

MEAC Minutes 2025-01-14

Voting attendees: Karl Johnson, Kate Stephenson, Dan Jones, Amy Gamble, Geoff Fitzgerald, Amanda Sardonis

Non-voting attendees: Sal Alfano, Chris Lumbra

Visitors/members of the public: Sam Lash (Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission), Jon Copans (Montpelier Commission for Recovery and Resilience)

Public Comment: None

Upcoming Events: None

Discussion with Jon Copans, Executive Director of Montpelier Commission for Recovery and Resilience:

Kate introduced Jon, explaining that the invitation was extended to hear about the Commission's work and discuss areas for cooperation and coordination. MEAC has been considering shifting its purview toward hazard mitigation and resilience.

Jon provided history and background for the Montpelier Commission for Recovery and Resilience. It has 16 members and was established after the 2023 flood to make Montpelier more resistant and resilient to flooding events. It is not a permanent body, but a response to a specific event that will lay the foundation for future resilience.

Jon provided an overview of current emergency response projects, including:

MAPLE (Municipal After-Action Performance & Lessons Learned): MAPLE will be presented to the City Council on February 12. The Commission is also discussing revitalizing neighborhood organizations, taking over efforts previously managed by Sustainable Montpelier and CAN (Community Action Network) for emergency and disaster response.

- **Discussion points:** What additional roles could CAN play, and how can MEAC coordinate with this newly revitalized network?

Hazard mitigation grant funding: The state has \$90 million in funding for hazard mitigation projects. Commission identified 32 projects, submitted five projects for consideration, including the wastewater treatment plant, 5 Home Farm Way, and Shaw's dam removal.

- **Discussion points:** What happens to the other 27 projects if not funded? The city will prioritize municipal assets and try to secure funding for expensive projects. How can MEAC help with project prioritization?

Watershed-level flood resilience network: The Commission is working on flood mitigation at the watershed level, convening upstream and downstream communities with regional planning commission and town managers.

Advocacy and partnerships with the city: Master Plan for Riverfront: focus on state-owned parcels and how to be ready for opportunities that arise. Federal Building Development: How the GSA-owned building could be developed responsibly.

- **Discussion points:** Dan inquired about larger-scale events and who is responsible for planning for them. Jon responded that the Commission is focusing on businesses and downtown revitalization while also exploring alternatives. Amanda asked where MEAC could be helpful, particularly in identifying bottlenecks or capacity gaps. Jon noted that CAN needs a home and coordinating capacity, where MEAC could provide institutional knowledge. Sam mentioned that the City's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) is up for review in 2026. Kate asked about the planning process and reminded us that the 2050 Net Zero Plan will shift from municipal-only to community (residential and business).

Sustainability and Facilities Coordinator Update: Discussion about the proposal to eliminate the Sustainability and Facilities Coordinator position the FY26 city budget. MEAC produced a statement to present to City Council (see below).

MEAC statement: MEAC strongly opposes the elimination of the Facilities and Sustainability Coordinator position in the FY26 budget. The position is critical to the city's ability to meet its Net Zero and climate resilience goals, as well as work related to flood recovery and reconstruction, district heat management, and other planning functions. The Sustainability Coordinator has secured funding for municipal projects that more than offset the salary costs of his position.