



Fairfax Mitigation Plan Kickoff Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Sept 20, 2024 at 10:30 a.m.

Public Meeting held at the Fairfax Town Office,
12 Buck Hollow Road, Fairfax, VT and virtually via Zoom

Participants: Sarah Hadd, Fairfax Town Manager
Steve Bessette, Fairfax Selectboard
Michah Genzlinger, Fairfax Fire Chief
Tim Burns, Fairfax Selectboard, VFD
Marlena Valenta, Northwest Regional Planning Commission
Shaun Coleman, Northwest Regional Planning Commission

The meeting began at 10:35 a.m.

Shaun provided a power point presentation on the mitigation planning process, FEMA requirements, community outreach efforts, timeline and roles and responsibilities. He reviewed the communication outreach plan that he, Sarah and Micha developed. He also reviewed the history of the Fairfax Mitigation Plan. The first was adopted in 2007. The plans are on a five-year cycle. FEMA requirements for mitigation plan approval change roughly in the same cycle.

The committee discussed outreach efforts to include more participation from various sectors of the community. Several members were unable to attend today's meeting due to work conflicts. Sarah and Shaun stressed the importance of engaging as much of the community as possible. It was suggested to use Old Academy senior community meeting space for a meeting and to gain input.

Sarah agreed to post meeting notices and inform action such as the community survey, agendas, minutes and the draft plan on the village website. She also suggested posting survey flyer and the meeting agendas at the same locations where Selectboard meetings are posted. The food shelf would be a good location for meeting information, survey and information on how to participate or where to send comments. With virtual meetings, some residents may join future meetings. Information will also be posted on the Town's social media sites and Front Porch Forum in an effort to receive public input.

Shaun provided an overview of how mitigation fits into the 4 stages of emergency management and discussed integrating information from existing programs, policies and plans into the mitigation plan such as the Local EOP and municipal plan. He also discussed how information from the mitigation plan can be used to supplement updates of the municipal plan and capital planning efforts.

Community Vulnerability Index Presentation

Marlena Valenta, NRPC provided a presentation. The Climate Council and Agency of Natural Resources created this tool (<https://climatechange.vermont.gov/mvi>) in order to meet some of the mandates of the greenhouse gas reduction goals of the state. The purpose was to have a useful tool at the state level and local levels for planning for climate adaption and hazard mitigation. RPCs in the state were asked to present workshops on the model to several municipalities within each region.

The tool uses various data on community assets, hazards and population profiles to analyze vulnerabilities. The sample showed critical assets and their relation to hazards such as wastewater treatment plants and FEMA flood plains. The tool also incorporates the Transportation Resiliency Planning Tool (TRPT) which depicts bridges, roads and culvert conditions. Several municipalities are using the (TRPT) for capital planning. <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/climate/trpt>

Some communities focus on new development on steep slopes to eliminate driveway and access issues that frequently come up during recent disasters. Additionally, the tool can be used to look at nature-based solutions to build resilience. For example, where a community might want to consider additional conservation or protection of areas like water retention areas to reduce flooding or enhancing wildlife diversity.

The Climate Office has been receiving feedback on getting the tool to focus on solutions are to the vulnerabilities. Planners are familiar with some of the actions that can be taken by a community to reduce their vulnerability. The tool is good for meeting with a community of volunteers to present information visually versus looking at a plan.

There was some discussion regarding using the American Community Survey (ACS) data which is not very reliable because populations are low for extrapolating useful data. ANR is working on the environmental justice law (Act 154) and trying to map environmental focus populations and are having the same issue with ACS data. The state is grappling with this in many different ways.

Marlena noted that this issue comes up in every meeting due to the low density of municipalities. Anyone who is introducing this tool should be up front about the flaws on the social domain for climate vulnerability. For example, the disability rates are unreasonably low which may be due to census under reporting. A solution would be to add context to any narrative regarding the data extrapolated from the tool explaining potential flaws in the data sources.

Sarah thanked Marlena for the presentation.

The next meeting was set for October 4th at the Town Office at 10:30 a.m.

The meeting ended approximately 11:30 a.m.

Action Items:

NRPC will send out meeting minutes and schedule the next meeting.

NRPC will schedule the next meeting which will be the Hazard Review and Risk Assessment Meeting.

Fairfax committee members will continue to implement Communication/Outreach Plan including those entities discussed at this meeting.

Fairfax committee members will track grant match.

