

August 2024 Emergency Flood Mtg.

Mayor Mark Coombs and the Fountain Green City Council called an Emergency City Council meeting to discuss the flooding that happened on Sunday, August 18, 2024. The meeting was held at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 21, 2024, in the Fountain Green City Hall, 375 N. State.

Mayor Coombs explained that this emergency meeting was called so that City Officials could meet with representatives from the State, the County, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to help answer their questions on how the city should move forward in regards to the flooding.

He gave a brief explanation and update on what was happening behind the scenes. So far –
*Officials met with UDOT to discuss road mitigation projects.

*Curt, Public Works, has already put in many hours helping the city with flood issues.

*City office employees have been working overtime trying to answer residents' questions.

*City Council members have also done an awesome job trying to help out as well as figure out what's going on and what is needed.

*Volunteer residents provided dinner to affected residents and volunteers.

The discussion tonight will be about how and where to find resources to help residents with clean-up and restoration.

Introductions – Jacob Littlefield (City Council), Kim Johnson (City Council), Rod Hansen (City Council), Scott Collard (County Commissioner), Kerry Farnsworth (City Council), Alyson Strait (City Council), Taryn Collard (Volunteer Coordinator), Todd Robinson (Fire Chief), Jeff Gallagher (Liaison Officer with the Division of Emergency Management), Jayson Albee (Sanpete County Emergency Manager), Curt Nielsen (City Public Works), Kevin Losey (Welfare and Self-Advice Manager for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints), Lieutenant Jason Kelsey (Utah Department of Public Safety or Highway Patrol), Sheriff Buchanan (Sanpete County), Greg Johnson and Gene Jacobson (Fountain Green Irrigation Co.).

Comments from Jeff Galagher –

Jeff expressed his sympathy to the city for the devastation the recent flood has caused.

He explained that thanks to the Mayor, the City Disaster Declaration is already in place, and he has the County Disaster Declaration ready to put into place tonight. He stated that when these declarations are in place they don't guarantee federal or state funding, but they do open the door for possibilities. The declarations are good for 30 days but are easy to renew.

Currently, facts and figures are being gathered – What was the damage? How bad was the damage? Is this a private residence? Is this a private business? Is it a city, or a county's infrastructure? Once that information is put together, that goes up to the state to be analyzed. There will be some things that might be eligible for help and there may be a lot of things that are not. It is especially hard with private residences and private businesses.

A lot of times there are not that many things in place unless it is catastrophic, and then FEMA will come in. Right now, we don't have the answers to that. That is why we've got to look at that assessment, look at what damage has been done, and then they will determine what's eligible, what's not, and where we can plug that in for available funding streams.

Comments from Jayson Albee –

The County Emergency Management team looks at emergency management in phases – plan and prepare, mitigate, respond, and then recover. It is a monumental effort for volunteers, for the city, for citizens to come together, from resources being offered up, time, money, and personal money.

The response happened on Sunday, and now we're in that recovery phase unless it rains tomorrow or Friday, then the city could be bouncing between phases which is a bit more complex. The County also looks at what resources may be needed short-term, mid-term, and long-term and then can reach out to the region (Six-County) and State.

Again, he explained that right now it's about data collection and making it usable for the state. They put those numbers together, submit them, and then we see what happens with that. Midterm, you start looking at mitigation projects that are maybe a little bit further out. Long-term – Applying for mitigation grants and ways to fund those projects.

Mayor Coombs emphasized that the city has to have the following information from its citizens: How many people were at your house helping you, their names, phone numbers, how many hours they were there, what type of stuff was damaged, and did anyone donate water or resources to you. There are still residents who haven't been contacted, talk to your neighbor and get the word out about what's going on. All of this data will come into play if we're able to get some funding. Most funding will not come as 100%. It's going to have a percentage tied to it that the city will have to come up with. But all the efforts of the people of Fountain Green will help offset that because a lot of times that can be in-kind. h

City Officials are concerned about possible rain tomorrow and Friday. The day was spent trying to strategize how to mitigate the flooding if it does rain, any little bit of rain is going to cause a problem because the ground is so saturated. The water has nowhere to go other than just run downhill. We've been putting sandbags around town and down State Street. We're going to be putting out more sandbags to try and move water from one place to another, so it does not, hopefully, flood people out again. Again, there's no guarantee because we don't know what water's going to do.

Enough cannot be said about all the amazing people spending hours going from one house to another to help people out. It shows what kind of spirit Fountain Green has. There have been so many people from out of the county calling up and saying, what can we do to help? What do you want us to help? What can we do? I'm working with a group right now from Payson. They want to bring a group down to help out. We're now trying to figure out where we need their help.

Comments from Kevin –

May I echo some of the words of sympathy that you've been through, but also applaud you for your response. It's been incredible to hear about all the helping hands jumping in, all the surrounding communities that have been helping and jumping in.

My role with the church is to gather information and keep Salt Lake up to date on what's happening so they're aware of the flooding, they're aware of homes, and families being displaced. There are a lot of faith-based organizations as well as others like the Red Cross that have equipment available to come in and help. Of course, the church has equipment and food and water, those types of things. If there is additional help needed, like shop vacs, muck-out kits, or hygiene kits. Those are the things that I can put a request in for and then get a truck down here.

Todd reports the following:

- Trying to channel water away from homes that were most affected, but also keep it from going into the neighbor's homes downstream
- Putting sandbags across various roads to divert and channel the water to run into the lowlands.
- Cleaned out culverts.
- Placed pallets of sandbags in strategic areas in case intersections need to be closed off or by the homes that were hit the hardest.

