

Skagit
CO
J. WEBER
5 September 1980

MEMO FOR: RECORD

SUBJECT: Meetings with the following:

1. Skagit County Planning Department Regarding Floodway Boundaries
2. Town of Hamilton Regarding FIA Intermediate Coordination
3. City of Burlington Regarding Floodway Boundaries
4. Town of Lyman Regarding FIA Intermediate Coordination

1. On 26 August 1980, Gardner and I traveled to Skagit County for the purpose of attending the meetings described above. Meetings 1 and 2 took place on 26 August and Meetings 3 and 4 took place on 27 August. All of the meetings were also attended by Mr. Wes Edens of FEMA.

2. A detailed summary of each meeting follows:

MEETING 1. Gardner, Edens, and I met with Bob Schofield, Skagit County Planning Director; Otto Walberg, Skagit County Planning Assistant Director; Judy LaFollette, Skagit County Permit Center Director; and John Leonard, Consulting Engineer for the city of Burlington, to discuss proposed floodway boundaries by Skagit County. FEMA will not issue maps with the county's floodway boundaries unless accompanied by a floodway table. They would issue two sets of maps with different floodways. Walberg was concerned with legal problems associated with the release of two sets of maps, but Edens explained that there is no public distribution of the floodway maps. FEMA policy requires a floodway data table before any floodway map is released publicly. Leonard and LaFollette expressed concern with the lack of legal backing for the county's floodway boundaries. Walberg stated that he felt the county's floodway lines are more defensible in a practical sense, but the Corps lines are more defensible in a legal sense. Gardner suggested a depth-velocity ordinance might be used to extend the equal-conveyance floodway boundaries to cover deeply flooded areas. King County has used this method where there is no floodway. Edens offered the following solution: 1) FEMA will release the equal-conveyance floodway maps for purposes of completing the Flood Insurance Studies; 2) FPMS will conduct a hydraulic analysis of the county's floodways under the Corps' Technical Services program; and 3) upon completion of the hydraulic analysis and creation of a Floodway Data Table, FEMA would revise the maps accordingly. Schofield would like the Shangri-La area to be out of the floodway since they are on higher ground and only subjected to shallow flooding, and proposed a split floodway, which would result in access problems. The county is concerned about access, but offered no solution. Gardner suggested that FPMS could check the split floodway around Shangri-La under the Technical Services program. Schofield will provide the Corps with several proposed floodways to analyze.

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The county proposed moving the floodway boundaries at Cape Horn outward which would place some high spots within the floodway. Schofield later withdrew this proposal.

Gardner also requested Schofield to schedule a future meeting to discuss filling practices by the city of Burlington that might obstruct overflow areas and aggravate flooding problems. LaFollette expressed the concern that there are no maps defining where filling should not be allowed. Edens is particularly concerned about the area between Burlington Hill and Sterling Hill overflow route to the Samish River Valley. Filling in this area could divert water into the Nookachamps and/or up and downstream which would increase flood damages. This area is presently outside of the Burlington city limits. The county may be able to protect the area by downzoning, if they win an ongoing downzoning lawsuit in this area. Leonard said he doesn't think Burlington is particularly interested in growth in that direction, since their present thrust is south and west of the city limits. Schofield agreed to sponsor a meeting to explore flood plain filling. (See attached business cards for addresses and phone numbers of people in attendance.)

MEETING 2. Gardner, Edens, and I held an Intermediate Coordination meeting at Hamilton to review the Hamilton Flood Insurance Study (FIS). The meeting began at 1930 hours and the only local official who showed up was John M. Smith, city councilman. Smith raised the following questions, which Gardner or Edens answered:

a. What are the 100-year flood elevations in Hamilton? Ans. Data is on the work maps.

b. Why did the Corps raise the Cockerham Island levee 2 feet following the 1979 flood while Hamilton is not permitted any fill in the floodway? Ans. A maximum of 2 feet of fill was used in washed out areas to bring up to original grade. (See attached as-built drawing with notes from Applebury/Lesmeister.)

c. What ever became of the economic feasibility study for a levee improvement in Hamilton? Ans. A preliminary study indicated that a levee would raise the water surface too much. No further analysis was done. We will send him a copy of our previous letter.

d. What about the feasibility of dredging as a solution to flooding in Hamilton? Ans. Dredging is not practical for many reasons. We will send him copies of previous letters concerning dredging of the Snoqualmie River that explains the situation.

