

Council Meeting March 26th 2024 at 9 AM City Hall / Presentation by City Engineer Kathleen Weeden by request of City Council at their meeting on February 13th 2024 in regards to: FLAMINGO DITCH FLOOD MITIGATION ***Council Motion: "Direct staff to provide Council with a presentation on Flamingo Ditch with information related to the flooding and drainage problems and possible improvements, large or small, that might be made through the Stormwater Enterprise Fund, grants or Bond revenue ..."***

From: Golden Beach Association Inc, MacArthur Beach & Racquet Club, Venice Villas HOA, and Members of Island Shores and Wind Song Owners.

Response to Presentation

**The report/presentation does not contain possible improvements, large or small as directed by Council.**

**The report fails to discuss potential funding sources such as the Stormwater Enterprise Fund, Florida Environmental Protection Department, FEMA, Penny Surtax Fund, Bond revenue, other grants, as directed by Council.**

Slides Imagery dated 1974 to 2014 demonstrate the population density growth within Zone 5 of the Flamingo Ditch fails to mention that **thousands of people are now impacted by life threatening flooding of the public streets in this area as opposed to a much smaller number prior to 1974.**

Looking at the FEMA flood zone map: "The area surrounding Flamingo Ditch has been in the Special Hazard Flood Area for 40 years." **So, why did the City neglect making it a priority to update and improve the storm water drainage of public streets in this area?** See today's Agenda Item TMP-9879 Grant Agreement with Florida Dept of Environmental Protection for Tarpon Center Flood Mitigation Project. **Flood mitigation related to Flamingo Ditch should be no less of a priority for the City.**

It should also be noted that **no major flooding or longstanding pooling of water occurs at the intersection of Villas Drive and Golden Beach Blvd when Flamingo Ditch is not blocked by sand. Nor were any homes flooded except a few on Villas Dr where deep water backing up on Villas Dr and Gardenia Dr went into their homes. The City is clearly liable and flaunting a lawsuit from these homeowners.**

The presentation shows Emergency vehicles were able to drive through Villas Drive; however **they don't show the City Police blocking Flamingo and Gardenia Drives, where no emergency vehicles could pass through these streets. Hundreds of residents including MacArthur HOA, Venice Villas HOA, and Gardenia/Flamingo Dr were trapped in their homes and unable to walk or drive their personal vehicles for two days. This is unacceptable!**

On Wednesday August 30<sup>th</sup> 2023 and the following day, the **City once again failed to shovel out the mouth of Flamingo Ditch. Engineering department was not allowed to clear the outflow due to safety concerns.** (Steve Berens, Oct. 18, 23). Again, **this is and has been an inadequate system for providing stormwater drainage of public roads, which is the City's responsibility.** Residents, seniors among them, went out with shovels to clear the sand blocking the ditch. Residents should not have to perform duties, which are clearly the obligation of the City! **The City's promise to shovel out the ditch weekly is also unsustainable because events can occur on weekends and holidays when staff is not working.**

December 2011 Flamingo Ditch and Deer Town Gully Outfall Improvement Project, prepared by Erickson Consulting Engineers ( ECE ). ECE was engaged by the City to evaluate two beach stormwater outfalls (Flamingo Ditch Outfall #5, Deer Town Gully Outfall # 8) to improve the water quality, capacity, and functionality of these outfalls. During typical high frequency summer storms, stormwater conveys to Flamingo Ditch, and backs up within the upstream channels resulting in extended residual times (normally 7 – 21 days) and results in conditions that are conducive to bacterial growth. The primary project goals and objective were to improve water quality and to reduce flooding for high frequency rainfall events; however, **the part of the project to reduce flooding occurrences on public roads was abandoned because Council or Staff determined that improvements were cost prohibitive.** The proposed improvements for the pipe option totaled \$ 3,649,574. (Email to B. Lehmann from Steve Berens 12-22-23). ***Did Council vote to abandon this project?***

Gulf waters were tested in Feb/March 2011 for bacteria and were found to contain high levels of Enterococci and Fecal Coliform resulting in public beach closures. The study emphasized that for an open ditch, improvements to water quality require a continuous flushing or movements of water through the outfall discharge points, pruning and removing of overgrown vegetation and non-native plants along the channel banks, sediment removal and UV treatment. **No one has suggested that all of the public road drainage going into the Flamingo Ditch be discontinued.** However, **this method of maintaining water quality is not effective because we do not have regular rainfall every week.**

**Dr Peggy Mason, Flamingo Dr fought for and helped the City get a \$ 2.2 Million grant in 2013 from Tallahassee** to demuck a large part of Flamingo Ditch, also pruning and removing overgrown plants. The project was not entirely finished as they apparently ran out of money.

