

Waterbury Natural Disaster Preparedness Committee
Meeting Minutes
05/22/2025

Opening: The meeting was held in the Steele Community Room, Waterbury Municipal Center. The meeting was called to order at 5:04 p.m.

Present: John Malter, Matt Dugan, Bette Lewicke, Emily Glide, and Dani Kehlmann, Waterbury Disaster Preparedness and Response Coordinator

Absent: Stacey Schwarz

Approval of Minutes: Motion from Matt to approve minutes as amended. Motion was approved at 5:05.

Approval of Agenda:

Business from Previous Meeting:

New Business:

John reported on the Winooski Flood Resilience Collaborative meeting, saying it was a productive session.

There was some discussion of stream gauges and the desire for more gauges/better information.

John said he had no update on the transfer of the cornfield/conversion of the cornfield for flood mitigation. Dani said the transfer sounded “imminent.”

There was discussion about FEMA not being reliable going forward. Dani stated that Waterbury can’t plan on federal help with disaster events. John said that we as a committee don’t want to over-promise regarding help that is available.

John: “It would be great to develop a catalog of all the things that are out there that are germane to flood response, both defensive and offensive.”

Emily said she appreciated the Winooski Flood Resilience Collaborative as a learning opportunity. She pointed out the example of a community replacing a culvert to protect a water treatment plant, done to address an immediate need and contrasted that with the time and expense of creating flood plain buffers, which is more helpful but much more complex.

Emily said that, based on the meeting and her own research, the committee could consider getting marketing demos from companies that create flood damage models. John said that UVM

and the regional planning commissions have resources. Emily suggested the committee look at flood success stories from other communities and see what we could learn.

John said that in Tampa, a hospital installed hydraulic walls that were successful in repelling recent flooding.

Dani said she'd check in with Tom Leitz regarding what the town is already doing and what vendors it has engaged with so that we don't duplicate efforts. Dani asked Emily if she would do some further research on communities who report flood success stories with the aim of collecting case studies similar to Waterbury and possibly reaching out to them for information. She suggested starting a Google docs platform for storing and sharing information.

Emily asked if Waterbury was an NFIP community. These communities commit to a set of mitigation measures and as a result everyone in the community gets a reduction in their premium rates for flood insurance.

Emily said she also found a draft of the town's 2024 local hazard mitigation plan and was wondering if there was an update/finished draft available. Dani said she'd check with Tom Leitz.

John offered that the EPA has some recent recommendations for staging areas for debris ranging from animal carcasses to hazardous waste; each town in each state is supposed to have this designated.

Dani asked Matt to share feedback from the town volunteer fair. Matt responded with concerns about mission creep and the committee's limited resources. He said he understood the mission to be building the Volunteer Corps and that there is much to do on this topic alone.

Dani said her goal before recruiting volunteers was to have a mission statement and create volunteer job descriptions. She is working on a volunteer database. She said we need to know what we have for inventory regarding flood cleanup supplies. She said the NDPC information on the town website needs to be robust. She wants to delegate tasks based on this list. Matt agreed and responded that working out all the implications from the manual will take a considerable amount of the committee's time over a period of years.

Dani said that her priority is the information we can communicate right now. For example, if you're in a flood plain, buy a sump pump and a dehumidifier and don't use your basement for storage. "If you need (financial) help, maybe the Good Neighbor Fund."

Dani reported that CReW has amassed a great deal of information on a household-by-household basis.

She said she is working on a "flow chart of who is responsible for what is the town responsible for, what is this committee responsible for, what is CReW responsible for, and what are none of

us should be responsible for that we should be outsourcing because those lines are very blurry and that is causing all kinds of burnout, confusion, et cetera.”

Emily said that, in light of this information, researching flood success stories had become a “nice to have” item at this point and more appropriate for another organization.

Dani announced that there will be a pump training at the town pool for anyone who wants to learn about the pumps available to households.

There was general discussion about the next steps for the committee. Matt introduced the idea of bringing former volunteers together and buying them pizza. Dani said we need to have a better idea of what to tell people first.

Dani asked Emily to research mold mitigation because she feels we need more information and recommendations for inclusion in the manual.

Dani: We need to get the lines of communication clear (the town, emergency services, etc.).

Dani: There is town-owned storage behind the school where the town will likely store the flood cleanup inventory. In a flood, presumably, the supplies would be moved to the municipal building and the Steele Room would become the response headquarters for “four days.”

Dani: There’s been a lot of conversation about sandbags. Are they even helpful and for whom? Is there an expert we can talk to? The problem with local flooding is that it comes with its own peculiarities such as ground water intrusion. “I live on the river and we could put a billion sandbags in, (and the water is still) coming in.”

“How do we communicate when someone on Randall Street says, ‘I need 10 sandbags,’ and it’s not going to do anything ...?”

Dani assigned Emily the task of researching when and how sandbags are helpful. This would be an item in a resource document for property owners.

The discussion turned to a potential event where we thank and train volunteers. Volunteer categories include:

- Paperwork
- On-location cleanup crew
- Administration & communication
- Door-to-door assessment
- Runners
- People with trucks
- Inventory: Procurement of supplies and kit assembly

Bette offered to do a brief psychological training for the home assessment process at the volunteer event. She said she could do the basics in 15 minutes. Dani said that this should be an ongoing training in shorter and longer versions.

Bette said that volunteers should be informed about their hoped-for time commitment. Dani suggested a two to four-day commitment.

Dani suggested that, with this new information gained, we set a date for a volunteer event. Emily suggested Wednesday June 25th.

There was discussion about the ratio of training to appreciation that the event should include.

The committee agreed to a longer meeting at our next scheduled meeting time, June 23, to hash out the details of the event.

Vote to adjourn: John motioned to adjourn. Bette seconded.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

Minutes Submitted By: Matt Dugan