

Franklin Township

In Somerset County



Scott M. Thomas, CFM
Senior Engineer, Engineering Department

scott.thomas@twp.franklin.nj.us

Municipal Building

475 DeMott Lane, Somerset, NJ 08873-6704
Phone: 732-873-2500 ext. 6237 Fax: 732-873-1059

MEMORANDUM

To: Franklin Township Mayor and Council

From: Scott M. Thomas, Senior Engineer/CRS Coordinator

Subject: Status of Flood Mitigation and All-Hazards Plan Implementation

Date: August 31, 2016

The Township Council adopted the Franklin Township Flood Mitigation Plan in 2003 and the Somerset County Multi-Jurisdictional Multi-Hazard Plan in 2008. An update to the Somerset County plan was adopted in 2014. Both of these documents contain recommendations on how to lower the risk and impact of flooding in the Township. This memorandum supersedes the one I prepared last year at this time and updates what has already been done and what can be done to meet the goals set forth in these plans.

In addition to being sent to the Mayor and all Council members, this memo will be distributed to the media and be made available to the public. This report is available for review in the Engineering Department at the Township Municipal Building, 475 DeMott Lane, Somerset and will also be posted on the Township's website.



1. Background – Franklin Township Flood Mitigation Plan

On May 13, 2003, by Resolution #03-231, the Township Council adopted the Franklin Township Flood Mitigation Plan. The Plan was drafted by the Franklin Township Flood Mitigation Planning Committee organized by the Township Council on September 9, 2002 with assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. A grant was obtained from FEMA through the State Office of Emergency Management. Gregory Westfall, Water Resource Planner, from the USDA-NRCS was primarily responsible for drafting the plan, but significant input was received from the Committee and the public through a series of public meetings and through a distributed questionnaire. The plan concentrates primarily on the flooding hazards along the Millstone River, although it is acknowledged that flooding can and does occur throughout the Township.

The plan identifies the following goals:

1. Protect human life and health
2. Identify and mitigate flood hazards
3. Reduce flood losses to existing buildings and contents
4. Prevent increases in flood damage from new construction
5. Reduce the risk of erosion damage
6. Protect natural and beneficial floodplain functions
7. Facilitate accurate insurance ratings
8. Promote the awareness of flood insurance

The plan includes a number of recommendations to help reduce the flooding risk and to protect life and property. The plan also includes 16 action plan items split into the following five categories:

1. Evacuation route enhancement
2. Public participation
3. Incorporation of flood mitigation planning into local ordinances and master planning
4. Public property, institutional and critical facility flood mitigation
5. Private property flood mitigation

These action items tend to strengthen the goals for flood hazard mitigation in the Somerset County Multi-Jurisdictional Multi-Hazard Plan described below.

2. A review of the Plan's action items:

The following is a brief discussion of the progress made to the action plan items detailed in Section H of the plan since 2004.

1. *Posting of Flood Evacuation Route Signage:* No signage has been posted to date.
2. *Traffic Gates and Electronic Signage:* Traffic gates have been installed at the causeways across the Millstone River. There is signage on the gates, but it is not electronic. There is a pre-emptive electronic sign installed on Blackwells Mills Road at the intersection with Van Cleef Rd.



