



**Carmage Walls**  
**Commentary Prize**

**2018 Entry Form**

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**Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.)**

Hampton Roads has the second-largest population in America threatened by sea-level rise, and the flooding caused by Hurricane Matthew in October 2016 — which was particularly acute in Virginia Beach — offered further evidence the region is woefully unprepared to handle it. These editorials represent part of our continued attempt to outline and explain the issue to readers, to propose thoughtful solutions to address it and to inspire the type of urgency needed to tackle the problem effectively.

This remains a work in progress, but we believe our advocacy of thoughtful, comprehensive and cooperative solutions is an important piece in a very complex puzzle that will determine the fate of the region and its 1.7 million residents.

*our views*

# BEACH SLOWLY MOVES FORWARD ON FLOODING FIXES

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DESPITE THE OLD adage of April showers bringing May flowers, a rainy first week of May instead renewed concerns about storm water management in several Virginia Beach neighborhoods.

Between May 1 and May 5, two fronts moved in and dumped more than 2 inches of water on the area. According to the National Weather Service, the area has recorded more than 10.5 inches of precipitation since March 1 and more than 15.5 inches this year, both well above normal.

Soggy, saturated ground can only absorb so much water before it yields, leaving the rain to overwhelm the inadequate storm water system. It pooled in streets, crept over curbs, made some streets impassable and slowly crawled toward houses, cars and businesses.

For residents of neighborhoods flooded by the remnants of Hurricane Matthew in October, the spot flooding was an unwelcome reminder of when the weather turned their lives upside down.

That storm dumped as much as a foot of rain in communities that had been soaked by Tropical Storm Julia only a few weeks prior. There was no place for the water to go, and Hampton Roads saw some of its most damaging, costliest flooding in years.

Some 1,400 homes in Virginia Beach alone were damaged by floodwaters, a catastrophe from which a good number of people have yet to fully recover. Drive through the neighborhood of Windsor Woods, for instance, and external storage units remain perched on driveways, full of cherished memories, as the rebuilding continues.

This was an awful disaster. And it fueled criticism that the city had neglected needed improvements to its storm water system in order to pursue other capital priorities, including new development at the Oceanfront.

That is a fair complaint, since greater vision long ago may have mitigated the damage in October. But it also misses the mark, since Virginia Beach — a city that boasts a \$1.9 billion operating budget — has the resources to comfortably shoulder a number of initiatives at once.

What's more, it distracts from what has emerged as the most pressing concern before the City Council in recent weeks: What to do about the storm water system now to prepare for future weather events.

In December, a presentation to City Council outlined nearly a half billion dollars in needed improvements to the storm water system. It tallied more than \$400 million in unfunded needs that were classified as “critical.”

The five neighborhoods hardest hit by Matthew — Windsor Woods, Princess Anne Plaza, Ashville Park, Sherwood Lakes and The Lakes — were all listed as priorities, and together accounted for \$180 million of that total.

So began a discussion among council members and City Manager Dave Hansen as to how best to tackle so daunting a challenge. They endorsed storm water improvements as one of their annual goals, and set about crafting a budget that could satisfy residents' concerns.

That promised to be an impossible task.

The staggering cost of these projects meant the city could not responsibly fund them all at once. And even if Virginia Beach secured the money, the planning, permitting and construction would take more than a decade to complete.

The original storm water capital improvement plan put just \$22 million annually toward those projects, and the five neighborhoods so badly damaged by last year's flooding were not included. Obviously, that was not going to stand.

Hansen proposed a 15-year plan to pay for the entirety of the \$400 million backlog, using a 2.5-cent-per-day increase in storm water fees. Residents would pay \$9.12 more a year for five years.

It would also devote 1 cent of the city's real estate tax to supplement the money from the increase in storm water fees. All together, the funds would be enough to tackle the full roster of projects.

Council members John Moss and Jessica Abbott offered an alternative solution, proposing to amass all the necessary funding by pulling funding from a number of other initiatives, such as a plan to expand full-day kindergarten to more city schools.

Theirs was a well-intentioned plan, though not a feasible one.

Finance Director Patti Phillips said it could hurt the city's credit rating and exhaust Virginia Beach's debt capacity. It was pointed out that funding these projects in just three years, as Moss and Abbott proposed, wouldn't expedite construction, which would still take an estimated 13 years.

