

Cabot Flood Resiliency Task Force
Meeting Notes
May 7, 2025

Present: Dawn Andrews, Peg Elmer Hough, RD Eno, Gary Gulka, Chris Tormey, Chris Duff, Michele Braun

Next Meeting: June 4, 6:30 pm

Meeting notes of April 2 approved as written.

Public Comment

None

Updates

The following updates were provided at the meeting:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program – Application submitted last week for both bridge projects and stream work on Lyford Brook. Total project cost is \$3.239 million. Benefit Cost Analysis of 1.15. Applications are in the hands of VT Emergency Management before passing on to FEMA in June. We believe our chances of funding are slim due to the high demand and lower priority of funding infrastructure projects compared to property buyouts and floodplain enhancements. FEMA has modified the BCA formula to include a higher discount rate, making it more difficult to achieve a favorable BCA. We have not heard that our BCA has dropped below 1. We expect to hear this month about our project ranking and the likelihood of funding. We discussed the idea of splitting up our project and pursuing a project on only one tributary, at lesser cost, but eventually did not do this. Vermont Emergency Management said that once the projects are reviewed by a committee, it is possible that they would then get back to us with this suggestion of doing only one tributary, so we elected to wait and hear back.

Cabot Garage Buyout Grant – Phase I Environmental Site Assessment has been completed. Suspected contamination has been identified and a Phase II assessment will be conducted. A RFP was issued last week for Phase II. We have been accepted into the *Brownfields Reuse and Environmental Liability Limitation Act Program* (BRELLA) to conduct this work. This program will reduce our environmental liability and may help to pay for any corrective actions required.

Cabot Garage Relocation – Site Evaluation, Selection and Cost Estimates – Request for Proposal was issued and there were no responses. We will reissue the RFP on the State of Vermont bid system.

Cabot Flood Resilience Master Plan – We submitted a Community Development Block Grant application for \$59,330. The project involves mapping and hydraulic modeling of up to 9 miles of

the mainstem of the Winooski and 2.5 miles of Jug Brook. We will look at alternatives for floodplain reconnection, flood benches, wood additions, riparian buffer improvements. We will then review recommended flood resilience alternatives and select three for 30% design.

Alternative Plans for Village Flood Mitigation – If we are unsuccessful acquiring funding for our village projects, we are beginning discussions of lower cost alternatives in the interim. We are in the early stages of discussions with engineering firms about debris catchers and other measures that we can take on both tributaries.

Public Outreach – Proposal to invite Dr. Denise Burchsted of Keene State College to Cabot for field walks and a public presentation on the river restoration and her research, the role of beavers and beaver meadows, the long history of human-induced modifications to rivers, and where we go from here. Dr. Burchsted has training in civil engineering and geology and considers herself a fluvial geomorphologist. We have already reached out to her, and she is excited about the possibility of coming to Cabot possibly in June. We are exploring the location of active beaver areas that are accessible for field walks.

Interim Flood Mitigation Strategies

If we do not receive FEMA funding for our village flood mitigation projects, we have been thinking about less expensive alternative measures that could be implemented until funding for the larger projects can be obtained. We have learned of Barre City's flood mitigation project on Gunner Brook that consists of debris catchers and a second set of debris catchers upstream of the original catchers, to create a serpentine water flow. A June 2 meeting is scheduled with Dubois & King to look at the south tributary and the feasibility of debris catchers as a less expensive interim measure.

Public Outreach Planning

At this point, we are planning one outreach event on beavers, and we will see how that goes. We are waiting to hear the outcome of two grant applications that will have a bearing on outreach planning, so we should wait until we hear the outcome. It was suggested that we have at least two different constituencies for outreach – those on the north and south tributaries and those on the mainstem of the Winooski. This is a way to think about organizing public outreach. We have \$2-3K remaining in our Vermont Community Fund grant for outreach. We can also do low-cost events by bringing in outside speakers from DEC and conservation organizations.

It was suggested and supported that we have an in-person meeting to discuss public outreach planning at a later time.

Riparian Planting Opportunities

It was suggested that we look at maps showing areas lacking riparian buffers. There is a map in the Ecological Inventory study that was recently completed. Friends of Winooski has also created a map. We do not currently have any landowners lined up for plantings with Friends of the Winooski.

They need to know by early fall the latest of any interested landowners. A minimum 35-foot buffer on each side to a river or stream and a 15-year commitment to maintaining the buffer is necessary for funding.

Some landowners may be eligible for the CREP Program (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, NRCS) that will provide landowners with an annual payment. Another option is a river corridor easement that is typically a one-time payment through an organization such as the Vermont River Conservancy. It was suggested that we have some conversations with landowners to gauge their interest in a project for next year.

New Business

It was suggested that we pursue the naming of Lyford and Menard Brooks through the VT Dept of Libraries and Cabot Library this year.

Michele mentioned that a grant was received for the Clark Sawmill Dam cleanup project and turning the site into a pocket park.