

Columbia County
All-Hazard Mitigation Plan
Update Kickoff Meeting
Minutes

DATE: November 10, 2015

TIME: 7:00 pm

LOCATION: Espy Fire Department
300 Tenny Street, Bloomsburg, PA 17815

The following people were in attendance:

Name	Organization/Affiliation
1) Michael Neiswender	Beaver Township
2) Walter Gordon	Benton Township
3) Debra Gordon	Benton Township
4) James Meighan	Berwick Borough
5) Sylvia Costa	Bloomsburg
6) Sandy Davis	Bloomsburg
7) Jennifer Haney	Bloomsburg University
8) Belinda DeLeon	Bloomsburg University
9) Tom Phillips	Bloomsburg University
10) Jennifer Whisner	Bloomsburg University
11) Carl Hess	Briar Creek Township
12) Barry Rothery	Briar Creek Township
13) John Zaginaylo	Briar Creek Township
14) Don Traugh	Catawissa Borough
15) Dave Kovach	Columbia County Commissioners
16) Chris Young	Columbia County Commissioners
17) Janina Everett	Columbia County Department of Public Safety
18) Jennifer Long	Columbia County EMA
19) Jessica Shoup	Columbia County EMA
20) Tim Murphy	Columbia County GIS
21) Mitch Kishbach	Columbia County GIS
22) Rachel Swartwood	Columbia County Planning
23) Fred Gafney	Columbia Montour Chamber of Commerce
24) Dave Bacher	Columbia Montour Vo-Tech
25) Megan Janolek	Conyngham Township
26) Matthew McCullough	FEMA
27) Earnest Bogart	Fishing Creek Township
28) James Kline	Fishing Creek Township

Name	Organization/Affiliation
29) Jay Johns	Fishing Creek Township
30) Melissa Matthews	Hemlock Township
31) Clayton Emery	Jackson Township
32) James Karnes	Locust Township
33) Allen Breach	Locust Township, Roaring Creek Township, Franklin Township, Cleveland Township
34) Jim Moser	Madison Township/Greenwood Township
35) Tom Shuman	Main Township
36) Rick Brown	Mifflin Township
37) Joyce Brown	Mifflin Township
38) Robert Bower	Millville Borough
39) Joe Mullen	Montour Township
40) Bob Black	Mount Pleasant Township
41) John Gordner	Mount Pleasant Township
42) Tammy Robbins	Mount Pleasant Township
43) Steven Hess, Sr.	North Centre Township
44) Neil Shultz	Orangeville Borough
45) Ernie Szabo	PEMA
46) Tom Hughes	PEMA
47) Chris Grim	PEMA
48) John Harder	PennDOT
49) James Brown	Pine Township
50) Paul Eyerly	Scott Township
51) Eric Stahley	Scott Township
52) Bill Seigel	SEDA-COG
53) Teri Provost	SEDA-COG
54) Dale Sneiderman	South Centre Township
55) John Kline	Stillwater Borough

MEETING HANDOUTS: Handouts and forms that were given to each municipality included the following: Kickoff Meeting Agenda, Capability Assessment Survey, Evaluation of Identified Hazards and Risks, National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Survey, Mitigation Action Plan Review Worksheet, Contact Information Sheet, & Risk Assessment Hazard Descriptions.

MEETING OVERVIEW

- **Welcome and Introductions**

Jennifer Long, Columbia County Emergency Management Coordinator, started the meeting by introducing herself, Jessica Shoup, the Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Project Manager, and Janina Everett, Columbia County Department of Public Safety Administrative Assistant. All meeting attendants were asked to introduce themselves and say which municipality they were representing. Long also introduced Eric Stahley, Scott Township Manager, who will be the floodplain manager for Columbia County starting in 2016.

Matt McCullough from FEMA started off the meeting by talking about FEMA's involvement in the Hazard Mitigation Update project early in the process. McCullough stated that often FEMA's only involvement is at the end when they are given the plan to approve. He stated that Columbia County would be ahead of the game by involving them early. McCullough reminded the attendees that they would be receiving a product in the end. He asked them to focus on the process and look at it from a "whole community," risk reduction standpoint. McCullough stated that we should not look at the plan as a document, but rather that we are creating solutions through risk reduction activities that will save lives or protect the community.

Following McCullough, Tom Hughes and Ernie Szabo, from PEMA, spoke with the attendees. Tom Hughes stated that he wanted to be able to help more municipalities secure grant funding, including non-disaster funding, for our communities. Ernie Szabo spoke about the money savings and problem savings that we would reap when the next disaster comes around. He also stated that he appreciated Columbia County working on this plan despite the fact that we didn't receive any assistance from a contractor to work on the plan. He advised he was going to use Columbia County as a best practice example for other counties that may face a similar circumstance.

