

# Plainfield Flood Recovery Grants Work Group Meeting

Tuesday, January 21, 2025 @ 10 a.m.

Attending:

Karen Hatcher (KH)

Michael Zahner (MZ)

Gary Smith (GS)

Josh Pitts (JP)

Karl Bissex (KB) – not available

Michael Billingsley (MB) – not available

Denise Wheeler (DW) – via Zoom

Arion Thiboumery (AT) – via Zoom

Carter Ivey (VEM Recovery Team) via Zoom

Sheila McGraw & Lauren (TIG @ 11 am) - via Zoom

Eli Toohey - Planner from Central Vermont Regional Planning Committee

## **Agenda: 10-11AM**

10-11:30AM

- Municipal Planning Grant discussion with Eli Toohey of CVRPC to determine best direction for our application (opens 1/27)

Eli - \$30K per town, these open up on 1/27 – Priorities – focusing on new or updated bylaws to enact various acts, climate, new housing development, planning, support communities for all ages, - there is a 10% town match – timeline 1/27 deadline to apply 3/31.

KH – flood recovery, climate resilience & housing is the thrust of our work – can grants be used for studies? Can it fill gaps in other funding?

Eli – usually used to hire consultants, revitalization plans, rewriting town plan, studies for infrastructure needs

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GS – planning of a green space after home buyouts?

JP – after buyouts land reverts to town. Funding for the town for a parks department?

KH – study on staffing infrastructure for the town?

MZ – town has to hire someone to remove homes okayed for buyouts.

Eli – hydrology study to return land to flood plain – this is what Northfield did. Study to incorporate how it would affect towns downstream – a regional plan. Thinking about it in a more regional way may give it more weight.

Climate resilience and flood recovery is a good focus – planning for new green space and flood resilience. Eli will check with Keith Coburn who knows more about it. Always include in scope community engagement process.

KH – good to have a plan and funding needed while funding sources are being investigated.

Eli – real focus on climate resiliency – this project is a good fit.

JP – new zoning opens up an avenue for study of new housing, infill housing.

KH – grants are annual and could apply again.

MZ to start drafting municipal planning grant for green space.

AT has a meeting Friday w/ VHCB and will bring up this information to them and potential for additional grant funding for a housing study.

- Recovery Manager position update- KH – SB not open to hiring another position so we would need to hire a consultant and seek reimbursement through FEMA. Awaiting an answer from TIG about how this could be done. MZ we need a project manager for each infrastructure project.
- Discussion about Permanent Projects being pursued through federal highway funds:
  - 1) Mill St. bridge
  - 2) #21 bridge,
  - 3) Bridge #23 (bridge after Cameron Rd.)

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4) washout (project #10 on map);

5) project list #8 – Brook Rd. & project 9 Brook Rd. bridge (bridges 12 and 24)

These have had an emergency fix and require a permanent fix. Project manager will identify issues, options

Project manager will do scoping, design, alternatives and costs – SB approves RFP - then how to get funding. Is the project reimbursable through federal highway funds?

Need joint meeting with all the funders - federal highway, FEMA, VEM, etc. to sort out projects and funding sources. What is FEMA and what is FHWA? Projects will have different funding mechanisms. FEMA funding is the last resource after all other funding sources are exhausted.

Identified FEMA priority projects outside of ROW – because federal highway will be used for other projects: Gore Rd., Cameron Rd., bridge over brook on Lee Rd.; orientation for access to wastewater treatment plant (Rec. Field Rd.); Batchelder Dam;

GS – needs a definitive list of what to ask FEMA to do.

- Public Information Meeting discussion/update at an upcoming SB meeting – yes. KB is concerned about project costs for town meeting. There are no decisions to be made at town meeting (outside of AT's housing project that is on the Warning).

JP - for each project there will be a local concerns meeting – then an alternative investigation is required (cost differential) – conceptual plan – we have to learn the process and let it roll

11:30- Noon (Partners join by Zoom) – Sheila, Lauren & Carter

FEMA PA- GS and partners –

GS/MZ to get digital maps to TIG from Roundtable meeting.

DI has been filed – GS and Sheila need to review again – SPA (simplified project application) has been filed for Cat. A & B – all are emergency items.

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DI projects will be put into project groupings and given a project # and name to help identify and organize invoices – TIG will review and send DDD (Damage Dimensions and Descriptions) list from damage assessment – then EEI's (Essential Elements with Information) for each project – then schedule site inspections with FEMA.

