



## Fairfax Mitigation Plan Kickoff Meeting

Meeting Minutes

November 15, 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  
Micah Genzlinger, Fairfax Fire Chief  
Tim Burns, Fairfax Selectboard, VFD  
Brent Sheets, Fairfax Public Works Director  
Shaun Coleman, Northwest Regional Planning Commission

The goal of the meeting was to review past mitigation actions identified in previous plan and provide their current status, and to identify present and future mitigation actions and related projects. Shaun explained that FEMA's Mitigation Planning Guidance outlines steps for identifying mitigation actions and the processes used to analyze and prioritize them. Communities must identify a range of potential actions that can reduce or eliminate long-term risks to people and property from hazards. These actions should address higher ranked hazards identified through risk assessments and consider community needs and resources.

Once mitigation actions are identified, they must be analyzed based on criteria such as feasibility, effectiveness, cost-benefit, and alignment with local priorities. This analysis typically involves evaluating each action's potential to reduce hazard impacts, its economic and technical viability, its environmental and social consequences, and its ability to be implemented within a feasible timeframe. Actions are then ranked based on this analysis, with priority given to those that offer the highest benefit in terms of risk reduction and are most cost-effective. The selection and ranking process ensures that communities focus on the most impactful and achievable actions to reduce disaster risk, while considering available funding and resources.

Shaun explained that under the new FEMA Mitigation Planning requirements, there are four categories of mitigation actions: Local Plans and Regulations, Structure and Infrastructure Projects, Natural System Protection and Outreach and Education Programs. Each action identified must include one of the four categories, the hazard being mitigated, responsibility and potential funding sources. The group also reviewed the evaluation criteria for the feasibility for each mitigation action. The criteria included life safety, property protection, technical, political, administrative, and other community objectives.

Using the previous plan's mitigation table, the group reviewed and discussed the status of each action.

Some projects were incomplete due to a change in local priorities at the time, difficulties encountered directly or indirectly related to the pandemic, or changes in staff and locally elected leadership.

The group reviewed a map of the town and sketched up areas of concern while discussing action items. Most of the updated actions fell under the structure and infrastructure and natural system protection categories and included areas that were recently flooded in July 2023 such as Goose Pond Road, River Road, Hunt Street as well as bottom of Stones Brook. There was also discussion regarding updating local regulations to meet the minimum river corridor standards and reducing the town's local match under ERAF. There was also discussion in developing more outreach and education related to various hazards that will supplement the recently adopted communications and engagement plan. All actions will be added to the plan.

The plan sections are being drafted and will be sent out to planning team members and stakeholders for review and comments. There will also be a public comment period scheduled prior to submitting to FEMA. In the coming month or two, the Selectboard, by motion, will act to submit the plan to FEMA for review and approval prior to local adoption during a regular meeting. Currently, staff are busy putting together the annual budget and annual town report.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:00 pm.

**Action Items:**

- NRPC will send the residential hazard mitigation survey to the committee for review and use as appropriate.
- NRPC will draft minutes and post to project website.
- NRPC will draft the plan and send out to planning committee and stakeholders for input/review.
- The Town Manager will continue to post information regarding the plan on community newsletter and social media and continue to solicit input during Thursday morning community coffee meetings.
- The PW Director will review the status of hydraulic studies and recent PW projects and update NRPC of any further status changes related to mitigation actions.