After Szabo finished speaking, Long asked the participants to make sure that they had signed in at the door to prove their participation in the planning process. She also asked them to make sure they filled out the contact information sheet so that we would know who to contact with future information and meetings.

- **Project Overview**

Jessica Shoup thanked the participants for attending and participating. She then provided an overview of hazard mitigation, including what hazard mitigation is, what a hazard mitigation plan is, and why we have a hazard mitigation plan. Emphasis was placed on the hazard mitigation plan being a living document that will need to be reviewed and revisited on a regular basis instead of only updating the plan every five years.

Shoup then spoke on the primary objectives of the planning process & kickoff meeting including: reconvening the planning team, assessing current risks & capabilities, updating the mitigation strategy, generating & delivering the documents to PEMA & FEMA for approval, and municipalities adopting the plan by resolution. Following that the local requirements and update process were reviewed.

The sections of the hazard mitigation plan were reviewed in detail starting with the community profile. Shoup stated this section included information such as the geography, population, and

critical facilities information. She stated that it was important for the municipalities to review the tables in this section in particular because the information on what is in a particular area would be best known by those who live in the area and are there on a daily basis. Municipalities were asked to contact Shoup with any updates to the information found in those tables.

The next section of the plan that was reviewed was the planning process. Shoup spoke about plan development & participation, the planning team, soliciting public and stakeholder participation, including meeting information, and integrating other plans such as county and municipal emergency operations plans and the county comprehensive plan into the hazard mitigation plan update so that they all worked together.

Risk assessment was the next section that was reviewed. Shoup stated that this part of the plan would be the most important to focus on. It includes a section on hazard profiles and vulnerability assessment. Fifteen hazards were identified in the 2012 plan. Shoup spoke about the standard list of hazards that define hazards and asked the municipalities to look at the risk assessment form and see if there were any hazards that we didn't include in the 2012 plan that they felt posed a greater hazard now and should be included.

The next section of the plan that was reviewed was capability assessment. Shoup talked about the county emergency management and municipal emergency management being considered a capability along with their emergency plans, evacuation plans, trainings, and exercises. Participation in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) also falls under this section. Shoup stated all municipalities participated in the NFIP as of the 2012 plan. She advised that there was a survey in the packet that would assess the municipal support and participation in the NFIP. Planning and Regulatory Capabilities were also discussed such as the county comprehensive plan, county and municipal zoning and building codes, and floodplain ordinances. Shoup asked the municipalities to review tables in this section as well to make sure that the information contained in the planning tools table is still current. They were asked to advise Shoup of any changes in that information. Other capabilities that were discussed were administrative and technical, which includes people who possess an in-depth knowledge of certain subjects, fiscal, which is the availability of funds to complete mitigation projects, and political capability, which assesses the support of the political leaders in the community.

The mitigation strategy was the next section of the plan that was reviewed by Shoup. She said that we would look at the 2012 goals and see what we completed, what still needed to be done, and any additions or items that needed to be deleted. In the 2012 plan there were 6 goals and 20 objectives listed. Shoup stated that we would look at those and based up on feedback create a list of goals and objective for the 2017 plan. Each of the goals must fall under one of the 6 mitigation technique categories in order to be included. They are prevention, property protection, public education and awareness, natural resource protection, structural project implementation, and emergency services. Shoup stressed the importance of including actions in the plan that municipalities would like to see completed because when we apply for grant funding, FEMA & PEMA will review our plan to see if they were included as a mitigation action. There were a total of 76 actions in the 2012 plan and all will be reviewed to see if they were completed. Shoup talked about plan maintenance which is how we update the plan, how often it is updated, and who is responsible for the update. Incorporation of other planning mechanisms and continued public involvement were also discussed.

The final section of the hazard mitigation plan is the plan adoption. Shoup explained that this section will include the municipal adoptions by resolution that is signed by each municipality once the plan is approved. She also explained that the plan expires in 2017 but will take time to complete and that is the reason why we were starting the process so early.

- **Stakeholder Participation**

After speaking about the hazard mitigation plan components, Shoup explained the forms that were passed out to the municipalities. They were told that they could fill out the paper forms or they were available on the EMA website in web based form and PDF in the event they lost their forms or needed new forms. They were asked to only fill out one form per municipality and to return them by December 8, 2015. The packets that were handed out to the municipalities included a capability assessment form, an evaluation of identified hazards and risks form, a National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) survey, and a mitigation action plan review worksheet.

The municipalities were advised that they could download a copy of the 2012 plan from the EMA website for their use in preparing the forms. Shoup then gave a timeline of the upcoming meetings and significant dates in the update process.

