

Minutes
Resiliency Committee
November 19, 2025

Members present: Edie Dondero (Chair), Art Burritt, Joan Marini, Mike Powell, Gerry Injaian

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:02am.
2. **The minutes** of September 24, 2025 and October 15, 2025 were unanimously approved.

3. Project Updates

York Road: Mayor Dondero shared that York Road project was likely to begin December 1, hoping that temperature/weather issues related to road material had been resolved, including the impact of overnight temperatures below 50 degrees. Before the start, a letter will go out to homeowners in the affected corridor. An AECOM staff member will be on site daily to supervise the work. Project estimated to take 5 days.

Stormwater Improvements: Mayor plans to generate map that will show completed and planned work. Public works installed new storm basins on Plymouth; those are now operational. Public works looking at alternative check valves. Some of the valves already installed are not opening and flowing correctly because head pressure is too high. Three valves had been installed; one is functioning well but two on Bristol are problematic. The two valves on Bristol will be replaced by the manufacturer with a different size valve with less head pressure required for opening. No further valves will be installed until the function of these three is validated during storm cycles. Several committee members were under the impression that a larger number of valves had been installed since the public works staff requested and received from Council additional funds for stormwater projects. The Mayor clarified that those funds were not solely for the purchase of valves; they may have been utilized for other stormwater-related efforts (e.g., new basins) or are yet to be spent on additional valves. Mr. Burritt cautioned about overlap between valve placement plans and areas slated for engineering review. Mr. Injaian expressed optimism that regrading York Road will alleviate much of the stormwater issues in that area, although he had hoped for additional pavement at the road lowest point.

Community Planning Initiative: The draft report from the University of Delaware IPA team has been submitted and will be reviewed by the Community Planning Advisory Group at their December 2 meeting. Report will then come to

Resiliency Committee meeting for review. Mayor Dondero would like to have the Resiliency Committee discuss that report at its January meeting and prepare a report to Council on whether it supports the CPAG's recommendations. Art Burritt stated that the report would not contradict anything under action by Resiliency, as it focuses mostly on ordinance changes and the establishment of a new disaster relief fund. No recommendations are project specific.

4. **Freeboard Discussion and Vote:** Mayor says committee mandate today is to decide whether to recommend to Council that some level of freeboard become mandatory. The distinction between new builds and major renovations was discussed. For new builds, 24 of 25 most recent builds have utilized voluntary inclusion of freeboard in return for additional building height. For substantially improved houses, code constable has not tracked freeboard incentive usage.

Thus, a mandatory ordinance has a greater impact on major renovations than on new construction, where costs are recovered more quickly through insurance savings. Mr. Powell estimated the cost of adding freeboard in a renovation as about \$100K for just the elevation of the structure by hydraulic jacks. Mr. Injaian questioned whether there could be different freeboard requirements for new homes vs for substantial repair. Mr. Powell was not aware of any towns that regulate freeboard in that way; also, FEMA discourages using variances because it undermines code integrity.

Mayor Dondero and Mr. Powell viewed this requirement as a penalty on current homeowners. Art Burritt suggested a phase-in process for the requirement of freeboard. Mr. Powell pointed out that 18 inches of freeboard results in a "plus 2" insurance rating because the height is rounded up to 2 feet.

Mayor Dondero summarized that the committee will recommend to Council that 18 inches of freeboard become mandatory starting in 3 years. This could impact the whole town by improving town ranking on the Community Rating System. Art Burritt suggested committee provide Council with a written statement stating reasoning behind proposal before Council considers this item.

5. **Project Prioritization and Sequencing**

Mayor Dondero suggested the Committee engage in prioritization and sequencing of projects since Council cannot pay for everything at once. There is money in the current fiscal year's budget to initiate analysis portion of Phase 2 of York Road project. In theory, a project could go to Council for approval, be approved and put out for bid and initiated by Spring.

Art Burritt expressed support for a bid process, which Mayor Dondero says takes 30 days. Dr. Marini wants to assure that multiple engineering firms are

considered and no one firm is given an inside track. Gerry Injaian says there are 5 or 6 potential engineers in the region he is aware of who could be considered. He suggested that engineers that came to look at York Road Phase 2 could also be asked to look at Cat Hill for a future project.

Mayor asked committee to decide whether we had a known scope of work to put out or, whether we wanted to charge an engineer with telling us the potential solutions and then we would decide. Mr. Powell and Dr. Marini felt that bulkheads should be considered in a unified way throughout town via a separate project. Art Burritt felt that informal consultations would help the committee to decide on project scope

The Mayor said the coastal analysis required by FEMA in order to authorize bulkhead raising is likely to cost less than an H&H study, but we need more information on both estimated cost and scope (i.e., what the analysis would look like). She indicated Council may be able to fund the coastal analysis simultaneously with one of the neighborhood studies because of the smaller scale. Such an analysis will happen after project design – i.e., after we determine the height of bulkhead raise, total linear feet, where in town it will occur, etc. – and functions to assure FEMA that project will not increase flooding as a result of physical changes to the floodplain. It was suggested that qualified coastal engineers may not need to do extensive modelling because they have experience with the consequences of the various actions that would be proposed.

6. Vote on Next Funding Request

Mayor Dondero called the consensus question on next funding request to Council – whether the committee agrees that the next ask of Council is to fund York Road Phase 2 analysis. A voice vote was unanimously in favor.

7. Public Comment: Chris Netter said the bulkhead on the opposite side of his and Gerry Injaian's canal (Bristol Rd) is 10" higher along most of its length. He asked, if the opposite side was not higher, would their properties get less flooding?

8. Adjournment: the meeting adjourned at 11:30am.