

## **Integrating Hazard Mitigation and Comprehensive Planning Workshop**

April 25, 2016 — DVRPC Conference Center

190 North Independence Mall West

Philadelphia, PA 19106

### ***Workshop Summary***

#### **Welcome**

Barry Seymour, Executive Director of DVRPC, welcomed attendees and introduced the topic of the workshop – Integrating Hazard Mitigation and Comprehensive Planning. Barry emphasized the important relationship between land use planning and hazard mitigation, noting that how we design, build, and regulate our communities impacts their ability to withstand hazards.

#### **Ice Breaker/Tabletop Exercise**

Participants were assigned to four breakout groups, mixing County, State, OEM, and Planning staff to ensure the exchange of ideas and viewpoints. Breakout groups were then given a map of a fictional riverfront community and a planning scenario that asked the groups to determine how their organizations would work with the hypothetical developer to identify planning and development considerations to assure a successful project that would reduce risk in the community. Groups had to take into account such considerations as nearby utilities, zoning, steep slopes, adjacent wetlands, road access, and gas pipelines. Although there were no right answers and groups generally wanted more information, the exercise helped to get participants thinking about the questions they would want to ask the developer in this situation. It helped to illustrate how future risk can factor into land use discussions and decisions.

#### **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Welcome**

Alison Kearns, Community Planning Specialist from FEMA Region 3, gave a brief welcome to attendees. She highlighted that the workshop was an opportunity for FEMA to learn how hazard mitigation planning (HMP) and its integration into comprehensive planning (CP) works in the DVRPC region, and listen to ideas on how it can be improved. She reinforced that FEMA is a resource for communities and encouraged attendees to reach out to her and her colleagues throughout the HMP process for any questions or guidance.

#### **Integrating HMP and CP at the County Level in the DVRPC Region**

Hope Winship, Region III Mitigation Champion with Resilience Action Partners, facilitated a discussion on what counties in the DVRPC region are doing related to integrating HMP and CP, with a focus on successes and acknowledgment of challenges. Some highlights from the discussion include:

- The level of integration between HMPs and CPs can vary greatly by county. Many of the Pennsylvania counties in DVRPC's region are already working to integrate HMPs and CPs. Some noted that they see the integration of known hazards and risks into CP as the natural next step for CP.
- The author of the HMP also varies by county. In some counties, the Planning Commission was responsible for developing the HMP, while in others that responsibility fell to the OEM. Other counties chose to hire a consultant to develop the HMP, with either Planning or OEM acting as the primary point of contact.

- County authority and responsibilities over CP and land use varies between NJ and PA. In NJ, counties aren't required to have a CP, but NJ municipalities must update their master plans every 10 years. PA counties are required to have CPs.
  - Although counties may be limited in their authority (they do not have the land use or zoning control that municipalities have), they still have the ability to influence and support municipalities. Counties can do this by writing model zoning language that directs development away from or limits the types of structures that can be built in high risk areas, providing data and mapping resources, and convening stakeholders from multiple agencies and municipalities. Counties can also focus on natural space protection through land acquisition and preservation. Preserving open space in high hazard areas can help to reduce the impacts of future hazards.
- Municipalities in both PA and NJ are required to have emergency management coordinators (qualifications vary across municipalities) but most municipalities do not have planners on staff. Instead municipalities generally hire consultants or work with county planners to complete planning work as needed. This staffing challenge can lead to limited local capability and/or knowledge of planning documents.
  - Based on his experience working with NJ communities, one attendee recommended that counties encourage municipalities to form working groups with representatives from a range of departments when developing/updating the HMP.

### **Lunch Presentation**

Stephen Marks served as the Hudson County Planning Director where he led the development of the county's All Hazards Plan prior to serving as the Municipal Manager of Hoboken during Superstorm Sandy. Mr. Marks presented on Hoboken's experience during Superstorm Sandy and the work they've undertaken since then to develop as a more resilient community. Mr. Marks also highlighted some of Hoboken's lessons learned from Superstorm Sandy, including:

- Emergency responders need better training, equipment, and facilities;
- Electrical substations need to be elevated and protected;
- Transit facilities need better protection;
- Rolling stock should be moved to higher ground; and
- There will be a breakdown of public information.

A copy of Mr. Marks presentation can be found [here](http://www.dvrpc.org/Resiliency/HMP/pdf/2016-04-25_Stephen_Marks_Presentation.pdf)<sup>1</sup>.

### **Facilitated discussion of how HMP process might be improved**

Hope Winship facilitated a discussion on ideas for changes to the hazard mitigation process. Some highlights from the discussion include:

- Some PA counties commented that the Standard Operating Guide (SOG) issued by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) can be overly restrictive. The SOG was developed to assist communities that chose to develop an HMP themselves. It was thought that providing a standard format would organize and simplify the process. The SOG was also developed to standardize the format across jurisdictions to allow both PEMA and other HMP readers to know where to find the same type of information in different HMPs.
  - Once county in particular noted that they had to push back against the SOG to be able to customize the format and content of their HMP update so that it worked better for their county. Ultimately, they wanted to produce a document that would be more useful and more readable for their county and municipal partners. Other counties also

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.dvrpc.org/Resiliency/HMP/pdf/2016-04-25\\_Stephen\\_Marks\\_Presentation.pdf](http://www.dvrpc.org/Resiliency/HMP/pdf/2016-04-25_Stephen_Marks_Presentation.pdf)

expressed an interest in having greater flexibility in how they organize their HMPs and what content is covered. Representatives from both FEMA and PEMA were amenable to different formats and encouraged counties to contact them early and often to work through these changes.

