

Following are the key talking points presented at the Hazard Mitigation & Flood Management Plan (HM&FMP) Public Information Meeting on December 20, 2022. The meeting was hosted by the HM&FMP Advisory Committee and the presentation was given by the Town of Westerly's Project Consultant, Kim Jacobs, Civil Engineer & Resilience Planning Consultant.

## What is hazard mitigation and why do we need a Plan?

Hazard Mitigation is defined as any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to life and property from hazard events.

### Why Create a Hazard Mitigation Plan?

- By planning ahead Westerly becomes pro-active rather than reactive
- Helps the community identify goals to prepare and adapt to changing hazards and vulnerabilities
- Provides an opportunity to prioritize preventative measures (projects, initiatives, policies) to reduce property damage and loss of life associated with natural hazards; and to expedite disaster recovery
- Provides an opportunity to engage/educate the community to risks associated with natural hazards
- Saves the community money by instituting mitigation measures to protect against natural hazards
- Eligible for FEMA Funding

# Why expand the Plan to include Flood Management?

- With extensive coastline (9± miles) and substantial coastal and inland floodplain areas, Westerly is highly vulnerable to the impacts from flooding
- Flood risks will continue to grow in the coming decades due to sea level rise and other anticipated deleterious effects of climate change
- The Town participates in the Community Rating System (CRS) Program
- Creating the Plan based on the CRS planning process for floodplain management allows the Town to maximize CRS credit for this process, which has the potential of reducing premiums for residents and businesses who purchase flood insurance through NFIP

## How is the Plan being prepared?

The Plan is being completed under the guidance of an Advisory Committee consisting of members of Town Staff, members of the public, and other stakeholders.

All meetings are open to the public.

Westerly's coordinated planning approach will meet the Disaster Mitigation Act (DMA) 2000 Hazard Mitigation Plan requirements and increase the potential CRS credit associated with Activity 510, development of a Flood Management Plan.

# How are we building on past planning efforts?

## Plan Integration

Numerous local plans, policies, codes, and programs that guide development in Westerly are being consulted in order to complement and build on past planning initiatives

## Coordination with Agencies and Organizations

The Town is reaching out to local, regional, state, and federal agencies and organizations to publicize the Plan and encourage them to participate in the process

# How are we involving the public?

The HM&FMP Advisory Committee has made a concerted effort to make the public aware of the Project and include them in the process. In addition to all Committee meetings being open to the public, the Committee has conducted a number of outreach activities including: creating a HM&FMP Project Webpage, articles in The Westerly Sun, Social Media Posts, Radio Broadcast on WBLQ, informational posters hung in Town buildings, the Library, and various commercial establishments, hosting an online Public Opinion Survey (which received 204 Responses), and the December 20, 2022 Public Informational Meeting.

In addition, once the Committee approves a Draft HM&FMP it will be made available to the public on the Town's website for a period of three weeks. During that time, and at the public hearing at the end of the three weeks, people will have the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the Plan. All community input will be reviewed and considered in the Final Plan. The Final Plan will then be submitted to RIEMA and FEMA for review and approval.

# What hazards are included in the Plan?

## Hazards Profiled in the Plan

### Flood-Related Hazards

Inland Flooding including Dam Failure, Coastal Flooding including Storm Surge, Coastal Erosion

### Wind-Related Hazards

High Winds, Thunderstorms including Lightning and Hail, Tornadoes, Tropical Cyclones - Tropical Depressions, Tropical Storms, and Hurricanes

### Winter-Related Hazards

Heavy Snow, Ice, Extreme Cold

### Infectious Disease

Vector-borne Diseases Transmitted by Ticks or Mosquitoes, Contagious Respiratory Illness Caused by Influenza Viruses or Coronaviruses

### Other Hazards

Earthquakes, Extreme Heat, Drought, Brush Fires

# How is climate change/SLR included in the Plan?

## Climate Change (including SLR)

- For the foreseeable future, climate change (including sea level rise) will have a significant impact locally, nationally, and globally
- In the Plan, climate change is recognized as a present threat and an ongoing amplifier to some of the natural hazards

# What are the next steps?

## Capability Assessment:

- discuss what measures the Town currently implements in terms of hazard mitigation (review existing plans/technical reports, talk to Department heads, etc.)

## Develop a Mitigation Strategy – Action Plan:

- determine mitigation goals to minimize short and long-term vulnerabilities to the identified hazards
- determine specific actions/projects that would be beneficial - in terms of natural hazard mitigation - for the Town to consider implementing over the next 5-years (the Action Plan will most probably include a mix of physical initiatives through capital improvement projects and programming, as well as passive initiatives through regulatory and policy measures)