It also had the unintended effect of raising residents' hopes for swift resolution of the issue. But flooding is a problem that cannot be fixed overnight, even if everyone wishes it could be so.

Ultimately, the council on Tuesday voted 9-2, with Abbott and Moss against, to approve the capital improvement plan, which spans six years and totals about \$3.3 billion.

About \$132 million will go toward storm water improvement projects. Many of the neighborhoods hit hardest last year will see some, if not all, of the funding required to alleviate severe flooding.

For instance, \$16.5 million was designed for Windsor Woods, which has \$31 million in needs. Princess Anne will receive \$20 million of the \$66 million estimated for its projects. Only \$2 million is set aside for The Lakes, but Lake Chubb, which was not on the original list, will get \$6 million.

This is not a perfect solution. And dozens of residents who attended Tuesday's meeting left angry and frustrated that the council couldn't — or, in the view of some, wouldn't — do more.

However, this is a thoughtful, reasoned and responsible approach to a massive and costly problem decades in the making.

That will be small comfort to residents still hurting from Matthew, and everyone in Virginia Beach threatened every time the skies darken and the rain starts to fall.

But progress, even when it's overdue, is still progress. And this plan is a decent way forward.

*our views*

# HURRICANE HARVEY SHOULD SERVE AS A DEADLY WARNING

EVEN AS Hurricane Harvey continued to pour rain on communities in Texas, Louisiana, Tennessee and Kentucky last month — an estimated 33 trillion gallons of precipitation, all told — debate turned to how much of a role climate change played in the storm event.

It was a predictable avenue for discussion, and certainly a worthy topic for consideration here in Hampton Roads, where the encroaching seas creep closer to dwellings and where blue-sky flooding is a common event.

However, arguments over the changing climate threaten to distract us from the need for determined, urgent action to enact planning protocol and build the necessary infrastructure for flood mitigation and population protection.

It's understandable that those who dismissed climate change as a hoax — hello, President Donald Trump — were eager to insist that their obstinance on this issue played no role in the tragedy of Hurricane Harvey.

There have been powerful hurricanes before, they argued. And they are correct. Tropical systems have been a summer staple of the Atlantic Ocean long before Hurricane Harvey slammed into Texas last month or Hurricane Irma barreled toward Florida this week.

For centuries, low-pressure systems that formed near the equator have been fueled by warm air and water to create nature's most impressive and terrifying weather engines. History is replete with stories of these storms striking unsuspecting populations with devastating effect.

That said, humans have never before had more accurate measurements of the natural world.

Scientists now monitor weather patterns from satellites that orbit the earth and collect readings from instruments across the ocean. They routinely fly planes into the middle of even the most powerful storms to learn more about their makeup and gain insight into where they might travel.

And what they tell us is that the warming oceans add fuel to these hurricanes. They say that coastal communities should expect to see more frequent tropical cyclones — and more powerful ones — as a result.

That's now inevitable. Still in the wind is whether we take specific steps to protect coastal communities such as those here in Hampton Roads — and whether we can do it fast enough.

So set aside for now the argument as to whether the 6 billion people on Earth somehow affect the planet's climate. Instead, devote that energy to tackling a concern that is arguably more pressing in its need: what communities such as this will do to protect themselves.

After all, a great deal of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Harvey was due to the planning decisions made in places such as Houston, a city that had few laws about where things could be built and where people could live.

To be clear, Harvey's unprecedented rainfall would have inundated any city. Some places recorded 50 inches of rain in a matter of days. A flood was going to happen.

But Houston officials made years of choices that contributed to a humanitarian catastrophe, from not protecting green space that would absorb rainwater to failing to maintain the city's system of reservoirs and bayous that were expected to help handle flooding.

These small decisions over time led to massive problems: a building that for the first time finds its way into a 100-year floodplain or an easement given to a developer because the city was promised a few more jobs and a couple more bucks in its coffers.

They may well have made the disaster worse and could prolong an already difficult recovery since federal relief funding is often tied to adherence to federal planning guidelines.

But with Houston, the country can see clearly what a lack of smart planning and proper mitigation can lead to when massive rainfall or a substantial storm surge happens.

For Hampton Roads and other flood-prone areas, it should be cause for soul searching.

Communities here, for the most part, have been ahead of the curve in preparing for the inevitable.

Water already defined this region, and flooding over the years has helped to shape where neighborhoods and businesses are located. Residents had little choice but to take seriously the threat of rising seas and the potential for calamitous storms.

