



Engage!
St. John's

What We Heard

Rennies River Flood Mitigation

December 2020



ST. JOHN'S

Context/Scope

The Rennies River Catchment Stormwater Management Plan (RRCSMP) was completed in 2014. On May 26, 2014, Council Directive CD# R2014-05-26/5 recommended implementation of the recommendations below to address flooding in the area.

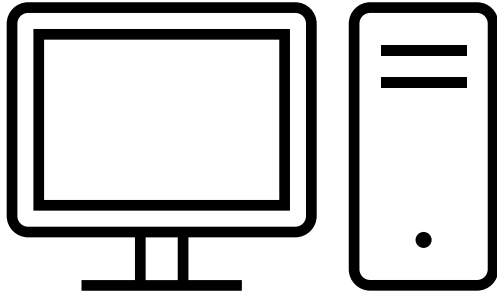
Priority	Description of Location
1	Location 3: Weir at outlet of Long Pond
2	Location 1, Option A: Kings Bridge Road to Portugal Cove Road & Upstream of Portugal Cove Road – Berms & Walls only (Recommended Option)
	Location 1, Option B: Kings Bridge Road to Portugal Cove Road & Upstream of Portugal Cove Road – New Channel and bridge
	Location 1, Option C: Kings Bridge Road to Portugal Cove Road & Upstream of Portugal Cove Road – Raised parking lot
2	Location 2: Upstream of Carpasian Road Bridge
3	Location 4: Clinch Crescent East to Clinch Crescent West
4	Location 5: Wicklow Street to Thorburn Road
5	Location 7: O'Leary Avenue Bridge
6	Location 8: Downstream of Mews Place

While the report recommended that the weir at Long Pond be given priority and the two problem areas located downstream of Long Pond be given second priority, the City has been working through the provincial environmental approval process for the Long Pond Weir Project since that time and the process is still ongoing. The most recent progress has been the issuance of a revised Environmental Preview Report Guideline (June 2020) by the Province that will require revisions and updating to the Environmental Preview Report (EPR). Based on these new EPR guidelines, a revised EPR will be required to continue the environmental review and approval process for the Long Pond Weir Project. In 2018, the City received funding for Phase 2A under the New Building Canada Fund. The scope of work was presented to Council at Committee of the Whole on December 19, 2018. One of the concerns raised during that meeting was the potential effect of proceeding with Phase 2A flood mitigation works prior to the completion of the Long Pond Weir Project. An engineering firm was subsequently hired to undertake additional stormwater modelling to review the impact of the downstream phasing sequence in the absence of the Long Pond Weir being completed. The outcome of that was to complete various modelling scenarios where it was determined that a two-phased approach could be undertaken for the flood mitigation measures in the area downstream of Long Pond based on the timing of construction for the Long Pond Weir.

Environmental Assessment

- Council directed staff to consult with residents in the area prior to the City's submission to the Government of NL for an Environmental Assessment Process for Phase II.
- Once the report is submitted, the Province will also engage on the project.





