

Plainfield Flood Recovery Grants Work Group Meeting

Tuesday, December 3, 2024 @ 10 a.m.

Attending:

Karen Hatcher (KH)
Michael Zahner (MZ)
Gary Smith (GS)
Josh Pitts (JP) - not available
Karl Bissex (KB)
Michael Billingsley (MB)
Denise Wheeler (DW) – via Zoom
Arion Thiboumery (AT)
Bram Towbin (BT) – not available
Shelia McGraw & Lauren Scott – TIG (@ 11 am)
Celina Barton (Goddard) (CB)

Agenda:

- EWPP Site Visit Update - Karen
- Mill Street Bridge Repair Status- Josh
- FEMA PA Visit Preparation- Gary
- Village Expansion Project- Arion
- FHWA Grant Discussion- Josh/Michael Z
- Goddard Campus Update- Celina Barton & Mike Davidson

Updates:

AT - Feb. 2025 we will know who is eligible for buyouts (27 applications (3 from 2023) 38 housing units total (some multi-family) – everything has been approved at the State level and forwarded to FEMA – cost benefit analysis will be done and town appraisals will be done – three 2023 properties Will be funded and go thru the legal process – 2024 properties will be done faster – \$10M ballpark for Plainfield.

KH - Green space planning end of 2025 – work to be done spring 2026 where buildings will be taken down

Village Expansion Project (AT)

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1) Please save the date: Saturday, February 8, 2025, 10 am – 3 pm, Plainfield Town Hall Opera House

A **Community Design Workshop** with break-out sessions facilitated by architects to design this new neighborhood. Lunch will be a community potluck meal. The goal of the day will be to develop 1-2 layouts for the new neighborhood – where lots are, roads, trails and green spaces. The final designs will be adopted by the Town through a public vote (still figuring out what this means in practice).

2) **Project Financing** - We've been offered a "low to no interest" loan to buy the parcel and develop the land from the Vermont Community Foundation. We are thinking that this needs a Town vote at Town Meeting in March. Does that sound right to this group? We expect to have a solid budgetary number by late January in the \$1.5 million range to properly warn for Town Meeting. Again, no tax-payer money will be spent, but it would be collateralized Town debt.

3) **Neighborhood Development Area** - The Planning Commission is expected to pass interim zoning updates on Monday (12/2) and the Select Board is expected to warn those changes on the same date for a hearing 2 weeks later. These changes are mostly regarding our town subdivision and density rules and are required for submission to the state for an Act 250 exemption under a "Neighborhood Development Area" which would allow the scope of additional housing in the Village Expansion Project (more than 10 houses requires an Act 250 permit normally). The "Neighborhood Development Area" is specifically designed for Towns like Plainfield, who are looking to add a new neighborhood immediately adjacent to an existing village.

<https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/designation-programs/neighborhood-development-areas>

Yes, we sent the preliminary engineering RFP out to 2 engineering firms. One firm was not able to meet our required timeline for completion of the work. The 2nd firm said that they can do it.

Sandy (our pro bono architect) and I met with the lead engineer from the 2nd firm (Engineering Ventures) at the site last week and he should be sending us a proposal this week. Hoping that this proposal comes back at a reasonable number.

AT – The Village Expansion Committee is working w/ the Vt. Community Foundation (VCF) regarding funding \$1.5M – VCF feels it is reasonable and needs a town vote at town meeting. They could borrow funds, maybe a line of credit from the Bond Bank. The Bond Bank offers a low interest rate; each house built will pay taxes to help repay the line of credit.

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White House Staff Visit - Karen/Michael B-

Karen, Michael B., Peter Youngbear and Josh attended. State participants - Pat Moulton, Doug Farnham, Eric Philkorn and Wash. DC staff - took place on Friday, 11/22/24. Vt. doesn't have county government. WH Staff looking at how they can better coordinate w/ the state and then to Plainfield via FEMA & state - a better federal level view - how do towns survive disasters of this scale without county government? How can they make their services more tailored to rural VT.? Karen said it was a good use of time.

CB is working with Heather Clark from the Biden administration who is working on a national funding program and they could potentially look at Plainfield as a pilot project.