Yet, it has not been enough. There are still far too many people at risk in the event of a catastrophe, inadequate highway capacity to evacuate them before a storm and too few protections to shield lives and property from the worst effects.

Some of that is surely the responsibility of city officials, such as those in Virginia Beach who should have moved to address the woefully inadequate stormwater system years ago and those in Norfolk who have yet to address the fact that some of the city's most vulnerable residents occupy the most flood-prone property.

But it must be noted that officials are elected by the voters and are expected to reflect the will of the electorate. If city officials didn't act quickly enough or aggressively enough on flood mitigation, then residents also shoulder some of that blame.

It's also a fact that localities in the region should be working in greater partnership with one another on this issue, if nothing else. Flooding from higher seas and stronger storms is an existential threat to Hampton Roads, but officials are still reluctant to cooperate.

Encouraging such collaboration might be a suitable role for Richmond to play, but even state government has been sluggish to face the problem head on.

In this year's legislative session, the Virginia Senate killed a measure that would have created a Cabinet-level position to handle coastal protection and flooding adaptation, an idea that emerged from Norfolk. A companion measure failed in the House Appropriations Committee.

And it's little surprise that a commonwealth that found itself \$1.5 billion in the hole last year didn't have much to spare for mitigation and planning efforts, especially when the cost continues to climb.

Really, the only institutions in Hampton Roads remotely prepared for what's to come are the military bases, thanks to some forward-looking leadership in the Pentagon. If only that leadership would rub off on the rest of the region.

Perhaps Houston and Hurricane Harvey can prove helpful toward that end. Perhaps this awful tragedy will finally prompt this region to take a sober look in the mirror and recognize what needs to happen.

Mitigation. Planning. Readiness.

These are what require our advocacy and our energy, our determination and our dollars, especially now that we know what awaits us.

*our views*

# A LONG YEAR OF RECOVERY FROM HURRICANE MATTHEW

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THEY SAID it would turn.

That was the nearly unanimous conclusion of the weather experts and their squiggly spaghetti modeling. A year ago, they all predicted that Hurricane Matthew, a once-powerful storm lurking in the Atlantic Ocean off the South Carolina coast, would make a sharp turn to the east.

Virginia, they said, had nothing to fear.

So a pensive Hampton Roads watched the storm's progress with wary confidence. Some residents made a point of visiting the grocery store or a hardware outlet for supplies, but most figured a little heavy rain and wind gusts were no cause for worry.

But weather forecasting is far from an exact science, and Matthew instead tracked up the coast, never made its turn and barreled right across the region beginning on Oct. 8.

A landscape already saturated by an array of severe weather — including Tropical Storm Hermine over Labor Day and the remnants of Tropical Storm Julia two weeks later — meant that Matthew's 9-12 inches of rain simply had no place to go.

Creeks became raging streams, and roads transformed into swollen rivers. The underpasses in Norfolk filled with filthy rainwater, and cars driven carefully or quickly into the water-logged thoroughfares found the same dismal fate.

But the neighborhoods — in Chesapeake and Portsmouth, in Hampton and Norfolk, and especially in Virginia Beach — bore the worst of Matthew's effects as water poured into bedrooms, living rooms and kitchens across the region.

It was a soggy, harrowing nightmare come to life, one from which some families have yet to fully recover.

One year later, the ugly stain of that storm remains visible across Hampton Roads. All told, Hurricane Matthew inflicted billions in damage on the southeastern United States, from Florida to Virginia.

North Carolina, in particular, took a beating. Heavy rains there flooded all six of the river basins that carve up the eastern part of the state, leaving many towns under water for days. One of the poorest regions of the country, eastern North Carolina, is home to some communities that may never recover, despite the best efforts of state and federal officials.

The damage in Hampton Roads was more acute, generally confined to low-lying or waterside communities across the region. Virginia Beach was the worst hit, and about half of the 4,000 homes flooded in Virginia were located there.

Five neighborhoods — Windsor Woods, Princess Anne Plaza, Ashville Park, Sherwood Lakes and The Lakes — saw the worst of it. And, in fact, residents in many of those places had long ago pointed to flooding as a key concern.

Virginia Beach officials were aware of the risk and recognized that the city had a long list of investments needed across the community to improve stormwater drainage. The total price tag, per a presentation in December to City Council, is expected to reach half a billion dollars.

