

Briarcliff Flood Action Items

Compiled by Ken Larsen

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Below is a list of possible action items to answer a petition that was submitted to the Chapel Hill Town Council by Ann Loftin on January 18, 2019. [\[details\]](#)

The # column contains a number that is used to sort the table.

#		Proposed Action Item	Comments
1	Town	Immediately cease approving projects that build in a flood plain.	This is highest priority. The Ephesus-Fordham project (which has been renamed Blue Hill) should not have been approved in 2014. Large pieces of it lie in the flood plain.
2	Town	Don't allow any infringement on any RCD.	We need to protect the RCDs.
3	Town	Be more diligent in policing all construction sites to minimize sediment runoff.	High priority item. This must begin immediately.
4	Town	Build retention pond south of Eastgate	Just beginning; good project; public should back it. Stormwater bond money will pay for this.
5	Town	Stop incentivizing development	We need to slow down the pace of development.
6	Town	Solicit FEMA money only for properties that are in the flood plain. If FEMA money is used to purchase a property, tear down the house and replace it with a park with the stipulation that it forever remains a park.	FEMA money is scarce and controlled by the State. It needs to be spent to mitigate floods ... not buy out properties that were flooded for other reasons (e.g. home owner's failure to properly drain his property).
7	Town	Building in a flood plain should be prohibited.	The Town currently permits building in a flood plain if the building is elevated (via filling in say 8 feet of dirt), but that just displaces the flood plain to another location. When Briarcliff was built many houses were built in what is now a flood plain, but that was before flood plains and laws about them were defined.
8	Town	Slow down the pace of development.	If these developments had been spread over 40 years, that would have been better. You would have ended up with the same amount of density, but it would have been this slow trickle of density. [Ken: per the school budget crisis, I learn that rapid growth means building costs soar, because there is a limited number of skilled builders ... they can charge whatever they want.]

9	Town	Dredge the creeks down 18"	Very costly, but needs to be done. Sediment from upstream development has made previously deep streams shallow. Money from a recent stormwater bond will pay for some of the dredging. Ken Larsen: Make developers pay for this. Their development is causing the flood problem.
10	Town	Have more flood prone land added to the designated wetlands registry.	Per Federal law, you can't build in a Wetlands area.
11	Town	Build more parks. In particular, don't build on the Legion Road property.	Building on the Legion Road property would increase the probability of downstream flooding.
12	Town	Put a moratorium on development approvals until the dredging is done downstream.	Ken Larsen: If a developer balks at this, invite them pay for the dredging.
13	Town	Have a meeting/brainstorming session with the directors of the Chapel Hill Country Club.	CHCC has a foot bridge on the 18th hole that serves as a dam when the waters rise. Sediment and debris from upstream (west of CHCC) frustrates CHCC.
14	Town	Buy out flood ravaged homes	This does not solve the flooding problem. It also hurts the home owner, because the buyout price would likely be well below the market value of the house if flooding had never occurred (possibly \$ 250K vs \$ 400K).
15	Town	Don't allow development with 50 yards of a stream ... no building, no decks, no driveways, no additions.	
99	Town	Daylight the creek that runs under Eastgate	This should have been done in the 1950s, but now it's too late. The more we build there; the more costly it would be to do this.
101	OWASA	Sleeve the pipes	In progress
102	OWASA	Dig up and replace sewer pipes	Extremely expensive and time consuming.
201	Home owner	Buy flood insurance	"Flood insurance is not cheap, but it doesn't break the bank. My flood insurance is \$ 1500/year with FEMA through their flood insurance policy, and I have a \$ 5000 deductible." –Dan Cefalo
202	Home owner	Add shutoff valve to sewage line	Is a relatively new technology. Dan Cefalo installed this at his flood prone house. If he learns that a storm is approaching, he shuts off his sewage line.
203	Home owner	Install French drains to direct water away from your house	When Briarcliff was built, many downspouts directed water into pipes that ran underground. This is not good design by today's standards.
204	Home owner	We installed plastic baseboards, spray foam insulation inside the walls that resists mold and mildew, and it's a nonorganic site. We tiled all the floors, and we raised everything 8" up. . I bought a couple of sump pumps that I can put inside that can pump the water out if water does enter into the house.	Dan Cefalo

205	Home owner	If you remove a tree from your property, expand your drainage system to compensate for the increased water runoff.	Trees are huge sponges. One tree can remove 500 gallons of water.
206	Home owner	If you're going to build in a flood plain, build your foundation so that water can flow under your house ... not be blocked by it.	Unless this is done, your building will reshape the flood plain so that more downstream houses are impacted by heavy rain.
298	Home owner	Move your HVAC to your attic.	If left at ground level, it has a higher probability of getting destroyed by a flood.
299	Home owner	Have FEMA installed flood vents installed in your crawlspace.	This only works if you have a crawlspace, and it is empty. The vents allow water to flow in your crawlspace ... which would be better than have the water reach your living space.