KH - Beyond FEMA where else can we get funding to fill the gaps? We should plan a meeting to focus on other funding possibilities

MB all churches have advocates for sustainable culture and have significant funding set aside (David Arubu?).

MB is concerned about Hazard Mitigation funding if not released in Jan 2025 if it will happen under the new administration. Plainfield just received funding for the 2023 buyout program.

KH - Emergency Watershed Protection Program Site Visits. The EWP program is responsible for fixing erosion issues (separate from the buyout program). There were 16 site visits, five or six potential properties will qualify. Allyson Hook, NRCS & George Springston went out to evaluate. We should receive a report at the end of next week from NRCS as to what properties are eligible for the grant program - the report will include a cost benefit analysis to fix the properties - 75% will be covered by a grant w/ homeowners paying 25%.

Goddard Campus - Celina Barton

Friendsgiving event was well received; Goddard is encouraging community groups to use Goodard space for meetings, events, etc.; Looking to reopen the restaurant.

Marie Plug (economic affairs - Canadian/US ambassador) looking to put Goddard and Plainfield on the destination map and looking at future opportunities - Mike wants to hear from community members will do a Zoom before holidays

MB - spoke about an educational program for non-resident students - this is within the Goddard charter campus.

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CB - potential programs include climate adaptation and arts programs - they are open to ideas for relocating some town and other services to the Goddard location - David Hale is looking for a location for the archival studies program

MB - spoke w/ Bob Atkinson about improving town buildings for energy efficiency.

Batchelder Dam (MB)

MB attended a meeting last week - the time frames to decide the fate of the dam have been relaxed with no urgency - they are seeking an engineering study and a scoping study grant to determine next steps and costs - options include the impact if the dam is removed and how it would impact the flow and behavior of the river - the dam is damaged and needs repairs - the engineering study will help guide the town on the next steps - dam removal could affect the recreation field and Sabra's house foundation - Friends of the Winooski might have funding for repairs, removal, or lowering water level. Engineering and study results will be available in April 2025 - MB suggested earmarking funds for a scoping study that might require a special town meeting or a vote at town meeting in 2026.

KB said the Selectboard can't make a decision until they know the costs. -

KH - Bigger picture funding opportunities - future agenda item - broader vision and rebuilding

FHWA/Brook Rd.

Karl said that Josh told him that guardrails were put on Brook Rd. bridge this morning. The emergency repairs are now considered complete and can be invoiced. Next is a scoping study for options for more permanent repairs.

Budget process:

KH provided an update to the Selectboard so the community knows the ongoing steps and recovery process and progress.

KH and KB budget process - what information is needed and important for the FY 2026 budget for approval at Town Meeting in March 2025?

Funding to activate emergency management positions in event of another disaster

- a) KB is looking for emergency readiness funds
- b) MB shelter budget
- c) Hazard Mitigation budget line for studies (ie, forest fires) - working w/ public for educ. And working w/ families - KH suggested prof. grants ; administrator

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line item ; vol. coord line item – how do these things get on SB budget for town vote – MB/KH work on writing up a proposal – bldg in prof. capacity positions for future events for 12/16 SB mtng. to discuss for town report

KH –WEC has a PA application. All permanent work is done. We need a Hazard Mitigation plan for Brook Rd. – need to include Bram in discussions with Teia Green-Slip from WEC. Coordinating relative to long term work on Brook Rd needs a meeting w/ WEC – KH will advise WEC - **MZ & KB will take the lead and have a meeting. w/ WEC and other folks.**

11-12pm (The Integrity Group joins) Sheila (no Lauren – sick)

FEMA PA- GARY

GS – good recovery scoping meeting – things are moving forward – there is a new FEMA state rep Carter Ivy, PDMG – GS and TIG are reaching out to him.

Continuing to build out the Damage inventory – Michael Bingham (road foreman) has identified culverts that need to be upgraded.

Sheila is reaching out to Chris (TIG) for updates to the inventory.

GS – building the damage inventory within the next 60 days – when do we start sharing w/ FEMA - asking TIG – add town bridge numbers from GPS to the inventory. Looking for engineering services for the town.