- **Question and Answer Section**

Ernie Szabo spoke at the end of the presentation. He advised them to look at the risks and mitigation actions and consider secondary effects of the hazards. Szabo gave the example of Fukushima preparing for earthquakes by having backup generators and preparing for floods by having a flood wall. What they failed to prepare for was an earthquake that destroyed the floodwall and then allowed the generators to be flooded. He said that those are the sort of situations that we want to consider when filling out the forms, such as how one hazard could possibly affect another hazard.

Szabo stated that when considering mitigation actions they should consider having actions in the plan that they may complete. He stated that after a big storm, problem areas should be assessed and if PEMA or FEMA is doing damage assessment, it will be included in the total. However, if damage is not noticed until months later, it may not be eligible for the disaster money, but it may qualify for mitigation funding if it was included as a mitigation action.

Shoup then took questions from the audience. Jennifer Haney, from Bloomsburg University, asked about the vulnerability and risk assessment. She stated that it seemed that the hazards would largely focus on the natural hazards, like flooding. She wanted to know if there would be any effort to assess socioeconomic factors that may increase vulnerability, such as the elderly populations that live in flood plain areas. Szabo stated that they would absolutely be included. He elaborated by saying that maps of flooding areas would also include critical facilities, such as nursing homes. He went on to say that they would need more time to evacuate and therefore would require an earlier warning and the maps would help in identifying those populations and mitigation actions that may help reduce the risk to them. Haney then asked if this would just be part of the risk assessment or if it would be placed in the mitigation strategy under public awareness and education. Szabo stated that it would be included because it may help to identify which mitigation projects should be given higher priority. McCullough then spoke about placing this information under the community profile, risk assessment, and then identifying what you will do for those vulnerable populations.

Mellissa Matthews, Hemlock Township, stated we are all familiar with our common hazards, such as flooding, and the proposed pipeline, but she inquired where they could find information about other hazards they may be vulnerable to of which they are not aware. Long stated that all areas will have different areas of hazards that will affect them and they need to focus on which ones affect them the most. Matthews then asked where to find resources to research hazards that we are not familiar with. Szabo stated that a great resource for researching and identifying local hazards are the staff at the university, neighboring communities, the organization behind the risk, such as the gas company,

or environmental organizations. McCullough stated that the narrative could include information from local residents who have lived in the community for sixty years and know about hazards that may be less familiar. Hughes stated that PEMA can intervene and advocate on behalf of the county if we run into roadblocks when trying to get information from organizations that may not be forthcoming.

Hughes then spoke about historical structures, such as the covered bridges. He said that we need to consider historical factors in our plan and move from recovery towards resiliency. He spoke about blue sky money, which is funds handed out in non-disaster years, and stated that there is no reason that Columbia County shouldn't be receiving some of that money and he felt that the group we had could come up with a good plan to work towards that goal.

Tom Shuman from Main Township spoke about a problem area with a stream that floods after nearly every rain fall. He asked if there was grant funding to address a situation like that or if a project such as that would be stalled by environmental groups. Hughes stated that they would have to look at it and see how they could write up the problem. He said there are other organizations and branches that may be able to help with issues and not to become so focused on FEMA and federal monies. Hughes stated that we could work with issues such as this and try to come up with a solution through other means. Szabo spoke about how different groups in the government have different areas that they focus on. For example where PEMA and FEMA don't support levees, the Department of Environmental Protection or the Army Corp of Engineers would support a project that included a levee. Szabo elaborated that we couldn't do anything about an issue that we don't know about and that is why it is so important to include them in the plan.

Steve Hess from North Centre Township stated that December 8th deadline for the return of the packets seemed like it would not be sufficient time to complete them. They were told that we would help them in any way that we could and if they had issues completing them in time they should let us know. Hughes stated that they could use one another as a resource and go to the next township over and work together through the packets. Shoup then also pointed out the county resources that could be called upon for assistance such as GIS, the planning department, and Eric Stahley, the new floodplain manager.

Melissa Matthews asked about sharing of contact information from the contact information sheets. She was advised by Shoup that contact information could be shared upon request. The municipalities were advised if there was anyone who was opposed to their information being shared with neighboring municipalities, they should make a note on their contact sheet and their information would be kept confidential.

Tammy Robbins from Mount Pleasant Township asked if there would be any interest in municipalities getting together to fill the paperwork out together to share information. The municipalities were offered to have a conference call set up by PEMA or FEMA if they wanted to meet in that manner. They were also told to email Shoup if they had interest in meeting together to fill out the forms.

The participants were thanked for their participation and attendance and the meeting was adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Meeting notes recorded by Jessica Shoup.