

Windham VT Selectboard Meeting Minutes
December 8, 2020 Emergency Meeting

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Present via Zoom web conference:

Maureen Bell, Selectboard Chair
Kord Scott, Selectman
Kathy Jungermann, Co-EMD

Peter Chamberlain, Selectman
Joyce Cumming, Selectboard Clerk
Imme Maurath, Co-EMD

Maureen announced the emergency meeting and called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss funding for the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) update. The Selectboard discussed this matter at its regular meeting on December 7, 2020 but did not take any action. Kord was asked to follow up and pose the questions that came up on December 7.

When he did not get a response from Alyssa Sabetto at Windham Regional Commission, he emailed Stephanie Smith at Vermont Emergency Management. Stephanie explained that Alyssa is not able to be involved in the application process because the WRC is a potential consultant who would bid on the RFP to update the LHMP. The deadline date for submitting the Local Match Commitment was December 4, 2020 but Stephanie agreed to accept Windham's response late based on the circumstances, hence the need for this meeting.

At Joyce's request, Kord reviewed the questions and Stephanie's answers.

- Q1: Where did the \$10,000+ grant request amount come from? It seems like a lot of money – if we are just talking about an update.
- A1: This is the amount I have determined reasonable for a plan update, which we have been using for the last several years. Most communities do use all of it.
- Q2: Did we pay the RPC to develop the plan that expired? If so, how much did that cost?
- A2: The RPC likely developed your last plan with a grant directly to the RPC, but based on the way FEMA funding works they end up losing money if we give funding directly to them to update plans.
- Q3: It seems like the recommended request amount is the same for all towns. Why is that?
- A3: The amount to update an LHMP is the same for all towns. How much you actually used may vary slightly but needs to be within this total amount.
- Q4: My understanding is that this grant money would be use to hire the RPC to update the plan. Do we have any alternatives? For example, I was asked if the update process could be handled internally.
- A4: This grant is to hire a consultant, which could be the RPC or someone else. I do not recommend that you try to update the plan on your own unless you have an experienced planner on staff.
- Q5: Is the HMP a requirement for all towns? Who is requiring it?
- A5: The LHMP is required by FEMA if you would like to apply for any mitigation grants. It is also one of the criteria in the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) which gives you an increased State share when we have a FEMA declared disaster with Public Assistance funding available. I can explain this further if you are not familiar with ERAF, let me know.

DRAFT

Q6: What is the situation regarding expired plans like ours? Do we automatically get an extension? Is the update considered a new plan if the old one expires?

A6: You do not get an extension if your plan expires, but you would no longer be eligible for FEMA mitigation grants and you would not be meeting the LHMP criteria for ERAF as noted above.

Kord followed up with Stephanie on the question of whether ours would be considered a new plan based on the expiration of the previous LHMP. Stephanie told Kord this would be considered an update.

Q7: One thought that occurred to me during our conversations about this issue. Our EMDs and our Selectboard in general were not familiar enough with the plan. None of us were really very familiar with what a HMP was. I guess with the age of the plan and the turnover of personnel, the communication about it was insufficient – which is probably why it expired without anyone realizing it. We also have had a few serious weather events during the period of time the plan was in effect – so the lack of awareness certainly affected whether we responded based on the plan. Can you help or make any suggestions about how to improve this?

A7: This can certainly be a challenge within a small town. When you develop your next plan it will include a process for monitoring your plan, typically annually at a SB meeting where you are developing your Local Emergency Management Plan.

Prior to the meeting, Kord filled out the completed Local Match Commitment Letter and shared it with the Selectboard and Co-Emergency Management Directors. See attached. He explained that the State is applying for the grant through FEMA.

In response to a question from Imme about how the figures were determined, Kord explained that based on the total project cost of \$10,150, the requested grant amount was \$7,612.50 (75% of the total cost) and the Town's Local Match Commitment was \$2,537.50 (25% of the total cost). Maureen opened discussion on how to come up with the Town's matching contribution. Kord explained that funding can be from a local agency (Town) and/or in-kind contributions. By placing a value on the time spent by staff in hiring a consultant, working on plan coordination and development tasks, as well as volunteer time at planning meetings, that value can be considered as part of the \$2,537.50. He also suggested that the Town should consider factoring grant matches into the annual budget for projects such as this and the Rt. 121 culvert. Kord listed himself as the grant administrator on the commitment letter. Maureen thanked Kord for the thorough explanation.

Motion: To approve the Local Match Commitment Letter in the amount of \$2,537.50 as part of the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan update, and appoint Kord Scott as the Grant Administrator—moved by Maureen, seconded by Peter—all in favor.

Motion: To adjourn the Emergency Selectboard Meeting at 1:41 p.m.—moved by Peter—all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Cumming
Selectboard Clerk

Attachment:

--Local Match Commitment Letter