



**Rockland County Multi-Jurisdictional
Hazard Mitigation Planning Project
Kickoff Meeting
November 20, 2008 at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.
Rockland County Office of Fire and Emergency Services
35 Firemen's Memorial Drive, Pomona, NY 10970**

Meeting Minutes

Attending

See accompanying sign-in sheets.

Items Discussed

Mr. Gerry Walsh, representing the County Executive's Office, opened the meeting by thanking the participants for attending and outlining the process that the County had been through to secure funding for the completion of a FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plan. Mr. Walsh also stressed the need for having a FEMA-approved plan in place as a condition for receiving most types of FEMA hazard mitigation project grants.

Mr. Walsh then explained that in order to achieve the County's objectives in terms of plan preparation, they had contracted with URS Corporation of Wayne, New Jersey, a firm with extensive experience in developing hazard mitigation plans (and in writing some of the guidance documents and evaluation tools used by FEMA). Mr. Walsh introduced the URS Deputy Project Manager, Mr. Richard Franks, and also Mr. Gene Lucchese, representing the New York State Emergency Management Office. He then turned the meeting over to Mr. Franks to present an overview of the plan development process and the roles of the County, individual municipalities, and the consultant in this process.

Mr. Franks began by defining what is meant by "hazard mitigation" and "hazard mitigation planning", and giving a few examples of common measures that qualify as mitigation actions. He continued by outlining how mitigation planning leads to the judicious selection of risk reduction actions, which, if implemented, reduce the costs of future disasters.

Mr. Franks referred to the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, with which the planning process and completed plan must comply, and stressed that under this process, no out-of-pocket expenses are incurred by participating local municipalities. Mr. Franks confirmed that consideration of man-made hazards is not mandatory under DMA 2000, and that Rockland County has currently elected to include only natural hazards in the plan. However, the County would be free to incorporate man-made hazards in the plan during future updates.

Mr. Franks stressed that each participating municipality is expected to identify its own unique set of mitigation actions for the plan (although municipalities are also free to consider collaborative actions that benefit neighboring communities) and that there is no competition between municipalities within the overall plan. Mr. Franks outlined the benefits to municipalities of participating in a multi-jurisdictional plan, which include the realization of significant economies of scale, and the concentration of all administrative and financial responsibilities with a single umbrella organization (i.e. the County) rather than requiring individual municipalities to apply for FEMA plan funding and procure consultants separately.

Mr. Franks then described the organizational structure of the Planning Committee and Core Planning Group, and explained that each participating municipality is expected to provide a representative (plus a deputy, ideally) for the Core Planning Group, who will be responsible for attending meetings, coordinating local public outreach, and submitting the deliverables that are required of each municipality during the planning process.

Mr. Franks then outlined the principal steps in the planning process and explained how these steps broadly coincide with key sections of the final plan. Mr. Franks presented a comprehensive list of natural hazards for initial consideration, and stressed the importance of demonstrating in the plan whether or not each one impacts Rockland County. Mr. Franks went on to describe how the Core Planning Group will be able to influence which hazards are studied in detail, before describing subsequent sections of the plan which aim to profile the selected hazards, describe and quantify exposed assets, and estimate actual expected damages in dollars for each hazard, where possible.

Mr. Franks then described how the Mitigation Strategy and Actions section of the plan, which is regarded as the most important section in the document, will demonstrate how the participating municipalities have

selected a range of appropriate mitigation actions, evaluated them against various criteria suggested by FEMA, assigned priorities to them, and considered how best to implement them. Mr. Franks stressed that failure of any municipality to develop an individual mitigation strategy will prevent FEMA from approving the plan for that municipality, and the municipality will not be eligible for FEMA mitigation grant funding.

Mr. Franks also briefly described how the final plan would include sections devoted to integrating the plan with existing regulatory frameworks, and how the plan will be maintained and updated in the future.

Mr. Franks briefly described how the participating municipalities will be expected to conduct outreach activities within the local community to build public support and input for the plan, and presented examples of organizations and other entities which may be appropriate for targeted outreach activities. Mr. Franks encouraged municipalities to make use of the hazard mitigation planning fact sheet which has been developed specifically for this project, and which was distributed to attendees. Mr. Franks also drew attendees' attention to the Outreach Log contained within Guidance Memorandum #1 (also distributed during the meeting) which municipalities are expected to use to document all efforts to build support and engage the public.

In addition to public outreach activities, Mr. Franks also described how the municipalities were expected to participate in the planning process by attending meetings (four subsequent meetings with Core Planning Group and consultant participation are currently planned), responding to questionnaires, reviewing draft sections of the plan, developing mitigation actions, formally adopting the plan by local resolution, and participating in future maintenance and updates.

Mr. Franks then initiated the next opportunities for municipal participation by distributing a "Wish List" and a Land Use and Development Trends questionnaire to all attendees. The "Wish List" is a list of relevant supporting documents and data which the municipalities may provide in order for URS to get as broader picture as possible of existing conditions within the municipalities and to supplement information readily available in the public domain. It was requested that items on the Wish List are submitted to the County by December 20th, 2008 for collation and forwarding to URS. The Land Use and Development Trends Questionnaire is a simple form intended to assess future development in hazard areas and the regulatory mechanisms that are currently in place to reduce the potential for damages. It was requested that completed questionnaires are submitted directly to URS (contact details are included on the

questionnaire) by December 7th, 2008. Mr. Franks reminded attendees that while it may be beneficial for core planning group members to consult other staff in their municipality while completing this and future deliverables, only one response is required from each municipality for each deliverable.

It is anticipated that in addition to the Wish List and the Land Use and Development Trends questionnaire there will be a further four questionnaires or worksheets that municipalities will be asked to complete and return at later stages in the planning process.

While outlining the deliverables for which the municipalities will be responsible, Mr. Franks mentioned that the County intends within the next week to set up a website specifically for the hazard mitigation planning process, as an offshoot to the County's current Emergency Management web page. This site is intended to provide reference and guidance throughout the planning process, and to act as a document repository for all components of the plan, questionnaires and worksheets, and records of all meetings. Individual municipalities will be encouraged to link to this web page from their own websites if they have them, as part of their outreach activities.

Mr. Franks then discussed the project timeline, noting that the intention is to have a full draft report submitted to the State Emergency Management Office for review in July 2009. Mr. Franks closed his presentation by reminding attendees that FEMA will only approve the final plan for the County and any municipalities that participate in the process, identify their own mitigation actions, and formally adopt the plan, providing FEMA with a copy of the adoption resolution.

Following a brief period of questions and answers, Mr. Chris Jensen of the Rockland County Office of Fire and Emergency Services thanked everyone for attending and the meeting was adjourned.