6 p.m. at Society Hill Neighborhood Center, 223 Hall St, Society Hill;
- May 17th at 6 p.m. at Lamar-Spaulling Elementary School, 5232 Lamar Hwy, Lamar; and
- May 19th at 6 p.m. at Coker University Elizabeth Boatwright Coker Performing Arts Center, 300 E. College Ave, Hartsville

Although the meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m., individuals remained in the facility to talk with the engineers and plot problem areas on the maps.

Respectfully submitted,



J. Janet Bishop
Clerk to Council



Bobby Hudson, Chairman
Darlington County Council

Approved at meeting of June 6, 2022.