

R I C H M O N D S E L E C T B O A R D
S P E C I A L M E E T I N G
M a r c h 2 2 , 2 0 1 2 M I N U T E S

Members Present: Chris Granda; Amy Lord; Ashley Lucht
Absent: Neil Boyden; June Heston
Others Present: Geoffrey Urbanik, Town Administrator; Erik Sandblom of KAS, Inc; Stephen Diglio of KAS, Inc.; Mary Houle; Isaac Cowan; Cara LaBounty; Denise & James Curley; Christy Witters; Marcy Harding; Brian Behr; Kim Robtoy; Gary Martin; Kevan Mayer; Terry Bambrick; Lauren Esserman; Jack Linn; Judy Rosovsky; Patti Pallito; Dan Noyes and Jim Hering was present to videotape the meeting for MMCTV Channel 15.

This meeting was held in the Richmond Free Library. Mr. Granda called the meeting to order at 7:20 PM.

1. Update on Digital Flood Rate Insurance Maps

The Administrator explained that KAS, Inc. had been hired to research the flood modeling for the Winooski River, and they were here tonight to present the results of their findings and to argue to move forward with an appeal of the base flood elevation of the Winooski River.

Erik Sandblom of KAS, Inc. explained why they had been hired to do the research. The Town had suspected that the difference in base flood elevation between the 1982 study and the 2011 mapping, which was over three feet higher throughout Richmond in the new mapping, was due to how certain bridges were modeled in the HEC-RAS computer program. KAS, Inc. had been hired to research the modeling and determine if any errors existed in the modeling used to develop the 2011 Digital Flood Rate Insurance Maps.

Stephen Diglio of KAS, Inc. did the actual modeling work. He explained a number of things he looked at, specifically several bridges, the drag coefficient of the land within the floodplain, topography and skew angles of water flowing through restrictions or structures.

Mr. Diglio explained in detail the rail crossing located in Williston and how the water surface elevation upstream of the bridge was dramatically different than downstream of the bridge. He had changed the skew angle of the water flowing through the bridge opening which widened the opening in the model, allowing more water to flow through and lowering the water surface elevation upstream of the bridge. He similarly examined several other bridges, including the Interstate 89 bridge and the Bridge Street Bridge, both of which had anomalies in their modeling which contributed to rises in water surface elevation upstream from the structures. Particularly with the Bridge Street Bridge, it had been modeled with the topography showing the approaches to the bridge were at the same height as the bridge deck, when in fact the approaches were significantly lower since it was a perched bridge. With accurate topography the water surface elevation changed quite a bit, resulting in a two-foot difference between the flood elevation modeled for the 2011 DFIRM.

Mr. Diglio also explained his change with the Mannings "n" coefficient, which was used to determine the speed of the water flow through a variety of ground conditions, such as woodland, cropland, bare ground, etc. The model used by FEMA used one consistent number instead of varied numbers that more accurately match the ground conditions in Richmond. When the woodland numbers were

1 replaced with more cropland numbers, the speed of the water increased and resulted in slightly lower
2 water surface elevations.

3
4 Mr. Diglio also explained that some additional survey data was required, and he would like to get an
5 elevation of a high water mark from the Irene flood near the Verberg farm to check his modeling with
6 the real world flood elevations. Mr. Diglio added that the Irene flood was not being labeled as a 100-
7 year flood by the federal government.

8
9 Lauren Esserman asked if the Irene flood benchmarking could be used as the basis for a revised base
10 flood elevation. Mr. Diglio said that the modeling was a more accurate way to develop the flood
11 elevations, and there wasn't enough data from the flood to accurately benchmark it.

12
13 Isaac Cowan said that this work was necessary since flood insurance rates were higher if you were in
14 the floodplain but optional and at lower rates outside of the floodplain.

15
16 Mr. Diglio explained the next steps, which included finalizing the model, updating mapping and
17 submitting an appeal to FEMA. Another necessary step was to file a Letter of Map Revision for the
18 areas outside of Richmond, since those maps had already been made effective.