3. *Removal of Evacuation Route Deficiencies:* There are no current plans to access Route 287 from Elizabeth Avenue, raise South Middlebush Road, or create an all-weather crossing to replace Griggstown Causeway.
4. *Geo-notification:* Somerset County has created a reverse-911 warning system which precludes the need of having the Township utilize GIS to create a local warning system.
5. *Public information:* Articles are now being published in the Township newsletter outlining specific flooding risks, flood safety tips and flood insurance recommendations.
6. *Community Rating System:* The Township became qualified in 2009 with an initial rating of 7. The Township went through its first 5-year revaluation of the CRS program in 2014. As a result of the Township's continued efforts, our rating improved to a 6 effective 5/1/15.
7. *Revision of Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance:* Ordinance adopted on 9/18/07.
8. *Incorporation of Disaster Mitigation Planning in Master Plan:* The Flood Mitigation Plan has been adopted as an addition to the 2006 update to the Master Plan and the Multi-Hazards Plan (see below) should be considered for adoption, as well. Note: adoption of the Multi-Hazards Plan is being considered during this year's update to the Township Master Plan.
9. *Critical Facilities:* The Franklin Township Sewerage Authority has installed two new sump pumps in the dry wells at their Weston Canal pump station. They have also raised all second floor wiring to the third floor. This pump station was flooded during both Hurricane Floyd and Hurricane Irene.
10. *Pillar of Fire at Zarephath:* Pillar of Fire is actively working on implementing their plan to migrate their facilities outside of the flood zone. Because of their existing large campus, this was considered to be a long-term goal. They have now moved their school facilities (Pillar College) offsite to a building on Apgar Drive in Somerset and the Military Park Building in Newark. They are also constructing an all-purpose building on their property, outside of the flood zone. They have finished the reconstruction of the levee surrounding the campus which was overtopped and damaged during Hurricane Irene in August 2011. The elevation remains the same as prior to its reconstruction, approximately at the 100-year flood elevation. Pillar College is now thriving post-flood, doubling their enrollment since 2011 and they are now expanding to Paterson and Irvington.



11. *State-Owned Structures in the Flood Plain:* Because of the historic nature of the State-owned buildings, this will be difficult implement. Hopefully they will take into consideration the flood risks when restoring and rehabilitating the buildings, but the Township is not in a position to mandate any changes.
12. *Property Owner Survey:* No survey has been sent out to flood-prone owners to determine their interest in flood mitigation measures.
13. *Identification of Funding Sources:* No funding sources have successfully been obtained. Note: The Township is a participating member of the five year-old Raritan and Millstone Flood Control Commission and finding funding sources for smaller site and individual mitigation measures is one of their goals.
14. *Individual Property Structure Analysis:* Cannot be pursued until funding sources are found.
15. *Individual Property Flood Audits:* Cannot be pursued until funding sources are found.
16. *Implement Flood Mitigation Measures:* Cannot be pursued until funding sources are found.

3. Background - Somerset County Multi-Jurisdictional Multi-Hazard Plan

On December 9, 2008, by Resolution #08-640, the Somerset County Multi-Jurisdictional Multi-Hazard Plan was adopted. The Multi-Jurisdictional Multi-Hazard Plan was developed with the assistance of a certified floodplain manager (Adam Slutsky, Somerset County Principal Engineer). Steering and Planning Committees were formed to provide input and review of the Plan. Membership of these committees included county and local engineers, emergency coordinators, police, administrators as well as the American Red Cross, NJ Water Authority and citizen representatives. All municipalities in Somerset County participated in and adopted the plan. By regulation, the Plan has to be updated every five years. The last update was done by the Committee during 2013.

