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H.397

Introduced by Representatives Waszazak of Barre City, Galfetti of Barre
Town, Bos-Lun of Westminster, Boutin of Barre City, Boyden
of Cambridge, Brown of Richmond, Burke of Brattleboro,
Burkhardt of South Burlington, Burrows of West Windsor,
Burt of Cabot, Campbell of St. Johnsbury, Canfield of Fair
Haven, Carris-Duncan of Whitingham, Casey of Montpelier,
Chapin of East Montpelier, Christie of Hartford, Cina of
Burlington, Coffin of Cavendish, Cole of Hartford, Cooper of
Pownal, Cordes of Bristol, Dobrovich of Williamstown, Dodge
of Essex, Eastes of Guilford, Feltus of Lyndon, Goodnow of
Brattleboro, Greer of Bennington, Gregoire of Fairfield, Hango
of Berkshire, Harple of Glover, Headrick of Burlington,
Holcombe of Norwich, Hooper of Randolph, Hunter of
Manchester, Kimbell of Woodstock, Krasnow of South
Burlington, Labor of Morgan, Lalley of Shelburne, LaMont of
Morristown, Lipsky of Stowe, Logan of Burlington, Masland of
Thetford, McCann of Montpelier, McFaun of Barre Town,
McGill of Bridport, Mihaly of Calais, Morris of Springfield,
Morrow of Weston, Mrowicki of Putney, Nelson of Derby,
Nielsen of Brandon, Noyes of Wolcott, Nugent of South

1 Burlington, O'Brien of Tunbridge, Ode of Burlington, Olson of
2 Starksboro, Pezzo of Colchester, Pouech of Hinesburg, Priestley
3 of Bradford, Pritchard of Pawlet, Quimby of Lyndon, Stevens
4 of Waterbury, Sweeney of Shelburne, Tagliavia of Corinth,
5 Torre of Moretown, Wells of Brownington, White of
6 Waitsfield, White of Bethel, Winter of Ludlow, Wood of
7 Waterbury, and Yacovone of Morristown

8 Referred to Committee on

9 Date:

10 Subject: Internal security and public safety; emergency management;

11 miscellaneous amendments relating to flood response and resilience

12 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require the
13 Division of Emergency Management to establish the Statewide Framework for
14 Flood Preparedness, Response, and Recovery; provide assistance to
15 municipalities to develop various plans for flood response and recovery;
16 provide financial assistance to municipalities for flood recovery; coordinate
17 with the Agency of Commerce and Community Development to develop
18 programs for voluntary buyouts and homeowner assistance in flood-prone
19 areas; and develop emergency and severe weather alert systems for use by
20 municipal governments. This bill also proposes to require the Agency of
21 Transportation to provide technical and financial support for municipal flood

1 resiliency and response programs that affect town highways. This bill also
2 proposes to require the Agency of Natural Resources to operate and support
3 flood mitigation and resiliency programs that relate to surface waters, river
4 corridors, and the creation of floodways. This bill further proposes to create
5 positions within the Division of Emergency Management to support
6 municipalities with grant applications and the engineering of flood mitigation
7 and resiliency projects. Finally, this bill proposes to require the Department of
8 Buildings and General Services to transfer a parcel of State property to the
9 Town of Waterbury after completing the creation of an extended floodway on
10 the property.

11 An act relating to miscellaneous amendments to the statutes governing
12 emergency management and flood response

13 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

14 Sec. 1. 20 V.S.A. § 3a is amended to read:

15 § 3a. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION; DUTIES; BUDGET

16 (a) In addition to other duties required by law, the Division of Emergency
17 Management shall:

18 * * *

19 (3) In collaboration with the Chief Recovery Officer and in consultation
20 with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and Vermont's long-term

1 recovery groups, shall adopt and periodically revise the Statewide Framework
2 for Flood Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. The Statewide Framework
3 shall define the roles and duties of the State, municipalities, long-term recovery
4 groups, and regional planning commissions for flood preparedness, response,
5 and recovery. The Division shall notify municipalities of any amendments to
6 the Framework and shall distribute copies of the amended Framework upon the
7 request of a municipality.

