



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
INFRASTRUCTURE TASK FORCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TOWER 101 – SUITE 1100, 101 NE 3RD AVENUE
FORT LAUDERDALE, FL 33301
MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2025 – 2:00 P.M. TO 4:00 P.M.**

January-December 2025

Attendance

Peter Partington, Chair	P	4	0
Marta Reczko, Vice Chair	P	4	0
Gerald Angeli (via Zoom)	P	3	1
Gregory Barnett	P	4	0
Shane Grabski	A	2	1
James LaBrie	P	4	0
Roosevelt Walters	P	4	0
Lindsey Way	A	1	1
Ralph Zeltman	P	4	0

As of this date, there are 9 appointed members to the Committee, which means 5 would constitute a quorum.

Staff

- Vickie Beauvais, Senior Administrative Assistant
- Omar Castellon, P.E., Assistant Public Works Director -- Engineering
- Dr. Nancy Gassman, Assistant Public Works Director – Sustainability (via Zoom)
- Jill Prizlee, P.E., Chief Engineer
- Roberto Betancourt, P.E., Stormwater Division Manager
- Deborah Cueva, P.E., Project Manager II
- J. Oppерlee, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Communication to the City Commission

Motion made by Chair Partington, seconded by Mr. Walters, that we request a meeting with the City Commission to discuss the future of the Infrastructure Task Force, the work it is doing, including a recommendation from the ITFC that the ITFC be set up as a Board. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

1. Call to Order

i. Roll Call

Chair Partington called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

ii. Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Mr. Walters, seconded by Mr. LaBrie, to approve. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

iii. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes – March 3, 2025

Motion made by Mr. Walters, seconded by Mr. Barnett, to approve with or without corrections.

Mr. LaBrie noted a correction on p.2: Ms. Reczko was elected Vice Chair rather than Chair.

In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Chair Partington recalled that at the end of the March 2025 meeting, there were requests from Board members for additional information. Vice Chair Reczko advised that she was not sent the information she had requested regarding the wastewater treatment plant. Ms. Beauvais stated that she would look into this further.

Chair Partington continued that there had also been a request for additional information regarding the construction of a redundant line near the Convention Center. Assistant Director of Public Works (Engineering) Omar Castellon reported that this line is expected to be completed in 2026. He confirmed that he would email the requested information to the Vice Chair.

Chair Partington added that Mr. Zeltman had also requested information about the phases of work related to the conveyance of water from the wellfield to the Fiveash Water Treatment Plant. Mr. Castellon stated that this project will have only one phase and is part of the enabling works for the new water plant. He estimated that it will be completed ahead of schedule, and added that the contractor can provide a presentation for the Committee if they wish. Chair Partington suggested that the Committee see a full presentation on the progress of the new water plant in the future.

Motion made by Mr. LaBrie, seconded by Mr. Walters, that we switch the Old Business and the New Business around so we hear the New Business first. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

The following Item was taken out of order on the Agenda.

3. New Business

i. Victoria Park Storm Drainage Presentation

Andres Rivera and Robert Taylor, representing consultant Hazen and Sawyer, and David Castro, representing consultant CMA, gave a PowerPoint presentation on storm drainage

improvements in the Victoria Park neighborhood. This is the first phase of the City's drainage improvement program across several neighborhoods.

Mr. Rivera recalled that the modeling and conceptual design phase of this project began in 2016 and included data collection and analysis to assess the conditions and existing infrastructure of the neighborhood. The project team held two public meetings in 2017, which generated feedback that helped in the development of the project's conceptual design. This design was submitted to Broward County in 2018 for permitting.

Mr. Rivera noted that the subject neighborhood features two separate systems which are independent of one another. Some of the proposed improvements include:

- Exfiltration trenches
- New drainage pipes
- Swale restoration
- New pump station

Resident feedback was collected using input forms in which residents described all their concerns regarding flooding, such as duration, location, and type of flooding. These concerns were identified on a map provided at the public meetings. There was also consensus from the residents regarding how the neighborhood behaved during wet weather: to the east of the coastal ridge, properties were subject to tidal flooding, while to the west of the coastal ridge there was no drainage infrastructure and swales were overbuilt.

The coastal ridge is a line of high elevation which runs along the coastline and divides the Victoria Park neighborhood into two different basins. This means a different approach must be taken for the two separate basins. Once the conceptual design was complete, it was submitted to Broward County for approval.