Engagement and Communications

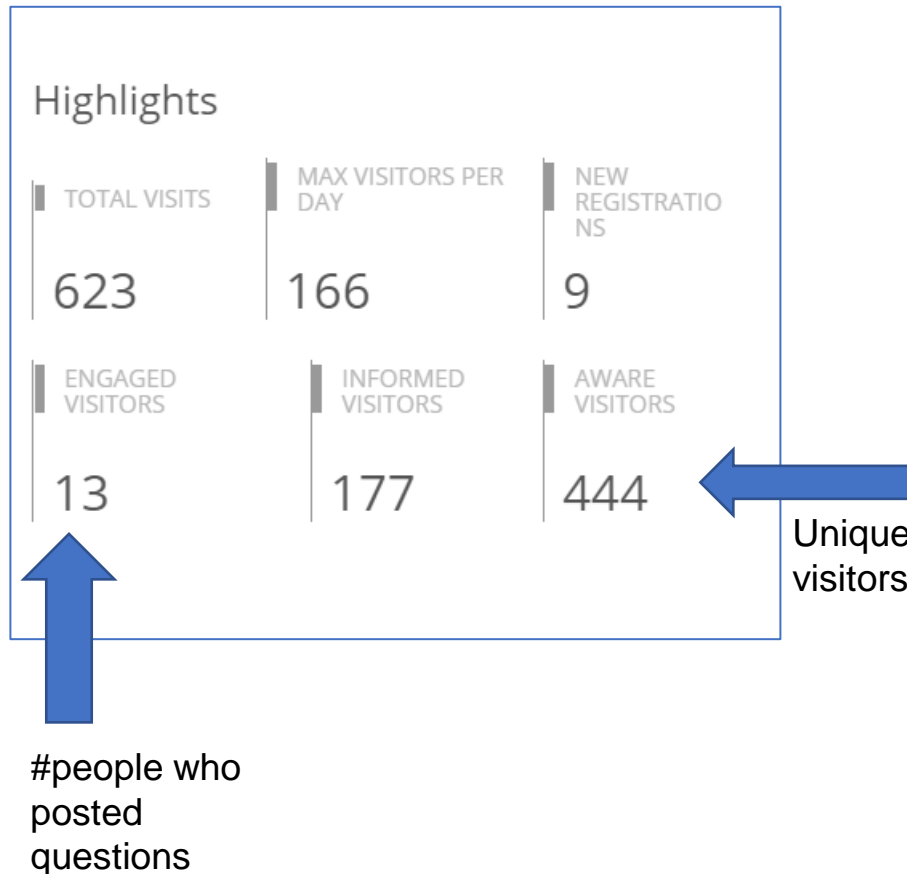
- Nearly 5000 postcards mailed to households in the area with information about the project
- Newsletter to 2700 registered users of engagestjohns.ca
- Posts to regular City communications channels including social media (22,500 views), news release, listservs, website



Who Engaged



On engagestjohns.ca



Virtual Public session

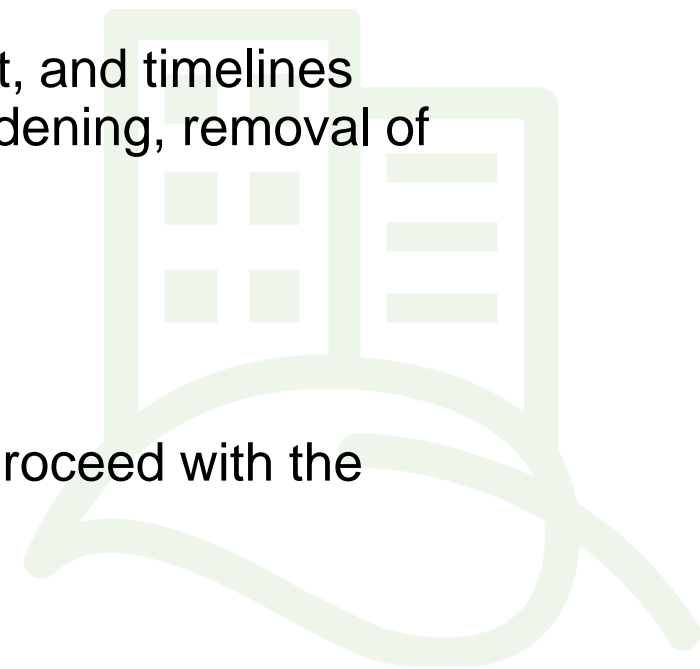
41 people – many of whom live in the immediate area

E-mail – two submissions

Most people who posted questions on engage also attended the virtual meeting.