KB – there may be hidden or potential damage - we may not know about it now that's why we need funding for engineering studies.

KH – Chris (TIG) is adding everything to the FEMA damage inventory.

GS & TIG – weekly FEMA meetings will be starting soon. FEMA will do site inspections once the damage inventory is submitted – GS will set up weekly state meetings.

KH – state FEMA contact (Carter) – will set up weekly FEMA and PA meetings. Chris (TIG) Carter and Byron - it is important all are on the same page.

Sheila – Need separate state meetings before FEMA meeting.

GS – Thad said we need to identify not just the bridge specific the damage – if the project meets the 50% of replacement costs it must meet current codes & standards – Josh would have a handle on these estimates – Vtrans at the Ready Grant may not qualify for funding for FEMA funds. – they have identified three

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engineering firms and will select one firm – check w/ Josh about Federal highway funding.

GS – the biggest confusion is what qualifies for Federal highway funding and what qualifies for FEMA – repairs or replace? need advice from engineers – put everything on the list and don't disqualify anything.

MZ – Hazard Mitigation Grant information can be copied from the damage inventory – Cameron Rd. could qualify for Hazard Mitigation Funds even though this is a PA project – can the town reallocate funds? Sheila said Hazard Mitigation money is different from mitigation funds from FEMA or from 428 - guaranteed funding might be available. 428 funding is more flexible and quicker - yes we can fund other projects if there are excess funds and reallocate to other projects.

AT - can we use 428 funds for Brook Rd. because it is a federally designated connecting road – once the 270 days expire for FEMA can it qualify for 428 funding?

KH - Look at future resilience projects. Are they hazard mitigation projects? – Need to have future conversations with TIG to talk thru bigger hazard mitigation projects that could be included – what else should be included?

KH – What are time limits on 428 and Hazard Mitigation funding?

Shela – will take projects from the inventory and create line items and look at best options for funding of projects - TIG will work w/ State and FEMA. It is better to overload inventory and then make changes later. If rebuilding what was there doesn't make sense we can relocate or propose an alternative project that makes sense.

Sheila – Plainfield needs A&E (architecture and engineering coordination) for the whole town – then parse out for individual projects.

Karen- What does our work look like over the next 45, 120 days?

Miscellaneous

MB – has asked Americorps for an assistant to MB - they will provide \$25,000 and a letter of intent and pay for the \$6000 town share. The Town needs someone to provide housing for the Americorps person. Celina said Goddard can provide housing.

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NEXT MEETING WILL FOCUS ON all things being considered and included in the 428 alternative projects list for FEMA application - include ranking of projects by importance and prioritize bigger vision bigger projects.

Reference below:

What are 428 funds? Section 428 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended, (Stafford Act)¹ authorizes FEMA to award Public Assistance (PA) funding based on fixed estimates. 428 funds, also known as the Public Assistance Alternative Procedures (PAAP) Program, are a part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Public Assistance (PA) Program

Large Projects Projects above a certain amount are considered "large." The threshold corresponds to the annually adjusted small project maximum. Alternative Procedures (428): For large permanent work projects using Section 428 PA Alternative Procedures, funding is made on the basis of a fixed-cost estimate agreed upon by the applicant, recipient and FEMA. PA funding is based on the estimated amount to restore the damaged facility to its pre-disaster design and function, including applicable and federally required codes and standards, and any identified eligible hazard mitigation measures. Once agreement on the fixed amount is made, the funding will not be adjusted. Applicants have the flexibility to use the funding to meet the post-disaster recovery needs, and not just build back what they had before. The applicant may also retain any excess funds for use on certain eligible activities. Standard Procedures (406): For large permanent work projects using the standard Section 406 process, funding is provided on the basis of actual costs as determined after the project is completed. The applicant's flexibility in use of the funding is limited, and they do not have the ability to retain excess funds. Small Projects Projects falling below a certain threshold are considered "small." The threshold is adjusted annually for inflation. For Fiscal Year 2020, that threshold is \$131,100. For small projects, final funding is based on the estimate at the time of project approval and certification of project completion is required when the project is done. The minimum amount that can be approved for any Project Worksheet under the PA Program for FY 2020 is \$3,300.