

THE TOWN OF JOHNSTON, RHODE ISLAND

1385 Hartford Avenue, Johnston, Rhode Island 02919



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 22, 2024

CONTACT INFO:

Dominique Turner
Deputy Chief of Staff
(401) 553-8812
dturner@johnston-ri.us

Town of Johnston Secures Federal Funding for Home Buyouts to Address Persistent Flooding Issues on Belfield Drive

The Town of Johnston and Mayor Joseph M. Polisena, Jr. are pleased to announce that the Town has successfully secured federal funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to address persistent flooding issues on Belfield Drive. The federal government has approved the Town of Johnston's application for funding to purchase several homes on Belfield Drive, where residents have long been affected by flooding, leading to severe public safety risks and relentless accessibility issues.

The approved funding, totaling \$5,171,587.03, will be allocated towards acquisition and restoration efforts, including demolition. The NRCS will contribute 75% of this amount, equating to \$3,878,690.25, which will be allocated to the Town of Johnston as part of the agreement. The Town will be responsible for the remaining 25%, amounting to \$1,292,896.75, assuming every property owner agrees to sell. There will be a \$40 million flood mitigation bond on the ballot in the upcoming November election. If passed by the voters, a portion of the proceeds from that bond will cover the Town's share of the buyout.

“Seeing Belfield Drive submerged under water was surreal – it resembled a lake instead of solid ground,” Mayor Joseph Polisena, Jr. said. “Our plan is clear: demolish homes, build detention ponds, and reroute water to prevent such incidents. The mandatory evacuations in January proved how serious this is, with water levels reaching 40 inches, even our military Humvee

vehicles struggled to get through without leaving our first responders stranded in the water. For these safety reasons, we had to mandate evacuations. These buyouts are an essential, one-time opportunity for residents. The use of eminent domain to take these properties is not ideal, and we encourage residents to take this buyout opportunity. The Town cannot spend more than half a million dollars for one neighborhood, while we have other major flooding problems in the town that have to be addressed as well.”

The Town of Johnston and Mayor Polisena, Jr. appreciate the U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS, and Senator Jack Reed for their support in addressing the critical issue of flooding in our community. These efforts mark a significant step forward in ensuring the safety and well-being of residents on Belfield Drive and safeguarding the integrity of the town's infrastructure.

The following addresses are eligible to participate in this one-time federal buyback program: 51 Belfield Drive, 62 Belfield Drive, 63 Belfield Drive, 77 Belfield Drive, 78 Belfield Drive, 82 Belfield Drive, 87 Belfield Drive, 96 Belfield Drive, 98 Belfield Drive.

Residents affected can expect to receive comprehensive information from the Town of Johnston regarding the next steps and procedures involved in the buyout process within the coming weeks.

For any additional questions, please contact Dominique Turner, Deputy Chief of Staff at dturner@johnston-ri.us.