



May 29, 2019

To the Residents and Businesses of Davenport:

It has been 29 days since the temporary flood wall in downtown Davenport was breached. April 30th started a new path with a new context from which our community views its relationship with the Mississippi River. I offer the following as a starting place for ongoing and productive community conversations as many of us search for new footing.

Davenport's elected officials and the public at large demand a government that is transparent, inclusive, and adaptable. I will share what we know as of today, what we don't know, and what lies ahead. Before I do, I want to emphasize one point that is unique to city government given the interconnectedness of city employees and their community.

The men and women of our Public Works Department are part of the fabric of this community. They live here, work here, play here, and even dream here. Their families and friends are impacted by the same natural forces that impact everyone. Since January 9th, there have been a total of just 32 days that Public Works employees have not worked overtime on snow or flood response efforts, which includes every single weekend and holiday. As of today, they have gone 68 days straight on overtime. Almost all of their resources are finite; things like time, energy, funding, manpower, and equipment only stretch so far. What Davenport residents can be proud of is that our Public Works employees' desire to serve this community is limitless. This desire for excellent public service has carried us through the past few months.

Consider some of the major challenges these dedicated professionals have tackled head on in 2019. Plowing more than 40 inches of snow, preventing major damage in southwest Davenport, downtown flooding, flood protecting the East Village, filling potholes (many multiple times) from the numerous winter freeze/thaw cycles, securing the Elm Street and 13th Street bridges from Canadian Pacific, flood protecting Modern Woodmen Park, reacting to more than a mile of raised rail lines on Davenport's riverfront blocking eight vehicular crossings, reviewing thousands of permits for MetroNet's fiber-to-the-home network, cleaning up flood damage at Union Station, locking in 10 employees at the Water Pollution Control Plant during the flood for more than a week, and the ongoing flood cleanup effort. Compress all of these extra things together with normal daily services and the result is nothing short of inspiring.

WHAT WE KNOW

Davenport has nine miles of riverfront, and all of it floods. Without becoming hyper focused on the breach area, there are multiple businesses and residents that experience significant flood-related problems at about flood stage 18'. Davenport's

flood plan is not and never was intended specifically to protect businesses. As you review the entire length of the riverfront, you will find that to be generally true. Davenport's flood plan objective is to protect critical public assets and infrastructure, which response measures have provided additional protection to properties near and along that infrastructure. These measures in the downtown area have an upward limit at about river stage 22'. While the City of Davenport does not yet have a clear understanding of what caused the breach, the new crest later this week gives us a moment to rely on the adage that bigger is probably better. You will see the temporary flood wall recently erected in this area is a two-deep, two-high design. The objective in this area continues to be keeping 2nd and 3rd Streets open to traffic to effectively access the Arsenal Bridge.

The temporary flood wall that failed was originally constructed on March 15th. The Public Works Department could not responsibly and safely add a second layer to the top of that previous system once it was filled and holding back extreme pressure from the Mississippi River. Such efforts could have compromised the existing wall and pump set ups. As crews build a new wall now, they are taking extra precautions to set up a bigger, heavier wall to hold the river back. Until a clear understanding of what caused or contributed to the breach is available, the City of Davenport will be constructing a taller, heavier wall from the start when there is any chance that river flooding could reach flood stage 21'.

Another thing we know for sure is that you will find plenty of helping hands throughout the Quad Cities during a time of need. Stories shared through social media demonstrated countless examples of friends helping friends and strangers helping strangers. Those who were fighting the river back from their own properties found time to help others struggling in the same fight. Government and non-profit agencies came to assist each other and to the aid of impacted residents and businesses. When it matters the most, everyone steps up.

WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW

In today's fast-paced environment, it is easy for wrong information to be disseminated as fact. This point is important for everyone to understand; we do not know, at this time, what caused the temporary wall failure. Many opinions, thoughts, and observations exist out there. Only two things can be crossed off the list. 1) The breach was not caused by the roadway being compromised. 2) The breach was not caused by the water level of the river reaching a point that was higher than the actual barrier. The roadway was easy to observe when the water receded. The river level relative to the flood wall was easy to observe the hours and minutes that led up to the breach.

With the easy observations out of the way, the work of subject matter experts to recreate the conditions that led to the breach has already started. The City engaged the Army Corps of Engineers and HESCO representatives to dive into the numbers. Theories are being developed and tested. The City is just as interested as everyone else in the results of whatever conclusions are made. These results will be shared with

the community because we know that people will be making important decisions based on that information. If something was done incorrectly, we will discuss it then. Assessing blame ahead of attaining facts is not a strategy for successful organizations. It is not an acceptable attribute for Davenport's leadership team. At the same time, it is a fundamental expectation that we look critically at our decisions to learn and improve in the future.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Davenport's flood plan is built on decades of flood fighting experience. It is a good plan; one that has allowed our community to move forward. No individual person created the plan or perfected the plan; that notion would be ridiculous. From the days of buying up riverfront properties, to demolishing flood prone property, to adding floodable park area, to buying out residences in the Garden Addition and along Duck Creek, to constructing a flood wall at Modern Woodmen Park, to making the Credit Island Lodge floodable, to private developments with permanent flood barriers, Davenport's flood plan is the result of decades of careful planning, foresight, and vision paired with strategic funding opportunities. That plan is not yet done and likely never will be.

My observation is that Davenport became so good at fighting floods over the years that the flood plan started to be viewed as complete, maybe even perfected. The flood plan has always been a living document, but it may need a shock to bring it back into rhythm with today's circumstances including the threat of more frequent flooding at new record river levels. Mayor Frank Klipsch's call for a Task Force is the start of that synchronization. It is time to reevaluate some serious questions. What should be protected? What areas should be preserved for flooding? What river height should the City be prepared to combat? What is the impact on the overall environment? How will future improvements be funded? My prediction is that these answers will not be the same as they were the day before the breach.

That is what we know, what we don't know, and what lies ahead. I look forward to working with Davenport's elected officials, the men and women that work for the City, and the community at large in a productive conversation about how Davenport and the Mississippi River coexist for decades to come.

Respectfully,



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