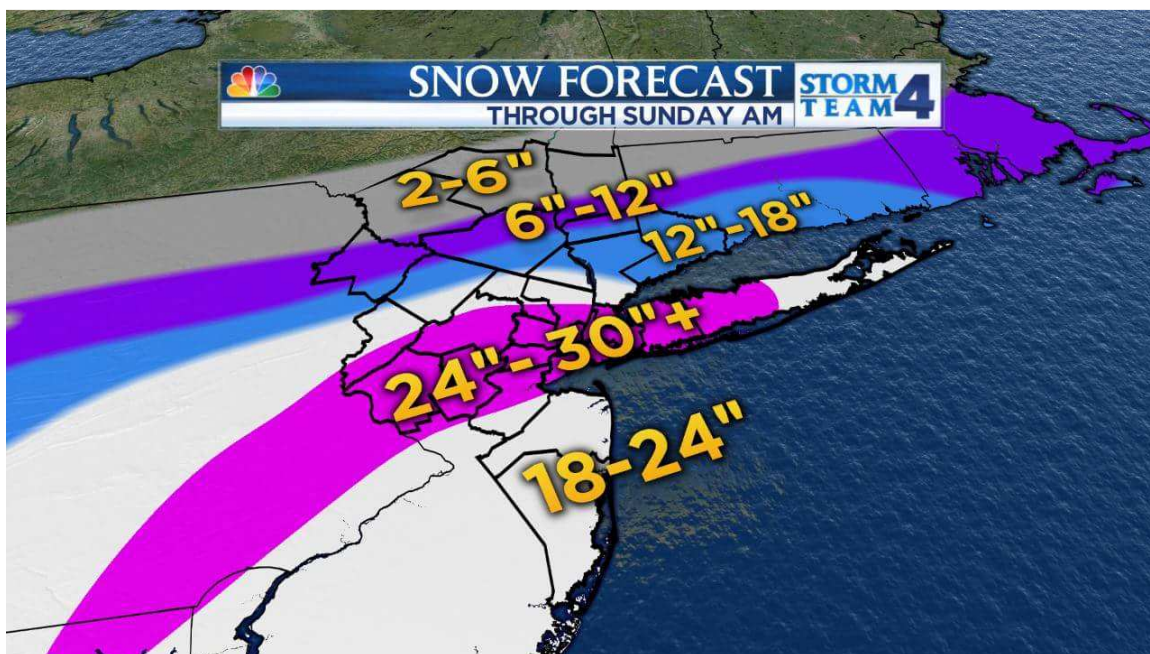
The plan was developed in response to the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000) which requires that states and local governments prepare all hazards mitigation plans in order to remain eligible for pre-disaster mitigation funds. It is important to continue to receive this type of funding in order to be pro-active in dealing with potential disasters in order to help eliminate or lessen the impacts to life, health and property.

As part of the planning process, the following was accomplished:

- Developed a planning group (Planning Committee)
- Identified hazards of concern
- Profiled and prioritized these hazards
- Estimated inventory at risk and potential losses associated with these hazards
- Developed mitigation goals, objectives and actions that address the hazards that impact the area
- Developed mitigation plan maintenance procedures to be executed upon conditional approval of the plan from the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM) and FEMA

The Committees considered a full range of natural hazards that could impact the area, and then identified and ranked those hazards that presented the greatest concern. Their list of seven hazards of concern, in order of hazard ranking, is as follows:

1. Severe Storms (hurricanes/cyclones, windstorms, thunderstorms, hail, lightning and tornados)
2. Severe Winter Storm (heavy snow, blizzards, ice storms, nor'easters)
3. Flooding (riverine, flash, and ice jam)
4. Extreme Temperatures
5. Drought
6. Wildfire
7. Earthquake



The Committees developed the following mission statement:

Through partnerships and careful planning, identify and reduce the vulnerability to natural hazards in order to protect the health, safety, quality of life, environment, and economy of the communities within Somerset County.

The plan identifies the following main goals:

1. Protect Life
2. Protect Property
3. Promote a Sustainable Economy
4. Protect the Environment
5. Increase Public Awareness

4. A review of the Plan's action items:

The following is a brief discussion of the progress made to the twenty mitigation initiatives detailed in Section F of Section 9.9 of the plan since 2008. All at least partly deal with flood mitigation and I will only update those aspects of the plan in this report.

Note: During the 2013 update to the Plan, a new list of mitigation initiatives has been created. Five initiatives from the 2008 Plan were considered completed and are listed below with the narrative of their status taken from the 2013 Plan. The other actions considered to not yet be complete or are ongoing have been carried over to the 2013 Plan update.

