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Fix Flooding First Mayoral Forum Questions

1. Assume you take office in January 2020. What will you do in your first 100 days to address flooding?

Answer: The 2019-2023 capital improvement plan estimates expenditures by project and year, and recommends funding for 15 drainage projects throughout Charleston, for a total cost of over \$300 million. Of that enormous projected budget, \$14 million will be allocated towards studies. Given the city's track record of frivolously pouring taxpayer dollars into studies that often lead to inaction, my initial approach to the flooding concerns of our city will be well-advised, cost efficient, and practical. During my first 100 days in office, I will ensure the most knowledgeable and properly equipped individuals to include: hydrologists, geologists, meteorologist, engineers, certified floodplain managers, etc. are placed in the correct jobs, possessing the right skillsets to execute, manage and/or oversee execution of the current drainage projects. I will also work to diligently assess and formulate plans to better the status of the city's flood hazard, flood map, and rainfall data, protecting the community from known flood risks and keeping the public well-informed.

2. Charleston's flood map, flood hazard and rainfall data are severely outdated or missing entirely. How will you ensure the latest science is incorporated into the city's planning efforts?

Answer: As mayor, I will work to maintain a strong regulatory floodplain management division staffed with properly skilled personnel to re-create an accurate and up-to-date flood map, flood hazard and rainfall data statistical information for the city. I will work hand in hand with the floodplain management team to ensure that the newly created flooding information for the city is used to ensure federal flood insurance and disaster assistance are made available for our families; while reducing future flood losses in Charleston. Most importantly, we will provide sound and trusted protection for our families, homes, and businesses. With 57% of developed land in Charleston County being accounted for in a FEMA floodplain between 2001 and 2006, there are more than 100,000 structures within these areas. The more homes and people within the FEMA floodplains, the greater the potential for harm from flood hazards; therefore, the floodplain management division will be quintessential in protecting our most populated communities and neighborhoods.

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3. Across the region, plans to address flooding vary differently and there is a lack of communication across municipal lines on this issue. As mayor, how will you address this problem and increase the city's collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions and the council of governments (COG)?

Answer: South Carolina governance is excessively fragmented. Quite frankly, we have too many jurisdictions, special districts, and commissions. The unintended consequences of this fragmentation has taken jurisdictions too deeply into the pockets of the taxpayers, coherent planning, and at times compromises our ability to corporative regionally. To pay for fixing flood hazards, will require a coordinated, well-funded, regional, State, and national response to our flooding and storm water vulnerabilities. No jurisdiction can go it alone. If the elected mayor not only will I work tirelessly across regional lines to effectively deal with this common hazard, I will also work to ensure that the many voluntary organizations including, the chambers of commerce, academic research programs, United Way organizations, and civic organizations be invited to play important roles in assisting the city with developing a more aggressive comprehensive flooding and drainage long-range plan that is science, hydrologists, and engineer driven. I'm placing that focus on the entire city both big and small projects that would help reduce our risk through proper mitigation planning. The plan should and must align with Charleston County regional hazard mitigation plan, and address sea level rise, maintenance of current drainage systems, and the protection and expansion of both wetlands and green space.

4. Residents on the Westside and Eastside are some of the most affected by flooding and waves of new infill development. How are you and sure all the interests of all residents are included in the cities planing for a growing city at a changing climate?

Answer: There are eight major drainage basin projects and other flood hazard projects the city is currently studying and or constructing. As mayor, the priority of drainage projects will be driven by benefits to cost analysis. This benefit cost analysis would help to determine to a rough degree of accuracy, the ratio of dollar value of benefits to the dollar value costs for a proposed project. Projects with higher benefits to cost ratios likely justify a higher priority ranking than those with a lower ratio. To manage infield development, I will revisit old building permits that would position the city to better manage fill and build.



5. Planners and scientists believe it will cost more than 2 billion to solve all the cities flooding problems. How will you prioritize spending on projects in the short and long-term? Give one project example of what you will do in and where the money will come from.

Answer: All spending on projects short and long-term will be driven by benefit to cost analysis results. However, as US17 is a vital evacuation route making the Spring/Fishburne drainage improvement project critical to the safety of residents, and is currently (as it should) position as the top priority drainage project, coupled with talk of raising the height of the Low Battery Wall, a top focus of mine will be the Calhoun West Drainage basin project. The Calhoun West drainage basin project is sandwiched between the Spring/Fishburne drainage, and the Low Battery Wall projects. It contains the hospital District (MUSC, and Roper), the College of Charleston, and many businesses and residences that are impacted by frequent flooding. To avoid creating a potential bathtub in this basin area, it is extremely important that this project advance forward simultaneously with the work at low battery and the Spring/Fishburne drainage basin improvements. I will seek Greenbelt, state, and federal, funds, and revenues from land sales to pay for it.