8 (4) In collaboration with the Chief Recovery Officer, offer financial and
9 technical assistance to municipalities to develop and implement:

10 (A) emergency parking plans for flood-prone areas within a
11 municipality;

12 (B) emergency shelter plans for municipal residents displaced by
13 flooding, including the designation and notice of shelter locations and adopted
14 plans for the distribution of food and water to displaced residents;

15 (C) municipal plans and systems to ensure that vulnerable
16 populations, including aging populations and individuals with disabilities,
17 within the municipality are contacted and visited to ensure their safety and
18 wellness during a flood emergency;

19 (D) emergency notification systems to provide real-time alerts to
20 residents, which shall utilize multichannel communication systems; and

1 (a) Voluntary Buyout Program. The Division of Emergency Management
2 and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development shall establish
3 and maintain the Voluntary Buyout Program for flood-prone properties. The
4 Program shall allow a municipality, at the request of the owner of a flood-
5 prone property, to apply for funding to cover the purchase price of the
6 property. The purchase price shall be the full fair market value of the flood-
7 prone property.

8 (b) Homeowner Assistance Program. The Division of Emergency
9 Management and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development
10 shall establish and maintain the Homeowner Assistance Program to provide
11 financial support to the owners of residential properties for:

12 (1) construction projects to elevate a residential building in flood-prone
13 areas to mitigate future risk of damage;

14 (2) relocation to other permanent housing in response to flood damage;
15 and

16 (3) the rebuilding of residential building using flood-resilient materials
17 or designs, including floodproof foundations and water-resistant construction.

18 Sec. 4. 19 V.S.A. § 306 is amended to read:

19 § 306. APPROPRIATION; STATE AID FOR TOWN HIGHWAYS

20 * * *

21 (i) Municipal Mitigation Assistance Program.

1 Sec. 5. 19 V.S.A. § 320 is added to read:

2 § 320. AGENCY SUPPORT FOR CERTAIN TOWN HIGHWAY

3 PROJECTS

4 (a) Design of stormwater management systems. The Agency shall provide
5 technical assistance to municipalities for the design of upgrades for stormwater
6 management systems affecting town highways, including the design of larger
7 culverts, reinforced ditches, drainage systems, and any other stormwater
8 management system that is capable of managing increased water flow due to
9 severe weather events.

10 (b) Technical assistance for specialized improvements. The Agency shall
11 provide technical assistance to municipalities for specialized flood resiliency
12 projects, including the alteration of bridges in flood-prone areas and the
13 removal of dams that pose a significant risk to surrounding communities.

14 (c) Technical assistance for town highway improvements. The Agency
15 shall offer technical assistance to municipalities for:

16 (1) roadwork and infrastructure adaptations for severe weather events;

17 and

18 (2) identifying and applying for federal, State, and regional grants to
19 support local infrastructure projects.

20 (d) Asset Management System. The Agency shall create and maintain the
21 Asset Management System to track:

1 (1) availability of equipment that may be used to respond to an all-
2 hazard flood event, including vehicles, water pumps, and sandbags;

3 (2) equipment operators and personnel that are trained for disaster
4 management and response; and

5 (3) locations of critical resources for efficient deployment of those
6 resources during an emergency.

7 (e) Provision of flood response fleet vehicles. The Agency shall procure
8 and maintain a fleet of heavy machinery, including vector trucks, necessary to
9 assist municipalities with debris removal from flood-impacted areas and the
10 maintenance of stormwater and flood mitigation systems to prevent future
11 damage. The fleet of heavy machinery shall be stored and maintained
12 regionally throughout the State.

13 Sec. 6. 10 V.S.A. § 1007 is added to read:

14 § 1007. AGENCY DUTIES; FLOOD RESILIENCY AND STREAM FLOW
15 PROJECTS

16 The Agency of Natural Resources shall establish a program to implement
17 and improve stream flow projects in response to flood risks, including:

18 (1) the clearing debris from surface waters to prevent the blockage of
19 waterways, flood plains, or other flood resiliency systems;

20 (2) the restoration of degraded flood-retention systems and reservoirs to
21 their original specifications;

- 1 (3) the alteration of rivers or river beds to mitigate flood risk; and
2 (4) the permitting of alternative, cost-effective flood mitigation solutions
3 to allow for expedited project implementation.

