

GREEN BROOK FLOOD CONTROL COMMISSION
NEWSLETTER
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PROSPECT PLACE PENINSULA

Picture the wishbone of a turkey. The right side of the wishbone is the Green Brook running down to the point of the wishbone. The left side of the wishbone is the Ambrose Brook running down and joining into the Green Brook.

Inside the wishbone formed by the two streams is a very pleasant peninsula of about 30 acres altogether. Along the high ground at the center of this peninsula is a very old street, Prospect Place. Dead end, of course. Altogether there are 22 houses on Prospect Place.

PROTECTION FOR PROSPECT PLACE

The original concept considered by the Federal Engineers was to build an earthen levee, in the general shape of a horseshoe, extending around these houses, and separating the houses from the Green Brook stream on the right side of the wishbone. And from the Ambrose Brook on the left side of the wishbone.

The dead end street, Prospect Place, runs along the high ground of the peninsula. But, unfortunately, that ground is not high enough to be above the flood level of the most severe floods.

THE OPINION OF THE PROPERTY OWNERS

In June 1995, Middlesex Mayor Dobies arranged a meeting on a Saturday morning, in the Prospect Place street, and the Federal Engineers had an opportunity to discuss plans for protection with the residents.

The residents made it pretty clear that they were not in favor of an earthen levee. They didn't like the idea of having their houses separated from the rather attractive wooded and open land behind their houses, running down to the two brooks. The property owners made it clear that they preferred protection by individual "flood proofing".

In a nutshell, "flood proofing" is an individual, house by house, architectural treatment to keep floodwaters away from the house.

HOW ABOUT US?

After the Floyd flood, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, together with the State of New Jersey, came through with money to buy out the 10 houses on Raritan Avenue, on the other side of the Ambrose Brook.

The people on Prospect Place quite naturally asked: how about us?

Middlesex Borough officials turned to NJDEP officials, and to the Federal Engineers, and asked: is there some way for the people on Prospect Place to get what they want? They want to be bought out, just as is being done for the Raritan Avenue people.

The NJDEP people, the Federal Engineers, and the Green Brook Flood Control Commission put their heads together. Maybe we can use the money which would have gone into a levee on the outside of the left wishbone (the Ambrose Brook), which now won't be needed to protect the Raritan Avenue houses; and use those savings to pay for the purchase and removal of the houses on Prospect Place.

A THOROUGH STUDY OF COMPARATIVE COSTS

The Federal Engineers did a thorough study of the costs of the plan for that area (Raritan Avenue plus Prospect Place), and concluded that because the levee along the Ambrose Brook will not be needed, the Project could purchase and remove the Prospect Place houses and still remain within the authorized budget.

COSTS ARE OKAY; BUT THERE'S A HITCH

The study concluded that people on Prospect Place could have what they want (buyouts), and still stay within the overall cost authorization for Raritan Avenue plus Prospect Place.

But there is a hitch. The Federal rules say that you cannot use money saved on one "Segment" of the project to pay for a change in a different "Segment". Only Congress has the authority to make such a money transfer.

As the Newsletter goes to press, Congress hasn't finished their consideration. We hope to be able to finish this story in the next Newsletter.