Of course, that's still too little, too late for families that had lost everything in Matthew's floodwaters. It is little better for those who managed to rebuild but still had City Hall telling them that stormwater work could take as long as 15 years to complete.

The resulting outrage has yet to subside, nor should it, really. Homeowners have every right to wonder why this wasn't more of a priority years ago, despite understanding that what happened last year was an anomaly — an uncommon string of storms that conspired to create a massive disaster.

Before Matthew, the City Council was putting about \$22 million a year into its stormwater capital improvement plan, but upped its funding to \$300 million deployed over six years, raising the stormwater fee to help pay for it. Residents will pay \$9.12 more a year for five years.

That investment should bring tangible improvement, though it is far from perfect.

Only \$16.5 million was designated for Windsor Woods, which has \$31 million in needs. Princess Anne will receive \$20 million of the \$66 million estimated for its projects. Only \$2 million is set aside for The Lakes. Lake Chubb, which was not on the original list, will get \$6 million.

That's not all that's being done. Dredging projects are clearing canals to expedite drainage, and the City Council was updated on the progress of those efforts in September. By most accounts, City Hall is acting with greater responsiveness to requests for service on those issues as well.

The city also launched an Adopt-A-Drain program so volunteers can help keep gutters free from debris. That will help direct some public action toward the problem, though it's kind of astounding that a city of its size, with a budget that large, needs volunteers to keep its drains clear.

Yet, so long as the storms keep threatening the coast, so long as the seas keep creeping higher, so long as people still live in those neighborhoods and the drainage work remains incomplete, folks who live there will be at risk.

That is part of Matthew's unfortunate legacy, and it's an unwelcome consequence of living in Hampton Roads.

There is still much more to be done across the region to deal with recurrent flooding and to better prepare in the event of another hurricane.

Cities such as Virginia Beach must make thoughtful decisions about planning development and emphasize smart growth so as to protect residents and not add to the problems. They must continue to invest in stormwater improvements, to be vigilant about draining and to be smart about approving new residential areas.



Residents must also play a role, involving themselves in civic affairs surrounding these decisions and calling on candidates, especially in this election season, to make dealing with recurrent flooding a priority in Richmond as well as in our local communities.

The flooding from Hurricane Matthew may well have been an anomaly, but that in no way diminishes the need for mitigation and reasonable precautions for the future. As was witnessed this year in places such as Houston, shoddy planning and poor drainage can put lives and property at risk.

Hampton Roads can do better. That's the best way to be ready for the next storm that doesn't move in the manner meteorologists predict.

*our views*

# FEMA FUNDS CAN IMPROVE OCEANFRONT FLOOD CONTROL

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IN VIRGINIA BEACH, protecting homes and businesses from flooding occupies a prominent spot in the public discourse. As well it should.

That's the case again tonight when the City Council takes up a proposal to apply \$5.3 million toward drainage improvement in the resort area. The money comes from the Federal Emergency Management Agency as reimbursement for city funds used in the Hurricane Matthew recovery.

City Manager Dave Hansen wants to use it to begin work on the estimated \$112 million in drainage improvements needed at the Oceanfront. It will serve as seed money toward the \$15 million first phase of design.

Every proposal to spend public money in the resort area generates opposition. This time, the pushback is acute since the Oceanfront was spared the flooding that followed Matthew's downpours.

Residents want to know why this money shouldn't instead go to expedite stormwater improvement projects in neighborhoods such as Windsor Woods, which witnessed the worst of the disaster.

At least 1,400 Beach homes were damaged during the flooding last year. Hundreds of families were displaced, either temporarily or permanently, and many were not required to have federal flood insurance, meaning they were asked to shoulder the massive cost of rebuilding.

After that disaster, city staff compiled a list of flood-control projects with a combined cost of nearly a half-billion dollars — a price tag that would challenge any community, even one as relatively well-to-do as Virginia Beach.

The ensuing debate over funding, which dominated this year's budget process, was marked by a division between those who contend the city should devote all its resources to flood control and those who argue that a deliberate and determined funding effort would be sufficient while allowing the Beach to also press ahead on other priorities.

It also put a spotlight on the city's stormwater fees, which according to Pilot reporting, have generated about \$385 million since 2004. City officials say the money is spent on operations and maintenance of pump stations, ditches, lakes, dams and pipes, but also for capital projects and other ancillary initiatives such as mosquito control and street sweeping.