What We Heard Highlights

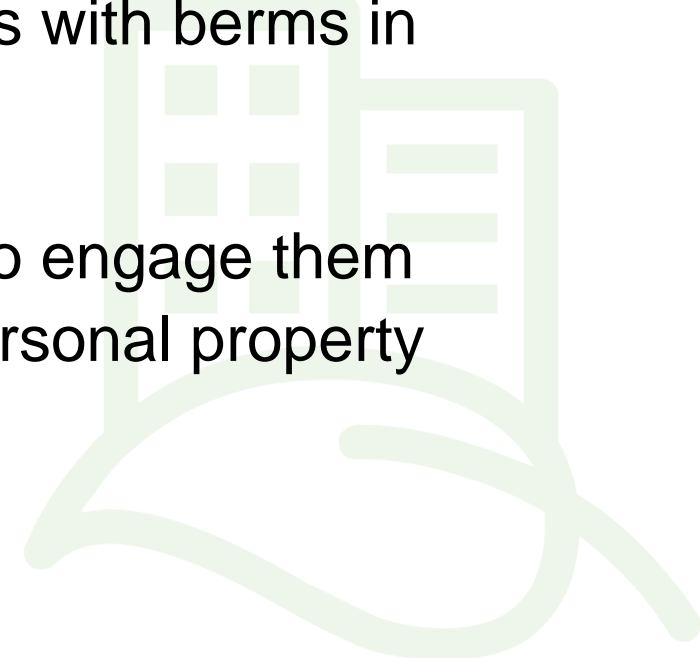
- A list of ALL questions/comments captured throughout the engagement process can be found at the end of this document. Answers to these questions are in the document library on engagestjohns.ca
- Key concerns/issues from all feedback were as follows:
 - health and beauty of the river
 - project proceeding without the weir project completed
 - environmental assessment process for the Weir and this project, and timelines
 - impact of this project and the shared-use bike plan including widening, removal of trees, potential use of asphalt for shared use path, run off
 - the use and look of berms
 - the water table/surface water, ground water
 - Impact on surrounding properties on Empire Avenue
 - Feildian Grounds and Riverdale area concerns
 - Immediate impact on houses in the area and the desire not to proceed with the project at all by some property owners



What We Heard Highlights con't

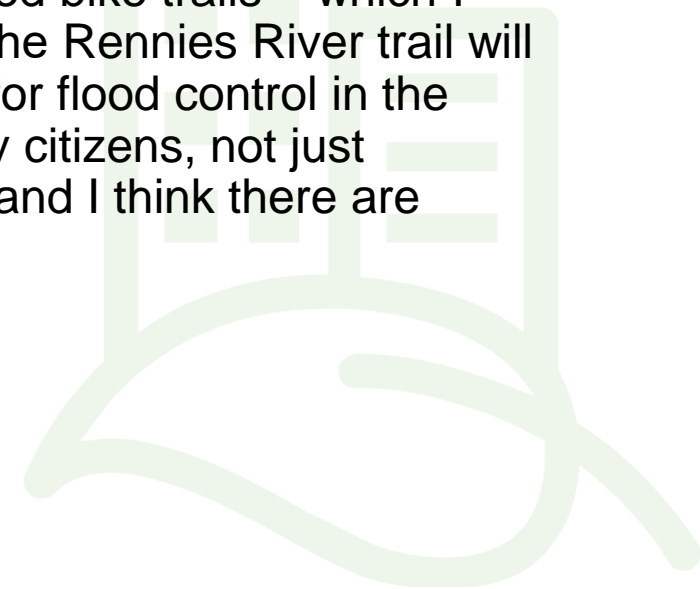
Key concerns/issues were as follows:

- Climate change considerations
- Concerns regarding the source of the flooding and upstream issues such as the new hospital
- Bridge capacity to withstand water during heavy rains with berms in place
- Overall costs of the project
- Perspectives of other stakeholders and opportunity to engage them
- Individual concerns with impact of project on their personal property such as fences
- Continued interest and desire to be engaged



