

Resilient Connecticut 2.0 Town of Lyme

5-3-22

Held remotely over Zoom

Present: David Murphy (CIRCA), Mary Buchanan (CIRCA), Margot Burns (RiverCOG), Steve Mattson (Lyme First Selectman), Ross Byrne (Lyme Zoning Enforcement Officer)

Overview: CIRCA met with the Town of Lyme 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 Lyme 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.

Initial Discussion:

- The town’s concerns are mostly already described in the HMP and depicted in the existing drawn ZSRs presented during the meeting. The town’s population density is low, flooding is usually temporary, and most areas have more than one point of access; all of these factors reduce the level of risk.
- Beavers pose a problem in the Grassy Hill Brook / Grassy Hill Road area in the southeast part of the town, just before the Old Lyme border. The road crosses several tributaries of the brook.

Review of HMP Actions:

Activity #	Goal/Obj	Activity Description	Status Reported by Location Planning Team
1	1-1	Add a freeboard requirement to the Town’s flood ordinance, in line with state requirements.	No progress here; town staff is unsure if there is a town flood ordinance. Flood damage prevention may be included in zoning regulations. David noted that the State Building Code already requires freeboard, so this would be a matter of incorporating the freeboard into the local regulations.

Activity #	Goal/Obj	Activity Description	Status Reported by Location Planning Team
2	3-1	Use Town website and social media accounts to educate the public about municipal hazard mitigation initiatives. Include maps of evacuation routes, storm surge areas, and shelters. Include options for mitigation of residential structures and business recovery and provide links to FEMA, NOAA, State OEM and RiverCOG websites for additional information.	This is an ongoing success. The town has robust communication with residents, with the town website, Facebook, Reverse-911, and email list all in use. There haven't been any natural hazard communications recently because there has been no need. Hurricane Ida reportedly did not cause damage in 2021. There was one storm in 2021 (potentially Henri) that washed out Grassy Hill Road, but this was repaired in eight days and the town communicated with residents throughout this time about road work.
3	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 official schedule for public education and outreach because the Town's risk is believed relatively low and hazard communication needs are already addressed (see action #2).
4	3-1	Perform a public outreach and education initiative to inform people of emergency shelter locations and access routes, and what to do with pets when in need of emergency sheltering. Initiative will include, at a minimum, annual postings on the Town website and social media accounts, as well as instructions prior to or during disaster events. Mailers and pamphlets placed in public hubs (such as the Town Hall or Library) may also be used.	There has been no specific outreach initiative, but this objective is likely covered through the town's response to action #2. The shelter is in East Lyme. The Hamburg fire station can also be a temporary shelter, although not for overnight sheltering; this facility has a generator and can be used for charging stations and cooling. If there is an emergency where relocation is believed necessary, this would be part of the town's ongoing communication activities.
5	3-1	Visit schools and educate children about the risks of floods, hurricanes, and other natural hazards and how to prepare.	No activity on this action. Lyme is part of a regional school system with Old Lyme (Region 18) and therefore the curriculum would be subject to both Towns' input.
6	2-1	Review forest roads to identify those presenting firefighting access issues because they are undersized or otherwise present obstacles.	The fire department is continuously doing this., Although the Town relies on a volunteer force with limited capacity, they are very knowledgeable about local conditions and challenges.
7	1-1	Develop a fire access plan to direct Fire Department response in the event of a wildfire. The plan should address limited accessibility of some forest roads and identify which equipment, if any, are able to utilize limited-accessibility roads.	There is no official access plan, but the Fire Department members are very familiar with the town and access points. There are strong communication channels with neighboring communities when outside aid is needed.

