

Township of Little Falls
Passaic County, New Jersey
Township Administrator

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MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Darlene Post and Township Council
From: Joseph Macones, CRS Coordinator
Joanne Bergin, CRS Co-Coordinator
Re: Floodplain Management Plan Annual Progress Report

Mayor Post and Council,

In 2008, the Township of Little Falls adopted its All Hazard Mitigation Plan. The general mitigation planning approach used to develop this plan is based on the FEMA publication, *Developing the Mitigation Plan: Identifying Mitigation Actions and Implementing Strategies* (FEMA 386-3) and input provided by the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management. In the Mitigation Strategy section of the All Hazard Mitigation Plan, mitigation goals were developed using the hazard characteristics, inventory, and findings of the risk assessment, and through the results of the public outreach program. By reviewing these outputs and other municipal and state policy documents, objectives tied to these overarching goals were identified and characterized into similar themes.

The following update on the Township's goals and objectives is being done as part of the Community Rating System (CRS) recertification requirements. This memo will be submitted to the Township Council. For credit under the Community Rating System, this memo must be distributed to the media and be made available to the public. It is being sent to the newspapers that cover the Township of Little Falls. Copies of this report are available for review at the Town Hall, 225 Main Street, Little Falls. A notice of its availability is being posted on the Township's web site.

1. Background

On October 1, 2009 the Township submitted an application for CRS credits. The Township received certification on July 14, 2010 with a rating of Class 9. This report is being prepared to satisfy the annual re-certification requirements and to illustrate the Township's efforts to protect and assist residents from future events, specifically flood damage.

The Township has a very active local community Flood Board that meets monthly. Additionally, the Township has two representatives that serve on the Passaic County Regional Flood Board and one that serves on the Central Regional Flood Board. These groups includes representatives from towns located along the Passaic and Peckman rivers.

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Guidance 386-2 risk assessment is the process of measuring the potential loss of life, personal injury and economic injury and property damage resulting from natural hazards by assessing the vulnerability of people, buildings, and infrastructure to natural hazards. The Township of Little Falls risk assessment is organized into four sections: 1). Methodology and tools used to support the risk assessment process; 2) Identify the natural hazards of concern (flooding) for further profiling and evaluation; 3) Identify hazards of concern ranked for the Township of Little Falls as a whole to describe their probability of occurrence and their impact on population, property and the economy; and 4) Profile and assesses the vulnerability for each hazard of concern.

2. A Review of the Hazard Mitigation Planning Goals and Objectives

The Township and Hazard Mitigation Plan Committee developed goals and objectives based on the risk assessment results, input received, and the existing authorities, policies, resources, and capabilities within the Township, Passaic County, and the region. The mitigation goals serve as general guidelines that clarify desired hazard reduction outcomes. The goals represent a long-term vision for hazard reduction and the enhancement of mitigation capabilities.

The goals are compatible with the needs and goals expressed in other available community planning documents as well as the New Jersey Basic HMP. Each goal has a number of corresponding objectives that further define the specific actions or implementation steps. Objectives were developed and/or selected by the Planning Committee through its knowledge of the local area, review of past efforts, findings of the risk assessment, qualitative evaluations and identification of mitigation options. The five mitigation goals and relevant updates are presented below:

Goal 1: Protect Life

Township Mayor and Council: NJ Governor Chris Christie formed a New Jersey Passaic River Basin Flood Advisory Commission. The Commissions' recommendations have been submitted to the Governor. A copy of the report is available on the Township's web site (www.lfnj.com). The Advisory Commission Statements and Recommendations focus on 15 areas:

- ✓ Floodway and Floodplain Buyouts
- ✓ Structure Elevations in Floodplains
- ✓ Open Space Acquisitions and Preservation
- ✓ Pompton Lake Dam Floodgates Performance and Modifications
- ✓ Desnagging and Shoal Dredging
- ✓ Feeder Dam removals
- ✓ State Adoption of the NFIP
- ✓ Permit Expedition for Desnagging and Shoal Dredging

- ✓ Emergency Preparedness and Response
- ✓ Flood Warning System
- ✓ Inundation Mapping
- ✓ Public Outreach
- ✓ USACE Reevaluation Study
- ✓ Flood Risk Mapping
- ✓ Moratorium of all New Developments in the Floodplain

The Township has been pro-active in flood mitigation and is underway with an aggressive program to elevate or acquire 78 properties. The Township has received a Repetitive Flood Claim grant through FEMA as well as two Severe Repetitive Loss grants and a Hazard Mitigation Grant Program application. A third Severe Repetitive Loss application is pending along with a NJDEP Blue Acres funding request. If approved, the Township will mitigate 90 properties – illustrating its efforts and implementing the Commission’s top three recommendations.

