

The Marietta Times

County updating plan to mitigate local hazards

Eleven years after the last update, Washington County is presenting a resolution to adopt the 2016 Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan that will help with gaining federal funding in the wake of natural, technological and man-made hazards.

“We met with our contractor and went over an old, outdated plan,” said Washington County Emergency Management Agency Director Jeff Lauer. *“Each village and each city put in some mitigation projects that they would like to get accomplished.”*

Natural hazards include flooding or any major weather event, technological hazards include extended periods of power outages and man-made hazards include dam failure. Essentially, the mitigation plan is structured to prepare for hazards to lessen the impact of the potential disaster.

On April 28, the project to update the plan took off with a core committee meeting for hazard mitigation with the Washington County Commissioners.

“There (were) a lot of profile hazards we basically had to go through,” explained Washington County Commissioner Ron Feathers. *“Of course, flooding was a big one; the second one was extreme weather like where we had the derecho a few years ago.”*

Representatives from the OSU Extension Office Community Development department and the Washington County Emergency Management Agency met with the Washington County Commissioners to ask for funding to hire a contractor and update the plan.

To update the plan with contractor JH Consulting, it cost the county \$8,200 and the Washington County Emergency Management Agency had to match 25 percent of the cost. However, through the Ohio EMA's hazard mitigation grant program, they were reimbursed \$8,156.

"It was \$44 of taxpayers' dollars to pay for the contract," said Lauer.

Marietta Safety-Service Director Jonathan Hupp said the plan is a routine process to ensure that, in case of a natural disaster, they would receive the funding necessary.

"This is a check in the box by the federal government," said Hupp. *"We have to have one of these in order for federal funding in the event something occurs."*

Hupp said getting the plan ready was a thorough process with several meetings and revisions.

"There have been a series of meetings that started last spring and we were meeting monthly," he said. *"The biggest things I'm telling council is it's a long standing document that needs to be renewed every five years."*

However, the plan hasn't been updated since 2005 and Lauer said it was time to update it in order to be eligible for federal funding. He said before, the document was overwhelming and did not stay a living document and was difficult to update.

"We had three, three-inch binders, so it was overwhelming," he said. *"The new plan had one binder and we are going to have a yearly meeting so we can make updates as we go so it won't be a big, aching document; by having at least a yearly meeting, hopefully, with that, we*

won't let it go stagnant.”

Lauer said the new mitigation plan also highlights the projects that the cities and villages have requested to be done in order to better protect their residents from natural disasters.

In Marietta, many of the projects involve the city engineering department in regards to flooding, such as installing a valve system to prevent water backup near Buckeye Park and assessing the feasibility of conducting structural projects to alleviate flood damage to the city's Wastewater Treatment Plant and water wells, both of which are in the floodplain.

“Each village has projects, each city has projects...even the county has projects,” said Lauer. *“I think we added the projects that were not done previously, I think there were a few we took off that were accomplished and there was a project I believe no longer fit.”*

After the plan was updated, Lauer said they had to send it off to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to have it approved. Now that it has been sent back, the next step is to have the cities and villages adopt the plan.

“The Washington County Commissioners have already adopted the plan, so now we have asked the cities and villages to adopt the plan,” he said. “If they adopt it, we now have a

FEMA-approved mitigation plan,

whether it is pre-disaster or post-disaster; if we do not have a FEMA-approved mitigation plan, we're not eligible for mitigation funding.”

At a glance

~The 2016 Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan is an update to gain eligibility for federal funding in case of natural, technological and

man-made hazards.

–The plan is supposed to be updated every five years, but hasn’t been updated since 2005.

–To update the plan, it cost the Washington County Commissioners \$8,200 and the Washington County Emergency Management Agency had to match 25 percent of the cost.

–Through Ohio EMA’s hazard mitigation grant program, they were reimbursed \$8,156, paying only a total of \$44.

–The plan was sent to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), was approved and is now being presented for adoption by the cities and villages.

Source: Jeff Lauer.

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