19
20 Mary Houle said that the size of the floodplain will affect property values and the rest of the town
21 would pick up the costs from the lower grandlist value.

22
23 Marcy Harding asked why FEMA would make certain assumptions in their modeling, that KAS was
24 now changing. She asked if FEMA was just being more conservative. Mr. Diglio explained that
25 FEMA's modeling didn't have as much data as what he had examined. Therefore it was more of a one
26 size fits all approach, where he had more closely studied certain structures and provided more data to
27 analyze.

28
29 Mr. Sandblom said that he had spoken with FEMA's engineer, Camp Dresser McKee over the phone
30 and that CDM was in agreement with the work that KAS, Inc. was proposing.

31
32 Dan Noyes asked if the 100 foot zone in the flood regulations would change. The Administrator
33 explained that in the regulations the 100 foot zone of ambiguity was because of the vagueness of the
34 1982 maps. With the new mapping, the accuracy will be increased and it is proposed that the 100 foot
35 zone of ambiguity will be eliminated.

36
37 Cara LaBounty said that CDM is open to looking at KAS' new data, and from the beginning had said
38 they were willing to examine additional information related to the study. FEMA had stated their goal
39 was accurate mapping.

40
41 Dan Noyes said that he agreed that the 100 foot zone should come out of the regulations.

42
43 Christy Witters, a member of the Planning Commission, said that the new draft had already taken this
44 out.

45
46 One resident asked why the limits of the study were the Winooski River. Mr. Diglio explained that the
47 Winooski River study was the only thing that FEMA was allowing an appeal for, and that was the
48 scope of KAS' contract. Mr. Sandblom added that the Winooski River study was the only study that
49 was updated in the new DFIRM.

50

1 Chair Granda asked if the changes in Jericho and Williston would trigger similar map revisions there.
2 Mr. Diglio said that those towns would not bear the costs of this, and it was included in what their new
3 proposal would be.
4

5 Lauren Esserman asked how many homes might be removed from the Special Flood Hazard Area.
6 Mr. Diglio said that this was not mapped yet. The Administrator said that one handout had some
7 potential homes listed based on a 1-foot drop in flood elevation.
8

9 Cara LaBounty commented on the scope of the study and said that in other parts of the new DFIRMs
10 the smaller streams were classified by FEMA based on stream studies from other areas. Those streams
11 have approximate base flood elevations.
12

13 Marcy Harding asked how much would filing the appeal cost.

14
15 Mr. Sandblom presented his proposal for completing the work and filing the appeal, with the Letter of
16 Map Revision. The estimate was \$8,545 to complete the work by April 12th, the end of the appeal
17 period.
18

19 Lauren Esserman asked if any town owned buildings would be removed from the Special Flood
20 Hazard Area. Ms. Sandblom said it was possible. There was additional discussion about the town's
21 flood insurance through the Vermont League of Cities and Towns.
22

23 Amy Lord asked if there was any precedent for FEMA reimbursing for this type of appeal. Mr.
24 Sandblom said that they had already paid CDM around \$6 million, so probably not.
25

26 Ms. Lord asked if Williston and Jericho would share the cost, and Cara LaBounty said that it was all
27 farmland and probably not benefit many homes and it was unlikely.
28

29 Lauren Esserman asked why Williston and Jericho had to be involved. Mr. Diglio said that there was
30 a need to match the maps.
31

32 Marcy Harding said that most people here seemed to be directly impacted, but she lived in a different
33 area. She asked if people on the list of affected properties could help pay for this. She was not sure
34 that reducing the flood zone was helping, and the \$20,000 spent on this project only helped a few
35 homeowners.
36

37 Jack Linn said that there have been meetings before and he urged a quick decision and to not delay.
38 He said that there are other things where costs are shared and this would be money well spent.
39

40 One resident suggested that the payback would be in two years for the town to save its grandlist value.
41

42 Cara LaBounty said that she was the reason we were here at this meeting. She brought this to the
43 Selectboard over a year ago, and her problems had been corrected. She wasn't going to gain from this
44 study but it was important to complete. She said that two people here tonight were on the Planning
45 Commission when the first maps were issued and they let them go through with the errors in them.
46

47 Isaac Cowan said that he wouldn't benefit from this at all but supported making the corrections.
48

49 Cara LaBounty thanked the Selectboard for putting in the time on this project.
50

1
2 Chair Granda thanked Ms. LaBounty for her time also.