Yet all that money — about \$41 million annually — couldn't keep Beach neighborhoods dry when it mattered. It's a fact that breeds understandable resentment.

It should be said that Matthew was an uncommon storm, both in its plodding pace and record rainfall. It served as the coup de grace for a drainage infrastructure hit hard in an uncommonly wet summer for the region.

That offers little comfort to families who waded through waist-deep water to escape their homes or who endured the choking stench of rotting drywall or mold to salvage a lifetime of cherished possessions.

They also find little reassurance in the city's adoption of a 15-year timeline for completing projects in the neighborhoods hit worst by the flooding last year. They question the notion that such obviously pressing work should take so long to complete.

Yet, in May, the council voted 9-2 on a capital improvement plan that would put \$300 million toward those projects within that timeframe. The council also voted to increase stormwater fees to generate more revenue to fund those needed drainage improvements.

That won't be fast enough for some, but it does prioritize many of the worst-hit areas. The quarterly update of flood-control projects, presented to the City Council in September, shows that effort is bearing fruit.

The resort area — which generates so much of the city's total revenue — is the only area designated for flood control money that did not receive funding in the 2018-23 capital plan. That's what the city manager proposes to address using the \$5.3 million from FEMA.

City staff maintains the money cannot accelerate work in the neighborhoods affected by Matthew, that the projects are sequential and must be ordered to maximize their effect.

So long as that is the case, and investment in the resort area does not impede progress in these other areas, the manager's proposal is worthy of support.

*our views*

# BEACH STILL CLEANING UP AFTER MATTHEW

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HURRICANE MATTHEW left an indelible mark on Hampton Roads when it inundated the region in October 2016.

Some of the evidence has faded, but it can be seen in the high-water marks on wooden fences and backyard sheds, in the unkempt yards of unoccupied homes and in the anxiety so many residents still feel when the forecast calls for heavy rain.

The pain is felt acutely in Virginia Beach, where about 2,000 homes were damaged or destroyed by the floodwaters. And the echoes are naturally and understandably felt in the community's political debates, especially when the discussion turns to how best to manage storm water there.

Shortly after the flood, city staff members estimated the cost of an updated drainage system to be about half a billion dollars, a massive undertaking expected to take more than a decade. The timeline was explained to be more about the need to tackle water projects sequentially rather than all at once, though price was certainly a factor.

In the 2017 budget, the City Council appropriated nearly \$300 million over six years for flood-control projects, emphasizing what could be done quickly. There is a plan in place to address the five neighborhoods most severely affected by Matthew — Windsor Woods, Ashville Park, Princess Anne Plaza, The Lakes and Sherwood Lakes — completion of which could take as long as 15 years.

That was never going to satisfy the whole city, especially those whose homes were damaged in the storm or who live precariously in flood zones.

Their complaints are valid and justified; the city should have long ago made storm-water drainage a higher priority. But it is also important to focus on the possible rather than the "should-have," to advance a plan with the greatest likelihood of protecting the most property in the shortest period of time.

That debate continued late last year when the Federal Emergency Management Agency informed city officials that it would reimburse the community for the cost of Matthew recovery, to the tune of \$8.1 million.

Residents argued over the best use of this money, which some mistakenly considered to be a bonus windfall rather than money spent from city coffers at a time of pressing need. It was, after all, funds that could easily be returned to the city's bank account for the next, and inevitable, rainy day.

City Manager Dave Hansen proposed that it be used in the Oceanfront district, which, while not damaged by Matthew, routinely faces the same problems as other Virginia Beach neighborhoods. It was omitted in the city's drainage plan, but Hansen argued that now was a good time to begin planning the necessary improvements.

It was a reasonable argument, if a bit tone deaf to his constituents. Some council members, at the behest of residents, contended that the money should go to speed the work in Windsor Woods, a neighborhood where many homeowners would face financial ruin after another storm.

The Oceanfront plan was thus tabled for debate and, this week, \$5.3 million from FEMA was appropriated to the projects in Windsor Woods, allowing those to begin in the next three years. The remaining \$3 million in federal funds will likely be a topic of discussion during the budget process this year.

This is an eminently decent outcome since it means that a neighborhood perpetually in the cross hairs of disaster may see speedier relief. And the council seemed to agree that was the best choice at this time.

Yet, the storm water improvements needed at the Oceanfront, estimated at \$112 million, remain unfunded. Residents there endure flooding too, and their fears are no less valid simply because the district plays host to tourists.

