

Report from Planning Board Working Group Meeting, Friday August 15, 2025

Present: Elaine Chiosso, Clyde Frazier, Robin Lyons, George Cianciolo, Steve Powers

Elaine shared information from a meeting earlier in the week with staff from Planning and Watershed Protection departments. Main takeaways were information, and gaps in what we currently know, about the full damage from Chantal and about the actual floodplain exceedances. Discussion of a possible survey of residents to learn more, ordinance changes that could prevent or mitigate floods, and funding to support these new initiatives, as well as current needs by staff. Chatham Co. is also part of an ongoing [NC Flood Resiliency Blueprint](#)

Steve shared information concerning current programs and regs regarding flooding, including the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), Severe Repetitive Loss (SRL) Properties, Community Rating System (CRS), Integrated Public Alert System (IPAWS), Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) (*term used by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to describe high risk flooding areas*).

We discussed gaps in knowledge concerning flood damage to private homes, structures and driveways if it was not reported to the county through Emergency Operations System (EOS) or 911. This led to a discussion of sending out a survey to Chatham residents to ask about damage from the flood. It could also be used to provide information on any assistance available and how to sign up for emergency alerts.

There was general agreement that the key recommendations we want to bring back to the full Planning Board are actions that can be taken at the county level to reduce the risk of flooding and damage in the future. At this time we are not advancing the idea of a moratorium on new development, though major flooding in the near future may revive the idea in order for county staff to have adequate time to focus on this issue.

Draft Recommendations:

<> A Survey Concerning Damage from Chantal: We don't know the full extent of the damage to homes, buildings and private roads, bridges, culverts, driveways etc. DOT has info on public roads, and Emergency Operations Center on emergency responses, but many people had damage not reported. Could county send out a survey to residents (through mail and online) to gather info on any damage they had from Chantal? It could also be used to explain what help is available, how to get emergency warnings, etc. The survey could include questions about what type of flooding (from heavy rains, creek rising, etc.), residents have experienced, as well as past flooding incidents, and knowledge of floodplain locations.

<> What do we know about the extent of flooding in Chatham from Chantal in terms of exceeding the regulated floodplains? The county doesn't have the tools or resources to do this alone, but the state is using Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) as part of the NC Flood Resiliency Blueprint which is underway, with data results expected this fall.

<> New ordinances or policies that could protect Chatham residents in future floods:

- There may be sections of the UDO that could be passed as stand-alone ordinances that relate to flooding. The Tree Protection section is one that could be pretty easily altered to enact alone, there may be others.
- Develop amendments to ordinances which would be ready for adoption if/when restrictions on downzoning are lifted.
- NC General Statutes prohibit Chatham from changing stormwater ordinances such as increasing the 25-year storm design to a 100-year storm (or even 50). Neighboring cities that have the 100-year storm benchmark are under EPA Phase II permits, which allows implementing measures to manage storm water runoff from new development and redevelopment construction. Chatham is not subject to these higher standards. Explore offering incentives to developers who design stormwater control measures to accommodate 100-year storms.
- We may also be limited by the state legislature in requiring development applications to consider the impact of flooding on downstream waters and properties if floods exceed the 25-year storm threshold. Look into whether this can legally be changed in the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) required by developers.

<> Emergency Preparedness Seminars: Educational seminars communicating flood risks and analysis to residents, information/alerts accessibility, shelter-in-place vs evacuation, etc.

<> Funding: To support the work above, and to fulfill current needs for stormwater reviews and enforcement, considering the large number of developments proposed and underway, additional funds will be required. New funds will also allow Chatham to hire consultants to assist with new flood prevention/ mitigation initiatives, including a survey, ordinance changes, public outreach and education about flood risks.