

Work begins on Fairhaven's Hazard Mitigation Plan

Thursday

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FAIRHAVEN - The town got the ball rolling on a Hazard Mitigation Plan to lessen the danger and damage by naturally occurring events such as hurricanes, winds, floods and fires.

A pair of consultants hired with federal grant money from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency met in three meetings Thursday.

The first was the core group of town planners, department heads with a direct hand in dealing with tough situations.

The second mid-afternoon meeting, not promoted to the press, was essentially a private meeting with some of the "stakeholders," any group, individual organization or business with an interest in damage mitigation and recovery.

Thursday evening came the first of three "public meetings," in which residents were encouraged to bring their concerns and wishes about natural disaster. Only a half dozen including three town officials, attended the meeting at Town Hall (the next will be held in April).

Jamie Caplan of Jamie Caplan Consulting, and Darrin Punchard of Punchard Consulting, spelled out the process that will next include data mining of existing things such as flood maps. It became clear that the recall of town residents about the history of the town will play an important role,

since they made an impression at the time. Hurricane Bob, for instance.

Town Planner William Roth, who chaired the meeting, spoke with approval of a Federal Emergency Management Agency called "Community Rating System," which calculates a score for the community. The attraction, Roth said, is that property owners can get from 5 percent to 10 percent off their flood insurance premiums. He said that the CRS is separate from the Hazard Mitigation but can be done in parallel.

He also said that the town's own master plan work begins later this year, and could be worked into the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

A finished report will be available in July, said Caplan.

The hazard report will first go to the state, then to FEMA, assuming it is approved. FEMA will then look at it as the town's intention to help itself, and will make grant money available for mitigation measures identified in the report.

Selectman Robert Espindola attended the meeting as an audience member, and asked the consultants to come up with a simpler explanation for this process and what is in it for various types of businesses, organizations and individuals.

A web site has been established to provide all the information about the project:

www.jamiecaplan.com/projects/fairhaven.

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