



GARY

WHITE

for MAYOR

Flooding Questions & Answers

We are fortunate that our community is surrounded by beautiful water and marshland. However, we also face significant challenges with regards to flooding, proper drainage, and even sewage overflow. Do you feel as though the City has responded appropriately to these challenges? How would your administration approach solutions to these issues?

The City of Charleston continues to experience numerous flooding issues. Unfortunately, due to limited financial resources combined with well-publicized inadequate planning, a myriad of disparate opinions from a multitude of commercial and environmental studies, and the inexperience of the current administration, there remains no clear path on how to protect the critical infrastructure of the Holy City or its residents from this potentially catastrophic environmental dilemma. The city does not need any more studies on flooding, it's time for action. Flooding has been an issue in the Charleston area for many years. Over the last few years, Charleston has experienced more and more significant weather events that have compounded this on-going problem. Additionally, many areas in Charleston that have not experienced flooding in the past, are now starting to see the effects of flooding. Deferred maintenance has contributed and significantly exacerbated the City's flooding problem. The dilemma facing the citizens of Charleston now is that there are numerous flooding issues to address and currently not enough financial resources or experienced leadership to address them. A twenty-year strategic plan is necessary to address Charleston's immediate to long-term issues of flooding and drainage. My plan will start by addressing our immediate opportunity, maintenance AKA 'the low hanging fruit'. Part of the maintenance plan must include developing a complete inventory of every outfall, pipe, storm drain and ditch that currently exists in the City of Charleston. As a going concern, the best management policies must be implemented including fiscal responsibility, cost-benefit analysis, and implementation of value engineering. The City has several very large projects that will require hundreds of millions of dollars in funding to be completed. To ensure the City has adequate resources to complete these projects, work on funding sources must be started immediately and be combined with building strong relationships with Federal, State, and County governments.

Assume you take office in January 2020. What will you do in your first 100 days to address flooding?

I will begin by developing a twenty-year strategic plan to address Charleston's immediate to long-term issues of flooding and drainage. The plan will start by addressing our immediate opportunity, maintenance. Part of the maintenance plan will include developing a complete inventory of every outfall, pipe, storm drain and ditch that currently exists in the City of Charleston. Once an accurate accounting of the City's current storm drain system is complete then an annual inspection and maintenance schedule can be completed to ensure that our current storm drainage infrastructure is maintained properly so that it can operate at its fullest potential. Additionally, part of the maintenance schedule will include ensuring that every outfall is inspected and cleaned out at the beginning of every hurricane season. Maintenance easements must be identified, and a schedule developed for obtaining new easements to ensure the City has access to all the areas necessary to maintain our drainage system. In many cases, these easements will need to be obtained from our neighboring jurisdictions. Additionally, the City must work with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control to provide a more efficient permitting process for granting permits to the City for the maintenance of our drainage outfalls. Lastly, I will work with my colleagues on City Council to create a fiscal policy that prioritizes and mandates annual funding for maintenance of all the City's drainage infrastructure.

Charleston's flood map, flood hazard, and rainfall data are severely outdated or missing entirely. How will you ensure the latest science is incorporated into the city's planning efforts?

I will leverage the expertise of those within the scientific community by making sure they are regularly consulted and that their input is incorporated into our decision-making process. Doing so will ensure that the information that the City has to help guide our planning process remains timely and relevant.

Across the region, plans to address flooding vary differently and there is a lack of communication across municipal lines on this issue. As mayor, how will you address this problem and increase the City's collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions and the Council of Governments (COG)?

The City of Charleston must have a Mayor that can create strong working relationships with all our neighboring jurisdictions. As noted, our current administration has failed to create open lines of communication and build coalitions across the multiple municipal lines in our region. During my 12 year tenure on City Council, I have built strong working relationships among my peers on City Council which is why many of them have endorsed my candidacy for Mayor. Additionally, I have built strong relationships with elected officials of Charleston, Berkeley, and Dorchester counties as well as at the State and Federal level. As Mayor, I will continue to build upon those relationships to ensure that the City has open lines of communication with all our neighboring governments. Water knows no boundaries which is why we must address flooding collectively as a region.

Residents on the Westside and Eastside are some of the most affected by flooding and waves of new infill development. How will you ensure all the interests of all residents are included in the city's planning for a growing city and a changing climate?

Although we may have 5 very distinct areas of our City with different needs and issues, we are One Charleston. While on Council my job has been to represent the citizens of District 1. But while on City Council I also have taken the time to make sure I understand all the issues across our entire City and support my colleagues on City Council with issues affecting their communities. It is because of my inclusive approach to providing leadership to our City that I had so many of my colleagues on City Council ask me to run for Mayor. I have been humbled by the support of my colleagues on City Council for my candidacy as Mayor. They know my history of being inclusive of supporting all parts of our City not just my District. It is what I have done in the past and what I will continue to do in the future.