The detailed design phase began in 2018 with submittal of documents under a separate task order; however, in 2019 the project team realized its drainage layout conflicted with an ongoing water main project. The drainage project was put on hold at that time. In 2024, the team resumed its efforts to develop a detailed design. This included a new topographic survey to ensure that the design was based on current conditions.

At present, the project is between the final design and bidding phases. Final bid documents were submitted to the City in March 2025. Other ongoing actions include securing the permits required for the construction phase, including permits for outflow modifications as well as for shoreline stabilization. Two permits have been secured from Broward County, including an environmental research permit for upland improvements including drainage, exfiltration trenches, and the pump station, as well as a permit authorizing work on the seawall and outflow modifications. Plans will also be submitted to Broward County's Traffic Engineering Division for signage and pavement markings.

Mr. Castro addressed the project's specific improvements to be implemented. He referred again to the neighborhood's east and west basins, noting that the west basin is the larger of the two. Two different approaches are being implemented. The west basin will include exfiltration trenches, storm drainage structures in the pipeline, and swale restoration, while the east basin will include a pump station, storm drainage, swale restoration, and rehabilitation of tidal valves.

Mr. Castro advised that some areas within the neighborhood have little to no existing infrastructure. The project will install new catch basins and provide conveyance to move water from low areas where ponding occurs to either outfalls into the Intracoastal Waterway or through exfiltration trenches. The project proposes roughly 43,000 linear ft. of new pipe.

The next proposed improvement is the implementation of new exfiltration trenches, which must be adequately maintained. The height of these trenches depends upon the level of the ground's surface. They are placed in higher areas in order to maintain space between the groundwater and the available storage provided by the system. Water from lower areas can be conveyed to these exfiltration trenches, where more volume is available.

Mr. Barnett asked how the team identifies which exfiltration trenches need to be replaced. Mr. Castro replied that they are using a database of existing infrastructure. Some of the older exfiltration trenches will not be touched, as their pipes are still in working condition. The project will add new exfiltration trenches which meet Broward County's water quality requirements.

The next improvement is the pump station, which will operate exclusively in the tidally influenced east basin. The pump station will push water into the Intracoastal Waterway. It will be complemented by the use of working tidal valves on existing outfalls. The station system will be located on the corner of 7th Street and 20th Avenue within the City's existing right-of-way. Redundancy will be built into the configuration of the pump station.

The station's capacity will be 19 cubic ft. per second and the pump will be connected to backup generators in case of a power outage. It will be compliant with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requirements.

Mr. LaBrie commented that an apartment complex in the Victoria Park neighborhood is particularly prone to flooding, and asked how water will be pumped into the Intracoastal Waterway from this location during high tides. Mr. Castro replied that the pump station is part of a larger vision for the area, recalling that Broward County recently passed an Ordinance requiring all seawalls and tidal barriers to be raised to a height that will be higher than the tides can reach. The project will include raising the City's portion of the seawall. Each resident will be responsible for raising their own seawalls. Once this is complete, the system will be closed and will work properly.

Mr. Walters expressed concern with the requirement for residents to fund their own seawall improvements, and asked if there have been any suggestions by which the City could help those residents. Mr. Castro advised that the project team's role is to design improvements to the system. Mr. Castellon added that this has not been discussed at the City Commission level.

Assistant Director of Public Works (Sustainability) Dr. Nancy Gassman added that the apartment complex to which Mr. LaBrie had referred is located on a private roadway, which means the City system will not fund improvements to the interior of that property. While the City currently does not have a program that would help residents pay for the raising of their seawalls, incentives are being considered as part of the Fortify Lauderdale private resilience process. She confirmed that there is available right-of-way adjacent to the complex on which the pump station can be installed.

Mr. Barnett asked if there have been any City communications with the owner of the apartment complex. Mr. Castro reiterated that the project team has met with residents of the neighborhood and presented the proposed improvements. Mr. Barnett suggested that the City reach out to the complex owner to tell them what is being done in the subject neighborhood and recommending that they take action as well. Stormwater Division Manager Roberto Betancourt advised that he would not recommend this action, as the seawall may not be the only problem associated with that property and the City would not want to raise false expectations. He concluded that the complex owner would likely need to hire an engineer to determine what is needed on that site.

