**PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING**

**Sutton Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2019**

***Sponsored by the***



Elly Phillips, Town Administrator and Hazard Mitigation Staff Coordinator opened the Public Information Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Present at the meeting were: Dane Headley, Select Board Chair; William I. Curless, Selectman; Aaron Flewelling, Deputy Fire Chief; Matthew Grimes, Emergency Management Director; Wendy Grimes, Rescue Chief; Bonnie Hill Conservation Commission; Jonathan Korbet, Elly Phillips, Town Administrator/Staff Coordinator; Glenn Pogust; Planning Board Member; Robert Wright Select Board, Bruno and Marilou Steblai and Betsy Forsham.

Ms. Phillips discussed the genesis and purpose of the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Ms. Phillips stated that the original plan was developed as a result of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 which states that municipalities have local adopted and FEMA approved natural hazard Mitigation Plans in order to be eligible for disaster and mitigation funding programs. She noted that New Hampshire is awarded funds based upon the completeness of its State Plan and the number of local plans.

Phillips advised that to remain in compliance the Town is required to submit for approval an updated plan every five years. The Plan being discussed was last approved in 2014. Planning is an ongoing process. The document is considered to be a living document. The 2019 update was developed over a nine-month period, by a group of Town staff members and board volunteers, public participates and a CNHRPC facilitator utilizing a standard approach to plan construction and content which is endorsed by FEMA. The 2019 Sutton Hazard Mitigation Committee was established by the Select Board in the Fall of 2018. The Committee consisted of members from Emergency Management, Administration, Fire and Rescue, Highway and Police Departments, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Select Board and Budget Committee as well as two dedicated members of the public. Participating members of the Hazard Mitigation Committee are: Cory Cochran, Fire Chief, Robert DeFelice, Budget Committee and representative of the business community, Aaron Flewelling, Deputy Fire Chief; Matthew Grimes, Emergency Management Director; Wendy Grimes Rescue; Bonnie Hill Conservation Commission; Adam Hurst, Highway Department; Jonathan Korbet, Elly Phillips, Town Administrator/Staff Coordinator; Glenn Pogust; Planning Board Member, Diego Solimine, Solid Waste Supervisor; Robert Wright Select Board. Bruno and Marilou Steblai represented the public were appointed members of the Committee. Others who attended one or more meetings were David Burnham, Health Officer, Christine Downing, Sutton Central School Principal, Kayla Henderson, Homeland Security, Carol Merullo, Town Clerk/Tax Collector and Kirsten Vigneault Greater Sullivan County Public Health Network.

Phillips added that the Hazard Mitigation Committee met for 4 formal meetings and 9 work sessions between November and August of this year, noting that the meeting Schedule and Agenda Activities are outlined in detail within the plan. For publicity and public outreach many individuals were personally invited to attend and participate in the Sutton Hazard Mitigation Plan Committee meeting including surrounding community EMDs, Boards and Committee Members Departments representatives, and local businesses. NH Homeland Security and Emergency Management (NHHSEM) Representatives were also invited as well as a representative from the Greater Sullivan County Public Health Network and the Sutton Central (Elementary) School. Meeting information was posted on the town’s online calendar and on a dedicated website page. Agendas were posted at various places and occasional press releases were done.

The Central NH Regional Planning Commission, contributed to the development of this Plan by facilitating the meetings, guiding the planning process, and preparing the Plan documents, Appendices, and Maps. For that we thank Stephanie Alexander, CNHRPC Senior Planner and Nathan Cote, CNHRPC Intern (GIS Mapping).

Phillips stated that the public information meeting tonight, which was publicized and noticed, is another opportunity to reach out to the public.

In closing, Phillips shared an interesting detail that emerged from the plan which was that Sutton’s overall population density between 1970 and 2017 increased +189%, from 15 people per square mile in 1970 to 34 people in 1990 and to an estimated 44 people in 2017. Sutton is geographically a large-sized community in the Central NH Region at 43.3 square miles (including water acreage). At the same time, Sutton has a comparatively low number of people per square mile as compared to other communities within the CNH Region.

Glenn Pogust, Planning Board Chair, was introduced to discuss the contents of the plan.

Mr. Pogust advised that the goals and objectives of the plan are to reduce future life and property losses before they occur by identifying appropriate actions to be implanted during the next five years. The plan is a set of guidelines. Adoption of the plan does not mean that the town is required to implement any identified actions.