Additional Facts for consideration:

While the Flamingo Ditch is privately owned, the **County/City owns an easement/license agreement to utilize the ditch as an outfall for storm water drainage of public streets, and is therefore responsible for the maintenance!**

ECE Project Overview City of Venice Outfall Improvement December 2011: page 6: "**Flamingo Ditch Outfall Maintenance Easement is held by Sarasota County.**" "**The City is responsible for maintenance of the outfall within the boundaries of the Federal Shore Protection Project**" (statement by Kathleen Weeden to Ericson).

**The City's Engineering Department proposed a Capital Improvement Budget for coming years. How come there is no mentioning for urgent Flamingo Ditch Water Quality improvements, and backups causing street flooding ??**

STORMWATER UTILITY FUND #480

Church St. Flood Improvements & Water Quality 125 \$ - \$ - \$ 150,000 \$ 400,000 \$ - \$ 550,000

Circle Dr Stormwater Improvements & Water Quality 126 - - - 150,000 500,000 650,000

Curry Creek WQ Upgrades & Channel Restoration 127 250,000 - - - - 250,000

Deertown Gully Water Quality Improvements 128 400,000 - - - - 400,000

Golf Drive Stormwater Improvements 129 - 200,000 500,000 - - 700,000

Hatchett Creek WQ Upgrades & Channel Restoration 130 - 250,000 - - - 250,000

N. Nokomis Ave. (Bella Costa) Outfall WQ Project 131 - 250,000 500,000 - - 750,000

Osprey Ditch WQ & Stormwater Improvements 132 - - - 150,000 800,000 950,000

Park Blvd & Granada Ave Water Quality Upgrades 133 350,000 - - - - 350,000

Parkside & Parkdale WQ and Stormwater Improvement 134 - - 150,000 400,000 - 550,000

Seaboard Area - Intracoastal Waterway Outfalls 135 - 300,000 - 400,000 - 700,000

TOTAL STORMWATER EXPENDITURES \$ 1,000,000 \$ 1,000,000 \$ 1,300,000 \$ 1,500,000 \$ 1,300,000 \$ 6,100,000

Last slide – **“Conclusions” by Kathleen Weeden:**

“All cost-feasible options for improvement have been implemented” (demucking, wooden outfall structure removal, improvements to SOP’s) **These were band aids and the situation is now worse than ever.**

Encouraging Flood Insurance Policies... **is not a City “improvement.” Again, no homes were flooded except for a few on Villas Dr that flooded due to back up of stormwater from the public roads!**

“Low roadway elevations increase likelihood of flooding during surge events and major rain fall” **When the Flamingo Ditch is not blocked, no major flooding or longstanding pooling of water occurs.**

“Residents should heed evacuation orders...” **City does not issue evacuation orders for heavy rainfall events, as they are unpredictable, unlike hurricanes.**

“Options moving forward”:

“Venice Villas: Easement and Modification to beach access” **Equipment would destroy their beachfront property, including damage to dunes, the first line of defense from storm water surges. Previously the City used the vacant lot on Flamingo Dr adjacent to the ditch for access; and this lot is still there.**

“Consultant needed” **We agree a Consultant is needed ASAP to develop and present all possible solutions to this problem including potential funding sources followed by direction to staff to put out to bid the solution that best fits the need to mitigate flooding of city streets in our neighborhood.**

“Special Tax District” **This is an insult to all residents who pay the City every month for stormwater services that amount to millions of dollars annually which are supposed to be used to manage and maintain stormwater services including adequate drainage of public streets. These streets are no different than streets in downtown Venice. We are quite sure if flooding was occurring on downtown streets the City would not suggest taxing downtown property owners in order to update or improve stormwater drainage infrastructure.**