



Beginning today and continuing until Aug. 25, voters will have a chance to decide what I believe is the most important local election in my lifetime – the Harris County Flood Control District’s \$2.5 billion bond proposal for hundreds of flood mitigation projects across the county.

In an effort to inform and engage the community in developing the bond proposal, the Flood Control District hosted 23 community meetings – at least one in each county watershed - in June, July and August. In addition, county officials, including the four county commissioners and myself, have participated in numerous neighborhood association and civic group meetings. Community members were encouraged to review projects that could be undertaken with bond funding, to ask questions, and to suggest additional projects that could reduce flooding risks in their neighborhoods.

Nearly 4,000 residents attended these meetings. This process resulted in a list of 237 proposed projects that will be presented to Harris County Commissioners Court on Aug. 14. Of those projects, 38 were added as a result of the community engagement process, which also resulted in more than 2,400 comments and suggestions from the public.

The Bond Program list, which can be viewed at <https://www.hcfcd.org/media/2907/2018bondprojectlist2018-08-06-1130.pdf> represents projects that would meet the bond election’s stated goal of assisting with recovery from previous floods and making our county more resilient to future events.

The list includes projects to improve bayou and channel conveyance of storm water, to build storm water detention basins, to preserve the floodplain, and to buy out flood-prone homes. Importantly, bond funds would be used to provide the local match needed to attract larger amounts of federal money for flood risk reduction projects, and to partner with Harris County and other entities to improve subdivision drainage. Bond proceeds also would provide for local-only projects in areas that may not meet federal cost-benefit requirements, but are needed and would help the most people.

Progress has a cost, of course, and there likely would be a property tax increase accompanying the issuance of the flood bonds. The Flood Control District intends to use the bonds over a 10-15 year period. Based on a likely borrowing schedule over approximately 15 years, the Harris County Budget Management Department estimates that the overall tax increase would be no more than 2-3 cents per \$100 of assessed home valuation – meaning that most homeowners would see an increase of no more than 1.4 percent in their property tax. Because of county property tax exemptions, homeowners with an over-65 or disabled homestead exemption on a home assessed at \$200,000 or less would pay NO additional taxes for these bonds.

I hope that you will take the time to vote on this extremely important issue. If you need further information, the Flood Control District website is an excellent source of information. The address is <https://www.hcfcd.org/bond-program/>.

Thank you very much,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Ed Emmett'.

Ed Emmett
Harris County Judge