

Flood Recovery Task Force Inc. Meeting Minutes,
1974 January 4th

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FRTF

FLOOD RECOVERY TASK FORCE, INC.

~~NOTICE~~ 165 S. Franklin Street
WILKES-BARRE, PENNSYLVANIA 18701
717 - 829-1981

MINUTES

WILKES COLLEGE

MEETING of FRTF Committee on Flood Control
December 28, 1973
Hq., Chamber of Commerce, 12:15 P.M.

JAN 4 1974

President's Office

Present: Harden Coon, Richard Cronin, John Doran, Robert Laux, Robert Maskin, Roy Morgan, Robert Parker, Richard Pearsall, Kim Ross, Betty Schechter, Andrew Shaw, Jr., Robert Slaff, Nick Souchik, Frank Townend, Walter Wint.

Morgan announced that the meeting had been called to (1) assess the year's end status of matters relating to flood control in Wyoming Valley, and (2) hear reports on the December 13th meeting of the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) in Harrisburg.

(1) Townend said that in several respects the Valley's levee system is in much better shape than it was when last he reported on it. First, rain pounding on the dikes since post-Agnes repairs were made to them has compacted them substantially; second, repairs to the dikes in the Riverside Drive area appear to have been completed satisfactorily, and, though repairs in the Forty Fort area are not yet complete, it looks as though they will also be satisfactory when finished; third, the Army Corps of Engineers (COE) has formally recommended raising Valley dikes five additional feet.

(2) Reporting on the SRBC's December 13th meeting, Souchik said the Commission announced it would hold a public hearing on February 15th on the COE proposal to raise Wyoming Valley dikes. He also said that he thinks the SRBC favors the COE proposal and has scheduled the hearing chiefly because it is required to do so by law.

Slaff said that it's important to remember two things about the SRBC: first, it has a great deal of power over what happens in the River Basin area; second, it is bound by its charter to represent a wide variety of Basin interests. Expanding on the second point, Slaff said that it is widely believed in Sunbury that it was only because Wyoming Valley served as an impounding basin at the time of Tropical Storm Agnes that Sunbury was not flooded. Thus, he said, areas downriver from Wilkes-Barre may well oppose additional mechanical flood control measures in Wyoming Valley for fear that added protection of this kind for the Valley will mean added danger of flooding for areas down river.

Townend moved that the FRTF Committee on Flood Control assume SRBC support for the COE proposal and send a letter to the SRBC urging them to expedite implementation of the proposal. Shaw seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

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Next, there was discussion of an announcement at the December 13th SRB Commission meeting to the effect that completion of a flood plain mapping project the Commission had contracted for was 90 days overdue. Souchik said this unwarranted delay in completion of a vital SRBC project was only one of many such delays, and that all could be laid to a lack of forcefulness on the part of the SRBC staff. Discussion of the point Souchik had raised led to agreement that the FRTF Committee on Flood Control should put its dissatisfaction with the progress of the flood plain mapping project on record. Reid moved that the Committee (1) send the SRBC a letter urging that it set a definite date for completion of the project and put pressure on the contractor doing the work to meet that deadline; (2) send a copy of this letter to Robert Bielo, Executive Director of the SRBC; (3) urge appropriate governmental agencies to write to Bielo expressing their concern about the unfortunate effects the delays in completing the flood plain mapping project is having. Pearsall seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

Souchik expressed concern about the quality of flood forecasting in the Susquehanna River Basin. He said that on several occasions the forecasting system presently in operation proved unreliable, and he recommended strongly that an appeal be made to Governor Shapp to revive the citizen band radio system of flood forecasting that was in use at the time of Agnes.

Townend said that Wyoming Valley cannot afford to wait for Basin-wide improvement in the flood forecasting system. He urged that informal cooperative arrangements to relay information about the river be made with Towanda and two other localities at once.