- The HMP should be a living document. Updates to HMPs, which are required every five years to be eligible for federal disaster funding, should focus on what has changed in a community over the past five years. Participants noted that there is no need to reinvent the wheel each time the HMP is updated, but instead to focus the update on improving the HMP and making it more valuable to the specific community.
  - Some attendees noted that the HMP would be better suited to a ten year update cycle to allow for a greater focus on engaging stakeholders like municipalities and county departments.
- One attendee commented that a potential improvement to the HMP process would be to make the HMPs scalable, allowing more or less attention to be paid to each hazard, depending on the likelihood that a community would face a particular hazard. For example, inland and upland communities may not need as extensive a section in their HMP on flooding as low lying communities because their risk is lower.
- Another suggested improvement was to require HMPs to include municipal specific annexes. Brief annexes detailing the risks, assets, and mitigation strategies of each municipality within a county will help increase municipal engagement and support greater implementation of the plan.
  - Similar to this suggestion, a few attendees commented that most people do not read HMPs because they are so lengthy. Including a brief executive summary could help to ensure that more people are aware of the general contents of the HMP.

### **FEMA Presentation/Discussion on *The HMP Planning Wheel***

Matthew McCullough, Community Planner with FEMA Region III, presented on the HMP Planning Wheel, which reflects the ongoing, continuous five year HMP planning cycle where communities engage, integrate, enhance, and finally implement their HMP. Under the current process, most communities spend less than two years updating their HMP and may not return to the HMP after it has been adopted. This may be due to local capacity and funding limitations, limited participation, and competing interests. Instead of making implementing mitigation strategies a burden, FEMA encouraged communities to make risk reduction a part of the day-to-day functions of a community. Additionally, FEMA reiterated their desire for a collaborative relationship with the counties. They encouraged counties to reach out to them at the beginning of the process to discuss what they want to improve for the next update. They also encouraged communities to not be afraid to ask for FEMA's comments from their previous HMP review. To view a copy of Mr. McCullough's presentation, please visit the project [website](http://www.dvrpc.org/Resiliency/HMP/pdf/2016-04-25_McCullough-Planning_Wheel.pdf)<sup>2</sup>.

- During the discussion, a few attendees commented that it would be helpful for FEMA to send reminders to counties throughout the HMP process. For example, FEMA could send an email stating, "You're 12 months out, have you completed your risk assessment?"
- NJ OEM also suggested that states could use Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) grants as an incentive for improved hazard mitigation planning.

### **Spurring Municipal Activity Beyond Gates and Buyouts**

Hope Winship facilitated a discussion on how county planners and emergency management

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.dvrpc.org/Resiliency/HMP/pdf/2016-04-25\\_McCullough-Planning\\_Wheel.pdf](http://www.dvrpc.org/Resiliency/HMP/pdf/2016-04-25_McCullough-Planning_Wheel.pdf)

professionals might work with municipalities to encourage mitigation actions, beyond the typical actions of buyouts and flood gates. Some highlights from the discussion include:

- One county noted that with deindustrialization and a renewed interest in developing along the Schuylkill River, some communities now have a second chance to develop with proper safeguards in place to mitigate hazards. However, redevelopment and economic growth can often run counter to developing in a way that mitigates future hazards (e.g., restricting floodplain development). Instead, this county has encouraged municipalities to use zoning and flexibility in design to help communities develop in a way that reduces the impacts of flooding.
- Another municipal activity that has been important in mitigating hazards is to improve inter-municipal cooperation. Counties noted that hazards and infrastructure cross municipal boundaries but often municipalities don't coordinate their actions to ensure their residents' safety. For example, flooding is multi-municipal but municipalities often don't cooperate on detours and road closures. One county is working to improve their relationships with municipal public works departments to increase communication and cooperation.
- One county found that meeting one-on-one with municipalities, sometimes in person and sometimes over the phone, really helped to increase municipal engagement in the HMP process.
- Another county commented that getting buy-in from municipalities was the first step to greater implementation of mitigation strategies at the municipal level. They viewed their engagement with municipalities as "baby steps and small wins".
  - After disasters, there is often funding for mitigation actions like purchasing generators for critical facilities. These actions are easy to accomplish and can be touted by politicians as actions taken to make their community safer. Political wins can in turn build more momentum for less tangible, but potentially more important improvements like changing the zoning code.
- Multiple participants brought up the link between the Community Rating System (CRS) and hazard mitigation. The CRS program is a good way to put the HMP to use as it rewards communities enrolled in CRS for undertaking mitigation actions. Additionally, in both PA and NJ, communities may be able to enter into the CRS program as a "7" or "8" based on existing state and federal laws and regulations.
  - 27 municipalities in PA, and 70 municipalities in NJ are enrolled in CRS; however there is less interest in CRS in some South Jersey communities.