Todd stated that he had emailed a document to the Mayor that can be shared that explains how sandbags can be placed and helps them understand the theory. It also gives some brief instructions on what to do with it afterwards or what not to do.

- Have pumps on standby, if needed. Especially on State Street and on Big Springs Road going to the Fish Hatchery.
- What roads/culverts need to be re-evaluated for mitigation purposes?

Long-Term Projects –

* Training. Understanding the emergency management process, how incident command structure works, how we can divide up the responsibilities, and emergency action plans. Train for things like this. Establish a CERT program, if the city does not have one. Attend the county emergency meetings that Jayson schedules where they talk about what could happen in Sanpete County and how to respond. Sanpete County is at great risk for floods, wildfires, and earthquakes. What is the county or what are the communities going to do about it? Everybody needs to be on the same page. There will be more training on the role of the mayor versus the role of the city council in an incident or emergency and look at those different responsibilities.

*Grants. There is the hazard mitigation grant program. There's also what they call the BRIC grant. B-R-I-C. Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities. That grant has a considerable amount of money (\$500 million). It's competitive and it's nationwide.

The federal government has realized because of all of the things that they've dealt with around the country (natural disasters) that are happening with more frequency, and with more severity, which is overwhelming communities. It is so much easier and cheaper if we

can mitigate beforehand to either lessen the potential impact or eliminate the potential impact through mitigation projects. If I remember right what you spend in \$3 or \$4 in mitigation will save you around \$8 in recovery. That's why they're dumping so much money into this grant because it's saving them money on the back end through these presidential declarations when these communities are impacted. Jayson can help you if you guys choose to go down that path, look at what needs to be done, and then start chipping away at those so that we can be better off the next time. Mitigation works. I would just highly recommend taking advantage of these grants that are out there that can pay for some of these projects, and I know with the BRIC there is a match.

*Rebuilding. How do the citizens get funding or resources to help with rebuilding? Flood Insurance? Even if they do have flood insurance, it won't cover an outside flood. It'll cover a broken pipe inside your house. But flood insurance, basic flood insurance, will not cover an outside one.

There are not a lot of things in place for private residents or private businesses. We're hoping, with this declaration, with a couple of state disaster recovery accounts that are in place, they're set aside right now to reimburse state agencies. For example, UDOT. Anything that UDOT did to support Fountain Green or anything that has incurred a cost there. And the state could use that account to reimburse UDOT as another state agency. What we're hoping, but can't guarantee, is that somehow, we can tap into those disaster accounts to do something other than just reimbursing state agencies or city and county infrastructure.

Other than that, there's not a lot in place. So, private organizations are the best to reach out to for donations or grants, to those kinds of people. I know that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has some options.

Sanpete County's disaster threshold, which I think the city will easily make, is \$130,810. The problem we have with the federal side of things, and never say never because it never hurts to try and it never hurts to ask, the state threshold is just a little over \$6 million. And if other areas, other counties, and you see some of these states roll through if it covers half the state and there's damage everywhere, we can declare together, and all of that damage is combined.

Where this is the only one, that burden rests on Sanpete County to meet the state threshold as well to be able to get that federal declaration. And when I say \$6 million, that's an eligible damage, not just a combined everything. It's only what falls into their eligible categories.

Mayor Coombs pointed out the following:

*There have been organizations and private citizens that want to help with funding and/or donations, which is wonderful but will have to do it on their own. If the city is involved with these types of things and our data goes to the state or the federal government, they're going to say, you have all these resources. You don't need our help anymore.

*There is also a company that wants to donate sheetrock to families. The city hall will just be a drop-off place, a place for people to pick it up. This is not under the guidance of the city, we have nothing to do with it and have not asked for it. We're just trying to help out the best we can but we're not involved.

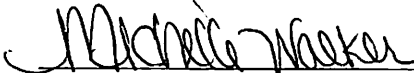
*Many communities such as Santaquin, Provo Fire Department, Fairview, Mount Pleasant, and Ephraim have called and offered to bring sandbags or sandbags that have already been filled.

*Again, members of the city council are volunteers. They still have full-time jobs they have to do to make a living. People think they should have been here all week long and not done anything. We all still have jobs. We don't show up to work - We might not have a job. We did the best that we could. Again, we're trying to figure out what we can do better next time.

*To give you an idea about your city council, as soon as that rain slowed down, they were all trying to do what they could do to help out. In case you don't know, there was three feet of water sitting against the door going down the stairs to the library. The entire basement of the city hall was flooded. The theater got flooded because the alleyway between the theater and the next building had three feet of water. The school was flooded. So, there's still a lot of other places that got flooded.

*Remember the city council and members of the office staff who were busy Sunday helping people out. Some of them got home at 11 p.m., midnight, and that's when they worked on their basements. I don't think there was a member of the city council that did not get hit in one form or another, but they put the city first before their own needs. That says a lot about the character of the people who represent Fountain Green. A lot of the residents of Fountain Green are the same way. They wanted to help the neighbors first, but they helped themselves. Like Jeff said, that's what Utah is all about. It's a great state to live in because we know how to band together. As my dad used to say, you pull up your bootstraps and get back to work.

*As we get more information, we'll try to get it out as fast as we can to help you out. If you have questions, please let us know what questions you have, and what we can do to help you out. That's what we're here for.


Michelle Walker, City Recorder