Any properties acquired through FEMA mitigation funds will be maintained in perpetuity as open space. Working with community groups such as the Passaic River Coalition, the Township will acquire or support the acquisition of any flood-prone property that can be demolished and removed out of the flood way or flood plain. These acquisitions have been mapped out in accordance with FEMA FIRM maps for floodway/floodplain areas.

The Township’s Business Administrator also serves as the FEMA Program Administrator who serves as a liaison between FEMA, NJOEM, residents and the Township Council. Several community meetings have been held to outline the program; a public hearing was held as required to submit the Blue Acres application, and reports are given regularly to the Township Council (which are televised for those who cannot attend in person). The FEMA Program Administrator is in the process of developing a web site specific to flood mitigation efforts underway in Town. The site will feature password protected areas for the 5 ongoing applications so that residents can receive timely updates in a consistent, streamlined system. An interactive question and answer area will also be included to allow for ongoing dialogue.

Properties that are acquired will be held for open space with the overall goal to create a greenway area in the Township that will enhance the natural beauty of the Passaic River while ensuring no structures be built that could be destroyed or damaged by flood waters. Additionally, in November of last year, the voters of the Township of Little Falls approved the creation of an Open Space Trust Fund that will establish a steady source of funds to acquire property for open space and develop parks and recreation areas. The Trust Fund also allows for the Township to leverage funds through other sources earmarked for open space.

Goal 2: Protect Property

Construction official: The Township's Construction Official will continue working with the Township Engineer and Township's FEMA Program Administrator to acquire and implement state and federal funding for acquisitions and elevations. The Construction Official recommends changes in zoning ordinances to allow for the home elevation process to be implemented without unnecessary delays or additional financial costs to the impacted property owners. The Township's Construction Office serves as a resource for all materials and guidelines available with regards to flooding, repairing and elevating homes.

Significant progress is expected in 2013 in terms of flood mitigation. There are 78 properties either approved, or pending, for mitigation through acquisition or elevation. The Construction Official works in tandem with the Township's FEMA Program Administrator and the Township Engineer to ensure the implementation will occur as expeditiously as possible within FEMA guidelines.

The Construction Official prepares, or processes, information with regards to mitigation and emergency preparedness through the local media and on the Township's web site. Those articles focus on:

- Flood Assistance Information
- Calendar of Flood Board Meetings
- Hazard Mitigation – General Information
- Hazard Mitigation – Citizen Survey
- List of Hazard Mitigation Resources

Additionally, the Construction Official assists in preparing After Action reports following flood events.

Township Engineer: The Township Engineer continues to be instrumental in planning ways to protect property within the Township. The Engineer and FEMA Program Administrator work in tandem applying for, and implementing, FEMA flood mitigation grants. The Township Engineer is also working closely with the DPW on the construction of a new pump station in the flood area.

Additionally, the Township Engineer plans updates and modernization for existing storm water pump stations.

Goal 3: Increase Understanding of Hazard Risk, and Public Awareness and Preparedness

Emergency Management: The Township's OEM Coordinator is diligent and active in implementing processes and services to effectively serve township residents. The Township's OEM was instrumental in purchasing a reverse 911 program that is used consistently to keep resident informed during emergency events. Notifications are sent for evacuations, storm warnings and to notify residents when to relocate vehicles, or where they can find needed resources – from sandbags to food and shelter.

The OEM Director participates in County and State planning meetings and looks to identify ways to partner with other municipalities and community groups to best serve the residents of Little Falls. The OEM Director maintains close contact with the American Red Cross the FEMA for supplies and relief during flood events.

