

**CITY OF NORWALK  
HEALTH, WELFARE AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
MARCH 24, 2015**

**ATTENDANCE:** Faye Bowman, Chair; Stephen Serasis; Rich Bonenfant;  
Michael DePalma; Eloisa Melendez (7:40)

**OTHERS:** Travis Simms; Diane Lauricella; Travis Simms; Michele  
DeLuca; Irene Dixon

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM. A quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Minutes of the January 28th Meeting**

- \*\* COUNCIL MEMBER BONENFANT MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 28TH MEETING WITH THE FOLLOWING CORRECTION:**
  - A. THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUAL'S NAME IS SPELLED THUSLY, AND SHOULD BE CHANGED IN EVERY INSTANCE IN WHICH IT OCCURS: PHIL PASSERO.**
- \*\* MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (DEPALMA).**

**Minutes of the February 25th Meeting**

- \*\* THE CHAIR MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 25GH MEETING WITH THE FOLLOWING CORRECTION:**
  - A. THE FOLLOWING CLARIFICATION WAS MADE: MS. DIANE LAURICELLA DID NOT START THE UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANK PROGRAM, BUT WAS A STATE WORKER WHO HELPED GET THE PROJECT COMPLETED.**
- \*\* MOTION PASSED WITH TWO (2) ABSTENTIONS (BONENFANT & SERASIS)**

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Ms. Lauricella came forward and clarified for the record that she did not start the underground storage tank program, but rather helped them execute the program as a state worker.

In regards to the resolution on tonight's agenda, Ms. Lauricella stated that she has some background in OSHA, HAZMAT and emergency management, and that she was the first and only chair of the local emergency planning committee. She stated that the group was charged with putting together an emergency management plan and to facilitate the input of several different departments in the late 80s and early 90s. She stated that it is important to cooperate on a regional level, particularly in light of large scale issues such as natural hazards. Ms. Lauricella stated that she is very interested in this prospect, and would like to know how often Norwalk's citizen group meets for emergency department management. She further stated that she would be happy to discuss this matter offline with Ms. DeLuca.

**Council Member Melendez entered the meeting at 7:40 PM.**

Ms. Lauricella stated, as far as public participation, it has been unusually difficult to get a response to certain Council Members, specifically mentioning Council Members DePalma and Bonenfant. She stated that she appreciates how busy they must be, but that she is similarly busy and that there appears to be an unwillingness to respond to emails or phone calls. She stated that there are a number of things she would like to discuss with the Chair, among them more robust agendas. She stated that this committee is important, and that she would like to believe that the lack of communication isn't deliberate, but rather the consequence of busy schedules and committee members not being aware some of their constituents have good backgrounds and can help.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Resolution Adopting the 2016-2021 South Western Region Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update**

The Chair read the resolution into the record as follows:

*WHEREAS, the City of Norwalk Common Council recognizes the threats that the natural hazards pose to people and property within the City of Norwalk; and*

*WHEREAS, the City of Norwalk, in collaboration with the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WESTCOG), has prepared a multi-hazard mitigation plan, hereby known as the*

*2016-2021 South Western Region Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update (the Mitigation Plan Update) in accordance with the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000; and*

*WHEREAS, the 2016-2021 South Western Region Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update has identified mitigation goals and actions to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from the impacts of future hazards and disasters that affect the City of Norwalk and the region; and*

*WHEREAS, public and committee meetings were held between August 14, 2013 and October 8, 2015 in furtherance of the development and review of the Mitigation Plan Update; and*

*WHEREAS, the Federal Emergency Management Agency/Department Homeland Security has approved the 2016-2021 South Western Region Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, on condition of local adoption, which enables the City of Norwalk to apply for Hazard Mitigation Grant funding; and*

*WHEREAS, adoption by the City of Norwalk Common Council of the Mitigation Plan Update demonstrates Norwalk's commitment to hazard mitigation and the achievement of the goals outlined in the City of Norwalk's section of the Mitigation Plan Update.*

*NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City of Norwalk Common Council hereby adopts the 2016-2021 South Western Region Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update.*

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER DEPALMA MOVED TO ACCEPT RESOLUTION RE:  
ADOPTING THE 2016-2021 SOUTH WESTERN REGION NATURAL HAZARD  
MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE.**

Ms. DeLuca stated that they began the process of developing this plan 2 years ago, and that it allows the City to apply for FIMA. Without a premeditated disaster plans, the City is unable to receive funds, whereas this agreement gives them preliminary approval by FIMA. She stated, if this item is ratified, it is good for the next 5 years. She stated that they reap a huge benefit should there be another disaster, and that the timeline provided in the packet outlines the process they went through. Ms. DeLuca stated that they worked with the Nature Conservancy to arrange for public workshops, and held a public meeting on February 12th, in addition to online surveys, and media releases. She stated that working through Western CT COG is a time and money saver for the municipality, and in about 3 years, they will start the process to revise again. She stated that the full document is roughly 700 pages, and goes through numerous disaster procedures. Ms. DeLuca provided a 1 page summary to the committee which read as follows:

*Hazard Mitigation Plan 2016-2012 Summary*

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*The HMP was prepared in accordance with 44 CFR 2016.6 of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA; Public Law 106-390). The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA) established a national program for pre-disaster mitigation and helps expedite the administration of disaster relief to impacted areas. A key requirement of the DMA is the need for a FEMA-approved HMP, which keeps the region and its municipalities eligible for Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) funding. During the past 2 years, the WCCOG worked with municipal staff, as well as local and regional stakeholders to identify and incorporate critical information. This HMP builds on previous iterations in 2005 and more recently in 2011, public comment and WCCOG also held community information sessions throughout the region.*