1. *Consider participation in the CRS program:* Complete. The Township has entered into the CRS.
4. *Develop public info strategy for dissemination of hazard information to residents before an event:* Complete. Information will be disseminated to residents via the following methods: reverse 911, Township website, Nixle system, and Township cable TV channel.
7. *Improve communication to residents of imminent hazards:* Communication with residents is done via the following methods: reverse 911, Township website, Nixle system, and Township cable TV channel. Improvements to the system will be evaluated by the Police Department & OEM. The current system is sufficient for communication to residents of imminent hazards.
18. *Participate in multi-jurisdictional update of Somerset County All Hazards Mitigation Plan:* Complete as of 10/31/2009.
19. *Work with County to ensure that flood-prone property owners are warned of impending hazards via reverse 911:* As noted in #4, the reverse 911 system is in place, and property owners are now warned of impending hazards via reverse 911.

Note: The 2013 proposed hazard mitigation initiatives are listed below. The 2008 list contained 20 initiatives (5 of which are considered complete). 14 new items have been added to the list bringing the total to 39. The list has been renumbered and numbers in parenthesis correspond to the initiative numbers carried over from the 2008 list.

1. *Evacuation route enhancement:* It is recommended that signage be posted along the official evacuation route map in the 2013 Plan and the OEM Plan. No signage has been posted to date.
2. *Installation of traffic gates and electronic warning signs in the Canal Road vicinity:* Traffic gates have been installed at the causeways across the Millstone River. There is signage on the gates, but it is not electronic. There is a pre-emptive electronic sign installed on Blackwells Mills Road at the intersection with Van Cleef Rd. Other intersections have been

recommended for electronic signage and they include; Jacques and South Middlebush Roads, Canal Road and Route 514, Blackwells Mills and South Middlebush Roads, Suydam and South Middlebush Roads.



3. *(20) Work with neighboring municipalities to establish emergency access entrance to Route 287 from Elizabeth Avenue for flood evacuation route from South Bound Brook:* The State is working to find acceptable access to Route 287 from Elizabeth Avenue to permit evacuation from South Bound Brook and Franklin Township. Somerset County is investigating the feasibility of providing acceptable access along the entire length of South Middlebush Road.
4. *Refine Township Flood Warning Program:* It is recommended that the Township refine their program to include identifier information for flood prone properties including; block and lot number, street address, digital photo, and first floor and low opening elevations. The Somerset County Flood Information data would be used to provide flood warning information to individual property owners and occupants.
5. *Inform residents to the threats of flooding and the benefits of flood insurance:* The Township currently provides this information annually through articles published in the Franklin Times newsletter. It is further recommended to involve area insurance agents in the activity.
6. *Incorporate flood mitigation planning into local Ordinances and the Master Plan:* It is suggested that the Township revise its Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance to incorporate recommendations from the State Flood Plain Management Program. Note: the Township is updating this ordinance in conjunction with the adoption of revised FIRM mapping along the Millstone River. The State recommendations should be weighed when making the revisions required by FEMA. The Master Plan should then incorporate the All-Hazards Plan when it is updated later this year.
7. *Add disaster planning as an element in the Master Plan and incorporate the Flood Mitigation Plan by reference:* It is suggested that the Township add a new element to the Master Plan dealing with disaster planning. It is also suggested that the 2004 Flood Mitigation Plan be incorporated in the Master Plan by reference during this year's update.
8. *Public Property, Institutional and Critical Facility Flood Mitigation:* It is suggested that the Township work with critical facility owners to enhance their level of flood protection to the

