

**Huntington Planning Commission**  
**January 12, 2010**  
**FLOOD HAZARD ORDINANCE DISTRICT INFORMATIONAL MEETING**

Commissioners Attending: Lucinda Hill, Tom Bailey, Everett Marshall, Gordon Miller, Beverly Little Thunder, Heidi Weston

Commissioners Absent: Eric Silman, Tom Bailey

Others Present: list at end of document, created from sign in sheet

Minutes: Heidi Racht

The meeting was chaired by Everett Marshall, who gave an introduction of how the meeting would be run and how the process would proceed after the meeting, and then introduced Gretchen Alexander of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Water Quality Division.

Alexander explained that flood hazards are “Vermont’s most natural disaster.”

Two type of flooding exist:

1. inundation – water level rises into flood areas
2. erosion - river is changing location

She had two maps to estimate the risk. The maps are now in a digital format.

1. inundation – FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) maps, which are based on elevations and encompass the 100-year flood risk, which is 1% in a given year. This is known as the special flood hazard area. The maps were developed for flood insurance purposes. The Federal government estimates the risk for flooding: “A” zones need to regulate zones.
  - a. Floodway – area closest to the body of water where there is the potential for velocity and risk
  - b. Flood fringe – area with less risk
2. erosion - Fluvial Erosion Hazard developed by the State, showing areas that are prone to erosion due to channel relocation. This can occur incrementally or in an immediate or accelerated manner. The State has created Stream Geomorphic Assessments, done in three phases. Huntington residents Dori Barton and Aaron Worthley had been contracted by the state to do the work on the first two phases.
  - a. Phase I – gathering existing information
  - b. Phase 2 – field assessment and data collection
  - c. Phase 3 – river corridor plan

Alexander explained that the goal is a stable river. This can be stated as a balance of sediment load and transport capacity. Changes to this balance includes:

1. degradation – more energy with the water
2. aggregation – bed of channel starts to fill up

Access to the flood plain can affect either of these.

The river has a meander belt width, which follows a lateral area. The width of each of the four channels is based on channel sensitivity. For example, the Huntington Gorge has a low sensitivity due to the fact that the river flows through rocks.

She gave an exhaustive explanation with visual aids as to how a river can change by altering the bank with fill.

Alexander states that this is not a predictor of future locations of the river since the factor is dynamic.

Why regulate Flood Hazard areas?

1. requirement – SFHA – minimum standards to meet flood insurance eligibility
2. public investment – roads
3. public safety - life
4. economics – property, commerce minimize loss
5. sustainable ecosystems – healthier, aesthetics, fish and wildlife habitat

The national program captures the majority of what faces the country, but it is geared at areas with flatter contours (wider flooding widths). In Vermont, most of the damage is caused by fluvial erosion due to mountainous, narrow valleys that create steep and powerful dynamic rivers. Traditionally, there are high flows in the channels. Vermont has spent \$60 million for flood damage.

The Huntington Planning Commission is considering

1. limiting or prohibiting new construction in SFHA (FEMA floodplain)
2. continue limitation on accessory buildings and substantial improvements to existing structures in SHFA
3. including the fluvial erosion zone in the regulation

Alexander stated, “Avoidance is opportunistic. It’s too late to plan for floods when the floodplains are filled in.”

Explaining that Vermont will align emergency funding with communities that take action, Alexander then wound up her presentation.

Due to the large number of people in attendance at the meeting, the Commission decided to open up the meeting to questions.

Brett Lindemuth asked Alexander what portion of the \$60 million was spent on erosion damage. She replied that it hadn’t been separated into inundation and erosion categories, but the majority of damage in the state was erosion.

Jim Fecteau, commenting on flooding that he had seen in the Mad River Valley after many days of rain, asked if this was 100-year or 500-year flood area. Alexander explained that the issues with flood are varied and it doesn’t always correlate to the magnitude of the rainfall event. There are localized rainfalls and localized events.

Jim Fecteau then asked why flood insurance is only available to people in the floodplain.

It’s not, Alexander replied. The 100-year flood is arbitrary. In the 500-year, there’s no guarantee. It might be beneficial to have insurance.

Everett Marshall added that the insurance is available and often at a cheaper rate.

Kevin O’Brien asked if there were any beaver ponds on the map. Alexander said that no mapping had been done. It’s good to point out that FEMA maps assume 100% conveyance (no dam) could change.

Andrew Hendrickson remarked that the federal flood insurance is regulating a different kind of flood.

Larry Haskins Junior said it didn’t help “one bit.” Marshall said the that flood ordinance needs to be updated. Haskins said, will it be a cheaper rate. We’re wasting our time. Marshall pressed on that the new mapping and new requirements required updated regulations.

Mark Lubkowitz asked what the minimum was needed for the town to be in compliance. He then asked about putting a screened porch on his house. Alexander replied that new development needed to be elevated above the base flood elevation.

Everett Marshall explained that Model 2 assumes no Planning Commission and no ZBA. With Huntington's current regulations, new construction has to go through Conditional Use; small structures are permitted. Outside the floodway, structures would not be permitted closer than the primary structure.

Jim Brent asked about the minimum requirements for FEMA. Marshall said out of the floodway, in the 100-year flood area where the elevation is mapped.

In answer to a question about the procedure, Marshall again explained how the process is another draft by the Planning Commission which would then have a public hearing. The draft that is the result of the comments made from the hearing would then go to the Selectboard, which could make changes or bring it directly to the public hearing. The Selectboard could then pass the regulation or have it on a ballot vote.

