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Memorandum

Date: November 3, 2010
To: Town Council
From: Amanda L. Stearns, Community Development Director
Cc: Nathan A. Poore, Town Manager
Re: FEMA Update – Mapping Alternatives

As a result of the response from many coastal towns in York and Cumberland counties, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has decided to offer an opportunity to towns that were part of the Map Modernization initiative which produced draft Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) in May 2009.

A new initiative, Risk MAP, has been announced and introduced conceptually to community representatives. This new initiative is intended to be more broadly based than the original initiative and will provide more tools and products for communities to use to improve flood awareness and take mitigation actions.

The new initiative requires communities to sign a Project Charter by January 31, 2011. The costs associated with the project will mainly be staff involvement. I anticipate that staff will be involved in public outreach, review of data, and other procedural aspects of this process. A draft of the charter has not been distributed at this time. The full cost of any changes in the FIRM maps will be borne by FEMA if towns choose to enter into this process. If not, any changes will need to occur through an amendment process that typically is initiated by a property owner for an individual property and at their cost.

The town has two major flood areas that could benefit from the involvement in this initiative. The first is the evaluation of the Presumpscot River watershed. This area was remapped in 2009 without consideration of the removal of the Smelt Hill Dam. The second area is the coastal area that has already has some preliminary review by Bob Gerber of Sebago Technics.

The main elements of the Risk MAP program are:

1. Flood Hazard Data Collection and Review
2. Public Awareness/Outreach
3. Hazard Mitigation Planning
4. Enhanced Digital Platform
5. Alignment and Synergies.

The process by which FEMA is moving forward with this initiative includes:

1. Notice to all communities that are affected by the formal appeal process being delayed.
2. Distribution of a draft charter for towns to review. The deadline for executing the charter at this time is January 31, 2011.

I have included the following documents for your information.

1. October 19, 2010 letter from Craig Fugate, FEMA Administrator to Senator Olympia Snowe outlining the steps moving forward for York and Cumberland Counties in Maine.
2. Risk MAP 101 – Informational handout from the Maine State Planning Office that describes their understanding of the elements of the Risk MAP program.