



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Reginald Goodson, City Manager
Dwan Bell, Public Utilities Director
Carl Best, Development Services Director
Jon Hawley, Grants Administrator

Date: March 18, 2026

Re: Consideration - Authorization to Apply, National Coastal Resilience Fund grant for Dawson Street

BACKGROUND:

For several years, City staff have been working to combat flooding around Dawson Street. As the Council is aware, residents here suffer from repetitive flooding and property erosion. Flooding here also affects important public infrastructure, including a sanitary sewer pump station and Southern Avenue as it crosses Charles Creek.

With grants from the NC Department of Environmental Quality and Golden LEAF, the City hired engineers to evaluate the Dawson area and propose flooding solutions. The first we're implementing is the Dawson Canal and Outfall Restoration Project. The City has nearly \$2.5 million in grant funding available for the project's design and construction, which will stabilize the eroding canal between Park and Dawson streets, protect the City's pump station from erosion, and replace a culvert under Dawson Street. The project is under design now, and our aim is to move into construction bidding later this year.

While the Dawson Canal project will greatly benefit this area, it doesn't include stabilizing the shoreline along Dawson Street, Hunter Street, and Tuscarora Avenue. However, the National Coastal Resilience Fund (NCRF) offers a funding opportunity to pursue this work. In this memo, City staff are requesting authorization to apply to the NCRF for site assessment and preliminary design of shoreline improvements to the Dawson area. Engineering funding would position the City to seek construction grants. There is no match requirement.

ANALYSIS:

The NCRF is a federal grant program administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, a Congressionally-established nonprofit organization. Through NCRF, the

Foundation seeks to protect coastal communities from flooding and other coastal hazards while also improving habitats for fish and wildlife. To create a pipeline of projects, NCRF funds proposals across four categories: capacity building and planning, site assessment and preliminary design, final design, and implementation (construction).

The Dawson-Hunter-Tuscarora shoreline is next to a heavily vegetated part of Charles Creek; water there is also routinely only inches below the roads themselves. There is a great need for improvements here, as affirmed by the recently completed Dawson-Hunter Stormwater Improvement Study. However, neither that study, nor the ongoing Dawson Canal project, include designing or constructing these improvements. Such improvements could halt roadway and yard erosion, reduce flooding through better stormwater storage, and improve water quality and habitats.

The City is therefore best positioned to apply for a site assessment and preliminary design grant. Notably, this category will allow us to consider different project approaches, such as nature-based stormwater infrastructure, that meaningfully reduces flooding and erosion while also providing environmental benefits. Notably, NCRF states that nature-based solutions/infrastructure may include “gray infrastructure,” such as culverts, pipes, walls/piles, etc., so long as they advance both resiliency and environmental benefits. Proposing a nature-based solution would also appeal to other agencies that fund resiliency and stormwater management.

City staff are working with JMT, our engineer for the current Dawson Canal project, to provide an initial scope and cost estimate for our application. There is no maximum for preliminary design grants, but they typically go up to \$1.5 million. Matching funds are not required or proposed at this time.

NCRF requires applicants to submit short pre-proposals by March 31; proposals of interest are invited to submit final proposals by June 24. City staff request authorization to submit both the pre-proposal and, if selected, a final proposal for the project described herein.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

By motion, authorize City staff to submit proposals to the National Coastal Resilience Fund for site assessment and preliminary design of Dawson-area shoreline improvements, as proposed herein.