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e. What flood effects would gravel excavation on the bank opposite Shangri-La have? Ans. Excavation without stockpiling would generally not be detrimental.

f. Is relocation of Hamilton to higher ground still a possibility? Ans. Edens said the lack of a clause in the town ordinance preventing structural repair after a flood may be hindering the possibility of relocation. Edens will look into it further.

g. If riprap can be placed during a flood emergency, why can't it be placed permanently? Ans. Emergency structures are considered temporary and should be removed after the emergency is over.

h. Smith said that residents of Hamilton feel like they are the only ones being restricted by the FIA. He would like to see the maps for adjacent areas. Ans. We will send him the work maps immediately upstream and downstream from Hamilton.

i. Smith wondered about floodways in places like Burlington and Mount Vernon and what they had to comply with. Ans. The Corps is working on the Skagit Delta, which is different than the mainstem because of sheet flow flooding.

j. Smith wondered about methods to raise existing structures in Hamilton to minimize damage from future floods. Ans. Raising the structure 1 foot above the 100-year flood would decrease the insurance rate. We will send him publications on flood proofing.

k. Smith questioned how and when Hamilton gets into the regular phase of the insurance program. Ans. Edens explained that Hamilton will enter the regular phase 10 months after the study is released, or approximately 12 months from now.

l. Smith wondered if the floodway could be shifted. Ans. There was no place to shift it due to the high bank on the opposite bank.

m. Smith said bank loans are hard to get in Hamilton because loan officers say that Hamilton can't get flood insurance. Ans. Edens will speak to the lending institutions, if he is provided their names.

n. Smith wondered if a new town water reservoir will be permitted in the floodway. Ans. Edens will work the problem, which may require trading an existing building for the tank.

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o. Smith is interested in the Corps flood warning and evacuation study for Skagit Valley. Smith said Hamilton presently has their own flood warning and evacuation system, but their escape routes are limited and readily shut off by floodwaters.

* p. Smith says there was local unhappiness with the Corps flood fighting representative during the 1979 flood.

MEETING 3. Edens had scheduled a meeting with Burlington to discuss Burlington's flood plain management practices and their effect on Skagit River overflow in the eastern part of the city. Burlington had advised Edens that they were going to issue building permits, which previously has been done by Skagit County for Burlington. Burlington officials present were: Les Holte, Permit Director; Bob Boudinot, City Engineer (consultant); Bob Linrothe, City Supervisor.

Boudinot was not sure exactly what building policies Burlington should enforce in flood plain. Edens explained that Burlington has to regulate flood plain development under an agreement with FEMA. Edens explained that city ordinance should spell out requirements and not simply refer to the FEMA regulations. Boudinot explained that Burlington is below the 100-year flood elevation and all new construction requires the use of fill which is not restricted. Developers are aware of possible future restrictions and are eager to fill their land now. Fill is readily available and cheap. Edens said Burlington must control filling as part of the agreement with FEMA. Gardner and Edens explained problems with Skagit River overflow east of Burlington and the possible impacts of obstructing the overflow into the Samish. Gardner felt that obstructing this overflow could aggravate flooding elsewhere, which would be morally and legally wrong. Burlington doesn't see this location as a problem since the growth thrust is south and east. Also the east area is not in Burlington.

Gardner suggested that Burlington either designate a floodway between Burlington and Sterling Hill or else the Corps can do it. Boudinot felt that it would be better if the Corps did it because Burlington would have a hard time originating one.

Edens explained that a meeting would be called in the near future between FEMA, the Corps, and county and city officials to discuss filling problems in the Skagit Delta. Linrothe told Edens to expect a fight from the city of Burlington.

MEETING 4. This meeting was an Intermediate Coordination meeting for the town of Lyman Flood Insurance Study. The meeting began at 1010 hours with 3 Lyman officials in attendance. Lyman provided the Corps with a map showing the correct city limits.

* Operations, please note.

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Lyman explained that no structures are presently in the area affected by flooding, and they had no problems or questions with the Corps maps.

3. At Hamilton, we found that the Skagit County Council of Governments had hired Leonard and Boudinot to prepare maps of several cities, including Hamilton, Lyman, and Burlington. We have been trying unsuccessfully to get good maps of these cities to furnish FEMA as base maps. Boudinot ran a set of prints for us.

R. Brennecke

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Copy furnished w/o Incl:

Mr. Wes Edens

FEMA

Regional Planning
Emergency Ops; (See Note of Page 4)
H&H Br