



Meeting Minutes

City & Town of Amsterdam, Town of Florida Planning Committee

October 22, 2013, 9:00AM to 10:00AM

Fulton Montgomery Regional Chamber of Commerce

Riverfront Center, Amsterdam, NY

Attendance: Sarah Crowell (NYS DOS), Jon Wimbush (NYS DOS), Amy Mahl (E & E), Nicole Parganos (E & E), Mark Kilmer (Co-Chair); see attendee table for complete list of others.

Agenda Item: WELCOME & MEETING AGENDA

Presenter: Amy Mahl (E&E)

Summary of Discussion:

E&E introduces draft conceptual plan in progress. The purpose of today's meeting is to review excerpts of the draft plan in preparation for the upcoming 10/28 submittal. Projects and opportunities discussed in the plan will need to have a detailed cost benefit analysis, and funding sources identified. Final report will incorporate more feedback and changes from the committee and public outreach.

Action Items

Person Responsible

Due Date

NA

Agenda Item: REVIEW OF DRAFT PLAN EXCERPTS

Presenter: Amy Mahl (E & E)

Summary of Discussion:

- Committee members were handed several pages of the draft plan for their review, including the executive summary, needs and opportunities, and proposed projects. 15 minutes were held for reading the materials followed by a group discussion.

Group Discussion Points:

- Fort Hunter and the Town of Minaville (on the Chuctanunda) Fire Departments were flooded. Both are in the Town of Florida. Consider merging fire departments and moving to new location on higher ground. Note that this has been discussed but is politically a battle in the town. Perhaps recommend a strategy for better government efficiency through mergers in emergency response where it makes sense.
- Emergency response communications should be multi-lingual.
- A formal communication system should be established so that people know where to go for information when power is out. Coordination of communications between Gilboa Dam, NYS Thruway, other

agencies, etc. Develop an emergency communications protocol. Possibly a regional item to develop a multi-jurisdictional emergency communication plan. Defense advanced research (DARPA- former federal program) developed a radio that automatically translated between fire, police, and military radio – so that all could talk without going between systems. DARPA dropped it due to other interests. If military fire and police can communicate directly in real time that would be a big advantage.

- Add to the Economic Development discussion that communities work with regional economic development councils.
- Discuss the potential to fund demolition of substandard housing in neighborhoods (blighted properties). Homes that are not up to code and need major money to fix up i.e. if it costs \$100k to fix up a property that is only worth \$10k, it would be economically better to demolish it (and either rebuild, or repurpose lot). Previously a county committee was targeting areas of substandard housing, but this committee is no longer in place.
- Perhaps apply this to condemned homes in the floodplain areas. For these homes, demolition and not rebuilding would be the preferred option. But have to consider impacts to the community (neighborhood quality and tax base) once they come down. Committee felt this is politically acceptable in their communities and that lots will be converted back to green space under Town (of Florida) ownership.
- Expand housing strategy to say where it is applicable to relocate or rebuild damaged properties. Some will take advantage of elevating their homes, some will relocate. There are state programs for this where a homeowner wants to do this. Is relocation displacement at need? This can be expensive.
- Some homeowners (i.e. Lost Valley) did not take a buyout due to their assessment being low. Then they were flooded and homes lost. Lost Valley area and Fort Hunter are particularly vulnerable. A few areas on the west end and south side of the City of Amsterdam also flooded several times. West Main Street and Erie Terrace should be called out specifically. Erie Terrace was rebuilt entirely; however storms Irene and Lee were the first times that area was really damaged flood. But the west end of the City consistently floods. There are infrastructure and drainage issues.
- Proposed zoning changes- is it possible to zone out residential use on lots prone to flooding? And to extend zoning next to denser areas so that replacement lots can be developed. Zoning and code enforcement that allows people to rebuild in these floodprone areas needs to be reconsidered.
- One of the needs is to clean out tributaries and Mohawk River. Remove debris so that waters don't come up as high or overflow. Need to focus on specific areas for clean out.
- Infrastructure for storm drains a project idea. Identify improvements to storm drains on the City's west end. This project is already mapped and ready to go. This is a NYS DOT project
- Take cleaning up waterways & streams one step further- there used to be a dredging program that ceased in 1970s – state needs to refocus on this.
- Under tourism discuss the Mohawk gateway overlook coming in 2015 – a major future asset to the City. Parking for this attraction should be considered.
- Relocation of cultural artifacts and museums is still a problem. Walter Ellwood has been relocated. Old Fort Johnson is important. Lot of history disappeared and was washed away by flooding. County offices

