

Chester Resilient Connecticut 2.0

5-17-22

Held remotely over Zoom

Present: Mary Buchanan (CIRCA), Margot Burns (RiverCOG), Charlene Janecek (Chester First Selectman), Richard Leighton (Chester Fire Marshal), Reinaldo “Ray” Guasp (Chester Emergency Management), Michael Sanders (Chester Chairman of Planning & Zoning), John Guskowski (Consultant Providing Zoning Services)

Overview: CIRCA met with the Town of Chester and RiverCOG to describe the expansion of Resilient Connecticut into the RiverCOG planning region and provide a forum to the local hazard mitigation plan team to comment on the status of actions in the Chester annex of the Hazard Mitigation Plan adopted in 2021. These meeting notes will be provided to the Town and RiverCOG for appropriate filing related to the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Mary commenced the meeting by providing an overview of the Resilient CT project and Resilient CT 2.0 future plans. During the discussion, the local planning team reviewed the Town’s hazard mitigation actions, and attendees had an open discussion about the Town’s needs related to climate change and natural hazards.

Review of HMP Actions:

Activity #	Goal/Obj	Activity Description	Status Reported by Location Planning Team
1	2-1	Conduct a study to assess the extent to which the dredging of impoundments in Chester is feasible, would increase the floodwater storage capacity of the impoundments, and would reduce flood risks for the community.	No study has taken place, but this is still an existing interest. There is ongoing dredging in Chester Creek, deposited at the end of Dock Rd.
2	3-1	Work with an organization such as Trout Unlimited, American Rivers, the Connecticut River Conservancy, CT DEEP to identify dams in Town that may benefit from removal and approach their owners to offer facilitation of that removal.	A study by Jacobson Consulting has been completed and has identified several dams. No dam removal has happened yet.
3	2-1	Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of dams in Chester to guide risk mitigation actions and grant applications moving forward	Ongoing
4	1-1	Increase the “look back” period for the definition of “Substantial Damage” in the Chester zoning regulations so that cumulative damages to flood-prone properties will trigger requirements for mitigative action.	No such changes to the zoning regulations have been made. Many of the current town staff were not involved in the last HMP and are not familiar with the need for this action.

Activity #	Goal/Obj	Activity Description	Status Reported by Location Planning Team
5	1-1	Institute a program to incentivize landlords to invest in risk-reduction measures that will benefit their commercial or residential tenants (for example, permit fees for mitigation measures could be waved).	No progress. Many of the current town staff were not involved in the last HMP and are not familiar with the need for this action.
6	1-1	Complete a Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant application to elevate Dock Road.	This has not happened. There have been recent concerns about Dock Rd and the temporary bridge for accessing the end of Dock Rd, which needs to be widened and replaced. This project might be suitable for Resilient CT, as the marina facility at the end of Dock Rd is affected. A similar issue affects Castle View Extension (private road, might have an informal HOA for plowing); there are homes at the end of Castle View Extension and consistent flooding during weather events. Both Dock Rd and Castle View Extension have limited egress.
7	2-1	Install an underground water tank in the Cedar Lake area to provide firefighting water.	This action was explored by Fire Department, it was determined that this is not a feasible project and so no tank has been installed.
8	2-1	Conduct a study to identify needs and alternatives with regard to wildland firefighting capabilities at the Inspiration lane commercial and industrial park.	No progress.
9	1-1	Require all facilities housing large populations of higher-risk individuals (such as nursing and independent living institutions) to submit a natural hazard response plan to the Town. Assign a department to review and approve these plans.	No progress but discussion is ongoing. Masonicare (not in a flood zone and with multiple points of egress) has its own plan and has conducted its own evacuation during previous storm events.
10	2-1	Complete restoration and stabilization of Chester Creek at North Main and High Street	A plan by Jacobson Consulting was developed, with the goal of collaboration between the town and the NRCS. Permits for this project are required from the Army Corps of Engineers, which is backlogged and has not approved the plan. The existing plan expires Sept 1 st . The town has been informed that the current plan is unlikely to ever take place – the ACE approval is the missing piece. To reapply, the project would need to cover a larger area and involve more flood mitigation actions in order to be considered. This might be of interest for Resilient CT 2.0 (although the main hurdle here is not the plan development but the ACE approval).

