

Deep River Resilient Connecticut 2.0

4-25-22

Town Hall

*Present: David Murphy (CIRCA), Mary Buchanan (CIRCA), Margot Burns (RiverCOG), Angus McDonald (Deep River First Selectman), Eric Waltke (Deep River Public Works), John Guskowski (Consultant Providing Zoning Services), Adam Kerop (Deep River Fire Marshal)*

**Overview:** CIRCA met with the Town of Deep River 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 Deep River 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.

David 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/Objec	Activity Description	Status Reported by Local Planning Team
1	1-1	<b>Business Recovery Plan</b> Explore the needs of local businesses and incorporate these needs into a business recovery plan that can then be distributed to town businesses.	Carried forward from previous HMP. The plan has not been created, although the EDC has put out a survey that has resulted in about 300 responses. The businesses along the river are not close enough to the river to risk much damage, so the exact needs are not clear yet. The Cumberland Farms gas station does not have (and does not intend to acquire) a generator. A storm a few years ago knocked out power to Main Street. It would be useful to know which businesses have insurance and generators. This action item has been in multiple town HMPs; perhaps it should be raised to the COG level so that there is a unified approach.
2	1-1	<b>Landlord Incentives</b> Research what kind of incentives would motivate landowners to make the additional investment that would reduce potential damages to their properties and loss of life of their tenants.	No progress here. Perhaps could be combined with other efforts aimed at improvements to living conditions.

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3	3-1	<p><b>Local Social Resources</b> In order to assist vulnerable populations during an event, these populations and their location need to be identified. Seek grants and identify a methodology to locate and track locations of these populations (i.e. elderly, disabled, non-English speaking, etc.)</p>	<p>Deep River’s population has a high median age; it would be useful for emergency services to know which residences are home to vulnerable people. One option could be a voluntary sign-up program such as First Due/Community Connect. The Fire Department can demo the use of First Due/Community Connect for other town offices.</p>
4	1-1	<p><b>Possible Open Space Criteria</b> the Conservation Commission will conduct a review of storm surge inundation areas for future open space considerations.</p>	<p>See item 8 for recent open space acquisitions. The Town also noted that the Land Trust could provide a list of recent acquisitions and upcoming pursuits.</p>
5	1-1	<p><b>Emergency Supply Cache</b> Pursue the creation of emergency supply caches that include drinking water and emergency supplies such as cots for sheltering.</p>	<p>Caches have not been created; storage is a challenge. During the last big storm, the Chester EMD had a water purifier that was very helpful.</p>
6	1-1	<p><b>Pursue funding</b> to develop and maintain a comprehensive, “in-house” GIS database that will provide the town with immediate capabilities of assessing areas</p>	<p>This is almost complete.</p>
7	2-1	<p><b>Road Reconstruction</b> Collaborate with Connecticut DOT to address the roadways of concern that are under the state’s jurisdiction.</p>	<p>Noteworthy reconstructions have not occurred. Last summer there was an in-kind replacement of a bridge. The town would like Essex Street to be raised, as there is a flood risk here in the Pratt Cove area where a zone of shared risk was drawn.</p>
8	1-1	<p><b>Land Acquisition</b> Pursue funding for acquisitions for both open space and public park creation</p>	<p>There is recently acquired open space (owned by land trust) along the Connecticut River and potentially in the Connecticut River flood zone. Some land up along Deep River has also been donated to the state. The town would be interested in acquiring more land for park spaces as well as upgrading existing parks.</p>

