

PLAINFIELD FLOOD RECOVERY GRANTS WORK GROUP
Tuesday, October 8, 2024 @ 10 a.m.

Attending:

Karen Hatcher (KH)- via Zoom

Michael Zahner (MZ)

Gary Smith (GS) not available

Josh Pitts (JP)

Karl Bissex (KB)

Michael Billingsley (MB) - unavailable

Denise Wheeler (DW) – via Zoom

Arion Thiboumery (AT) – unavailable

Bram Towbin (BT)

Further discussion of the October 1st meeting with state and federal highway officials regarding the future of Brook Road, funding options for full and partial repairs through FHWA ER.

MZ raised the fundamental question: whether to rebuild the Brook Road and to what extent. There are many advantages to making emergency repairs under the FHWA such as 100% funding from a different and more available pot of money. However, there would be very little in the way of long term hazard mitigation. Although, we were advised that some “betterment” projects within the watershed could be approved. To get 100% funding, all work must be completed within 270 days from the date of the flood, or April 5, 2025. If the Mill Street Bridge is to be retained in the federally designated transit route (as it is now), then Bridge #21 (Brook Rd. bridge) must also be retained or replaced (with the current HMPG funding) even though it will still be undersized to handle current flows. This bridge has been the major cause of debris blockage and subsequent flooding in recent years.

Mill Street Bridge would have to be rebuilt to pre-disaster conditions under FHWA which has proved to be inadequate, unless the FHWA approves a “betterment” design.

MZ – spoke with Thad L. re FHWA ER funding – Thad has toured Plainfield and the Brook Road – as a federally designated highway, he feels that it makes sense in the short term (270 days) to achieve as much as we can with 100% funding. Other longer term funding may be available through our VEM HMPG application but that will take a while but hopefully will form the basis for a Master Disaster Recovery Plan coupled with home buyouts and hazard mitigation. VEM has received many applications through the HMPG program according to Thad.

JP – Anything that doesn’t require a large scope of work can receive 100% reimbursement with a relatively rapid funding turn around. He has submitted all the paperwork from last year – return funding is fast compared to Hazard Mitigation and VEM. The Town could conceivably retain the federal designation for Brook Rd.

MCB – said if the Town rebuilds Brook Road in its current configuration it will eventually be redamaged and cause future flooding damage to homes along the path of the Great Brook.

JP – Agrees that we can’t continue to restrict the water flow – Hazard Mitigation would be funded at 90% and a larger cost to the Town. Main St. Bridge accessing Rte. 2 is qualified for federal assistance and allows the opportunity for more funding.

KH – concerned that if the Town receives funding from FHWA ER, it may be deducted from other sources of funding.

MZ – clarified that there are separate pots of money. Certainly they cannot be comingled.

Planning Group consensus is to proceed with the hiring of an “at ready” engineering firm to oversee and advise on the repair of Brook Rd. within the 270 day window focusing on federal highway funds in the interim to make the Brook Road roadways safe, passable condition before winter with 100% federal funding.

MZ The correct focus on which projects can be prioritized and completed should be determined by a “ready engineer firm” (i.e., DuBois & King). The Town should immediately hire an engineering consultant and bid the projects following the federal procurement process for “emergency repairs.” Link to list of Vtrans “ready engineers roster”<https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/VTRANS/external/MAB-LP/SitePages/MunicipalProjectManagerProcurement.aspx>

KB will add this to the Oct. 14 Selectboard meeting agenda to approve the Town accepting federal highway ER funds. The Selectboard needs to approve the plan to pursue federal highway funds as discussed.

BT - The public is concerned when Brook Rd. will reopen because of the increased traffic on East Hill Rd. (especially increased truck traffic).

MCB suggested signs be posted stating that Brook Rd. is closed – post on WAVES (used by truckers) - that truck traffic should be rerouted to Middle Rd.

MZ said Thad suggested a phased completion of work and then use HMPG funding for long term master planning, switching to Hazard Mitigation funding when those funds become available. Thad recommended immediately repairing portions of Brook Rd along with damaged infrastructure using Federal Highway Administration ER funds.

BT will contact Joe Flynn (Secretary of Vtrans) to find out who is supervising the repairs on Mill St bridge because no one has contacted town.

BT asked whether the Town can seek alternative routes without actually seizing property? He found this section in Title 19.

Title 19 : Highways

Chapter 009 : Repairs, Maintenance, and Improvements

Subchapter 005 : Appeals and Minor Alterations

(Cite as: 19 V.S.A. § 935)

§ 935. Relocation of highway

When a highway is made impassable, or the width reduced to prevent the free and safe passage, by a landslide or washout, or a bridge is swept away by a flood, the selectboard may change the location of the highway or the bridge and may discontinue any resulting unnecessary parts of the old highway. It may take, damage, or affect such land as may be necessary at the location of the slide or washout for the purpose of re-establishing, repairing, rebuilding, or protecting the highway or bridge and may proceed immediately to build or rebuild the highway or bridge and open the highway or bridge for work and travel. (Added 1985, No. 269 (Adj. Sess.), § 1.)

PA update –

GS said within 60 days the Town must compile a spreadsheet of all ER projects and list damages and repairs to be made within 270 days and other things beyond 270 with FEMA funds.

Status of CVEDC grant proposal

KH – has submitted an application.

GS attended a meeting yesterday. There are 11 Regional Planning Commissions in Vt. and noted there is a lot of funding available for planning and private/public partnerships. Kristy Farnham of ACCD suggested seeking grants for the Village Extension project for planning and infrastructure (funding not available for roads and bridges). GS suggested reopening the application

and amending it to include the Recreation Field as part of the project for improved recreational use with new housing to have a more defined project.

Plainfield Coop was funded through a CVEDC grant

Pat Moulton (Central Vt. Recovery Officer) suggested applying through Northern Borders Commission because they have a lot of funding. They require a strong preapplication.

GS hasn't heard from the Towns PDMG person (FEMA point person). GS will follow up because the Town needs to secure someone ASAP.

Action Items

1. The Town should immediately hire an engineering consultant and bid the projects following the federal procurement process for "emergency repairs."
2. KB - Selectboard needs to approve the plan and pursue federal highway funding for Brook Road.
3. Post signs stating that Brook Rd. is closed – post on WAVES (used by truckers) that truck traffic should be rerouted to Middle Rd.
4. KH – follow up on data entry help \$30K
5. GS spreadsheet
6. Amend CVEDC through Northern Borders Commission.

**FAS stands for Federal Acquisition Service, which is part of the General Services Administration (GSA) and is responsible for procuring goods and services for the government.*

Next meeting is Tuesday, October 15 at 10 am.

Mission Statement: Identify, explore and secure resources for flood recovery – no dollar left behind.