

**Hartford Hazard Mitigation Plan
Working Group
Approved Minutes of December 10, 2025**

The kick-off meeting of the Hartford Hazard Mitigation Plan Working Group Meeting was held on Wednesday, December 10th in Room 2 of the Hartford Town Hall. Member John Reid called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and proceeded to read the hybrid meeting script followed by a roll call.

Working Group Members:

John Reid	Planning Commission/Climate Action Steering Team
Bruce Riddle	Planning Commission
Kyle Katz	Resilient Hartford
Sally Mansur	Resilient Hartford
Lee Michaelides	Climate Action Steering Team & Conservation Commission
Mark Bradley	Bugbee Senior Center
Cathy Geiger	Energy Commission

Staff:

Dana Clawson	Environmental Sustainability Coordinator
Matt Osborn	Town Planner, Department of Planning and Development

Others Present:

None.

- 1. Introductions:** Each person described their current position and interest in serving on the working group.
- 2. Introduction to Local Hazard Mitigation Plans & Past Hartford HM Plans:** Matt noted that Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMP) are a requirement of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The first HM Plan for Hartford was in 2008. The Plan was a total of eight pages in length. The second HM Plan was adopted in 2014 and was a FEMA pilot project grant. Planning consultants Peg Elmer and Sharon Murray were hired to create a new template for the LHMP. Hartford was selected as a large community example of a LHMP. The 2020 HM Plan update was funded through a FEMA grant. The Town hired Two Rivers-Ottawquechee Regional Commission to update the Plan. The current update was scheduled to receive FEMA funding, but the grants were eliminated. As a result, the Town is updating the Plan on its own.

Matt read the purpose of mitigation planning from the 2021 Hartford HM Plan:

“The purpose of this hazard mitigation plan is to identify and plan for both natural and manmade hazards facing the Town of Hartford, and to develop strategies to reduce long-term risks. Hazards cannot be eliminated, but it is possible to determine those hazards that are most likely to occur, where they may be most severe and cause the most damage, and what can be done to reduce their impacts on the community.”

Matt noted the four different phases of emergency management.

- Mitigate
- Prepare
- Respond
- Recover

Matt noted that since the 2021 HM Plan, FEMA has added requirements for a LHMP. He stated that VEM can't separate new requirements from the old. They suggest going through the current LHMP review tool.

Cathy requested that staff develop a scope of work for the rewrite. Kyle noted the link to the Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) 2023 and 2025 review tool that includes all of the requirements of a LHMP. Lee offered to use AI (Artificial Intelligence) to examine the review tool to see if it can identify the essential steps in the update process.

- 3. Community Resilience Building Event:** Dana reported that last December, the Town participated in a Nature Conservancy (NC) sponsored Community Resilience Building (CRB) event at the Wilder Club that included thirty people, including Town staff, Commission members and the public. The day-long event resulted in a report that included the following categories:

- Current Concerns & Challenges Presented by Hazards
- Current Strengths & Assets
- Recommendations to Improve Resilience

Matt noted that earlier that year, Dana attended a CRB event in Lebanon and asked the NC to sponsor an event in Hartford. The NC agreed. Matt stated that the event fits well with this update of the HM Plan and that several working group members participated in the Wilder CRB event.

- 4. Role of the Working Group:** Matt noted that working group is intended to obtain input from committee members who have experience and interest in the HM Plan update and to help shape the Plan. He added that the working group is a component of community involvement. Dana added that there are lots of tasks that need to be done for the update and the working group can assist staff. Matt noted that the current HM Plan expires 3/18/26. Dana noted that VEM needs 45 days to review the Draft Plan so we need to complete the draft by late January.
- 5. 2021 Hartford Hazard Assessment & 2023 Vermont Hazard Assessment:** Matt noted that the hazard assessment is an important part of the HM Plan update. He presented the 2023 Vermont Hazard Assessment and the 2021 Hartford Hazard Assessment. Matt noted that the updated state assessment ranked heat as the third highest hazard compared to its 2018 ranking as 6th. This is a reflection of our changing climate and increasing number of 90-degree days. He also noted that after the 2025 summer/fall drought, it is likely that drought will receive more attention in the updated Hartford Hazard Assessment.

There was consensus that the Vermont Hazard Assessment is simpler and much easier to digest than the 2021 Hartford Hazard Assessment. As a result, it was suggested that we use the state format and consider combining some categories.

- 6. Next Steps:** Kyle noted that he has worked on several LHMP's. He suggested that we break down the process into discrete steps. He noted that we can save time by focusing on natural hazards since man-made hazards are not required in a LHMP. Kyle stated that there are three key tasks of a LHMP:

1. Identifying top hazards
2. Looking back at past actions
3. Develop additional mitigation strategies

Kyle stated that a great deal of the narrative will stay the same.

Lee suggested starting with the State Hazard Assessment. Bruce noted that some things have changed in the last five years. He stated that we need to be mindful of what the Town can afford. Kyle suggested doing the ranking exercise at the next working group meeting. He said the ranking is locally driven and is based on experience and public input. Dana suggested that if each of the working group sends us their two preferences of hazard categories, staff will send out directions.

Matt agreed to send the working group the following files:

- Community Resilience Building Report, Dec. 2024
- Vermont State Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2023
- Braintree, Vermont Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2025
- Hartford Standards of Cover & Community Risk Assessment, 2024

Cathy said that the existing HM Plan has very little information on communications systems noting that Lebanon is working on Starlink to communicate during a disaster. Cathy volunteered to find out more information about it.

Cathy also suggested changing the order of chapters. Dana responded that we could look into that later.

Matt suggested that to meet open meeting law requirements to send information to staff and not copy all. Staff will distribute information to the working group. The Committee agreed.

7. **Next Working Group Meeting:** Matt asked if members were available to meet on Monday, December 22nd. The working group agreed.
8. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:16 p.m.