Activity #	Goal/Obj	Activity Description	Status Reported by Location Planning Team
11	2-1	Conduct an alternatives analysis to identify measures for restoring natural flows and stabilizing banks of Chester Creek at Deep Hollow and Liberty Road. Include CT DEEP, USACE, and other stakeholders in the process as appropriate.	This is related to Action 10. The town would have to undertake additional work in addition to that specified in Action 10, which is an ongoing discussion. It's possible that this could be done without ACE approval, not confirmed. This would involve diverting stream flow during work and then restoring flow.
12	2-1	Develop a prioritized list of undersized culverts to be replaced with larger structures to facilitate passage of debris and rubble.	Unknown, needs follow-up.
13	2-1	Replace priority undersized culverts with larger structures to facilitate passage of debris and rubble. At the time of development of this hazard mitigation plan, the Town had identified six culverts restricted by rocks and rubble.	Culverts are replaced as-needed on an ongoing basis.
14	3-1	Work with local businesses and the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce to explore options for reducing risks to businesses in Chester. This may include assisting businesses to develop business continuity plans.	The town agrees that the question of business resiliency would be appropriate to address at the COG level.
15	3-1	Provide guidance to local businesses on hazard and risk mitigation options accessible to them.	See previous note for Action 14.
16	3-1	Conduct a direct outreach campaign to owners of Repetitive Loss and Severe Repetitive Loss properties informing them of mitigation options including elevation, relocation, and acquisition. Include information about funding and technical assistance from municipal, state, and federal sources.	There are only 4-5 RL properties in Chester, most located in the downtown area where the lower levels of businesses are right on the edge of stream. There has been no outreach campaign. There is reportedly not much to be done about the flood risk to these properties given that the buildings form the bank of the brook.
17	3-1	Develop a written annual schedule for natural hazard public education and outreach efforts through the Town website, social media outlets, mailers, in-person outlets, neighborhood associations, and other media, to ensure consistent and long-term public education programs. Education should include information on sheltering locations, private property owner mitigation action options, techniques for homeowner self-inspection, hazard insurance, and geographic distributions of natural hazard risk zones in Town.	There is no annual schedule, communications are made on an as-needed basis. Prior to major storm events, Everbridge notices are sent out and social media is used. Prior to hurricane season and the winter season, Emergency Management will send out reminders regarding generators, water supply, etc.

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18	2-1	Upgrade or install generators at critical facilities in need of emergency power, including future municipal buildings.	Ongoing
19	2-1	Install a generator for back-up power at the Public Works Garage.	Ongoing
20	3-1	Conduct a campaign to inform Chester residents that are elderly, disabled, non-English speakers, or have other functional needs, about the Town's protocols for hazard alerts and communication. Work with these populations to identify needs and gaps in the protocols.	See notes for Action 17 about town communication. The Fire Department and Social Services have a good sense of where the elderly and disabled residents are located. Unknown whether the seasonal notifications are provided for non-English speakers. There is an ongoing concern that there may still be people slipping through cracks.
21	2-1	Paper Records Preservation – Convert all paper records maintained by the municipality to electronic format, consistent with State recommendations, to ensure their survival. Establish protocols for practice going forward	Ongoing. RiverCOG has a sign-up sheet for consultant services.
22	1-1	Drought Study and Water Conservation – Conduct town-wide study of ground and surface water capacity as it relates to planning for droughts. Develop recommendations for future land use to include recharge and site design to encourage water conservation.	No progress.
23	1-1	Structural Reports – Continue to require structural engineering reports for expansion or alteration of buildings within the V-Zone. Evaluate benefits of doing same in other flood zones.	Ongoing

Open Discussion on the Town's Needs:

- Margot raised the issue of rt 148 flooding at Cedar Lake town park, particularly across the road into the parking lots.
- Chester was hit very hard by the 2018 storms. Prior to this the last major flood event was the back-to-back storms of '82 and '84. This was also the last time any major stabilization work was completed around Chester Creek (rip-rapping).
- The storms in 2021 involved more wind risk / power outages than flooding concerns. There was a concern that there could have been a dam failure, which was monitored closely; the dam did not fail.

- The primary concern is that the major community asset / the down town area is right along the banks of Chester Creek.
- Privately-owned dams are a secondary concern. The costs of inspection and maintenance are cost-prohibitive for the private owners in Chester, and so inspections/maintenance may not happen. Of particular concern is a dam behind the historical society that poses a risk to the downtown area.
- There is no official shelter in Chester; residents use the Regional shelter at John Winthrop Middle School. The Chester Hose Company is the back-up, can also be used as a cooling center, and has a generator.
 - o The synagogue in town can also be used for cooling if needed.
 - o The elementary school is another option, but does not have a generator.
 - o There is a generator at the town hall, but the existing generator is not enough to power the entire building. Charlene is working to get Board of Finance approval to get a larger generator for the town hall that will be capable of powering the entire building.
- Actions #6 and #10/11 might be potential candidates for Resilient CT 2.0 collaboration.

Background Info on Climate Change Vulnerability Index (CCVI):

<https://resilientconnecticut.uconn.edu/ccvi/>

Follow-up:

- Please take a look at the map viewer for the Zones of Shared Risk and offer any corrections/additions. Link here:
<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/9a4f68dd99f44dc58b93fd85bcfe1255/>
- (Note: the Editor tool within the viewer does not always save reliably, so please email mary.buchanan@uconn.edu with any changes you'd like to see reflected in the Chester ZSR layer.)

Charlene will be the primary point of contact going forward, but communications should be shared with the entire team present on this call.