

To: The Vermont Senate Economic Development and Housing Committee

From: Jim Linville, Vice Chair, Town of Weston Selectboard
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Thanks so much for the opportunity to speak to you about Weston's flooding issues. For what it's worth, here are the 'next steps' we're hoping you focus on:

- We believe that delegating issues like improving flood resilience to Regional Commissions is at best inefficient and at worst wasteful. Vermont is a tiny state, smaller than a huge number of the 'regions' in our country, and the resiliency issue deserves to have highly focused, well-funded, state level attention paid to it. 11 weak plans will never be better than 1 strong one.
- Lots of money is going to be required to help towns build resilience. Lots. Start thinking about that right now. Resilience plans are going to get made in the next year or so and they aren't going to be cheap. It would be a tragedy if the next 'big one' hit Vermont before funding (State and Federal) was available to implement increased resilience. In the short term, make low-cost, short-term financing more available.
- Small towns need help – they don't have professional mayors or town managers and rely on overwhelmed, underqualified volunteers. Build on the MTAP program and the "Resilience Committee" concept.
 - Develop a list of 'Navigators' or consultants who can provide the technical expertise that towns require.
 - Make funding available for Navigators and consultants
- Cooperation between towns that share watersheds is important, but each town has its own unique set of problems. The "both/and" approach is going to be required to properly address the issues. This was driven home as we listened to testimony from Jamaica, Weston, and Londonderry.:
 - Jamaica needs help with buybacks for houses on streams that were fed from water coming from Stratton – the water from Weston and Londonderry was well controlled by the Ball Mountain Dam.
 - Londonderry seems to be focusing on moving businesses out of the flood area in the 'north town'.
 - Weston needs to do whatever is possible to reduce flooding in its downtown heart and upstream of the dam.

These three very different vulnerabilities (which we are surely over simplifying) require very different solutions to improve resilience.

- Speak with federal delegations about the difficulties small towns and non-profits have with FEMA and SBA. Can we make FEMA more user friendly? Can we do something about the current SBA requirements that allow downturns from COVID to make applicants ineligible?