

Presentation to the Vermont Senate Governmental Operation Committee
Jim Linville, Vice Chair, Town of Weston Selectboard
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As you know well, Weston, like many Vermont towns got slammed by the July Flood:



In addition to the flooding in our downtown, there was substantial flooding in the 'Route 100 Corridor' upstream of the dam, which is several hundred yards upstream of the bridge. The flooding was worse than in Irene – by feet, not inches. Those of you who have visited Weston will know that the Town Green is the beating heart of Weston and that reducing the kind of flooding we saw in July is crucial for Weston's long term viability. Here is part of our wish list for help from you folks:

- 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 flood 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. Since you asked, I would say the same thing about STR's. This issue is way too complex for individual municipalities and in any case needs some overarching theme rather than a patchwork of potentially conflicting rules that vary from town to town.

- 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. We are setting one up as we speak. In addition:
 - 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. This was driven home last week as I listened to testimony from Jamaica, Weston, and Londonderry before the Senate Economic Development Committee. From South to North:
 - Jamaica needs help with buybacks for houses on streams that were fed from the Ball Mountain Brook from Stratton. The water in the West River from Weston and Londonderry was not a problem because the Ball Mountain Dam did its job.
 - 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.

After the testimony, Senator Wendy Harrison asked whether it would make sense to look at the resilience issue on a watershed by watershed basis, and I responded by saying that is a great idea but we need a "both/and" approach – that is to look at both the broad watershed issues for towns that share a river shed, and recognize the unique needs of each town in responding to our 'new normal' flood risk profile.

- Small towns like Weston need help 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 (like the Weston Theater Company) ineligible? Should we contact our US Senators and Representatives directly? Would a joint plea be more effective?
- It has been very difficult to get information about the bridge in Weston from VTrans. I have scoured our town records and found nothing. The folks I've talked to at VTrans have not been able to find anything useful and just last week suggested that I file a FOIA request to get information (!). Is this a governance issue?.
- Thanks so much for your time. Questions?