What We Heard via Email

Don't think building walls or berms is a viable solution. For one, wouldn't walls and berms simply facilitate the water backing up upstream in extreme rain events? Natural vegetation can be an adequate flood control for most storm events. Flood and water fluctuation are a normal part of river systems – perhaps where we build in the floodplain needs to be reconsidered. It may be too late to relocate homes already in the floodplain, but the proposed hospital upstream is a bad idea that should not go ahead. The section of the river between Kings Bridge and Portugal Cove Road is a narrow trail and quite beautiful. I'm concerned that the construction of walls and berms will affect the shoreline environment and narrow the channel. I see this as a pre-cursor to the proposed bike trails – which I also oppose along this corridor. I'm a and commute by bike, but I don't think the Rennies River trail will make a good shared-use trail. I urge you to think of more naturalize options for flood control in the Rennies River. The trails here are a jewel in the city that are enjoyed by many citizens, not just property owners in the area. Walls and berms will destroy the natural beauty and I think there are better solutions to flooding issues.



What We Heard via Email con't

- We have paved or built into every bit of land and wet land that feeds into this river from Kelsey Drive down. We even paved Larch Park which used to serve a bit of sponge in the spring runoff time. There is endless construction around the Health Sciences: I now shudder when I see the activity up there for yet another building. There is an 8-foot walk of concrete on the river just west of Clinch Cres and what was a lovely pond will soon be a concrete swimming pool. The City will never get the flooding under control unless it can work with the provincial government to get “the cause” under control. This was foreseeable and the cause should be addressed not just the treatment.
- I appreciate that the property owners along the river deserve protection from what is, in essence, a man-made made mess. I would hope, and strongly recommend that the engineers absolutely minimise the use of various forms of concrete in the process of the mitigation. The river is a special asset creating a calm and tranquil space in the middle of the city. Concrete will distract from this asset and turn the river into an urban canal instead. (Burton’s Pond is an example. It used to be a pretty little pond. Now it has a 6 ft. concrete wall around 1/3 of it and it has lost all its rustic charm.) Additionally, concrete is nothing but a magnet for graffiti “artists”. The concrete section by the bridge by the tennis club is already well covered. This will completely distract from any part of the river in which it will be used. Perhaps some use of large rocks to create the channels instead?
- I see no reason to widen, flatten or straighten the walking trail. There are some wiggly parts for sure, but we can all manage to be polite and make room for those who need a little space or time. Before her death, 15 years ago, we used to take my mother in her wheelchair up the part of the trail by St Pat’s Home. If we could do that people in other forms of “self-motored” vehicles and do the same. It is not meant to be a highway. It is meant to be a special pastoral spot in the middle of the city.
- And finally I am very much against the widening of this trail in preparation for being included in the Bike Master plan. I will deal with that issue in a note on the bike plan; for now, sufficed to say that the disruption of the widening and the paving of the banks will further degrade those banks and lead to longer term problems instead of solving them.

Questions From engagestjohns.ca

- In this process, have you consulted with any geographers, biogeographers, botanists, biologists...? Any scientists at all? What is the impact of this project on biodiversity along the river? Have you considered what the river needs in terms of appropriate riparian zones? Is this study taking into account the new mental health facility which will have massive impacts on the Rennie's River watershed? How is what you are proposing to do here consistent with the city's climate change plan?
- Is the recommended option the "Alternative Option" as listed in the briefing note to council and will this option proceed unless there is a revised recommendation based on these consultations?
- Will the natural beauty of the trail along the river be affected?
- How will the berm construction behind my property at 3 Pringle Place remove my property from the flood plain as stated in City's media release of November 3/20? Does the water table in this area have any impact on the flood plain mapping in my area?
- Will the work completed increase the frequency and/or severity to flooding to the homes on Empire Avenue?
- What is the plan to mitigate flood risk for Feildian Grounds and Riverdale? Why was this not included?
- What is the flooding history in the Riverdale/Feildian Grounds area?
- If the City is so concerned about flooding, then why are they planning on widening and paving the walking trails, as widening involves the removal of significant number of trees and vegetation. Paving decrease the infiltration of runoff. Many km of a 3m wide strip of pavement and significant widening of the trails will have a significant impact of the infiltration and attenuation capacity. Furthermore, the trail greenspace of narrow, 25m wide or less on many sections, so widening will have a significant impact.
- Why didn't the City register the entire project (i.e. Phases 1 and 2) under provisions of the Environmental Assessment Regulations, 2003?
- Will the construction of the berms behind my property a 3 Pringle Place any effect on the on the drainage of water from my property during periods of heavy rain and or snow melting, given the membrane which will be put in place between the rivers edge and the berm wall?
- The proposed berm to be constructed from Portugal Cove Road to approximately the foot of the steps leading to Larch Place Park was to be built following the weir dam at Long Pond (Phase 1 of the recommendations) .Has the City formally asked the resident property owners, whose properties are adjacent to the proposed berms , if they want the berms built , without Phase 1 (the weir dam) being constructed firstly?
- Will there be an equal amount of property security as I have now with the existing 6-foot chain link fence when the berm is built, i.e. will there be a 6-foot chain link fence on the new raised trail bed between my property and the edge of the new raised trail bed?

