

# Plainfield Flood Recovery Grants Work Group Meeting Tuesday, March 11, 2025 @ 10 a.m.

## Attending:

Karen Hatcher (KH)

Michael Zahner (MZ) – not available

Gary Smith (GS)

Josh Pitts (JP) – not available

Karl Bissex (KB) –

Michael Billingsley (MB) – not available

Denise Wheeler (DW) – via Zoom

Arion Thiboumery (AT) – not available

Bram Towbin (BT) – not available

Kristie Farnham (NBRC)

Andrea Smith (NBRC, Program Director)

Julia Connell (VCDP – w/n ACCD, federal community block grant thru HUD)

Eli Toohey (CVRPC grants administration)

**10AM Kristie Farnham joined to inform our group about the Northern Borders grant programs.** Below is information she sent us last month following the funders roundtable discussion below: *Email information from Kristie is below*

- *Catalyst Program Overview:*  
<https://www.nbrc.gov/userfiles/files/Catalyst%20Program/2025%20Catalyst%20Program%20Overview%20FINAL.pdf>
- *Catalyst Program Manual:*  
<https://www.nbrc.gov/userfiles/files/Catalyst%20Program/2025%20CATALYST%20PROGRAM%20User%20Manual%20FINAL%2020250207.pdf> which **includes scoring criteria for both NBRC and Vermont (Appendix K)**

*As I communicated in our last meet up, federal sources can co-mingle in a project. The FEDERAL FUNDING CAP is what you must be mindful of. It is called out in the Catalyst User Manual:*

<https://www.nbrc.gov/userfiles/files/Catalyst%20Program/2025%20CATALYST%20PROGRAM%20User%20Manual%20FINAL%2020250207.pdf>, "Cost sharing or matching requirements may be met by other Federal grants where authorized for up to 80% of the total project cost, so as not to exceed the maximum federal contribution allowed as outlined in 40 U.S.C. Subtitle V §15506: Supplements to Federal grant programs". Federal loan contributions would not count towards this maximum. This is a reason to segment or compartmentalize the independent projects from the broad redevelopment/revitalization. Each corresponding segment would have its own description, project timeline and budget; even if there is reference to the broad effort it should be stand-alone in the NBRC application.

*A couple of informational tidbits on the NBRC Federal – State partnership:*

- *NBRC Catalyst allows for a multi-jurisdictional infrastructure award with a max prize of \$3M.*

- *NBRC awards in a transitional county, which Washington is, require a 50% match contribution.*
- *NBRC does not prioritize housing; rather, infrastructure in support of housing and/or economic development and/or community development.*
- *For NBRC programs, there is a program cross-cutter that prohibits the submission of an application for those with existing awards until the original project is 75% complete.*
- *The funds are only available to NPOs, arms of government, Indian tribes, and municipalities.*
- *Investment into real property requires a notice of federal interest with a 20 year tail.*
- *NBRC awards have a 3 year period of performance; the first of which is the runway to secure the corresponding match and complete NEPA.*
- *Though NBRC programs have a two point of entry competition year; the spring cycle has a greater budget.*

Karen – gave background of 2023 and 2024 floods and damage estimates - \$300K in 2023 and \$20-35M in 2024 – Village Expansion project needed for housing – Goddard Campus may include housing rentals.

Gary – 5 priority FEMA projects – we need someone to manage multiple projects

Kristie – what is the town's budget?

Karl – \$1.6M town budget (\$1.3M raised in taxes) – borrowed \$1M from VMBB

Andrea – make a list of large priority projects? Timing of funding?

KH – 12 federal projects need to go out to bid with an RFP for project manager in next 18 months – housing project and federal buyout – looking for displaced residents to return to Plainfield. – looking to encourage new residents - town project match 10% - additional VMBB funds may be available – CVRPC has been helpful -

Kristie – representing Catalyst Program – NBRC funding doesn't work well in phased projects – carve out projects into segments clear start and end (broad recovery and revitalization umbrella) – segments are more manageable within in NBRC projects – Hardwick yellow barn project is an example of successful municipal/private partnership project – arrange meeting with other towns (Hardwick & St. J.) to learn about how they managed and made projects happen – NBRC projects are fiercely competitive – Kristie's group works ("white glove service") to help insure access and success (application & project administration) –

Julia – is Goddard purchase complete? – Karl said Mike Davidson is securing funding and town is working with Goddard – small businesses, arts, community, housing – helped to rebuild housing in White River – make sure there is a clear public process

Eli - Goddard will transition from non-profit to for profit – are any buyouts in a brownfield?