Activity #	Goal/Obj	Activity Description	Status Reported by Location Planning Team
8	2-1	Identify a preferred process for maintaining culverts located on or adjacent to private property that affect public rights of way. This may include developing agreements with private property owners to access culverts for maintenance, establishing requirements for private property owners to maintain culverts on their property, implementing an "adopt a culvert" program to promote culvert maintenance by private property owners, and distributing educational material to help private property owners avoid activities that may exacerbate culvert blockages and deterioration.	While this action has not been accomplished as written here, progress has been made. Two private culverts washed out during a recent storm (likely Hurricane Ida), one of which was on a right of way. Both of these culverts are being re-engineered to be larger and able to withstand larger storms (one will be replaced at the 50-year standard, one at the 25-year standard); these replacements will still likely be insufficient but will be improvements over previous conditions, and will meet the state requirement. The town is slowly chipping away at replacing the town-owned culverts; the limiting factor here is funding. The Town owns 289 culverts.
9	1-1	Include an express criterion in the Town's open space acquisition process that encourages acquisition and preservation of areas within or adjacent to flood risk zones.	The town is constantly looking at possible acquisitions and adds a few parcels a year on average. The town buys some land outright and also works with the land trust and The Nature Conservancy. Approximately 55% of the land area is under some form of ownership or easement. Johnson Preserve recently added a significant parcel. The town is actively making progress on creating a green belt.
10	2-1	Acquire and install an emergency generator at the Town Library	This did not make it into the budget this year but may be included in the budget for future years. There is no specific plan for utilizing the library once it has a generator, but it could be an auxiliary sheltering location or cooling/warming center. The town hall shares a generator with the elementary school.
11	1-1	Complete conversion of all paper records maintained by the municipality to an electronic format, consistent with any State recommendations, to ensure their survival. Establish protocols for practices going forward. Establish protected back-up of records and the ability to access them remotely, should municipal facilities be compromised during or following a disaster.	The town is 2/3 of the way through digitizing vault records. The town is also early in the process of working with RiverCOG to digitize land use records.
12	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 has been no action on this given the low number of RL properties.

Activity #	Goal/Obj	Activity Description	Status Reported by Location Planning Team
13	1-1	Designate a municipal staff member to liaison with CT DOT, and communicate with CT DOT about roadways of concern, upgrade schedules, and municipal needs – especially with regards to flood mitigation and emergency vehicle accessibility.	There are open channels of communication with DOT, but no recent action has occurred. DOT is aware of the challenges related to the roads leading to the ferry.
14	2-1	Work with Eversource to accelerate utility repair work following storm events; specifically identify potential pathways to allow municipal officials to assist with repair work if Eversource cannot respond in a timely manner	Eversource has done increased work on tree trimming and storm response in the last three years, but this capacity is reportedly still not ideal and trees are dying faster than they can be removed. The Town believes the associated risks are significant. Many homeowners have private generators for use during power outages, which helps bolster community resilience during outages.
15	2-1	Install automated stream gauges on streams in or upstream of Lyme to help warn residents ahead of developing floods	There has been no action on this. The town is not in a position to carry this out given the number of streams in the area and the associated expense for installation and maintenance. David and Margot hypothesized that this was an idea that was related to the flood of September 2018, which was fresh in the minds of people when the meeting to develop the hazard mitigation plan was conducted.

Open Discussion:

- David facilitated an open discussion about potential needs and all attendees noted that the Town has done a good job fostering resilience.
- David noted that the town center and roads are near the rivers.
 - o The town has reportedly done a good job at armoring town facilities against floods. There are not many homes along the Connecticut River flood zone and the predictable floodwaters recede in a relatively short period of time.
- A flood like the one that occurred in 1982 would be a challenge for the Town and its infrastructure. David noted that the Town’s efforts are likely consistent with the infrequent nature of floods of this magnitude, given that it has been 40 years. He noted that higher design standards would be applicable if the Town were designing something like elderly housing.
- The First Selectman noted that the residences in the town consist mostly of single-family house lots; there are no apartment complexes or elderly housing.
- There doesn’t seem to be an immediate project need in Lyme that is consistent with the typical goals of Resilient Connecticut, but the channels of communication are open so both sides can easily get in touch if needed.

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 Lyme ZSR layer.)

Steve Mattson will be the contact going forward.