Mr. Angeli asked if statistics are available on how often the river in the subject area overtops the seawall as opposed to flooding on the roadway associated with rainfall. Dr. Gassman replied that it may be possible to calculate this information.

Mr. Taylor of Hazen and Sawyer advised that there is insufficient elevation in the subject area to direct water to existing outfalls using only gravity. The pump station will help resolve this issue and is expected to provide a benefit in the near term. He added that the City needs to make improvements to its own properties with the recognition that adjacent properties may not yet be prepared to make their own improvements.

Mr. Castro returned to the presentation, continuing that in addition to the pump station, the east basin project would also replace an existing outfall with a larger pipe. This will allow flows to move at lower speeds. The outfall will also include riprap as an environmental component. The project also proposes replacement of roughly 40 linear ft. of seawall with sheet piles and a concrete cap in order to comply with the aforementioned Broward County Ordinance.

Another improvement would be the implementation of swales throughout the neighborhood. There are grass areas in some locations that can be upgraded to provide additional water storage. This allows water a place to move to rather than accumulating

in the roadway. Roughly 12,000 linear ft. of swale space is proposed, which will improve water quality as well as storage volume.

A series of outfalls, which include several tied to the east basin and one tied to the west basin, will be assessed to determine the operation of their existing tidal valves. These will be rehabilitated and tidal valves replaced as necessary.

Chair Partington requested the estimated cost of the project. Mr. Taylor replied that the cost before allowances is close to \$43 million and reaches nearly \$48 million with allowances.

Mr. Barnett asked what level of rainfall the project is designed to accommodate. Mr. Taylor stated that the City's intent is to protect its roadways from impassable flooding during a 10-year storm event over a 24-hour period, which would generate approximately 8.5 in. of rainfall in one day. He cautioned, however, that there will still be areas in some neighborhoods where this is not achievable, as they may be too low-lying to reach the desired level of service. The current level of service accommodates roughly 3 in. of rainfall in a 24-hour period.

Mr. Zeltman emphasized that homeowners should be made aware that they cannot put sod or other material in roadside swales, as this would hamper the percolation of water. The swales need to maintain 6 to 8 in. of depression, depending upon their width. Mr. Taylor confirmed that this is an educational process to ensure homeowners understand that swales are a functional part of their water management system.

Vice Chair Reczko expressed concern with the project's timing, which was paused during the installation of a water main. Mr. Betancourt explained that the water main project had been more complicated than only a simple underground pipe that burst. Funding of the project also contributed to the delay. The City currently does not have sufficient funding for the project and a bond may be necessary to pay for it. The timeline for permitting is also not what was originally anticipated for the project. Many of the federal permits have already been submitted for permitting; once funding has been secured, the project can go out to bid.

Chair Partington observed that several locations will need swale work, and suggested that these aspects could be addressed in advance of the rest of the project. Dr. Gassman advised that in cases where an immediate problem can be alleviated in advance of the larger overall project, the City has performed this type of work.

Mr. LaBrie expressed concern with the community outreach for the project, which occurred in 2017. Since that time, the City has experienced both a severe flood event and significant additional construction. He asked which neighborhood would be undertaken once the Victoria Park project is complete, and whether or not the City should provide additional community outreach. Mr. Castellon explained that this is already underway, as

the project team has met with 17 different Phase 2 neighborhoods over the last three to four months.

Mr. LaBrie also asked if any of the Phase 1 projects have been completely finished. It was clarified that work is complete in the Edgewood and River Oaks neighborhoods. Dr. Gassman advised that the City has experienced 3 in. and 5 in. rainfall events since the completion of these projects, and inspectors were sent to review these neighborhoods and other areas of concern following those events. While some additional engineering work is underway to address any outstanding concerns, the new systems are managing these rainfall events appropriately over a 24-hour period.

Motion made by Vice Chair Reczko, seconded by Mr. LaBrie, to address Public Comments. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

The following Item was taken out of order on the Agenda.

5. General Discussion and Comments

ii. Public Comments

Michael O'Brien, member of the public, advised that he is a resident of the Sunset neighborhood, which is in the southwest quadrant of the City. He explained that this neighborhood has petitioned the City through its City Commissioner to request inclusion in the Fortify Lauderdale program. The neighborhood does not have any storm drains and experiences flooding. He asked how the City chose the neighborhoods in the program and how the Sunset neighborhood could be added.

