

Baltimore County lays out plan — and at least \$2 million — for climate change fight in 2023

John Lee, WYPR



Flooding is seen in Baltimore County's Turner Station. Courtesy Of Turner Station Resident Olivia Lomax.

Baltimore County has a plan to pay for damage caused by climate change in its back yard, officials announced on Thursday. The plan includes establishing a Resilience Authority to find ways to pay for long-term projects as well as getting nearly \$2 million to help Turner Station, the historically-Black neighborhood in Eastern Baltimore County.

This year, the county will be making moves to set up the Resilience Authority with guidance from its paid consultant, Throwe Environmental LLC. The county council in December agreed to pay Throwe up to \$250,000 to help it create the Resilience Authority.

Dan Nees, the director of policy and finance for Throwe Environmental said in the coming months they will

be doing an exhaustive assessment of the county, including where the climate threats are, the county's budget picture and how decisions are made.

“Our primary goal, number one goal above all else, it is our job to make sure that the communities we work in are getting the maximum amount of return for every taxpayer dollar that they invest,” Nees said.

The authority would find money to pay for projects related to climate change. Nees said that could be a wide range of possibilities from going after federal dollars to investing in real estate, to creating taxing districts where fees are collected to fund a project.

“Where you could have a community that said ‘we are having a flooding problem.’ The county can't really work on private property very effectively. But the authority could,” he said.

Another option for paying for damage done by extreme weather, according to Nees, is for the authority to issue bonds. He said that debt would be backed by revenue the authority creates, not Baltimore County.

“You would not want to have an authority like this issuing debt that is backed by what is referred to as the full faith and credit of the county, because if you did that then the county wouldn't need the authority, it would just issue their own debt,” Nees said.

In 2020, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation that enables localities the right to create resilience authorities. Charles County has one. Anne Arundel County and Annapolis have one as well.

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