

# CRew



Community Resilience for the Waterbury Area

TO: Chair Alice Emmons and the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions

FROM: The CRew, Community Resilience for the greater Waterbury area

DATE: March 18, 2025

RE: H. 471- An act relating to the transfer of State-owned property in the Town of Waterbury

Community Resilience for the greater Waterbury Area, founded immediately after the devastating July '23 flooding, is a small nonprofit organization working to help flood-affected folks in Waterbury and the surrounding towns recover and rebuild, and identify strategies for property- and community-level flood risk reduction. Revitalizing Waterbury is our fiscal sponsor and we are funded by grants and small donations.

In July 2023, over 150 properties in Waterbury were flooded. Many of those properties were flooded again in December 2023, and then again in July 2024. One neighborhood in particular, Randall and Elm Streets in historic downtown Waterbury, has been significantly impacted by flooding since Tropical Storm Irene in August, 2011, and residents there are highly aware of the landscape and the changes that they have observed since TS Irene.

The residents of this neighborhood have undertaken many individual mitigation efforts to reduce their flood risk, from exploring building elevation (deemed not cost-effective by FEMA) to elevating mechanicals from basements, installing French drain systems, reinforcing foundations, and many other efforts.

Even as they have invested in improvements to their homes, they have documented the silt build-up that has increased in the Randall Meadows behind their homes (known locally as the corn field). This property is owned by the State of Vermont and is contracted for planting of animal feed. In CRew's work helping muck out and repair dozens of flooded homes in this neighborhood, we have heard consistently from the residents that the field has assumed a

“cupcake” shape - and this is driving water directly into their homes. They are asking that the Town of Waterbury and the State of Vermont take action to resolve this situation.



To give a visual, please see this photo (aerial view by Gordon Miller July 11, 2024; Hope Cemetery is to the right). <https://www.waterburyroundabout.org/news-archive/a-drones-eye-view-of-the-july-10-11-flood> Over the past decade, the silt has built up in the center of the field.

CRew supports the request to transfer ownership of this parcel so the Town of Waterbury can take appropriate action to reduce flood risk for Waterbury residents and business owners.

We believe this parcel can serve the critical community function of floodplain restoration and flood mitigation, and we hope that the State and the Town of Waterbury can lead on this effort. The parcel has been identified by the Town of Waterbury's hydrology research as a key resource that could reduce flood damage if managed properly, and CRew has received positive feedback from the Department of the Interior and the Army Corps of Engineers on converting this property into a floodable park – a place that serves public needs while also holding floodwater effectively.

We have held many community events and conversations with residents over the past twenty months, and there is no question that addressing the issues with Randall Meadows is the top opportunity for community mitigation in Waterbury. Residents are desperate to see action from the State to address the changes they have observed over the past few years -- they can speak from first-hand experience about the thick mud that now enters their homes from flooding, instead of river water – coming from this field. With this bill, the State and the community have an important opportunity to do something that has the potential to reduce risk, improve the experience of residents, and create a flood mitigation project that will act as a powerful investment in this community.

We respectfully hope that you will consider allowing Waterbury to own and manage this parcel for the safety and benefit of Waterbury property owners.

Thank you.

Please see our website at [thecrewvt.org](http://thecrewvt.org) for more information.