Mr. Pogust presented some examples of important goals and objects noting that the goals are simple: to reduce the risk of injury and loss from natural hazards including severe weather and to promote public awareness regarding hazard mitigations. The plan objectives cover a wide range of areas among the most prominent would be to minimize potential damage caused by sever weather including extreme temperature, snow, rain fire and flooding.

The Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment involves the identification of main hazards within the town and of recent disasters in an effort to assess the risk of future hazard events. Some of the hazards the Committee identified as warranting the highest concerns were: Extreme Temperatures, High Wind Events and Severe Winter Weather. Other areas of concern are Inland Flooding and River Hazards, Public Health and Wildfire.

Mr. Pogust observed that fortunately the only disaster declared for Sutton in the last five years was the severe windstorm in October 2017. The Committee also identified a mild earthquake in March 2019 and recalled the active shooter threats earlier this year. Previous events have been predominantly related to severe winds snow and flooding.

The Committee reviewed past events and current potential hazards including: Extreme Temperatures or Storms requiring the town to provide rescue and shelter services; Inland Flooding causing road closures or property damage; Aging Infrastructure (bridges and culverts); Transportation – crashes on I-89 requiring fire, rescue and Police Assistance; Active Shooter threats; Cyber-attacks on town systems.

The Committee identified critical community facilities as follows:

Pillsbury Memorial Hall – valued at $359,000, but in need of preventative maintenance and could cost $3-4 million to rebuild.

Fire & Rescue Station – needs to be renovated and expanded or replaced. The current value is $202,000 but it could cost $3-5 million to replace.

Highway Facility – valued at $600,000 is in good condition.

Power lines and communication towers have a combined value of almost $5 million.

Town capabilities were assessed as having a high level of effectiveness in planning with respect to many areas, including: Strategic conservation, emergency management, emergency response, building code compliance, bridge and culvert inspections. Examples of high capability in regulatory functions are in police, fire standard operating procedures building codes, and zoning ordinance as well as subdivision and site plan review regulations.

Examples of completed actions since 2014 are that the town is providing a stipend for rescue members since 2016. Emergency responders have provided educational services to students and staff on school security and Highway has replaced a number of culverts.

Suggested actions and priorities run the gamut from zero expense to millions of dollars and include a new or renovated fire station, more education and awareness programs, and making energy efficiency upgrades to town buildings.

Examples of action items within the Mitigation Action Plan with the highest priority (from 12 to 75) are:

Post appropriate signage for wooden bridge weight limit and enforcement (75)

Adopt Hazard Mitigation Plan into the Master Plan (74)

Update zoning ordinance to comply with NFIP Requirements to reduce impact of flooding (75)

Adopt written priority policy for clearing roads with no alternative or secondary access (71)

Adopt an impervious surface zoning ordinance (71)

Install a dry hydrant near the Post Office in South Sutton (70)

Establish a CERT in town (70)

Encourage Follansbee to consider installing fire alarms and upgrades to code (70)

Wendy Grimes, Rescue Chief, reviewed Plan Implementation. Chief Grimes discussed the 5 maps which were developed: Potential Hazards, Past Hazards, Critical and Community Facilities, Potential Hazards and Losses and Stream Crossings and Assessments.

Chief Grimes advised that future implementations steps are to establish a permanent Hazard Mitigation Committee to oversee the plan and meet quarterly. Actions will be worked on annual mostly done by the departments at no cost. Some actions will require funding within the operating budgets or need to go to town meeting for funding. Ms. Grimes advised that the Mitigation Action Plan should be reviewed and updated annually. Chief Grimes encouraged those present to review the appendices containing the assessments and implementation worksheets. Chief Grimes highlighted these detailed and important working maps which were available for the information session.

Chief Grimes discussed the next steps in the plan process which are that NHHSEM issues conditional approval and the Select Board adopts the plan. NHHSEM and FEMA issue a formal approval letter. Chief Grimes reiterated the purpose of the plan which is for grant eligibility and to apply for and receive FEMA mitigations funds including Hazard Mitigation Grants, Pre-Disaster Mitigation and Flood Mitigation Assistance.

Police Chief Korbet was introduced to moderate the general question and answer session. Betsy Forsham asked whether the past disasters were just within the past five years and was advised that it was beyond that time frame. Betsy Forsham asked if active shooters events were broadcast anywhere and was advised that Code Red could be utilized for that purpose and how to sign up was discussed. Local sheltering for hazard events was also discussed.

The Select Board acknowledged the substantial effort of the Committee participants.

There being no further business, the Public Information Session adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elly Phillips, Staff Coordinator