

## **West Pittston Borough**

Feasibility Study for a Non-Federal Flood Damage Reduction Project

### **Second Public Meeting**

Wyoming Area High School Auditorium, Exeter Borough Pennsylvania

Date October 9, 2019

Attendance: The public meeting was attended by approximately 140 people. A voluntary sign-in sheet was provided and a copy is attached to these minutes.

Media: The meeting was covered by both local print and television media outlets.

Purpose: The purpose of the meeting was to a) inform the public about the analyses and conclusions of the study of the alternatives to providing West Pittston Borough with increased damage protection caused by flooding of the Susquehanna River and b) invite public comments or questions on the study results. The most recent flooding from tropical Storm Lee in September of 2011 flooded over 900 homes and businesses in West Pittston Borough and caused an estimated \$97,900,000 in damages.

Project Status: The project has begun in April of 2019. The project team has completed the research of records, surveying, mapping and modeling. The Project team had consulted with a Technical Advisory committee (TAC) consisting of state and federal stakeholders. This meeting presented the conclusion of the study that a levee system of earthen embankment, sheet piles with concrete caps, closure structures and pumping stations would be the most feasible solution to providing increased damage protection from flooding in the borough.

A copy of the PowerPoint slide presentation utilized for the meeting is posted to the project website: [www.westpittstonboro.com/2019Floodstudy](http://www.westpittstonboro.com/2019Floodstudy)

The meeting began with a welcome by Ms. Ellen Quinn, President of West Pittston Borough Council.

The Study team was introduced:

James Brozena, PE, - Brozena Consulting Services

Thomas Lawson, PE – Borton-Lawson

Samantha Albert, PE – Borton-Lawson

Joseph Durkin, PE – Reilly Associates

Thomas Reilly, Jr, PE – Reilly Associates

The PowerPoint slides were presented by Mr. Brozena, Mr. Lawson, Mr. Durkin and Ms. Albert.

Following the slide presentation, the audience was invited to provide any comments or ask questions regarding the study.

## Public Comments and Question and Answers

(JB=James Brozena, PE; TL=Thomas Lawson, PE; EQ=Ellen Quinn)

### Questions by Viv Harris 1021 Ledgeview Dr. West Pittston:

It seems that the project will not protect Ledgeview Drive.  
At the end of Wilkern St. there was some flooding in 2011 and they had to use sandbags.

Answer (JB):

That area is protected by the existing Exeter Levee on Hicks Creek. To provide closure of the Exeter Levee at Wilkern St. sand bags are normally used. However, the Luzerne County Flood Protection Authority (LCFPA) is looking into upgrading that closure to a post and panel closure. The Team will look into the status of the upgrade plans.

### Questions by John Hannigan, PG 318 Delaware Ave. West, Pittston

It is my opinion that due to climate change the flows on the river are increasing.  
Is the proposed levee based on the Lee Flood and is that sufficient?

Answer (JB):

Yes. The Study was based on examining two flood events: 1) the FEMA 100 base flood event, and 2) the Flood of record – Tropical Storm Lee.

Comments by Mr. Hannigan:

I do not think that those design flow levels will be high enough.

There may be significant problems by the River Shores area. The existing soils which are there may not support the levee due to the proposed force and flow of the river.

To reduce costs did you consider moving the proposed levee further away from the river perhaps in an existing road and leave some houses on the river side of the levee.

There should be more extensive use of infiltration of stormwater in the into the sandy soils. This would reduce the need for storm water pump stations.

Answer (JB):

We are aware of the problem with the soils due to the existence of the old dump site.  
No, we did not consider moving the levee away from the river and leaving part of the town on the river side of the levee.

### Question by Don Hudock 367 Susquehanna Avenue Exeter Borough

I am concerned that the area of Exeter Borough where I live is being sacrificed. In 2011 they built a 4 ft. high dirt berm from Valley St. to Schooley Ave. Houses got water in the basements. How can there be no impact on me? The study is false.

Answer (JB):

The models show that there will be no increase from the proposed levee downstream of the levee at the Schooley Ave. -Valley St. location in Exeter Borough.

However, this is a low spot. With the new Flood Insurance Study (FIS) maps being issued by FEMA the 100-year base flood boundary will extend significantly into the borough from this location. We have met with the borough officials and they are looking into it.

Answer (TL):

PA DEP may look into a small flood protection project at this location.

Comment by Paul Newhart, 23 Philadelphia Ave. West Pittston.

It seems that the bridges (Water Street and Ft. Jenkins) will not get replaced for a long time.

Answer (JB):

PennDOT was on our Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for the levee study. PennDOT will begin the process of selecting consultants for the replacement of these bridges next year.

Answer (TL):

This study will add priority to the replacement of the bridges. It will also provide guidance on how to replace the bridges to fit with a proposed levee.

Questions by Nancy Hopkins, 2448 Sullivan Trail, Falls PA.

We had a lot of flooding and damage from Lee in 2011. Will there be additional flooding from this levee?

Answer (TL):

This study indicates that without any mitigation there will be a 1" rise in the river at the Wyoming County line. But, in order to get the permits, we will be required to provide mitigation. We will implement mitigation measures so that there is no increase in the flood levels on the river at the Wyoming County line. The mitigation measures that will be considered as a part of the detailed design will include a) replacing the bridges; b) steepening the levee banks; and c) shifting the levee further from the river.

Question: Won't removing the islands help?

Answer (TL):

This model shows that the effect of the islands is small. The river has already naturally developed channels on each side of the island for its flow. There is no place I could find in the country where island removal or dredging was used as a flood control project.

Question: Is the 4 to 5 year timeframe reasonable?

Answer (TL):

Yes. Bloomsburg designed and built its levee in 5 years. The Bloomsburg levee and the proposed West Pittston would be of similar size.

Comment by Tom Blaskiewicz 409 3<sup>rd</sup> St. W., Pittston

I would suggest that Governor Tom Wolf should be approached for major funding for the project.

Comments and Questions by Rep. Aaron Kaufer

I have applied for a \$10 million state RCAP funding for West Pittston for this project.

Comment (TL):

The Bloomsburg levee project Phase I took 12 months for design and 16 months for construction. The cost was \$25 million.

The Bloomsburg levee project Phase II took 14 months for design and 16 months for construction. The cost was \$14 million.

Question by Rep. Aaron Kaufer

Is it possible to phase the West Pittston project?

Answer (TL):

It would be difficult to phase the West Pittston levee construction because there is no high ground to tie the levee into.

Answer (JB):

It would be possible to phase some of the sanitary and storm sewer work first.

Question by John Hannigan

What percentage of the Bloomsburg levee project did the town of Bloomsburg have to pay?

Answer (TL):

The town of Bloomsburg paid \$0 dollars. The project was funded through grants. The only local public contribution was by the school district which paid \$3.5 million because one of its schools was included in the protection. Also, one of the businesses which was in the protected area contributed \$2 million to the Phase I project.

Closing Remarks (JB):

Reminded the audience that the Final Study will be published on the webpage. Thanked everyone for their attendance at the meeting and stated that anyone interested in volunteering to help make the project a reality should contact the Borough or one of the members of the Project Team.

Questions or comments may also be sent via email to:

[Leveestudy.westpittstonboro@comcast.net](mailto:Leveestudy.westpittstonboro@comcast.net)

Or written comments/questions may be dropped off or mailed to West Pittston Borough:  
555 Exeter Ave, West Pittston, PA 18643.