

# HAMPTON VA

## NEWS RELEASE

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## Experts from The Netherlands offer ideas to reduce flooding along Newmarket Creek

**June 23, 2015** - A delegation of planners, engineers and architects from the Netherlands who came here last week to study flooding in Hampton and Norfolk presented their ideas Tuesday for long-term solutions.

In Hampton, the group was part of an effort called the Dutch Dialogues that looked into rising sea levels and flooding along Newmarket Creek, which faces two different flooding threats. Along the north tidal flooding pushes Chesapeake Bay water into Hampton from the Back River. Along more southern areas heavy rainfalls cause overflows.

Steven Slabbers, the Dutch landscape architect who headed the team studying Hampton, said their top recommendations were to regulate the water level, reduce runoff and add storage capacity. Because they have spent so many years dealing with water and the problem of flooding, the Dutch are recognized leaders and innovators in water management.

Slabbers said the team focused on looking at the creek not as a threat to the community but as an amenity. They sought to integrate a long-term perspective that would turn the area into a "much more interesting place to live and work." Renewing and restoring the creek, the experts said, could make it an attractive and accessible amenity with footpaths and bike trails.

Other ideas included creating "bioswales," landscaped retention areas, along Mercury Boulevard; adding green roofs; and using rain barrels to retain water and reduce runoff. The team envisioned stronger corridors along Mercury, LaSalle and Armistead avenues, connecting the city's commercial core, Langley Air Force Base, the historic downtown area and Hampton University. The creek would essentially function as one big amenity on its path through town.

"There is no silver bullet," to solve the flooding problem, cautioned Dale Morris, senior economist with the Dutch Embassy. "There are no easy answers," he said. But "inaction is probably a disaster." Morris reminded local leaders that "landforms and water do not respect political borders. If you don't address it regionally, you're doomed."

Hampton City Manager Mary Bunting said Hampton is willing to "embrace the challenges that are before us," but as opportunities, not just problems. "When we face these challenges, we get to provide social opportunity, recreational opportunity and economic opportunity for our localities,"

said Bunting. She pledged to work with Norfolk City Manager Marcus Jones to "be leaders in advancing this on the regional agenda."

The Hampton Roads Planning District Commission helped organize Dutch Dialogues Virginia, along with the Dutch Embassy.

Hampton submitted Newmarket Creek as a potential study area because it abuts nearly a third of Hampton's households, said Community Development Director Terry O'Neill. "We are a landlocked community," he said. "We have to look at what we have and how we can reinvent areas to improve the quality of life and the economy."

Newmarket Creek also flows into parts of Newport News, and city officials there also participated in the study. In fact, one Dutch team member said the group considered the creek a single element and deliberately did not look at where city borders fell.

For more information on the Dutch Dialogues in Virginia see [hampton.gov/dutchdialogues](http://hampton.gov/dutchdialogues) or [lifeatsealevel.org](http://lifeatsealevel.org)

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