Questions From engagestjohns.ca con't

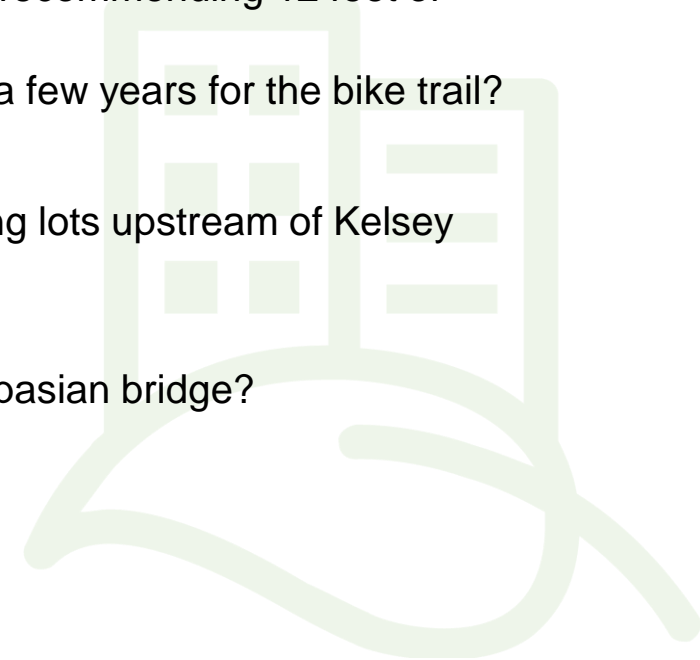
- I live across the river from Riverdale and the riverbank (city property) adjacent to my property has suffered significant erosion over the past number of years. The city remediated a portion of the riverbank in 2008 but the remainder continues to erode. How will building berms on the Riverdale side of the river impact further erosion along the riverbank adjacent to my property? Is there a plan to remediate the riverbank opposite Riverdale? How and when will the riverbank be remediated? I do not want our mature trees to be removed to accomplish this.
- I walk that trail from Carpasian to Kingsbridge every day. Summer and winter. I can recall walking along the path adjacent to Pringle after Gabriel or maybe Igor. The water barely flowed under the Portugal Cove Road bridge. If I could walk on the path what good would a raised berm do? The water would be up against the bridge. Would the integrity of the bridge withstand that flow of water? What would happen to the bridge and the road? Where would that water go? What would it take with it? Has there been any storm studies undertaken for the river? Measurements should be taken during storms. River height, total rainfall in the area at the time, and water table levels adjacent to the river. Where does the water go? Have cameras in the area. I also agree with him. The river takes away surface runoff during a storm. Portugal Cove Road becomes a river. Your berm will prevent the river from doing that. Steps up to the berm? The water will go around your berm. What is the budget for this project? And the Pringle Place residents don't want this done? Why are you moving ahead with it? Wait for the weir. A waste of taxpayers money and ruining a beautiful trail.
- I would argue that no one puts more footsteps on the path from Carpasian to Kingsbridge over the last 25 years than I. Flooding spots that I have noticed are the boardwalk at the bottom of Fieldian Grounds and a property off Winter Avenue. In this area the footpath has been reconstructed and acts as a berm. I assume at some time during major storms the river crests over that berm. It cannot then get back into the river and stays in the yard until it seeps into the ground. That is the problem with berms. There was limited discussion last night regarding the Vaughn Place berm. I was not aware there is flooding in that area. I had always assumed they had water table issues. Vegetation in the river holds soil in place. Removing it may increase soil movement and related problems. Rennie's River has been recorded as having the highest biomass of German brown trout in the world. There was also an effort to reintroduce salmon to the river. How will habitat be affected by your project. The weir project may have environmental concerns that affect all of these concerns. A weir is only as good as the people who design, build, maintain and operate it. I was a bit concerned last night that from the tone of the City, this project was going ahead as designed. I certainly hope not.
- What is the estimated cost to construct the berm upstream from Portugal Cove Road to the bottom of the Larch Place Park steps?
- What's the opinion of the Grand Concourse Authority on your project?
- In many cities, they are taking rivers OUT of channels and re-naturalizing shorelines. Naturalized shorelines can do a good job of flood control if bioengineered properly. I feel like building berms and walls will destroy the riparian shoreline, be bad for biodiversity and not solve flooding problems. Berms and walls will likely exacerbate flooding in high rainfall events upstream of the new structures.