Hurricane Matthew changed Virginia Beach, but its ugliest remnant is how it continues to pit neighborhoods against each other, obscuring the certain truth that the city will sink or swim as one.

*our views*

# CLIMATE CHANGE ALSO THREATENS THAT OTHER COAST

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RESIDENTS OF Hampton Roads should send their condolences to California's Bay area, which recently received a grim prognosis about the future of that community.

According to a study recently published in the journal *Science Advances*, the region stands to lose a greater land area than previously expected due to the combination of subsidence, which is the sinking of the land, and sea-level rise.

A New York Times article reporting on the study summarized, "The combination of rising sea levels and sinking ground increases estimates of the total amount of endangered areas to a range of 48 to 166 square miles. ... While most areas around the Bay are sinking at less than 2 millimeters per year, some have been found to be sinking at a rate as high as 10 millimeters per year."

By 2100, sections of San Francisco, Union City, Santa Clara, San Mateo and Palo Alto will be submerged. About 7 million people live in the region now, and that property is among the most valuable in the state, both of which speak to the potential impact of a slowly developing environmental catastrophe.

If anyone understands their plight, it's the residents of Hampton Roads, who are bracing for a similar fate. Subsidence and rising seas pose an existential threat to this region, which already faces steadily increasing hardship as a result of more frequent and widespread flooding.

In fact, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science last week released revised estimates of predicted sea-level rise, indicating the situation is rapidly growing worse.

The Pilot's Dave Mayfield reported on Tuesday that the institute, part of the College of William & Mary, evaluated 32 localities along the Atlantic coast, Gulf of Mexico and Pacific coast, concluding that Norfolk water levels will increase by more than a foot between now and 2050.

"At the Norfolk gauge, sea-level rise has averaged about 4.6 millimeters per year, about a foot and a half over the 91 years [of records from Sewell's Point]," Mayfield wrote. "The annual increases have accelerated over the past decade, with last year's coming in at more than 5.1 millimeters, the institute reported."

This follows a study released in November, led by NASA in partnership with Old Dominion University,

that concluded that relative sea-level rise varies tremendously across the region, with some places deviating as much as seven to 10 times from the average loss of 23 millimeters (1 inch) every five years.

So trust us, California. We know what you're dealing with.

**While we hate** to pile on the bad news, Bay area residents can expect precious little help as they try to save their homes and businesses from the waters that will soon be spilling into their streets.

The president of the United States has publicly stated that he thinks climate change is a Chinese hoax. He has populated his administration with officials who are hostile to environmental protection measures and who are actively working to undermine international climate accords.

Climate-change deniers populate Congress as well, even in the committees that focus on science and research. In fact, the military is one of the few federal entities that seems to harbor a clear understanding of the havoc a warmer planet and rising seas will wreak at home and abroad.

Bay area communities may find more agreeable partners in their state government, but that's not been the case for Hampton Roads.

Richmond has been painfully slow to respond to this serious threat, and lawmakers annually look with skepticism on the urgently needed proposals our lawmakers bring to the General Assembly.

**There was progress** made, at last, this year when a bill sponsored by Sen. Lynwood Lewis, D-Accomac, and Del. Chris Stolle, R-Virginia Beach, creating a Cab-net-level position to address coastal resiliency and flooding adaptation won passage.

That helps elevate the issue in Virginia and reflects its importance, both deserved. It should lead to more responsive action as Hampton Roads tries to hold back the rising tides.

But House leaders brushed aside another important bill, this one by Virginia Beach Republican Del. Jason Miyares, which would have created the Virginia Hurricane and Flood Risk Reduction Authority, an entity capable of working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to expedite needed resiliency projects — following the lead of Louisiana, which has a similar body.

Miyares points out that Moody's, the financial information firm, will take into account the threat of climate change "and actions taken or not taken by states and cities to mitigate storm and flood damage" in making its bond ratings, and he has framed his bill as essential to protecting Virginia's borrowing power.

But it had little effect, as his colleagues are content to drag their feet despite the certain damage it will do. That's a common refrain, as the Bay area will surely come to realize if it hasn't already.

It would be nice were we able to provide greater comfort to our friends three time zones away, but surely they don't need our false hopes. Better that they know, right now, what they're in for and the long slog ahead of them.

Who knows? With Silicon Valley, home to so many innovators, also facing ruin, perhaps Hampton Roads will benefit as a result.

Surely we can use the help.