

**HIGH POINT TRANSPARENCY, ENGAGEMENT, & COMMUNICATION
COMMITTEE MEETING**

Wednesday, September 17, 2025 - 9:00 AM

Municipal Office Building

211 S. Hamilton Street

High Point, NC 27260

**Transparency, Engagement, and Communications Committee - Council Member
Michael Holmes, Chair**

CALL TO ORDER

Council Member Michael Holmes, Chair, announced that the Transparency, Engagement, and Communication Committee did not have a quorum and noted that Council Member Amanda Cook was present in chambers, Mayor Pro Tem Moore was absent, and Council Member Dr. Patrick Harmon was attending virtually. He explained that no votes were required since the meeting would consist solely of a presentation and discussion and that the committee would proceed with the presentation. He then introduced Assistant City Manager Damon Dequenne.

Present: Chair Michael Holmes, Council Member Amanda Cook, and Council Member Dr. Harman (virtually)

Absent: Mayor Pro Tem Moore

PRESENTATION OF ITEMS

2025-392

Emergency Response and Communications

Staff will provide information on emergency response options and opportunities for the public to be informed.

Assistant City Manager Damon Dequenne presented information on the City's emergency response and communication efforts, focusing on the July 9, 2025, flash flooding event and the City's actions during and after the storm. He explained that the storm produced over six inches of rain in a short period following days of heavy rainfall from Tropical Depression Chantal, resulting in widespread flooding, road closures, damage to City facilities, and nineteen water rescues. He noted that the rainfall may have approached a 1,000-year storm threshold based on consultant analysis and explained the challenges of designing infrastructure to withstand such extreme events given the high costs and feasibility concerns. He further clarified the differences between flash flooding, which is unpredictable and dangerous, and tropical storms or hurricanes, which allow time for preparation and communication efforts such as staging barricades and issuing public alerts.

Mr. Dequenne demonstrated the North Carolina Flood Risk Information System (FRIS) website where residents can check the flood risk for their properties without creating an account. He also reviewed various notification methods available to the public, including the Guilford Emergency Alert Notification Information system (G.E.A.N.I.), Reverse 911,

Wireless Emergency Alerts, local media outlets, and the Emergency Broadcast System. He emphasized the importance of enabling notifications on mobile devices to ensure residents receive timely warnings.

He explained that after-action reviews are conducted following all major events to evaluate response efforts, identify improvements, and strengthen coordination among departments and agencies. Following the July 9 event, recommendations included installing permanent signs at known flood-prone locations, conducting facility access analyses for the Police Department and Westside Wastewater Treatment Plant, and enhancing public communication tools in partnership with Guilford County Emergency Management. He also pointed to the City's Emergency Management webpage, which provides links to Ready.gov, Ready Guilford, FEMA, and other preparedness resources for residents.

During committee discussion, Council Member Cook emphasized the importance of building trust between public safety departments and residents to encourage compliance during emergencies. She highlighted the Compassion Commitment initiative and its role in strengthening relationships with the community. She also raised concerns about residents who have inherited private drainage systems not maintained by the City, noting that the cost to repair or upgrade such systems can be prohibitive. Mr. Dequenne explained that while the City can assist by providing information, notifications, and evaluations for City-owned systems, private property owners should consult licensed professionals before altering or closing drainage systems to avoid liability or unintended consequences.

Chairman Holmes asked whether the increasing frequency of severe storms was influencing infrastructure design standards. Mr. Dequenne responded that larger design thresholds are considered on a case-by-case basis, with critical facilities such as wastewater treatment plants designed to withstand greater storm events. Additional discussion included neighborhoods adjacent to floodplain areas, such as Foxwood Meadows, where the focus should remain on ensuring adequate access during emergencies rather than undertaking costly flood-control measures.

In response to Council Member Cook regarding the potential benefits of adding trees, plants, or features such as dry stream beds to help absorb water on properties, Mr. Dequenne explained that these measures are always beneficial. Planting trees can help stabilize soil, reduce erosion, and slow the flow of water during heavy rains, which is helpful not only in flood events but also for general environmental management. Maintaining dry stream beds or other natural channels that carry water only during significant rainfall is equally important. These areas should be kept clear of debris and free from development or structures that might impede water flow.

He noted that many of these systems are privately owned and maintained by homeowners' associations or individual property owners. While most do a good job of keeping them functional, challenges often arise in older neighborhoods where infrastructure was built decades ago, sometimes with homes constructed directly over

drainage systems. In such cases, the City cannot perform maintenance on private systems but can advise owners on best practices.

Overall, keeping these areas clear of blockages, regularly removing fallen tree limbs and other debris, and making modest investments such as planting trees or preserving vegetated areas can be very cost-effective ways to manage stormwater. Preventing obstructions before storms occur helps reduce flooding impacts and protects both private property and public infrastructure.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Holmes concluded the discussion by thanking all emergency response personnel for their dedication and service during severe weather events. The meeting ended at 9:29 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Holmes, Chairman

Attest:

Sandra Keeney, City Clerk