*The South Western Region (SWR) is comprised of eight municipalities which form the southwestern panhandle of Connecticut. The region shares its western boundary with New York's Westchester County, is bounded by Long Island Sounds (LIS) to the south, and extends inland approximately 13 miles.*

*The Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WCCOG, formerly SWRPA) received Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds through the Connecticut Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) to develop the 2016 Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update (HMP) for the following municipalities listed below:*

- A. Town of Darien*
- B. City of Stamford*
- C. Town of Greenwich*
- D. Town of Weston*
- E. Town of New Canaan*
- F. Town of Westport*
- G. City of Norwalk*
- H. Town of Wilton*

*A key goal of this plan is to identify the natural hazards likely to affect the SWR, its eight municipalities and the over 365,000 residents. The plan also identifies areas vulnerable to the aforementioned natural hazards, and incorporates appropriate strategies aimed towards mitigation. Consistent with FEMA and DEMHS goals, the HMP serves to reduce loss of life and property, economic disruptions and the cost of post-disaster recovery for the region's communities.*

*Specific goals and objectives of the document include:*

- A. Protecting public safety and preventing loss of life and injury;*
- B. Reducing harm to existing and future development;*

- C. Preventing damage to a community's unique economic, cultural, and environmental assets;*
- D. Minimizing operational downtime and accelerating the recovery of government and business after disasters;*
- E. Reducing the costs of disaster response and recovery, as well as the exposure to risk for first responders; and*
- F. Helping accomplish other community objectives, such as leveraging capital improvements, infrastructure protection, open space preservation, and economic resiliency.*

*Project benefits include:*

- A. Identifying cost effective actions for risk reductions;*
- B. Directing resources to the greatest risks and vulnerabilities*
- C. Building partnerships by involving people, organizations, and businesses;*
- D. Increasing education and awareness of hazards and associated risk;*
- E. Aligning risk reduction with other community objects; and*
- F. Providing eligibility to receive FEMA federal hazard mitigation grant funds*

*Upon adoption of the 8 participating communities (through the Resolution), the Hazard Mitigation Plan will be in effect from 2016-2021.*

Council Member Serasis inquired about the nature of the funding the City is eligible to apply for under this agreement. Ms. DeLuca stated that the funding varies depending on the project and the nature of the damage, and that these grants tend to be very competitive. She further stated that the bulk of them are mitigation focused, and that most of the big project are public works related items such as culverts, bridges and flood plain management.

Council Member DePalma asked how a private citizen would go about applying for funding through this arrangement- whether directly, on behalf of the citizen or all of the above. Ms. DeLuca stated that all of the above are options, depending on the nature of the funding and the intended usage of said funds.

Council Member DePalma asked how individuals will know they are in a danger zone. Council Member Bonenfant stated that most people in a flooding danger zone are notified by their insurance companies.

The Chair encouraged Ms. DeLuca to contact herself and Ms. Dixon with any ideas regarding the execution of or communication of the Disaster Mitigation plan.

Council Member Bonenfant asked if there was any funding the City has put in in regards to the development of the Disaster Mitigation fund. Ms. DeLuca stated that the City received funding for the development of the plan from an alternate source. Council Member Bonenfant asked if there was any responsibility on the part of Norwalk for the other towns and cities in the WESTCOG group. Ms. DeLuca stated that during a disaster, Norwalk is solely responsible for doing their own damage control, however in the event another town requests the use of a bulldozer (or something comparable), then the City will attempt to accommodate them.

Mr. Simms asked how reimbursement would work, should one of the towns borrow a resource from Norwalk. Ms. DeLuca stated that the reimbursement would move in the form of a request from Norwalk's Department of Public Works, to the other town's Department of Public Works. If anything is damaged during the course of mutual aid, the municipality responsible is liable to help replace or repair it. There is higher level reimbursement for FEMA level disasters, and the City receives a certain percentage back.

Council Member Bonenfant asked specifically what the City is signing on for for 5 years. Ms. DeLuca stated that they are committing to the use of the pre-mitigation plan. Council Member Bonenfant asked what would happen in the event that they found the plan ineffective, and decided the City would be better served with an alternate plan. Ms. DeLuca stated that once it is adopted, it is good for 5 years, and the only thing it allows the City to do is applying for funding. In the event there is a disaster and the City doesn't want to apply for funding, it is solely their discretion and there is no obligation on the part of the City. Ms. DeLuca clarified that eligibility to apply for funding isn't tied to the COG, but the disaster mitigation plan, which tends to be more lengthy, time consuming and expensive when undertaken as an individual municipality. She stated that their current plan expires in June, so there isn't enough time to do this at present, however if it is something they wish to revisit in 2019, that is entirely possible.

The Chair asked how many times the City has signed on for this arrangement, and Ms. DeLuca stated that this is the third renewal.

Council Member Bonenfant expressed his concern that Norwalk's constituents may suffer as a result of being combined with the neighboring municipalities, and in the event of an emergency, they don't want to be waiting in line for resources that are rightfully theirs to utilize. Ms. DeLuca acknowledged that this is a unique arrangement due to funding and staff resources, and that this arrangement allows the City the ability to apply for funds in the event of a crisis.

The Chair noted that this saves the City money, and Council Member Serasis stated that this arrangement acts as a safety net, should a disaster come to pass.

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

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**OLD BUSINESS**

- \*\* COUNCIL MEMBER DEPALMA MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- \*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Ramos  
Telesco Secretarial Services