KH – Can we prioritize projects that are FEMA and what are federal highway projects? Sheila – yes

KH trying to avoid duplicative work – strategic list for FEMA projects

Lauren - Now DI has been submitted we can now do RFR's (Request for Reimbursement) expense sheets and upload into project portal – will be submitting time extension requests for Cat A & B (add'l 120 days – she will double check). Until FEMA obligates a project can't submit RFR's. Obligated means it has gone through DDI, EEI and CRC (Consolidated Resource Center). Total for Cat A \$.5M & B \$2M – rough estimates in DI. If projects are less than estimated, won't have to wait for final to get reimbursed.

**TIG can submit invoices as received. TIG will start compiling summary sheets for Cat A & B.**

Whatever is not covered by federal highway – FEMA will look at covering the difference. Josh (Treasurer) will track the financial process.

### **MB update (unavailable to attend meeting):**

Secretary Joe Flynn of VTrans and I had an informal talk, starting on another topic, on Wednesday. He opened the door to ANR Secretary Julie Moore to help us out with our Great Brook problem. So instead of writing just to Doug Farnham... as Michael Z. expected I would do... I also wrote including Secretary Flynn and Secretary Moore asking where to find the funds and expertise to deal with the new flooding issue along Hudson Avenue. *There will be flooding, if this is not addressed.*

George Springston, Karen and Michael Z. are looking over my draft letter seeking assistance from all of them, for Plainfield. (More to learn here.)

Thursday night river engineers Roy Schiff and Alex Manucci (sic) showed up at the Hazard Mitigation meeting, where we had only expected Michele Braun of Friends of the Winooski. As you all know, we... the committee... and Friends of the Winooski had requested a study of the Batchelder Dam (which is underway) and Michele found the funds to get that done for us.

Did it sustain damage in the recent floods? If it is damaged, how badly and what would it cost to repair? (Plainfield has no choice but to repair it... new Vermont regulations put that burden on

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us.) Would a repair be more costly than removal? What are the pluses and minuses of removing that dam, and is it advisable?

Although the study is preliminary (they are still refining the modeling) they did say unequivocally

1. The Batchelder Dam is definitely damaged, leaking and deteriorating.
2. The sidewalls adjacent to the dam, and the foundations of the adjacent buildings are definitely damaged, and deteriorating.
3. The dam may not withstand the next 500-year flood (and certainly would not withstand a dam failure in Marshfield or an emergency discharge).
4. Repair would require almost complete removal, and rebuilding from the bottom up... potentially millions of dollars.
5. It would be significantly less expensive to remove it and not repair it..... meaning both a lower engineering cost and a lower contracting cost.

State FEMA Hazard Mitigation Team (in Vermont Emergency Management) reached out to the Hazard Mitigation Committee with Michele Braun's encouragement, and has invited us to apply to Hazard Mitigation funding not just for the scoping study and for dam removal, but also to repair the adjacent foundations and support walls... so those buildings (like the old Plainfield Hardware) don't fall into the river.

Michele told us Thursday that it is *very promising* that the Hazard Mitigation Team reach out to us first. She feels that they want to give us the money.

I responded to the state Hazard Mitigation Team by saying that we are *very* interested in their assistance, and asking their advice as to which steps to do next. *It remains to be seen (now that the committee is convinced that the dam is dangerous and must most likely be removed) if Michele will write that grant or whether she will suggest that Karen or Michael do it. She offered to facilitate and do project management.*

Michele did tell us Wednesday that money from that particular source would accomplish much more than a grant either for phosphorus abatement (one grants path she had suggested earlier) or a different grant for increased species access to the upper watershed. So we are taking her advice and going the Hazard Mitigation direction.

The committee would have loved to act upon his encouragement sooner, but thought it irresponsible to seek funds for dam removal while there was a possibility that the dam is sound, or that its removal would make flood outcomes worse for people who own property on the Winooski near the dam.

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The preliminary SLR update gave us confidence to head toward a grant application. Michele suggests that we pursue the money now, even before the final SLR report is given us in April.

We will ask the Select Board to decide on the dam's fate after the report is in hand, while at the same time investigating the available hazard mitigation funds. If the Select Board says yes, we hopefully will already be tapped to receive money to do it. And if the Select Board says no we will withdraw our application.