- Base Flood Elevation (1% chance a/k/a 100-year flood). Critical facilities include: Zarephath Christian School, Somerset Christian School, East Millstone First Aid Squad, North Brunswick Water Plant, Willow Creek Rehab & Care Center and Guild Housing.
9. *Work with Pillar of Fire in implementing their Master Plan:* It is suggested that the Township assist Pillar of Fire with its goal of expanding their physical plant outside of the flood plain. The Township should also work with them to help minimize or eliminate any new development within the 100 and 500-year flood plains.
 10. *Work with State agencies regarding historic buildings in flood plain areas:* The Township should partner with State agencies during the rehabilitation and restoration of historic buildings to minimize future flood damage risks. Such efforts should include the adaptive re-use of the structures with the placement of all important equipment such as furnace, hot water heater, refrigerator, etc. above the base flood elevation. Agencies include: New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Parks and Forestry, Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission and the New Jersey Water Supply Authority.
 11. *Private Property Flood Mitigation:* The Township should survey owners of flood-prone property along the Millstone and Raritan Rivers to determine their level of interest in investing in various flood mitigation measures such as acquisition and demolition, elevation, flood proofing and relocation.
 12. *Identify funding sources for flood mitigation measures:* The Township should identify various funding sources at the Federal, State, County and local level as well as from the private sector that could individually or collectively provide the local share for funding flood mitigation measures. NRC Service PL83-566 Program and the FEMA Flood Mitigation Program provides up to 75% to implement nonstructural measures. The purpose of this initiative is to identify funding sources for the remaining share of the costs.
 13. *Conduct individual property audits to determine flooding impacts:* The Township shall, with the permission of interested owners, conduct individual property audits to determine the impact of flooding on the contents and structure of individual properties.



14. *Implement flood mitigation measures on individual properties:* The Township shall, with the permission of interested owners, implement appropriate options for flood mitigation. Appropriate measures will be determined on the basis of cost of the option, the eligibility of

- the property for financial assistance based upon its NFIP damage claim history, engineering feasibility, historic and environmental review, and property owner acceptability.
15. (2) *Promote Open Space Acquisition:* Promote open space uses within the flood plain via land use, and/or voluntary property acquisition. This is an ongoing program being lead by the Planning Department.
 16. (3) *Maintain historical flood (and wildfire) data:* It is recommended that the Township obtain, record and maintain flood data including flood marks and road closures. The Engineering Department has collected some data, including flood marks from Hurricane Irene. However, historical data sources would need to be sought out and incorporated into the information already on record.



17. (6) *Create and enhance mutual aid agreements:* This is an existing program lead by the Police, the Office of Emergency Management and Public Works. However, it is suggested that more effort be expended in enhancing mutual aid agreements with neighboring communities for continuity of operations.
18. (8) *Warehouse information on critical facilities and infrastructure:* This ongoing program is lead by the Engineering Department and Public Works. Currently, Water Department assets are being located using GPS and are being uploaded into the Township GIS. All stormwater detention facilities and outfalls have already been located by GPS and are in the GIS.
19. (9) *Develop a post disaster plan:* It is recommended that a post disaster plan be developed that includes such things as debris removal. A plan is currently being developed by the Police.
20. (11) *Continue to develop, enhance and implement existing emergency response plans to utilize new and developing technology/information as it becomes available:* Emergency Management continues to incorporate any new technologies available within budget constraints in order to better prepare for and deal with disaster situations.
21. (13) *Enhance the building inventory to include structure values for future use of the HAZUS program:* It is recommended that the Township use internal resources such as the Township Assessor and its GIS capabilities to move this initiative forward.
22. (14) *Provide higher resolution DEM for future use of the HAZUS program:* Data is being collected by Engineering through as-built surveys of construction projects to be used to update the Township's digital elevation model.
23. (15) *Where appropriate, support retrofitting of structures in hazard-prone areas to protect structures from future damages:* The Engineering Department maintains a list of "repetitive

