

Town of Plainfield • Hazard Mitigation Committee
Annual Committee Report 2019-2020

In January 2016, the Plainfield Select Board authorized the reforming of the Flood Advisory Committee into a Board-appointed Hazard Mitigation Committee. By resolution of the Select Board the committee will have seven members, one of whom is a non-voting representative from the Select Board.

Committee's mission is defined as: "The Hazard Mitigation Committee will assist the town by gathering information and developing long term recommendations to mitigate the impact of future flood and other hazard events on public safety and infrastructure.

The goal of the Hazard Mitigation Committee is to provide the Select Board with information and suggestions to reduce or eliminate the long-term risks to human life and property in Plainfield from fluvial erosion/landslide, flash floods/floods, Marshfield dam releases or failure, winter storms, long-term electric outages, hazardous waste spills, forest fires and other identified hazards."

Continued trends of more extreme weather make planning for the protection of our citizens more difficult. The Winooski and Great Brook flood more often and more intensely with the impact of stalled storms, local deluges of rainfall, road washouts and inadequate bridges. Similar storm systems in winter alternate snow dumps with quick warming and icing, and are often accompanied by high winds with power outages.

We believe strongly that in addition to having a well-trained and well-led fire and rescue department (and Plainfield has amongst the best) that all possibly hazard-endangered residents should be aware of their household's risk and plan their own safe exit from bad circumstances. To that end, in the spring of 2019 we sent out an all-household mailing to help with disaster planning and preparedness.

In June of 2019 we hosted a top climate expert (who helped lead the writing of the National Climate Assessment) and a much-respected regional meteorologist for a "State of the Climate" public forum at the Opera House. Lesley-Ann Dupigny Giroux and Roger Hill made it clear that we are heading for worse weather and rocky times, and explained why.

One deep and abiding concern is that Green Mt. Power has not moved swiftly to maintain and improve their very old (1927) earthen dam on the Marshfield-Cabot line, just upstream of Marshfield and Plainfield.

To push forward with our safety concerns we started an investigation with the Vermont Public Utility Commission (PUC), which in turn led to a court docket to evaluate their construction plans. We continue this work - with Sasha Thayer and Michael Billingsley putting in long hours to file evidence, dispute GMP claims and force a review of their construction planning. So far we are having a beneficial impact and the dam renovations are being modified in response to our filings.

Lastly, our members have attended forums and trainings, and continue to be highly committed to understanding the natural forces at work which are affecting Vermont's and our own residents' safety. Members of the committee attended both a state-run dam safety workshop in Montpelier as well as climate and energy training workshops in Fairlee, VT this Fall.

We continue to solicit new members for the Committee. Please notify our Chair Amos Meacham or our Secretary Michael Billingsley if you are interested in helping with our work in Plainfield. Our next

public forum in the spring of 2020 will be to better predict and address the needs of vulnerable persons with disabilities or chronic illness during times of disaster.

respectfully submitted,
Michael Billingsley, Secretary
Hazard Mitigation Committee