In 2011, the Township acquired two 4 x 4 vehicles with deep water fording equipment for emergency evacuations or entry to flood areas for security reasons or police patrol. Additionally, a 1 Military pickup truck was acquired with a trailer to transport emergency supplies. The Office of Emergency management also received a new connector boat for evacuation and patrol which is maintained and housed by the Fire Department.

The OEM Coordinator ensures the operation of the Township's Emergency Shelter which is used to capacity by evacuees during storm events. In 2011, the Township installed showers at the facility as the shelter is often used for several days – and sometimes weeks - at a time by residents who cannot get back into their homes until the water recedes, debris is removed, and power restored to the area.

The OEM Coordinator is able to access the local cable TV station for emergency broadcasts or issuing helpful hints and that has been done regularly and often throughout 2011.

In October of this year – as a result of Hurricane Irene - the Township OEM Coordinator arranged for a community meeting with representatives from FEMA, the National Flood Insurance Program, the Passaic County Long Term Recovery Unit, and the NJ State Police to review assistance available and to allow residents an opportunity to register, sign up, and ask questions while representatives from each of those groups were present.

Additionally, the OEM Coordinator assists in preparing After Action reports following flood events.

Goal 4: Protect the Environment and Natural Resources

Department of Public Works: The Department of Public Works has provided exemplary service to the residents and the Township following a year of devastating storm events. Although there was significant effort in being reactive to storm events, the DPW Superintendent has also spent time and effort being as pro-active as possible in maintaining the infrastructure of the Town.

The DPW Superintendent is in the process of gathering cost estimates to map the Township's utilities, water, sewer, storm water, brooks and culverts to better monitor all utilities in flood prone areas.

The DPW maintains storm water catch basins on an annual basis or as needed after flood events, and records the inspection process.

The DPW Superintendent is working with the Township Engineer on the construction of a new pump station in the hart of the residential flood area. The pump station will assist in preventing

catch basins from backing up into the streets within the flood area. Additionally, the DPW maintains the three existing storm water pumping stations.

The DPW maintains all flood-prone properties acquired for open space, and maintains property along the Peckman River and Morris Canal.

Additionally, the DPW Superintendent assists in preparing After Action reports following flood events.

Goal 5: Encourage Partnerships

Community Flood Board: The Little Falls Flood Board and the Passaic Valley Regional Flood Board continue to be active, productive and effective groups that have raised awareness of flood issues, identified strategies to decrease flood-related damage, and advocated for assistance from state and federal resources. The Flood Board has worked with the Passaic Valley Regional Sewage Authority to remove nearly 1,000 cubic yards of materials from the Peckman and Passaic rivers each year. That is the equivalent of about 70 truck loads of debris, rock and sediment and if spread out would cover an entire football field, six inches deep.

The Flood Board has also been aggressively lobbying the Army Corps of Engineers to design a long-term solution to diminish flood impact along the Peckman River. At its November meeting, ACOE Project Manager Alicia Gould outlined the mitigation approach identified as the most feasible: a 1,400 foot gravity feed culvert. A contractor has been to the site doing borings, and survey has been completed. The Corps has full funding in place to finish the Feasibility study. The proposed culvert will be a one-way flow, and cannot back up, it will have a check valve and grates on each end so that no animal or human can enter the culvert. A flood wall will be built by Great Notch Brook. There will be 5,000 ft of channel modification. The total cost for construction is approximately \$120 million. The ACOE is fine-tuning the economic and hydrologic portions of the study, to see if the 100-year or 50-year storm figure is the most economical. When construction is completed, the DEP will be responsible for maintenance. When the study is completed, the project will go into design. An agreement with DEP will be signed, with the cost share of 65% Federal, 35% State (this 35% will be shared among the impacted municipalities). When construction is finished, the project will be turned over to the DEP. If all goes as planned, construction is expected to start in 2016.

3. Recommendations

The Township should continue its job of implementing the Mitigation Strategy as outlined in the Township's All Hazards Mitigation Plan.

The Township should continue participation in the Passaic Valley Regional Flood Board.

Township documents related to flooding and stormwater management need to be catalogued in the public library. Digital versions should also be provided for the Township's web site.

Continue to develop and implement a strategy for flood mitigation through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grants.

Continue to develop enhanced communications for residents specific to flood mitigation and disaster assistance.