Ken Pillsbury said he wanted "a clear understanding here tonight as to what model" is going to be proposed. He then said, "Most people would like to know if we can operate at a lower level."

Turning to Alexander, he said that the evening was "very educational. We should be exercising more control over the Huntington River and take corrective action to stop erosion. I fail to see the benefit of the expansion of the Flood Hazard zone." He then suggested that the Conservation Fund, (no over \$150,000), be used to help landowners with erosion problems. People want to know how that [regulations] is going to affect the values of that land. "You people shouldn't be signing on to everything that's being told tonight. You are being led down the proverbial path."

Brian Hayes said that the minimum was on the FEMA map.

Marshall spoke about the area outside the inundation (FEMA) and Hayes asked, "What service are you providing?" Marshall said there were issues about putting in new structures in this area.

Heidi Reposa asked about getting rid of the old ordinance. Marshall explained that there would be no updates after September 2010. He again stated that the regulations have to be updated.

Reposa asked about adding fill to the existing floodplain. "Doesn't that endanger the town? You can't add to it. You have to move it around." Marshall said that the existing regs discourage new construction and required Conditional Use. Fill changes the floodplain.

Reposa said again, "You cannot add fill to the floodplain." Alexander said that an hydrological analysis would be needed. This study would need to be paid for by the landowner.

Teddie Brace said that people want "the least amount of regs to get insurance. I don't see anything wrong with a little building" like a sugarhouse near the river. He then said that regulations are trying to steal property rights. "We're not getting it back." He also expressed fear of people being able to walk around on private property once this land was designated flood area. It was a "control issue to keep taking people's land." Property ownership was a "God-given right."

Joe Spence talked about the erosion cause by gravel not being taken out of the river. Alexander responded that when the river is stable, there's equilibrium. "In equals out." Removing gravel changes the equilibrium.

Spence commented about the lack of fish in the river now and said that the Huntington River used to have excellent fishing. He challenged anyone to find a good-sized fish in the river.

Patty Delaney asked what the process was and if the regulations considered "things that cause erosion upstream."

Marshall explained the process (see paragraph 4, page 3) . He also suggested that there might be a possibility for an interim regulation. In response to a comment from somewhere in the audience, he then clarified that the Planning Commission would not be passing the regulation or deciding whether it would be on a ballot: this was the role of the Selectboard which is the elected governing body of the town.

Both Ken Pillsbury and Teddie Brace expressed unhappiness that the Selectboard might pass the regulation and the people of the town wouldn't get to vote on it.

Heidi Weston offered "to represent your viewpoint." She asked the audience to "please stay active. It's important to stay involved if it's important to you." She explained that she had gotten involved after the hearing in October and had been appointed to the Planning Commission.

Marshall then addressed Delaney's second question about things being done upstream that cause erosion further down by stating that it wasn't regulated.

Brett Lindemuth asked about the draft and the different models. "You owe folks an explanation if you aren't considering the minimum." He then said, "When some of us want to move a mission forward, some of these people all they have is their land." He went on, "We come with regulatory framework when you tell people they can't dump in the river, but when you tell people they can't use their land without compensation..."

Marshall pointed out that Model 3 does the same things as Model 2.

Jim Fecteau said, "You folks explain the minimum requirements."

Gordon Miller said that this was an informational meeting. The regs were developed for people who need insurance. He invited the audience to come to the HPC meetings.

Miller then talked about legislation under consideration that would require fluvial erosion control in the ordinance.

Duncan Keir asked a question about scheduling, now that the ordinance wasn't moving forward to a vote in March. What would happen if the town didn't get the regs approved?

Marshall responded that he didn't know how it works. Alexander added that when a town doesn't have regulations, it's "on probation" and is given 30 days to get the regs in place.

Lindemuth said, "If you had done the minimum, this would be done by now. You have a laundry list of things that don't conform."

There was more general discussion with many people staying after the meeting to read the maps.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Date UNAPPROVED minutes submitted to HPC: January 20, 2010

Date minutes APPROVED by the HPC: January 25, 2010

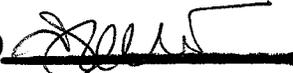
Date Approved Minutes submitted to Town Clerk: February 2, 2010

## Attendance includes:

Gary Carpenter	Betty J. Wheeler	Michael Gravelin
Robin Worn	Charles Spence	Teddie Brace
Ronald Green	Jay Centerbar	Mack Riddick
Joe Segale	Patrick Reagan	Arnold Gratton
Glenn Bruno	Jan Gratton	Lori Lavallee
Mary Wills	Ruth Little	Margaret Cole
Phil Cote	Joe Spence	Ken Pillsbury
Terry Boyle	Linda Fickbohm	Roman Livak
Dori Barton	Aaron Worthley	Heidi Reposa
Mark Wisniowski	Jeff Compo	Bob Cary
Joy Cary	Larry Haskins Jr	Larry Haskins Sr
Jeff Groleau	Justin Rich	Doug Quesnel
Todd Jacques	Dave Brautigam	Andrew Hendrickson
Dianna Melville	Dan Hall	Liz Janelle
Tim Taft	Duncan Keir	John Scott
Brian Hayes	Jim Baumann	Tom Fucarile
Cindy Sprague	Michael Pendriss	Ken Russin
Rhoda Russin	Daryl Storrs	Dean Menke
Brett Lindemuth	Jeff Fergerson	Mark Cavic
Arnold Blair	Les Hunton	Mark Lubkowitz
Alan Homans	Jim Brannen	Kevin O'Brien
Lynda Pendriss	Ann Moore	Emily Jones
Joan Sargeant		

RECEIVED

DATE

  
February 2, 2010