



Legislation Text

File #: 19-0070, Version: 1

Resolution Adopting the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission Recommendation Pertaining to Minimum Sea Level Rise Planning Criteria For Future Development

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND:

In October 2018, the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) adopted a resolution recommending local governments in Hampton Roads incorporate proposed HRPDC policy and approach into local plan and policies. The primary item that the HRPDC has recommend is a set of planning horizon numbers related to sea level rise; they recommend localities adopt policies to plan for:

- 1.5 feet of relative sea level rise for near-term planning (2019-2050);
- 3 feet of relative sea level rise for mid-term planning (2050-2080); and
- 4.5 feet of relative sea level rise for long-term planning (2080-2100).

Staff recommends adopting this policy as a base number for planning decisions, with the understanding that depending on other local factors, context, strategic importance, and life span of an investment, the city may choose to plan for greater sea level rise. There is a benefit to adopting a region-wide policy, such as putting us all on the same page when dealing with state and federal agencies such as VDOT.

Recommendation:

Approve resolution and provide feedback on Resilient Hampton update

WHEREAS, Hampton has completed Phase I of the Resilient Hampton initiative which calls for decisions related to resilience and planning to be made using the best available data;

WHEREAS, the tide gauge at Sewell's Point in Norfolk has recorded nearly 1.4 feet of relative sea level rise since 1927, equivalent to a change of 1.52 feet per 100 years;

WHEREAS, reports by the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission staff have found the Hampton Roads region to be particularly vulnerable to flooding and sea level rise;

WHEREAS, several federal agencies have found, as described in the technical report, "Global and Regional Sea Level Rise Scenarios for the United States," published in 2017, that "long-term sea level rise driven by global climate change presents clear and highly consequential risks to the United States over the coming decades and centuries";

WHEREAS, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science published, in 2018, a "Sea-Level Report Card" for Norfolk, Virginia, that projected relative sea level rise of 1.61 feet of sea level rise between 1992 and 2050, with a 95% confidence that sea level will rise between 0.95 feet and 2.20 feet over the same interval;

WHEREAS, Hampton has recognized resilience as one of the nine key elements for the Hampton Community Plan (2006, as amended) and includes a goal that “Hampton will address the challenge of sea level rise and resiliency in a holistic manner founded upon the best science and data available, our own set of community values, and an appreciation for the uniqueness of each place”;

WHEREAS, incorporating sea level rise into local policies for planning, design and project implementation is sound public policy to help protect and promote the health, safety, and welfare of the City of Hampton; and

WHEREAS, the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission has requested its member localities adopt a standard planning horizon for sea level rise, to encourage regional consensus and cooperation.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Hampton, Virginia that:

1. It directs the City Manager to include sea level rise in project design, policy decisions, and future plans;
2. It recommends the following general minimum planning criteria be included in the next Community Plan update: planning for 1.5 feet of relative sea level rise above current mean higher high water (MHHW) for near-term (2018-2050) planning, 3 feet of relative sea level rise above current MHHW for mid-term (2050-2080) planning, and 4.5 feet of relative sea level rise above current MHHW for long-term (2080-2100) planning;
3. The above general minimum standards may be adjusted depending on local factors, context, strategic importance and relative life span of the investment; and
4. It recommends that the adopted policies include selecting an appropriate sea level rise curve and design based on the requirements and needs, including risk tolerance and cost, of a specific project or policy decision and best available data.