Questions From Public Session

- The images are deceptive because they do not show the height of the bridge. If you install a 19 m elevation low side to the river and the bridge is at 18 m, how can you put a barrier and not have water flow out over at some point in time?
- What has been done with the ground water flow study in the areas?
- Is there risk that the assessment this needs to go through will be held up by the Province?
- With no weir being build and the Waterford hospital being constructed and replacing the marsh land that accommodates the accumulation of water, has this been factored into the design and plan? Should we wait until the Province allows the weir to be built and do the berms after the weirs are built?
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- Will all the vegetation have to be removed from the channel that you walled off to keep Mannings End at a level where the water can flow freely? The images show a lovely area with vegetation. How will the river channel be cleaned out once you have it walled off?
- How would water get through the 4-5 foot wall if needed? What is the nature of the wall and how will it be designed?
- Is there any plan to mediate the riverbank across from the Riverdale Tennis Courts?
- Phase I on the bike plan fits into the Rennie's River Trail, how can money be spent on this in Jan before we know how phase I and II of the bike plan will be implemented?
- How long has the City been waiting for the weir?
- Will the bermage be wide enough for multiuse trails? Will you use the draft design for the bike plan to develop the design?
- Can one assume some of this work will facilitate the contested bike plan and possible make mute some of the arguments against it like environmental, aesthetics before consultation can occur?

Questions From Public Session con't

- What has changed since the 2014 study? Why would we now proceed without the weir that was recommended in Phase I at the time?
- Have you considered head waters?
- Is the proposed infrastructure sufficient to handle projected climate change impacts?
- Did we adjust estimates based on the Province's decision to fill in the wetland by the Health Sciences Centre?
- Where will the width come from for the trail to be expanded for multiuse? The bike plan is recommending 12 feet of space.
- If you are spending money now on weirs and berms, will we have to tear it all up again in a few years for the bike trail?
- How long have we been waiting on results for the weir project?
- What measure are being taken to deal with runoff water from roads and streets and parking lots upstream of Kelsey Drive into Rennie's River?
- Can Pippy Park stall this project further?
- Will the river back up and flow over the land of the homes opposite the berms? At the Carpasian bridge?
- How will we know when the environmental assessment is submitted?
- Did you consider alternatives to putting the weir dam in Pippy Park?



Next Steps

- Share What We Heard with Council and the public
- Finalize the environmental registration documentation to be submitted to both the Province's Department of Municipal Affairs & Environment and the City's Environment & Sustainability Experts Panel.



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