

Eastern Shore Hazard Mitigation Plan

Summary of February 16, 2021 Steering Committee Meeting held Virtually via Zoom 2:00-4:00pm

Presentations, support documents, and other resources can be found at <http://www.a-npdc.org/accomack-northampton-planning-district-commission/coastal-resources/hazard-mitigation-planning/>

Members may access a recording of this call at: tinyurl.com/4wn6p937

Steering Committee Members Present:

Susan McGhee, Northampton County
Jeb Brady, Town of Cape Charles
Tom Brockenbrough, Accomack County
Jamy Salazar, Town of Onley
Bryan Rush, Chincoteague Emergency Services
Michael Tilbert, Town of Chincoteague
Robert Williams, Town of Wachapreague
Matthew Spuck, Town of Onancock
Jackie Davis, Town of Cheriton
Thomas Beasley, Town of Bloxom

Steering Committee Members Absent:

Town of Painter
Town of Accomac
Town of Saxis
Town of Exmore
Town of Eastville
Town of Tangier
Town of Nassawadox
Town of Keller
Town of Belle Haven
Town of Hallwood
Town of Melfa
Town of Parksley

Steering Committee Alternates Present:

Jeanette Eby, Town of Bloxom

VDEM Present:

Harrison Bresee, VDEM

A-NPDC Staff Present:

Shannon Alexander
Jessica Steelman
Thomas Hicks, Berkley Group
Jon McCoy, Berkley Group

Planning Council Members Present:

Scott Hall, ESCC
Hali Plourde-Rogers, ESLT
Evelyn Shotwell, Chincoteague Chamber
Susan Bates, The Nature Conservancy

Welcome and Introductions

Shannon Alexander, Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission (A-NPDC) Director of Planning, and Thomas Hicks, The Berkley Group, welcomed participants and directed participants to take roll call using an online form.

Shannon Alexander thanked participants for their engagement and reiterated the importance of the hazard mitigation planning process and the plan's impact on the community. The Hazard Mitigation Plan is required by FEMA for various funding opportunities, as well as positioning the communities for funding through the upcoming Community Flood Preparedness Fund.

Round Table Discussion: *What historic storm/event impacted your community the most?*

Committee members were asked to share what historic storm or event impacted their communities the most. A range of events were discussed, including Hurricane Andrew, the 1962 Ash Wednesday storm, Hurricane Gloria in 1985, Hurricane Isabel, 2009 twin Nor'easters, Hurricane Irene, Hurricane Sandy, 1999 Hurricane Floyd and the storm of 1933. These storms share high winds and heavy precipitation as common factors. Drainage issues compound the heavy precipitation events to create risk for the community.

Discussion of Chair & Vice Chair

In review of Federal guidelines, it was determined that a chair and vice chair are not a necessity for the hazard mitigation planning process. Shannon Alexander proposed to the steering committee that the planning process move forward in a collaborative fashion, forgoing a formal chair and vice chair. A unanimous vote by all localities present was taken and the steering committee decided to proceed without a formal chair and vice chair.

Adoption of Vision Statement

Jonathan McCoy covered the proposed changes to the vision statement from the January meeting. All committee members present voted unanimously to adopt the new vision statement, which reads:

"Planning and mitigation actions minimize damage and disruption during hazard events. Federal and state agencies cooperate with the local governments and guide necessary resources to the governments for recovery activities. To the extent possible, residents should be self-sufficient and should have taken responsibility for their own economic and physical protection. Infrastructure smoothly functions throughout the event and the recovery period following."

Locality Meetings & Review

Shannon Alexander announced the addition of a new planner to the planning district commission staff. The new planner, Ashley Mills, will begin conducting virtual (or potentially some in-person) one-on-one meetings with representatives of each local government by Mid-March and will likely continue these meetings through April. These meetings will be held to review and develop the draft chapters of the plan.

Round Table Discussion: *What is the biggest risk to your community today?*

Jonathan McCoy led the group through a discussion of the biggest risks to their communities today. Many answers were given, including flooding from both flood waters and coastal flooding, high winds, and wave action in coastal communities during high surf. Overwhelming existing infrastructure in the region was another risk, including telecommunications, sewer systems (both the collection systems and private septic systems), and the ability to provide potable drinking water. Environmental concerns were also a major risk factor, with the loss of natural environment areas being a potential impact on both health and economic activities. An additional risk factor involves rocket launches from Wallops Island. This facility is a driver for tourism and is heavily impacted by weather. It can also severely disrupt travel and tourism activities in the event of a rocket launch failure. Pandemic concerns were discussed in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic

Through this discussion it was highlighted that prior to worrying about costs of mitigation projects, the risk associated with hazard events must be fully discussed in the plan. This will assist in the pursuit of mitigation funding.

HIRA Facilitation

Tommy Hicks reviewed the high, medium, and low hazard priorities from the 2016 HMP. The survey from the January meeting divulged 55 different potential risks facing the Eastern Shore. Tommy led the group through a HAZUS report conducted on Northampton County, identifying the potential impacts from hazard events.

Using the survey results and reports pulled from HAZUS, Tommy Hicks identified high priority, medium priority, and low priority hazard. Shannon also reinforced the option for localities to include a hazard in their own chapter of the HMP that may not have risen to the high, medium, or low list, if they feel it is an important concern for their locality. The committee and council members discussed these hazard rankings and decided locality representative's present unanimously chose to rank the hazards as follows:

Four high risk factors:

- High Wind Events
- Coastal Flooding
- Coastal Erosion
- Non-Coastal Flooding
- Biological Hazards

Six medium risk factors were identified:

- Water and Wastewater Quality and Management
- Road and Highway
- Substance Use and Overdose
- Communications Failure

Six low risk factors were identified:

- Active Threat
- Electrical Energy Failure

- Tornado
- Invasive Environmental Disease

Next Meeting

The meeting ended at 4:00 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for March 16.