4 Sec. 7. 10 V.S.A. § 1429 is added to read:

5 § 1429. AGENCY DUTIES; FLOOD RESILIENCY AND RIVER
6 CORRIDOR NATURALIZATION PROJECTS

7 The Agency of Natural Resources shall establish a program to designate
8 areas at risk of severe flooding and create floodways within portions of those
9 designated areas to mitigate the damage caused by severe flooding. Through
10 the program, the Agency shall also support riverbank naturalization projects to
11 enhance ecological resilience, reduce erosion, and improve flood mitigation
12 within designated areas.

13 Sec. 8. DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; POSITIONS;
14 APPROPRIATION

15 (a) The following positions are created in the Division of Emergency
16 Management:

17 (1) one full-time, exempt Municipal Grant Liaison; and

18 (2) one full-time, exempt Flood Mitigation Technician.

19 (b) The Municipal Grant Liaison shall be dedicated to grant research, grant
20 applications support, coordination between municipal corporations and the
21 Federal Emergency Management Agency, and direct assistance to municipal

1 corporations for the acquisition of grants and other funding sources for flood
2 relief and recovery efforts. The Flood Mitigation Technician shall be
3 dedicated to providing or supporting engineering analyses for flood mitigation
4 projects, oversight of municipal flood remediation and recovery projects, and
5 managing technical assistance to municipal corporations for flood recovery.

6 (c) There is appropriated to the Department of Public Safety from the
7 General Fund in fiscal year 2026 the sum of \$225,000.00 to support the two
8 positions created in this section.

9 Sec. 9. DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; FLOOD AND
10 WEATHER ALERT SYSTEMS FOR MUNICIPAL
11 CORPORATIONS

12 (a) The Division of Emergency Management shall develop flood alert
13 systems for municipal corporations that have a population of not more than
14 2,000 residents. At a minimum, the Division shall make the following
15 available to qualifying municipalities:

16 (1) surface water flood monitoring devices, which shall automatically
17 trigger notification systems for emergency services providers and residents;
18 and

19 (2) alert systems that are integrated with a statewide weather alert
20 system for real-time updates during severe weather events.

1 (b) The Division shall also develop and implement a statewide enhanced
2 weather alert system, which shall:

3 (1) predict local and regional conditions using advanced modeling; and

4 (2) issue real-time warnings for flooding, blizzards, and ice storms
5 through multiple communication channels.

6 Sec. 10. DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS AND GENERAL SERVICES;

7 TRANSFER OF RANDALL MEADOW PROPERTY IN THE

8 TOWN OF WATERBURY

9 On or before July 1, 2026, the Department of Buildings and General
10 Services shall finalize a transfer of State-owned real property in the Town of
11 Waterbury referred to as the “Randall Meadow.” The Department shall grant
12 the Town the ability to either acquire ownership of the property or an option to
13 purchase the property, which shall remain available for a period of ten years.
14 The Department shall transfer this property to the Town of Waterbury. The
15 Town may use the property for future flood-resilient redevelopment. Prior to
16 completing the transfer, the Department shall contract for engineering and
17 other necessary services to create a higher volume floodway within the bounds
18 of the property.

19 Sec. 11. DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; STATE

20 STAKEHOLDERS; NEEDS ASSESSMENT; REPORT

1 The Division of Emergency Management, Chief Recovery Officer, Agency
2 of Commerce and Community Development, Agency of Natural Resources,
3 and Agency of Transportation shall conduct a needs assessment to identify any
4 additional staffing, resources, technical needs, or authority needed to carry out
5 the provisions of this act. On or before December 15, 2025, the Division shall
6 submit a written report to the House Committees on Appropriations and on
7 Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committees on
8 Appropriations and on Government Operations containing the needs
9 assessments conducted by the State agencies and departments identified in this
10 section.

11 Sec. 12. EFFECTIVE DATE

12 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.