and archives have also been flooded. Better emergency preparation is needed for cultural organizations and archives, records, artifacts. They need a safe place to go when the Mohawk and Chuctanunda overflow.

- Elevation of CSX lines is higher and doesn't allow for proper drainage after the flood. Other options are needed to mitigate, and provide retention other than storm sewers. Use check valves to prevent water coming in or let it out. This could be a solution for the West End.
- Hospitals – all computers are located in the basement pavilion next to the creek and at risk
- We've discussed water damage but haven't talked about wind damage – Bury the utility lines on the south side. Main street utilities were buried after blizzard of 1888. South side has problems- partly due to the substation there but also impacted by wind. The substation next to Target is being replaced
- A back-up generator is needed for City hall and Public Works Buildings.
- The Montgomery County Office Building is outside of the boundary but will be referenced as a regional/county need and should include the direct impacts that flooding of the building have on Amsterdam and Florida. The building is a former high school that was moved in the 1950s due to flooding. As a county building, it currently holds archived computer records and the old courthouse's historic archived records in the basement, The building is directly connected to the City of Amsterdam operations including IT functions, payroll, real property tax, and health and human services.

Decisions/Motions/Votes: NA

Action Items	Person Responsible	Due Date
Follow up with Robert von Hasseln about project ideas		

Agenda Item: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Presenter: Amy Mahl (E & E)

Summary of Discussion:

- One public meeting was held and was poorly attended; as such the discussion included possible ways to increase participation through augmented advertising as well as planning for upcoming public outreach events.

Group Discussion Points:

- The Town of Florida public outreach events could be organized through the fire departments. The events would include a pancake breakfast coupled with either a Town Hall style format or a hybrid format that includes a 20 minute introduction of the document, then breakout stations. A public outreach meeting is tentatively scheduled for November 16th. A community group needs to be contacted to make the pancakes, and the fire department needs to be contacted to host the meeting.
- Consider another pancake breakfast in the City of Amsterdam after the Town of Florida events.

- There is a need to augment advertising to increase public awareness and participation. The following were identified as potential advertising options.
 - Radio advertising on WCSS 1490 Radio Program on Fridays from 10 am to 11, or WVTL-Amsterdam.
 - Advertising on the front page of papers the week before the meeting.
 - Because flyers can be difficult to distribute, outreach materials and information may be disseminated through email and social media including via the hospital’s 5,000 email listserve, auto-dialer calls to the school district, and through Facebook,
 - A press release should go out to increase the public’s awareness of the program that includes basic information about the city/town and their websites. E&E will develop the visuals for the websites, which will link back to the storm recovery website.
- The wording on the advertisement should be clear and attention grabbing, such as “tell us how to spend \$9 million”
- Incentives are available for communities that excel in specific categories. Creative forms of community outreach may make communities eligible for additional funding.

Decision/Motions/Votes: NA

Action Items	Person Responsible	Due Date
Contact fire departments about Nov 16 event	Elma Phillips	

Agenda Item: NEXT STEPS Presenter: Amy Mahl (E & E)

Summary of Discussion:

- After the conceptual plan, the meetings can be moved to a monthly schedule and the committee can meet as they choose.
- Montgomery County was added to a separate grant program with state funding. This program has not yet started but will be soon. The Montgomery County planning process should address the 5 counties getting funding.
- The next meeting is scheduled for November 19th (no meeting will be held on November 5).

Action Items	Person Responsible	Due Date
NA		
