

Waterbury Natural Disaster Preparedness Committee

Meeting Minutes

07/28/2025

Opening: The meeting was held in the Steele Community Room, Waterbury Municipal Center. The meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m.

Present: John Malter, Matt Dugan, Bette Lewicke, Emily Glide, and Dani Kehlmann, Waterbury Disaster Preparedness and Response Coordinator; Tom Leitz, Town Manager; and Kane Sweeney, Select Board member

Absent: Stacey Schwarz

Approval of Minutes: Motion from Matt to approve minutes as amended. Emily seconded. Motion was approved at 5:03.

Approval of Agenda:

Business from Previous Meeting:

New Business:

John kicked off the meeting and asked Dani to direct the meeting.

Dani reported on the June 25 thank-you/recruitment volunteer event. Twenty-two signups resulted. They are organized by roles (mucking, administration, etc.). The muck-out group was the least popular category. John asked about recruiting young people via local coaches. Dani took him up on the idea and said this was an example of the creative thinking needed to recruit more volunteers. Emily suggested gyms and offered to put a notice up at local facilities.

Dani mentioned that efforts were being made to learn more about Tyvek suit procurement and sandbags. John is doing research on trash disposal options. Dani has recruited a helper for website design and infographics.

Dani brought up the issue of intake/assessment forms, an issue that concerned her during the July 10 potential flooding. There was discussion about how to streamline the process of homeowners filling in the form and the Response Coordinator receiving them digitally. This kicked off a discussion of how to address this issue.

Tom suggested creating a town email address for flood response and a dedicated cell phone for the Natural Disaster Preparation and Response Coordinator.

Dani reported that she is leaning toward using Monday.com as the database for disaster response.

Dani said she would begin moving supplies and equipment to the armory building on High Street, which will become the permanent storage space, and to a small trailer. The goal is to have sufficient supplies for immediate response. This effort will be aided by volunteers who've signed up to help, which represents the first actions of the new Volunteer Corps.

Dani noted that she had been reviewing Montpelier's communication strategy that was "very thorough" and that she has loaded to the committee's shared Google docs platform.

Dani asked Tom for an area map for use in the cleanup effort.

Training is the next step, said Dani. She suggests quarterly trainings in the Steele Room. Bette said she'd be happy to make phone calls to the people who've signed up for various volunteer categories.

Dani said that assessment and intake and muck-out are the top priorities for early trainings. She envisions trainings taking place once or twice per year per category.

She said a muck-out training in a basement would be helpful.

John suggested that pictures of flooded basements would be helpful for the muck-out training.

Dani would like one or two committee members to be at each training.

Kane reminded the committee that a group text would not be acceptable under parliamentary rules for open meetings.

Dani said that a single email address would be necessary and that she will investigate how to make an intake/assessment form available on the website for all user skill levels.

There was discussion about the flavor of the trainings. John suggested shorter trainings. Matt suggested thanking people and making it a social experience. This is based on the CReW survey responses where people talked about the sense of fulfillment they got volunteering. He also suggested doing this on Friday nights at 5:00-6:00 or thereabouts due to room availability. Dani said we should make it light with easy learning to take away.

Dani said that we could bring together two volunteer groups for a social part of the evening and then split up and conduct the trainings in two different spaces. Longer-term, she envisions a dress rehearsal for all volunteer groups using a model home.

Dani would like to do a volunteer Red Cross training (Bette is the expert on this).

Dani will contact Diana Chase from the Vermont Dept. of Health for a go-bag training.

The committee agreed on a September time frame for the first training. Dani and Tom will agree on a time and then do quarterly meetings thereafter.

Kane will begin recruiting team leaders; Dani will supply him with existing materials. Emily asked for materials to hang in her gym and other public spaces.

Emily is working on a how-to-work-with-your-insurance company document. This could be included with the packet left with affected homeowners and also be on CREW's website.

Tom said the town has good flood maps with elevations and that the town is working on breaking this down by neighborhood. He also asked the committee to think about a budget, to be delivered either before or just after the holidays. Dani said she would put the inventory team on it.

Tom reported that nine buy-outs have been applied for. Two properties on Union Street and two on Main Street have gotten their appraisal numbers, but the process has been stalled. The Main Street properties are "dirty" and Tom is working with the state to deal with this. Everything is in a holding pattern from the federal end.

Regarding Randall Meadow, Tom said there is a \$65 million pot of money from the state. It now makes more financial sense to the state to address this due to a growing silt dam. But \$55 million is earmarked for buyouts. The meadow is a \$3 million project competing for a \$10 million pot of funds and there are \$50 million in projects that are high-priority also. The silver lining is that some property owners will say no to buy-outs and the allotted money will be re-programmed. There is also potentially \$23 million in FEMA money that will be allocated to the town. There is also clean-water money from the state regarding phosphorous reduction. \$700,000 is the maximum amount of money available and Tom feels there is a good chance of obtaining this money. There's a chunk of land (the Stanley Watson site) near the state complex the state has agreed to sell to the town, and the town is working with developers to develop the site. There is a new state program that allows for increased taxes from the site can be used to rehabilitate the meadow. This will all take a number of years.

FEMA is unlikely to be available as a resource in the future, said Kane. Tom cited two recent disasters in red states where FEMA declined to assist.

Dani suggested presenting the budget to the Select Board on Nov. 3.

Tom said the voters can create a reserve fund at Town Meeting time. Over time, this budget could be substantial.

Tom said that five thousand dollars is enough to buy a "substantial" trailer for storage.

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

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Minutes Submitted By: Matt Dugan