

Fairhaven to develop a Hazard Mitigation Plan to tame weather events

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By **Steve Urbon**

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FAIRHAVEN - To better fend off natural disasters and extreme weather events, the town is embarking on the creation of a FEMA-supported Hazard Mitigation Plan.

A program of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the new plan is considered essential to the town's efforts to improve emergency preparedness and identify ways to become less vulnerable to disasters caused by natural hazards, " wrote Town Planner Bill Roth in his announcement.

The first meeting to begin the process will be Thursday, Jan. 12 at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall.

Roth wrote, "The purpose of the local Hazard Mitigation Plan is to identify and assess the community's natural hazard risks and determine how to best minimize and manage those risks over time. All members of the community are invited and encouraged to attend to share ideas for reducing or eliminating the impacts of natural hazards such as hurricanes, floods, and severe winter storms."

Attendees will learn about the process for developing Fairhaven's Hazard Mitigation Plan and how they can help in making the community more resilient to natural hazards.

The Planning and Economic Development Department will lead the planning process with assistance from Punchard Consulting LLC. An approved HMP will make the town eligible for federal mitigation project funding through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance Grant programs, the announcement said.

"Mitigation planning is a key process used to breaking the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage," FEMA states on its website.

It adds, "State, tribal, and local governments" are engaging in planning to identify risks and vulnerabilities associated with natural disasters, and develop long-term strategies for protecting people and property from future hazard events."

FEMA requires state, tribal, and local governments to develop and adopt hazard mitigation plans as a condition for receiving certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for HMA mitigation projects.

Those with questions regarding the public meetings, or who would like to learn about more ways to participate in the development of the town's first HMP, can contact Bill Roth, director of Planning & Economic Development, by phone at 508-979-4082, ext.9 or by email at **billr@fairhaven-ma.gov**.

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