- loss” and other high risk of flooding properties in the Township, and provides the public with information and advice on how to limit future flood damage.
24. *(16) Provide backup power at vital critical facilities during the course of retrofitting those facilities identified as vulnerable:* The Township is receiving grant money to install natural gas emergency generators at the Public Works Building and the Community/Senior Center.
 25. *(17) Strive to maintain compliance with and good-standing in the National Flood Insurance Program:* The Township continues to maintain good-standing in the NFIP. In fact, the Township has improved its rating from a 7 to a 6 after its initial 5-year re-evaluation of its CRS Program performed in 2014. The new ranking became effective 5/1/15.
 26. *Conduct and facilitate community and public outreach and education for residents and businesses:* It is recommended that the Township do the following to promote and effect natural hazard risk reduction:
 - Provide and maintain links to the Hazard Mitigation Plan website and regularly post notices on the Township web referencing the HMP.
 - Prepare and distribute informational letters to flood vulnerable property owners and neighborhood associations explaining mitigation grant funding and instructing them on how they can learn more and implement the mitigation measures.
 - Use email notification systems and newsletters to better educate the public on flood insurance, mitigation grant funding and natural hazard risk reduction measures.
 - Work with neighborhood associations, civic and business groups to disseminate information on flood insurance and the availability of mitigation grant funding.
 27. *Utilize ordinances and zoning restrictions to control future development in hazard areas:* It is suggested that the Township incorporate ordinance and/or zoning restrictions to control and mitigate future development in identified hazard areas. While this is a new Plan initiative, the Planning Board has for years been pro-active in controlling development in flood hazard areas such as along the Millstone and Raritan Rivers and along Six and Ten-Mile Runs.
 28. *Develop programs and procedures to capture and archive loss data:* It is recommended that procedures be developed to capture data such as:
 - Location and length of road closures.
 - Residential and commercial property damage including permit history of repairs.
 - High water marks.
 29. *Support ongoing updates of Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans:* The Township continues to support multi-jurisdictional emergency management plans.
 30. *Develop agreements with entities familiar with the submittal of disaster assistance paperwork:* It is suggested that the Township develop agreements with entities that can provide support with FEMA/NJOEM paperwork after disasters. Identify entities that have qualified personnel that can help the Township improve post-disaster damage assessment, paperwork compilation, submissions and record keeping.
 31. *Work with regional agencies to help develop damage assessment capabilities:* Work with regional agencies such as Somerset County and NJOEM to help develop damage assessment capabilities at the local level through training programs and certification of qualified individuals such as code officials, floodplain managers and engineers.
 32. *(18) Continue to support implementation of the Somerset County All Hazards Mitigation Plan:* The Township has maintained support the implementation, monitoring and updating of the Plan by maintaining representation on the Plan Committee, maintaining an updated mitigation strategy and submitting annual progress reports. The Township fully participated in the latest 5-year update.

33. *Obtain and archive elevation certificates:* The Township continues to collect elevation certificates for any construction within a Special Flood Hazard Area in accordance the requirements of FEMA's CRS program.
34. *Promote participation of Floodplain Administrators:* It is suggested that Floodplain Managers become more involved in the planning process and other Township activities.
35. *Join NOAA's "Storm Ready" program:* It is suggested that the Township join NOAA's Storm Ready program to enhance community resilience to severe storms (including winter storms). A basic chart of program requirements can be found here:
http://www.stormready.noaa.gov/guideline_chart.htm
36. *Require underground utilities in new developments:* It is suggested that the Township adopt regulations requiring underground utilities in all new developments. The Township's Land Development Regulations already require the installation of underground utilities in all larger developments.
37. *Waive permit fees for installation of backup power:* The Plan suggests that the Township institute a policy of waiving permit fees for the installation of backup power systems on private properties. Franklin Township does not currently do this.
38. *Educate the public on the use of backup power:* The Plan suggests that the Township provide education and outreach on the proper installation and use of backup power.
39. *Prevent trees from becoming a threat to lives and impacting power availability:* It is suggested that the Township implement, review and enforce municipal policies and programs to prevent trees from threatening lives and impacting power availability and interruptions.