KH – not that we know about – Eli said any assessments go through DEC and would be paid for by FEMA – like underground fuel tanks on buyout properties

Catalyst Program has multiple opportunities – multi jurisdictional asks – infrastructure funds 75 to 80% funding are more attractive to funders rather than green space, etc. – housing hasn't typically been supported but has done infrastructure funding – bridges, roads, water/waste water, etc. could be a segment for the housing expansion project – Washington Co. is a transitional area and requires matches – consider use of TIF program tool –

KH – town wide panel meeting with people from other towns who have done projects and get community on board that a project is an investment in the town not an expense to gain support and instills confidence and that Plnfl. isn't alone in this process

Julia – if talking about debt and sell it to the community (invite City of St. Albans) to speak to community – infrastructure first priority working w/ Vtrans – caution on housing and federal funding strict guidelines on fair housing (Downstreet & Habitat for Humanity grants) – if town is applicant for CDBG funding – expansion project can't be singled out to those who lost houses –

Kristie – infrastructure must continue to be maintained by the town – NBRC award allows leverage for the release of first investment funds – funds can't be passed through to private projects – could be a public/private partnership but funds need to pass through town

Andrea – fall round of funding begins with a pre-application due in Aug. and full application submission in Oct. 2025 – decisions are made by the end of year – Plnfl. has priority points and is 10<sup>th</sup> in lineup

Kristie – RPP priority list - tie projects to thumbnail list – readiness, partners, private money, matches, etc, makes a stronger case – federal funds can't exceed 80%

Julia – CDBG-DR- Funding is tied to FY 2023 disaster declaration – focus on planning grant – public hearing for funding sources on March 20<sup>th</sup> in Montpelier.

Kristie – import to note that there is no commitment of award or match until a Notice to Proceed is issued this is critical or funding will not cover work done before Notice to Proceed is issued – must wait for notice to proceed before beginning a project.

Karen & Karl – SB needs to decide priority projects and work with CVRPC to develop priority list.

Andrea – NEPA analysis and required – coordinated environmental review is long and complicated – ask for feasibility study funding – concerned about finding a way for town to navigate different funding sources and coordination is critical – NBRC to coordinate projects and funding requirements to gain largest reward – infrastructure is a great way to coordinate projects (housing, roads/bridges & Goddard). Separate and unique requests for acquisition and then infrastructure. Timing is a challenge.

Kristie – recommends a “GANTT chart” used to visually plan and track the progress of a project by displaying a timeline of tasks, their start and end dates, dependencies between tasks, and milestones, allowing project managers to effectively monitor the schedule and identify potential issues with task sequencing and deadlines.

KH – should acquisition & infrastructure funding be requested as separate projects?

Kristie – NBRC funds can't pay down debt funds. She can and is willing to continue as a free consultant.

### **11:36 AM**

#### **Brief Updates: (Lauren & Sheila)**

FEMA PA – Gary – FEMA funding can't be used for Brook Rd. – figure out what is and isn't part of Brook Rd. – rec'd FEMA damage inventory and what items will be deleted – ready to sign off and submit final inventory – ok.

Sheila/Lauren - FEMA lumped all the bridges, culverts and roads into one project – Sheila needs to separate projects back out into 3 projects.

There is a FEMA meeting tomorrow at 9 am.

Lauren - Cat A for Great Brook – secondary project – not a clear category for cleaning up a waterway to be funded by FEMA – town looking for a different funding source for cleanup – was taken off DI as the last adjustment.

GS – site visit inspections will take 3-6 days (Mon. thru Thurs.) – schedule site visits a few weeks apart so paperwork can be updated. FEMA likes to bring multiple inspection teams – tell FEMA we can only manage one team – group agreed to schedule visits week of 3/31 and later in April.

GS – connecting with Michael Bingham to review minor projects and deleting from list - Lauren recommends “table tops” for smaller projects.

Sheila – suggested reclassifying 2<sup>nd</sup> Cat B projects as donated resources projects and capture volunteer labor to offset town share - yes

FHWA - Josh

Permanent Project Mapping Project- Karen

Advanced Assistance (Great Brook Study) - Michael Z – update from communication with Roy Schiff and VEM (Steve Libby and Maggie Clark) regarding our "Advance Assistance" application – Roy said, there's a new twist regarding the FHWA and the Great Brook. There is now an intent on the part of the Town to proceed with the engineering for some specific construction projects within the Great Brook watershed since there is a FHWA deadline to fund those improvements - September 30, 2026. Those funds will need to be "obligated" by the FHWA with all design, engineering, ROW and permitting work completed. This obviously presents a timing challenge for us but also an opportunity to critically review those proposed projects using the technical model that will be prepared under "Advance Assistance." FEMA will not provide any funding for these projects because it is a federal connector highway under FHWA.

This is a very recent development based on conversations with Ross Gouin at VTrans. Maggie says that she has prepared summaries for the Preliminary Review Committee at VEM so the "Advance Assistance" application can move forward. We will need the information that we had discussed related to timing, costs and SOW. I have completed all other aspects of the application including a brief summary of the Great Brook flood history.