

City of Hamburg
1201 Main Street
P.O. Box 106
Hamburg, Iowa 51640
PH: 712-382-1313
FX: 712-382-1405
Email: cityofhamburg106@gmail.com

ENVIRONMENTAL AND PUBLIC WORKS HEARING

Testimony of Cathy E. Crain, Mayor of Hamburg, Iowa

April 17, 2019

53 levee breaks along the Missouri River

5 miles away stood our 5-foot Federal levee built to protect us from Ditch 6. It was not designed to protect us from the Missouri because, as it had been said, it could never happen. But it has happened. Twice. In 8 years. We didn't have a chance. And we knew it.

On March 17th we needed the 13-foot emergency levee that kept our town dry in 2011. It held over 12ft of water for 120 days. But we had to tear it down when we couldn't raise the \$5.6 million required to meet Federal levee certification. We went up the Federal ladder asking for preventive funding when denied or ignored, we posted a flash mob video asking Americans, "For less than a latte, save a town". We didn't raise enough, so we were required to tear down the levee that cost \$8.6 million to build and spent another \$675,000 to remove.

Our fears were realized when over 11 ft. of water captured our town. 169 of 560 homes, 88% of our businesses and two thirds of our town were underwater.

We had evacuated our lowest elevations. But this time the devastation went where flood water had never been and it's velocity toppled a section of the nearly 2-mile Hesco barrier wall we'd built for more protection. It was 3:00am when our senior housing was evacuated. This congenial group that played bingo every afternoon at 2:00pm were roused out of bed. They had cooked their meals, raised their children, helped raised their grandkids, sold their homes and taken their most favored items to one and two bedroom apartments. Our volunteer firemen carried them out in their nightgowns and pajamas, leaving their walkers, scooters, wheelchairs and treasures. It's on the curbside waiting for debris pick-up. Our people are scattered amongst their family, friends and shelters- and it's day 31.

We had no water. We lost the water plant, wells, lift station, natural gas and City equipment. Immediately, we met to plan Hamburg 2.0. All the while our people went to work finding and helping each other, starting a Relief Center and cooking meals for the town while a Unity Church Service was organized. 4 of the 5 churches are underwater.

Only the ConAgra plant and our electrician can open. No restaurant, gas station, hair salon, barbershop, parts store, drug store, grain elevator, insurance office, bank, motel or farm implement dealership can open. There are no dry buildings for our businesses to move too. They're underwater and City Hall is housed at the grade school with laptops and cell phones.

As our farmers haul water from miles away, the volunteer fire department pump water to the tower and we drill an emergency water well. On day 19 the DNR says we can shower, do laundry and flush.

Now we talk about rebuilding the levee and once again, we need to sign another contract with the United States of America for a temporary levee. All this and we're back where we started? The only difference is we're destroyed. We must have a permanent levee solution.

What can you do? Do the right thing.

1. Make flood prevention the #1 priority. Recreation and fish must be lower on your list. We never saw Missouri river water from 1952 until 2011, until the politics changed.
2. Take a deep dive into your levee certification laws. Use our local guys to assist. The system is in desperate need of practicality.
3. When we asked in 2012 to keep our levee, there was no funding for prevention, just emergency. Make prevention an option.
4. Change line 2d in U.S.A.'s contract for tearing down emergency levees. Give small town's a chance to survive.

We're the town you want to work with.

We're responsible. 31 days ago, the City owed \$56,000.

We have untapped potential. We house the industry for our county and are slated for future growth.

We get along well with others. In the lawsuit against the USACE, only 1 of our farmers participated.

We need:

- Affordable housing and business rental space
- A "Fill In" housing program inside City limits
- A 10-acre industrial park with rural water
- The Missouri River levees raised and repaired
- The permanent levee we asked for to protect us, and
- To see our town whole and growing with our businesses and people back

But now, we're preparing for the predicted May and June flooding, without protection.

We want our future in our town with our businesses back and everybody home again. We belong together. These people. This Community. If you only saw what they are doing to re-build, you would be in awe.

We'll continue to do everything we can. Please help us do what we can't. We're worth it.