3
4 Lauren Esserman said that Ms. LaBounty's comments were a gratuitous swipe. The maps were public
5 and to say the Planning Commission didn't catch the errors was wrong since they weren't engineers.

6
7 Chair Granda brought the discussion back and said that we agree that we are seeing climate change
8 and we need accurate maps for flood insurance.

9
10 Cara LaBounty said that this was all about flood insurance, not whether it was a good idea to have
11 insurance. The accurate maps were the issue.

12
13 Lauren Esserman said she didn't think she would benefit from this but supports money being spent to
14 finalize the process. She thinks that people don't realize what flood insurance really costs.

15
16 Ms. Lucht said she was a resident of the hilltops but supports accuracy and moving forward.

17
18 Ms. Lord asked how often were these maps updated, and the Administrator said the first maps were
19 from 1982. She asked when would this be done again, and Mr. Diglio said it was up to FEMA, but
20 their changes appeared to be reasonable to FEMA's engineer, CDM.

21
22 Chair Granda said that equity in home is good for the town. He counted 31 homes that might be
23 affected, possibly more. The math might show \$8,500 in tax revenue a year could be lost with the
24 changes left the way they are. He asked if anything was not included in the KAS proposal.

25
26 Mr. Sandblom further explained his proposal, and his requirements.

27
28 The Administrator explained a budget breakdown of how this could be funded:

29

30 Contract Administration	\$1,545
31 Landscaping	\$2,000
32 Awards	\$500
33 Technology	\$500
34 Notes interest	\$2,000
35 <u>CUSI</u>	<u>\$2,000</u>
36 TOTAL	\$8,545

37

38 Mr. Granda offered a motion to approve an amount not to exceed \$8,545 be allocated for the
39 completion of the scope of work as defined in the estimate from KAS dated March 22, 2012, for the
40 completion of the services to appeal the Winooski updated flood insurance study mapping results for
41 the town of Richmond and was seconded by Ms. Lucht. The motion carried 3-0.

42
43 **2. Other Business**

44
45 **Dog Warrant and Emergency Health Order**

46
47 The Administrator explained that last week the Health Officer had issued an emergency health order
48 regarding the restraint of a dog housed at 149 Esplanade Street. The dog had bitten two people and
49 numerous complaints were received. The nature of the emergency health order was that the dog was

1 to be removed from the home, the Town of Richmond and proof of rabies vaccination shown or the
2 dog would be seized.

3
4 There was some discussion on the details. The main request of the board was to authorize seizure of
5 the dog if it was not removed from the home. Ms. Lord offered a motion to approve a resolution
6 signing a seizure warrant for the dog and was seconded by Ms. Lucht and the motion carried 3-0.

7
8 Executive Session

9
10 Chair Granda requested an executive session to discuss personnel matters. Ms. Lucht offered a motion
11 to enter executive session at 8:55 pm and was seconded by Ms. Lord and the motion carried 3-0.

12
13 Chair Granda offered a motion to adjourn the executive session and reconvene the special session at
14 9:13 pm and was seconded by Ms. Lord and the motion carried 3-0.

15
16 Appointment of Water Commissioners

17
18 The Administrator noted that Water Commissioners needed to be appointed prior to April 2nd. The
19 Selectboard had not finalized who would serve, although Ms. Lord was a natural to serve in the
20 position.

21
22 Ms. Lucht offered a motion to appoint Bruce Bailey, Harold Irish and Amy Lord to the Board of
23 Water Commissioners and was seconded by Mr. Granda. The motion carried 3-0.

24
25 **3. Adjourn**

26 Motion by Ms. Lord to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m. Seconded by Ms. Lucht. So voted.