6. Regulations and building practices in place now ignore the realities of a changing climate and encourage development and flood prone places. Unless we revise zoning and land use ordinances this city will continue in the pattern of building and flooding. What are your specific plans for updates to zoning and land use practices and how will you garner the political support to transform current practices?

Answer: To effectively balance all the competing interests and coastal resources in the face of climate threats we will need flexible and robust land-use regulations. It would be stupid of elected officials to say to taxpayers, we have a 2 billion-dollar flood and storm drainage problem, and we need more of your money to fix this. However, at the same time we're going to continue business as usual-by filling wetlands, overdevelopment, granting permit exceptions to developers, and infill build. This won't happen on my watch. Zoning is the most powerful tool local government has to preemptively mitigate hazards created by this business as usual behavior. My administration, through an inclusive planning and zoning process, will seek to put an end to business as usual by developing clear and specific zoning ordinances that would determine what is at risk, what is safe to build, and where it is safe to build.



7. Buyouts for Homes that flood severely and repeatedly are becoming a growing trend nationally to mitigate the impacts of worsening flooding. We saw this recently in the Bridgepointe subdivision of the Shadowmoss neighborhood. What are your thoughts on this mitigation strategy and how do you plan to help people whose homes are repeatedly flooded relocate higher ground?

Answer: Between 2001 and 2006, 57% of developed land in Charleston County was in a FEMA flood-plane. This is stupid, the more property and people located in a floodplain the greater the potential for harm from flooding. It is time to say not no, but hell no, to development in flood prone areas, filling wetlands, and fill and build. As mayor, I will focus on trying to move people away from flood prone areas through a voluntary program that would use a combination of federal, state, and local funds to offer market value to citizens for their homes. The acquired land becomes an absorbent creekside buffer, much of it serving as parks with walking paths where appropriate.

8. We all know they are limited dollars to address worsening flooding in Charleston, and some Projects must take a backseat to others. Still, the current administration has endorsed Charleston County's plans to use money from the 2016 half cent sales tax to build the I-526 extension. Do you agree we should fund the I-526 extension, and, if so, how do you justify spending those hundreds of millions of dollars rather than immediately funding action on flooding?

Answer: Creating a debate around the two issues would lead ultimately to nothing getting done. Both flooding and extreme traffic congestions have negative consequences on our quality of life, economy, and public safety. Unchecked over development in and around the proposed construction site of I-526, has created maddening traffic congestions that need to be fixed now! As mayor, working with county and state officials, and broad community stakeholders, here are several things I WILL do right now, to relieve traffic congestions in the impact areas of I-526. Additionally, I will while execute strategic mitigation approaches to mitigate citywide flood and drainage hazards.

Here's how intend on getting the job done:

*** Act with urgency to complete the flyover at Main road and highway 17. It has allocation in the half-cent sales tax.**

*** Push for funding and completion of the southern Pitch Folk plan at Maybank and River Road, where the Stono Bridge comes down.**

*** Traffic signal improvements, simply updating signal timing to reflect current traffic conditions, can greatly reduce congestions.**



Additionally, the strategy of simply building new roads and widening the existing ones, needs to be supplemented. It is imperative that local governments coordinate the completion of I-526 and other transportation infrastructure investments with local land-use plans, manage our transportation systems well, and harness new technology to control traffic. If it does not do so, congestions will be exacerbated not relieved.

Charleston cannot be entirely free from flooding. Currently, the city is addressing flooding problems in eight major drainage basins according to its sea level rise plan. Each of the drainage basin projects pose unique hazards to the city and our overall quality of life. It is cost prohibitive to fix this problem all at once, and therefore must be prioritized. To ensure that the most urgent of the projects are fixed first, benefit to cost analysis will be conducted. This benefit cost analysis would help determine to a rough degree of accuracy, the ratio of dollar value of benefits to the dollar value costs for a proposed project. Projects with higher benefits to cost ratios likely justify a higher priority ranking than those with lower ratios.

Finally, key to our success will require a coordinated, well-funded, regional, state, and national response to our flooding and storm-water vulnerabilities. The City must develop a more aggressive comprehensive flooding and drainage long-range plan that is science, hydrologist, and engineer driven. It should focus on the entire city both big and small projects that would help reduce our risk through proper mitigation planning. It should align with Charleston County regional hazard mitigation plan, and must address sea level rise, maintenance of current drainage systems, and the protection and expansion of both wetlands and green space.

Thank you for providing the opportunity and forum to communicate how I intend on bettering the flood and overdevelopment crisis in Charleston as the next Mayor.

Warm regards,

Maurice Washington

2019 CHARLESTON MAYORAL CANDIDATE

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