

## **March 2025 Annual Report**

### **Karen Hatcher, Town Grants Administrator**

The flood of July 2024 created an opportunity to reimagine the role and responsibilities of Plainfield's Town Grants office. Not quite recognizing the enormity of the work ahead, a number of retired professional volunteers responded to a call from the town's Emergency Management Director, to provide administrative support to help the town recover financially from the disaster. Remarkably, each volunteer brought unique and complementary talents along with a strong dedication to the cause. Thus, the Plainfield Grants Work Group was formed and has continued its work over the many months since it began. The work of identifying, exploring and securing grant funding to help the town recover from the extensive damages caused by the flooding will go on for a number of years. It's been a steep learning curve to be sure, but steady progress is being made. Team members include:

Karen Hatcher, Grants Administrator  
Michael Zahner, Asst. Grants Administrator  
Gary Smith, FEMA Public Assistance Coordinator  
Arion Thiboumery, FEMA Buyout Coordinator  
Josh Pitts, Town Treasurer, WWW Commissioner and Road Commissioner  
Karl Bissex, Select Board Liaison  
Michael Billingsley, Emergency Management Director  
Denise Wheeler, Administrative Assistant

**Our Mission: Identify, Explore and Secure all available flood recovery funds to benefit the town and people of Plainfield.**

### **How we Think About and Organize our Work**

- Repair  
Short-term emergency repairs to roads and infrastructure to enable safe access through the winter months of 2024-25.
- Rebuild and Restore  
Investigate options and funding sources to hire experts and professionals who can help us understand how to best address the future of the Great Brook watershed and its affected areas, with a target for completion and presentation to the town in 2025.
- Resilience  
Long-term. With the town's input, create and work to implement a comprehensive plan for a resilient future. Implementation of these projects is expected to go on for several years.

### **Our Goals**

Short-term (first 3-6 months):

- Track all expenses for damage inventory for FEMA PA application

- Track all expenses for making roads and infrastructure ready for winter, repairs for emergency access and safety for FHWA grant
- Hire a Disaster Recovery Consultant to ensure we get as much reimbursement from FEMA as we are eligible for
- Identify and apply for any relevant grants that are made available from the State of Vermont
- Share grant information with the public, i.e. BEGAP, EWP, others that become available
- Hold community information sessions on a regular basis and set up a webpage posted with current information on the town's website.

Mid-term (6 months - one year):

- Complete emergency repairs on Brook Road to ensure safety and access in line with FHWA grant funding process
- Submit a number of FEMA projects for reimbursement
- Investigate housing solutions for future and explore funding possibilities
- Begin longer term planning for study and decision process for the Great Brook Watershed
- Explore community engagement strategies to support decisions related to future of the village
- Continue to work with Federal and State agencies to identify and secure funding for all projects
- Work with new owner of Goddard Campus to coordinate housing and other opportunities to collaborate; coordinated to secure any appropriate public/private funds
- Continue to update the community with regular information sessions

**Accomplishments/Highlights**

- Submitted a robust Hazard Mitigation Grant pre-application on 8/30 for the Great Brook Watershed Project. Eligible for funds from \$90 Million new allocation (pending)
- Submitted application for 27 homes to the FEMA Buyout program (expect full funding)
- Sent out an RFP, interviewed and hired The Integrity Group, a Disaster Recovery Consultant out of Tallahassee, FL to support our FEMA PA application process
- Submitted our Request for Public Assistance to FEMA, held our initial scoping meeting with FEMA in November 2024 and submitted a thorough Damage Inventory to FEMA by the 60 day deadline.
- Raised \$30K from Vermont Community Foundation to help fund disaster recovery efforts
- Met with FEMA and FHWA regarding Brook Road status where it was determined that emergency repairs to Brook Road made by April 5, 2025 will be funded under the FHWA funding program at 100%.
- Submitted a comprehensive proposal to the Regional Priority Project list totalling \$50 Million to fund housing, infrastructure and community development, which was selected as one of the Top 10 Priority Projects, creating visibility and access to funding sources.
- Completion of temporary bridge on Mill Street (paid for by VTrans)

→ Emergency Watershed Protection grant site visits done on 16 properties (pending determination)

Visit the Grants Administration webpage for meeting notes, grant documents and updates:  
<https://www.plainfieldvt.gov/grants-administration>