5. Review of recommendations for the current year:

- *Prepare another informational article for the Franklin Times. The Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012, as modified by the Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014, could have a significant impact on some Township residents. If there is not*

enough space available in the Franklin Times for a full article, at least a brief listing of changes with a link to find out more information should be published. Changes to FEMA's flood insurance program are numerous and ongoing. There is also limited space in the Township newsletter to outline those changes. As such, I suggest that for now anyone interested in reading about the current reforms should visit the following website:

www.fema.gov/flood-insurance-reform.

- *When reviewing proposed construction projects, continue to encourage developers to build stormwater detention facilities that infiltrate rainwater into the ground as opposed to allowing it to quickly run-off into streams and other waterways. Utilize these same methods when designing Township improvements, as well.* The Engineering Department is actively encouraging rainwater infiltration both in Site Plan reviews and in Capital Project design. By the end of this calendar year, the Engineering Department will have replaced six asphalt basketball courts with porous pavement ones.
- *Continue to work with the RMRFCC to try to find funding sources for individual flood mitigation projects.* The Millstone and Raritan Rivers Flood Control Commission is currently working on ways to finance smaller, cheaper projects that collectively will have a positive impact on the river basin and that help reduce flooding impacts.



RARITAN & MILLSTONE RIVERS FLOOD CONTROL COMMISSION

- *Continue to provide public information about the CRS program and the discounts afforded those in the Special Flood Hazard Area to encourage those who don't currently have flood insurance to buy.* An article was published in the Franklin Times that, as of 5/1/15, those in the SFHA saw an increase in savings from 15% to 20% in their flood insurance due to the Township's improved CRS rating. Other policy holders will see their savings double from 5% to 10%.
- *Re-advertise in the Franklin Times that all residents, home buyers and real estate agents are welcome to either call or stop into the Engineering Department in order to obtain information on potential flooding risks to individual parcels.* This was addressed in an article in the Franklin Times.
- *The Township needs to continue to obtain conservation easements in flood-prone areas in order to prevent future building. Complete the Engineering Department's project of mapping all existing conservation easements into GIS and then begin enforcement of any encroachments into those protected areas.* The Township continues to obtain conservation easements in flood-prone areas in conjunction with all Board applications. The Conservation Easement mapping project was completed with the help of two interns from the Raritan Scholars program. These interns were students in the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences at Rutgers University who each volunteered at least 125 hours of their time to work on this project. Developing a comprehensive easement enforcement policy is a goal for the coming year.
- *The Engineering Department needs to continue to provide yearly updates to the Township Tax Maps and Geodetic Information System in order to better link property information currently available from the Tax Assessor and Construction Code.* The Engineering Department continued work on updating its Tax Maps over last winter and into the spring. Work on summer construction projects has slowed the pace of these updates, but they continue to be ongoing. The Engineering Department also spent a significant amount of time assisting the Township IT Department to update GIS information.

6. Recommendations for coming year:

- When reviewing proposed construction projects, continue to encourage developers to build stormwater detention facilities that infiltrate rainwater into the ground as opposed to allowing it to quickly run-off into streams and other waterways.
- Continue to incorporate green engineering principles into the design of Township Capital Improvement projects whenever practical.
- Continue to work with the RMRFC to try to find funding sources for smaller scale flood mitigation projects. Assist them in developing smaller, cheaper projects that can be constructed throughout all the participating municipalities. Examples of these projects might be drywell rain collection systems, rain gardens and detention basin retrofitting.
- Continue to provide public information about the CRS program and the discounts afforded those in the Special Flood Hazard Area to encourage those who don't currently have flood insurance to buy.
- Re-advertise in the Franklin Times that all residents, home buyers and real estate agents are welcome to either call or stop into the Engineering Department in order to obtain information on potential flooding risks to individual parcels.
- The Township needs to continue to obtain conservation easements in flood-prone areas in order to prevent future building. Complete a Township Conservation Easement Enforcement Policy and then begin enforcement of any encroachments into those protected areas.
- The Engineering Department needs to continue to provide yearly updates to the Township Tax Maps and Geodetic Information System in order to better link property information currently available from the Tax Assessor and Construction Code.