Mr. Castellon requested clarification of what had been determined at the neighborhood meeting. Mr. O'Brien replied that residents had identified two to three key streets within the neighborhood that experience flood conditions. He emphasized the magnitude of the effects of flooding on homes in his neighborhood, reiterating that there is no existing infrastructure in the area.

Dr. Gassman noted that Phase 1 of the development of the Stormwater Master Plan included a City-wide model which identified the most vulnerable neighborhoods as well as those "next in line" with regard to flooding. The system is being designed for typical rain events rather than for the 1000-year flood that occurred in April 2023. In addition, areas on the western portion of the City have a higher groundwater table, which means swales can be very effective in managing rain events.

Dr. Gassman continued that Phase 1 of the Stormwater Master Plan was designed with seven specific neighborhoods in mind. Phase 2 was planned to address another eight neighborhoods; however, by the time the Fortify Lauderdale program was underway, this number had increased to 17. At present the number of neighborhoods in need of Phase 2 design is at 25, which constitutes roughly one-third of the City. She concluded that

although the City is working to incorporate every vulnerable neighborhood, keeping all neighborhoods free of flooding during a 1000-year rain event was not a realistic expectation.

Mr. O'Brien reiterated that there are no storm drains in his neighborhood, which he felt should call for higher priority on the list than neighborhoods with some extant infrastructure. Dr. Gassman explained that infrastructure does exist in the Sunset neighborhood, although it is in the form of swales.

Chair Partington suggested that if rainfall totals over 24 hours reach a certain level, residents of the Sunset neighborhood should document the conditions at their homes and email City Staff to inform them that problems are more significant than expected at their elevation. Dr. Gassman recommended that this information be submitted through the FixItFTL app so conditions can be inspected right away.

2. Old Business

i. Ongoing Discussion of ITFAC

Chair Partington stated that he had prepared a document based on discussions led by former Committee Chair Marilyn Mammano regarding the continuation of the Infrastructure Task Force Advisory Committee (ITFAC). Vice Chair Reczko had also prepared a draft document based on the Committee's governing Ordinance, advising that she felt the best option would be an Ordinance establishing the Committee as a Board.

Vice Chair Reczko reviewed the options for the City Commission's creation of a Board rather than a Committee as stated in her document. Chair Partington recalled that the Committee was created to carry out a specific task; once that task was complete, the Commission recognized the utility of the Committee and renewed the Ordinance allowing them to continue their work. The Commission had not provided specific additional tasks for them to undertake.

Vice Chair Reczko asserted that either City Staff or the City Commission could introduce and/or sponsor an Ordinance changing the Committee to a Board. Mr. LaBrie cautioned that while he was also in favor of suggesting this change, the Vice Chair's letter could be construed as "pushing" the Commission when it is not needed. Chair Partington proposed sending a shorter communication to the City Commission with the Vice Chair's document attached.

Motion made by Chair Partington, seconded by Mr. Walters, that we request a meeting with the City Commission to discuss the future of the Infrastructure Task Force, the work it is doing, including a recommendation from the ITFC that the ITFC be set up as a Board. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

Chair Partington advised that the communication would appear on a City Commission Conference Agenda, after which the Commission would indicate whether or not they wished to meet with the Committee as requested. If a joint meeting is scheduled, that would be the appropriate time to provide the Commission with background information.

4. Public Works Update

i. CIP Financial Report

None.

ii. Water & Sewer Breaks Report w/Mapping

Mr. Castellon reported that there were five sewer breaks during the past month, with associated costs included in the written documentation.

5. General Discussion and Comments

i. Committee Members

Chair Partington advised that the City Commission's final meeting of summer 2025 is scheduled in early July, after which they are not scheduled to meet again until August 19, 2025. He suggested that the Committee consider cancelling either its July or August 2025 meeting, with further discussion planned for the May 2025 meeting.

Ms. Beauvais requested that the Chair or Vice Chair email her office with detailed information on the items requested at the March 2025 meeting. Chair Partington added that he would also email her office with a request to schedule a presentation on the progress of the new water treatment plant. Vice Chair Reczko also confirmed that she would email a request for specific information on the frequency of tidal and rainfall-based flooding in the Victoria Park neighborhood, as discussed earlier under New Business.

6. Adjournment – NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING DATE: Monday, May 5, 2025

There being no further business to come before the Committee at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.