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9	3-1	<p><b>Public Information</b> Develop a preparedness webpage to cover all hazards, and include information such as evacuation routes, hazard areas, shelter location, insurance information, and mitigation efforts property owners can easily pursue. Conduct outreach to RL and SRL owners to encourage review of alternatives.</p>	<p>This has not happened. During storms there is information on the website.</p>
10	3-1	<p><b>Public Outreach</b> Develop a program to inform residents on natural hazards. Action items may include: - Collecting readily available brochures and pamphlets and distribute them more widely, - Conduct annual educational outreach in schools to educate on hazards, - Educate and encourage resident on the benefits of elevating above BFE. Include drought and target outreach to socially vulnerable populations.</p>	<p>Town staff expressed a desire for more education for town officials so that town officials can then educate residents. Drought is an increasing concern, both for fire-fighting and for seasonal water provision.</p>
11	1-1	<p><b>Debris Management Plan</b> Pursue the development of a formal debris management plan. Address the need to increase the capacity of the current debris management site.</p>	<p>A formal plan has not been developed. Currently debris is brought to a farm on Rt 145.</p>
12	1-1	<p><b>Firefighting Capabilities</b> Equipment needs are evaluated and assessed on a 5, 10- and 15-year planning horizon. Pursue funding for future equipment needs to ensure response capabilities, such an engine and SCBA (breathing apparatus).</p>	<p>The plan is updated and modified as needed on an ongoing basis. The town has acquired additional firefighting equipment in the last few years and is also having an official needs assessment done.</p>
13	1-1	<p><b>Benefit/Cost Analysis (RL Properties and Buy Outs)–</b> Evaluate opportunities for public funding of mitigation on private property where public benefits exceed the cost for RL properties or those otherwise eligible for buyout</p>	<p>There are very few RL properties in the town (town staff can think of two at most, and both are private homes). There is currently no intention to acquire these properties. One may be a Tower Hill residence, with the Falls River going right under the house in a concrete pipe, but this would need to be verified by viewing the RL list from FEMA.</p>

### Open Discussion on the Town's Needs:

- The Deep River fire house is adjacent to the Deep River.
  - o The building has not experienced much flooding thus far, although some flooding occurred in 1982.
  - o Floodproofing will be part of the long term plan for the new building; for example, the building will be raised and additional flood protections may be added.
- The John Winthrop Middle School is the middle school and the regional emergency shelter for three towns: Deep River, Chester, and Essex. There is potential for access to be cut off at the entrance driveway because it crosses a stream conveyed in a culvert as noted below. The Town's swimming area nearby is at one of the ponds along this stream.
  - o The middle school can also be used as a cooling center. There has not been much regional need for a cooling center so far; individual towns will sometimes use their own town hall or firehouse for a day or so when needed.
  - o Rt 80 crosses the Deep River at least twice. People coming from Chester to the middle school would need to use this road. David noted that Chester and Essex municipal staff and elected officials voiced concerns about access to the middle school during times of sheltering, two years ago during development of the hazard mitigation plan.
  - o The middle school was used two years ago during COVID for charging and food distribution.
  - o There is a culvert under the access road to the middle school. Town staff are not aware of any past issues, even in 1982, but it could pose a future risk if overtopped or washed out.
- The Hemlock neighborhood has limited access. One road leads to this neighborhood from Route 80, and Route 80 crosses Deep River in two locations nearby (one to the west of this intersection and one to the east).
  - o Erosion is not a concern, but the main road to this neighborhood is very steep and poses a challenge during winter storms.
  - o There is possible emergency access between the Hemlock neighborhood and the high school, but it's an informal route that might cut through private property.
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- Tower Hill neighborhood – see item 13 on HMP action list. The headwaters of Falls River reportedly flow under one residential structure on the west side of the lake. The property owner calls the Town frequently to request a solution to the flooding that occurs. However, this owner has reportedly not been interested in acquisition. David and Mary noted that a zone of shared risk was drawn around this neighborhood.
- One culvert on Plains Rd at the Deep River reportedly collects a lot of debris and is also old and in need of repair. Only three houses are directly served by this culvert, and Plains Rd can serve as an alternate access road when the Rt 80 bridge is closed. The town would like to use infrastructure funding to address this concern.
- Major employers include plastics companies (Silgan/SWPC), schools.
- Town staff expressed concern about the proliferation of beavers, especially along the Deep River corridor.
- No other major resilience projects are occurring.

- The Connecticut River coast is a “hard” coast that rises from the riverbank, and most of the residences near the river are not at risk.
- Pratt Cove is an effective functioning floodplain.

**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](mailto:mary.buchanan@uconn.edu) with any changes you'd like to see reflected in the Deep River ZSR layer.)

The contact for this going forward will be the First Selectman's office.