#### **Action Items**

- Multiple attendees noted that the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources are important state organizations that need to be involved in any future hazard mitigation discussions since they have such a large role in land use (especially in NJ).
  - In NJ, the State Development Plan is managed by DEP.
- Attendees had a number ideas about future efforts/ways that DVRPC, FEMA, PEMA, and NJ OEM can support for counties and municipalities, including:
  - Help counties understand best available data on future conditions and climate change (ex: flood level predictions)
  - Map Individual Assistance/Public Assistance/Small Business Agency loan data.
    - This will help communities to understand past impacts and justify future projects and funding.
  - Develop model ordinances and hazard overlay zones.
  - Support counties by developing more regional-level hazard information.

- Provide additional trainings and engagement sessions.
  - Help communities develop executive summaries for their HMPs and/or short sections that they can include in their master plans.
- Work with PEMA and FEMA to balance the need for a Standard Operating Guide with what works best for each individual county updating their plan.

### **Additional Identified Resources**

Attendees identified additional resources throughout the course of the workshop. Some of the resources are highlighted below:

- State Silver Jackets Teams
  - [PA Silver Jackets Interagency Flood Mitigation Program Guide<sup>3</sup>](http://www.nfrmp.us/frmpw/2012workshop/docs/PASilverJacketsProgramGuide_FINALJUL2011.pdf)
- FEMA and State Staff (for trainings and technical assistance)
- [Flood Risk Products<sup>4</sup>](http://msc.fema.gov/portal)
- R3 Integration Guidance (2105)

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.nfrmp.us/frmpw/2012workshop/docs/PASilverJacketsProgramGuide\\_FINALJUL2011.pdf](http://www.nfrmp.us/frmpw/2012workshop/docs/PASilverJacketsProgramGuide_FINALJUL2011.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://msc.fema.gov/portal>

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American College of Physicians Building – 190 North Independence Mall West – 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19106 – [www.dvrpc.org/directions](http://www.dvrpc.org/directions)



**Certification  
Maintenance**

Participants are  
eligible for 5 CM  
credits

- 9:30 Networking and coffee
- 10:00 Welcome – *Barry Seymour, Executive Director, DVRPC*
- 10:10 Participant Introductions – *DVRPC*
- 10:20 Ice Breaker/Tabletop Exercise – *Resilience Action Partners*  
The full group will be broken into four assigned subgroups, mixing counties, states, OEM/HMP, and comprehensive planning staff to assure exchange of ideas. This will be followed by a facilitated and structured report out by each group, with the facilitator drawing observations that will be useful in underlining the relevance of the day.
- 11:00 FEMA Welcome / Expectations – *FEMA*  
FEMA will frame the day as an opportunity for FEMA to learn how the HMP process and its integration into comprehensive planning works in practice, and listen to ideas on how it can be improved.
- 11:10 Integrating HMP and CP at the county level in the DVRPC region – *Resilience Action Partners*  
A facilitated discussion to learn what counties in the room are doing related to integrating HMP and CP, with a focus on successes and acknowledgment of challenges.
- 12:00 Lunch
- 12:30 Lunch speaker — *Stephen Marks, Municipal Manager, Hoboken, NJ*  
Mr. Marks served as the Hudson County Planning Director where he led the development of the county's All Hazards Plan prior to serving as the administrator of Hoboken during Superstorm Sandy. He will discuss the impacts of Sandy, the successes and challenges Hoboken's efforts to integrate HMP into its planning, and offer his perspectives on how counties and municipalities can work together to advance hazard mitigation.
- 1:15 Facilitated discussion of how HMP process might be improved – *Resilience Action Partners*  
DVRPC's one-on-one meetings with county staff elicited excellent ideas for changes to the hazard mitigation planning process. This session will raise and discuss some of those ideas.
- 2:00 FEMA presentation/discussion on *The HMP Planning Wheel* – *FEMA*  
This presentation will talk about FEMA's recommendations for activities during each year of the 5-year HMP cycle. This discussion will touch on how to integrate the FEMA flood map production schedule into this cycle. The presentation will allow for comments and discussion.
- 2:30 Break
- 2:40 Spurring municipal activity beyond gates and buyouts – *Resilience Action Partners*  
There is a great deal of interest at the county level in spurring municipal activity beyond installing gates and implementing buyouts, such as updating zoning and building standards. How might county planners and emergency management professionals best work with municipalities to make changes to their flood plain ordinances and (for example) street tree policies? What tools are needed? What roles can various organizations play?
- 3:30 Observations/comments from PEMA/NJ OEM – *DVRPC/Resilience Action Partners*
- 3:45 Next steps and actions – *DVRPC/Resilience Action Partners/FEMA*
- 4:00 Event ends. Participants invited to stay and network

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