Planners and scientists believe it will cost more than \$2 billion to solve all the city's flooding problems. How will you prioritize spending on projects in the short and long term? Give one project example of what you will do in your tenure and where the money will come from.

I will prioritize spending in the short term on maintaining our current drainage infrastructure. In the long term, the large infrastructure projects that have been identified such as Church Creek, Calhoun West, and the Low Battery will require significant funding resources. Those three projects alone will likely cost over \$500 million. The City's total annual budget is \$200 million. The City cannot fund these projects on its own. The Mayor's term is 4 years, which is not a long time when you consider the enormity of getting some of these larger projects funded. During my tenure, I will work to ensure that the City makes finding funding sources at the County, State and Federal levels for our very large infrastructure projects a priority. The one project I will complete in my term is to create a Master Stormwater Maintenance Plan. The plan will be focused on ensuring that our pipes are the right size, pipes that are collapsed are repaired or replaced, and that our ditches, storm drains and outfalls are kept clean. I will

Flooding

Question and Answers

ensure that we are actually getting things done that will have an immediate impact on improving drainage in our City. The funding sources to accomplish this will come from the City's drainage fund and Storm Water Fees. The plan will be the guiding document for how our City addresses stormwater drainage now and into the future. Additionally, I will work with my colleagues on City Council to create a fiscal mandate that requires the City Council to appropriate funding for stormwater maintenance within our annual budgeting process.

Regulations and building practices in place now ignore the realities of a changing climate and encourage development in flood-prone places. Unless we revise zoning and land use ordinances this city will continue in the pattern of building and flooding. What are your specific plans for updates to zoning and land-use practices and how will you garner the political support to transform current practices?

I currently sit on the committee that is creating the City's updated Storm Water manual. Those revisions to the manual will include recommendations for how flood-prone areas within the City are developed or not. Once our work is complete with the Storm Water Manual, I will begin working with my colleagues on City Council to gain their support for the passage of the new manual. This is the first critical step in the process. Once City Council has adopted the new Stormwater Manual then I will begin taking the necessary next steps to update zoning ordinances that are recommendations from within the Manual. I have a proven track record of building coalitions within City Council to get the necessary support (7 votes) to get things done.

Buyouts for homes that flood severely and repeatedly are becoming a growing trend nationally to mitigate the impacts of worsening flooding. We saw this recently in the Bridgepointe subdivision of the Shadowmoss neighborhood. What are your thoughts on this mitigation strategy, and do you plan to help people whose homes are repeatedly flooded relocate to higher ground?

I support the buyout program as in some cases, such as Bridgepointe, it is the only logical option for homeowners. I will continue to support the program and ensure that the city staff is working with our residents to help those who may qualify for these programs.

We all know there are limited dollars to address worsening flooding in Charleston, and some projects must take a backseat to others. Still, the current administration has endorsed Charleston County's plans to use money from the 2016 half-cent sales tax to build the I-526 extension. Do you agree we should fund the I-526 extension, and, if so, how do you justify spending those hundreds of millions of dollars rather than immediately funding action on flooding?

I understand the intent of this question however it is a comparison of apples and oranges. Large flooding projects such as Calhoun West and Church Creek are City driven projects in the early design phases. I-526 Extension is a County driven project that has already been approved and funded by the State and County and are in the permitting and land acquisition phases. To be able to prioritize these projects would require the funding sources to qualify equally for all projects and they would all need to be in the same stages of completion. Large flooding infrastructure projects in Charleston are very important to our City's future and as Mayor, I will work hard to find funding sources to ensure we get these projects planned and completed.

Will you apply for SC Transportation Infrastructure Bank funding for the Calhoun West Drainage Improvement Project and the Low Battery Seawall Project?

The following is taken directly from the SC Transportation Infrastructure Bank Act. “Eligible project” means a highway, including bridges, or transit projects which provides public benefits by either enhancing mobility and safety, promoting economic development, or increasing the quality of life and general welfare of the public. “Eligible project” also includes mass transit including, but not limited to, monorail and mono-beam mass transit systems. The flooding projects listed above do represent projects that enhance safety, quality life and welfare of the public. However, given that they are not a highway, bridge or transit projects I am not certain they would qualify as eligible projects. I would be willing to apply for funding from the SC Infrastructure Bank however given the above I would look to additional funding opportunities that may be better fitted for these important projects.