7. Conclusion:

This is the seventh of my annual updates to Township Council and the public on strives the Township staff and others are taking in making Franklin Township safer and more prepared. In 2011, we were hit by a hurricane, a tropical storm, an early, devastating snowstorm and even a small earthquake. Many thought that things couldn't possibly be worse in 2012, but "Superstorm" Sandy proved otherwise. While not a large rain event in our area, the widespread, long-term loss of power was particularly devastating. Lack of heat and refrigeration made life difficult for many. Those who were lucky to have gas generators spent hours in lines trying to buy fuel. Downed trees and power lines made travel nearly impossible for the first few days. 2013 saw a fairly uneventful spring, summer and fall, but the winter of 2013-2014 was a different story. Despite the lack of a defining foot-plus snowstorm, the total snowfall amount in the area was ranked sixth highest over the last 120 years. We saw repeated smaller snow events and an extended period of sub-freezing temperatures. The result was an exhaustion of the State's salt supply, an explosion in the number of potholes and a commuting nightmare. We were then hit with a rain event in May 2014 that dumped around five inches of rain in our area, again causing major flooding issues. The start of 2015 also was marked by numerous small snow events that totaled up to large headaches for many. There were no major rain events in 2015 or so far in 2016, but we did get snow and loads of it. There was really only one accumulating snow event worth remembering, and its name was Jonas.

Winter Storm Jonas (as dubbed by the Weather Channel) was the largest snowfall event recorded at Central Park, New York in the century and a half that they have been taking official records. It was also quite devastating in our area with blustery winds and up to 24 inches of snow continually accumulating from Friday, January 22nd through Sunday, January 24th, 2016. While most of us were

sitting warmly inside waiting for the snow to end before venturing out, the Township's Department of Public Works were out plowing and re-plowing streets and our emergency services personnel were out assisting residents in need. While it took many days to recover and fully clear our streets, adequate planning helped the Township avoid what could have been an even more devastating natural disaster.



As part of its continuing participation in FEMA's Community Rating System program, the Township was subject to a Community Assistance Visit on May 6, 2014. This was the first 5-year re-evaluation since the Township began participation in the program in 2009. The result of the visit was an improvement in our rating from a 7 to a 6 effective May 1, 2015. This means that property owners in the Special Flood Hazard area that were enjoying 15% policy discount now see a 20% savings. Other policy owners saw their 5% discounts double to 10%.

Keeping rainwater from quickly entering our stormwater systems reduces flooding. Infiltrating it into the ground also helps recharge aquifers, which can be especially important in a dry summers like we been experiencing the past couple years. Since so many Township residents utilize wells for their water supply, rainwater infiltration is a practice that the Township has been encouraging. The Engineering Department is designing public improvements with stormwater runoff in mind. The first project constructed was a one acre parking lot in Middlebush Park. Instead of typical asphalt pavement, porous pavement was used which allows water to pass through and into the ground instead of running off. Porous pavement basketball courts were built in Delar Park last year and are being built in four other parks this year. These courts are replacing ones that have impervious surfaces now and will act similar to a drywell collecting rainwater and infiltrating it into the ground. Las year, the Township constructed a large rain garden in a portion of the Griggstown Native Grassland Preserve that is currently establishing growth of moisture-absorbing plant species. The rain garden serves as an example of what homeowners can build at a smaller scale in their own backyards. These gardens beautify a landscape area, attract birds, butterflies and other wildlife and contribute in alleviating our growing flood problem.

Once again, I welcome all comments and recommendations from Township Council, other Township personnel and the public on how to better prepare in order to lessen the impact of flooding in the Township. Feel free to email me at scott.thomas@twp.franklin.nj.us or call me at (732) 873-2500, ext. 6237.