



Memorandum

Date: June 18th, 2024

To: Susan Grant Acting City Manager
Alan Dodd, Director of Public Works
Dr. Nancy Gassman, Assistant Public Works Director

CC: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Fort Lauderdale City Commission

From: Vice Mayor Steven Glassman, District 2

Re: **Commission Report Comments Regarding Flooding and Multi-Point Plan**

Last week's rainstorm once again challenged our community. And while our response was very good, we need to focus on being more proactive. We must call on Fort Lauderdale's innovative spirit.

Parts of Broward saw nearly 20 inches of rain in a two-day period. This is not the 1,000-year storm we saw last year, but more like a 200-year storm with a half percent chance of occurring each year.

Still, these events seem to be happening more frequently.

And this is without the expected 2 feet of sea level rise by 2060, which will greatly reduce the effectiveness of our stormwater system and create other challenges for our community.

Dr. Obey, who leads FIU's Sea Level Solutions Center called this, "... a sign of things to come." More rain in a shorter amount of time is exactly what science tells us we should expect to see more of – and regardless of the science, as we grow, we must do a better job of finding smart places for water to go.

I know we are in the process of completing our Flood Vulnerability Assessment, and that is a great start, but we cannot wait for a study to take action on flooding.

It's time to innovate and lead – becoming the beacon of how you should prepare for and respond to flooding.

Today, I am sharing a multi-point plan to start improving our flood resilience and reduce flood risk. BUT I want this to be a discussion item and this to become our plan. Let's work together, amend this plan, and show our residents that their safety and security is our #1 priority.

Our \$500M Fortify Lauderdale Plan, is ambitious and vital, but we must also take immediate actions, and communicate what we are doing. Our residents deserve to understand our plans.

While the County is working on large-scale planning efforts, it will still be up to us to find and implement solutions. We also cannot wait for them to act on our economic drivers. How many times does the airport have to close due to flooding until you realize it's a real problem and start actually doing something about it? How many times does the airport employee parking lot need to flood for them to realize that they are impacting our residents?

All of this must be a priority as we move into budget season.

People live here because of the water, and frankly, with climate change and sea level rise, it will get worse. But that means we must act now, be bold, and not afraid to lead.

Vice Mayor Steve Glassman's Multi-Point Plan to Enhance Flood Resilience and Reduce Impacts

1. **Communication:** It starts with communication. We must be more comprehensive on showing our residents all of the resilience and stormwater projects we are working on and communicate it in a way they understand. We are spending their dollars and should be as transparent as possible. This will also help people understand that these projects are complex and take years to fully implement. Projects are moving even when construction may not be actively occurring.
2. **Insurance:** The City of Fort Lauderdale is currently a Class 7 in the Community Rating System. I would like to see staff develop a comprehensive plan for our community to achieve a higher-class rating. I understand that there are hurdles, and it may be difficult, but we do not back away from a challenge. This will allow us to properly plan our budget to provide our expert team with the resources to provide an additional 10% savings on flood insurance to our residents. Cutler Bay has a Class 4 rating; we should be, too.
3. **Floodplain and Resilience Ordinances:** It's time for a comprehensive review of our floodplain ordinances and our code in general with respect to resilience. We should enact ordinances to assist repetitive loss properties and explore a community-wide freeboard ordinance allowing everyone to build higher within property rights. All of this can be done without creating adverse impacts on neighbors if done thoughtfully.
4. **Emergency Management:** I would like to see the development of a Flash Flood Emergency Action Plan that does not just focus on response after the fact, but a response before the flooding becomes severe. There is no reason roadways that we know are under water, too deep for cars, should not have police or other barricades to stop people from using them. We should be developing emergency flood routes and prioritizing those higher elevation roads. Also, there is modeling technology on the shelf through the uses of AI to forecast on a street-by-street basis. We should buy that today.
5. **Real-time Flood Forecasting:** To that end, we need technology that will help us identify low-lying areas and those expected to flood during a storm. That starts with a screening level of identifying those areas prone to flooding and connecting them back to the Flash Flood Emergency Action Plan. Then, using real-time data, we can make decisions on where to place resources.

6. **Flood Sensors:** And forecasting is only as good as data. We need to lean in on technology and flood sensors. Let's start evaluating how we can deploy a community-wide flood depth sensor network. Flagler Village and Victoria Park roadways and elsewhere were impassable and with sensors and signage, we can save people the cost of losing a car.
7. **Funding our Resilience Work and Waterways:** In our next budget, there is a proposed Chief Waterways Officer. Let's work on building sustained funding for that position and the resilience work of our waterways. I have been exploring ways to modify our existing City code to allow private residents to rent their docks *legally*, with the permit fees going into a fund that would be dedicated for waterway clean-up and resilience. After a flood, our water quality suffers, and that water often ends up on our roadways, too. Any proposal should also require pump-outs of these vessels and provide additional funding for enforcement.
8. **Elevating Roadways:** We are expecting the Urban Land Institute's report on Criteria for Raising Roadways in the City. We can be thoughtful and do it right. We must develop a plan of last resort to prioritize and raise roadways. This cannot just be guidance that sits on a shelf. I would like to see a Road Raising Prioritization Plan in next year's fiscal budget. This is a priority for me in the Las Olas Isles, among other neighborhoods.
9. **Finding more Storage:** We cannot build enough grey stormwater infrastructure for all the water our community receives in these large storms. We must look for additional storage. When our unused fields are high and dry and the neighbors next to them are underwater, that's a problem. While we are in the midst of park redesigns, let's evaluate creating stormwater parks and more retention areas. Let's do a survey of residents to find out who would be willing to let us regrade their swales to add additional storage, and let's create a program that recovers those swales. This is especially important in neighborhoods like Victoria Park.
10. **Private Property Adaptation:** Last year, our Public Works team told us they are working on guidance for Private Property Resilience. Meanwhile, Miami Beach is in year 2 of their Private Property Adaptation Program. They are providing grants to their residents and implementing solutions to help people reduce flooding; let's not reinvent the wheel.
11. **Sustainability Action Plan Implementation:** And, while we fix flooding, we also need to focus on the root cause of climate change. We need to empower our sustainability team to truly reduce the emissions of Fort Lauderdale. We need

stronger codes that encourage greener buildings, more trees and nature-based solutions, and we need to work on expanding our network of fast electric vehicle charging stations. Many of these actions can also help reduce flooding. It's time to finish our Sustainability Action Plan update and focus on implementation.

12. **Elevating Resilience:** Lastly, it's time to elevate Resilience and Sustainability beyond just Public Works. We need a dedicated staff working across all departments and implementing solutions. I am asking the City Manager to consider a structure that will elevate these issues and encourage cross-department implementation. Dr. Gassman is an amazing resource for this community, and it's time for the Chief Resilience Officer in title. This office could also house our new Chief Waterways Officer.

These floods have had a significant impact on our residents and businesses. My goal as an elected city leader is to understand why this is happening and how we can better mitigate it in the future. It is imperative that we are all on the same page regarding flood management strategies. Let's evaluate what has worked and what hasn't. Thank you for your consideration.

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