

TOWN OF STAMFORD
SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING
November 8, 2023
(UNAPPROVED)

Present: Selectboard: Nancy L. Bushika, Chair, Michael G. Denault, Pamela Tworig, and Kurt Gamari.

Marie Kelly-Whitney was not present.

Visitors: Sally Bohl, Debra Burchard, Robert Burchard, Kelly Garnish, Sheila Pecor, 413-xxx-xx15, and Brian McWalters.

Lori Shepard, Selectboard Secretary.

Nancy Bushika called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

WORK SESSION: FEMA BUYOUT

Brian McWalters introduced himself as the Hazard Mitigation Planner for the State of Vermont. He works with towns with buyout grants. He said the town has to agree and apply for the grant. The grant funds are used to hire an appraiser, pay for the title work, purchase the property and tear down the structure. The town must agree to maintain the property as green space thereafter.

Kurt Gamari, Nancy Bushika and Mike Denault had several questions which Brian McWalters answered. The benefit to the town would be the creation of more green space for the community and the reduction of flood risk. The grant will pay 100% of the costs: 75% by FEMA and 25% by the State of Vermont. The property does not have to have sustained any damage in the recent flooding, it only has to have the potential risk of flooding. Houses both in the flood zone and river corridor are eligible for buyout. The property owner only needs to demonstrate flood risk to be eligible. The property does not have to be damaged or condemned by the town. Residential, commercial, life estates and rental properties are all eligible. Clear title is necessary and FEMA will work with the landlord/property owner. They even have relocation assistance available if needed. The homeowner can back out at any time. The town can back out prior to closing, but FEMA will need to understand why the town is not following through.

Brian McWalters did not have the date of the most current FEMA maps. A subdivision of large parcels would be negotiated if only a portion of the parcel was at risk. The flood risk determination is easily met if the structure is within the flood zone or river corridor on a FEMA map or if the homeowner or a DEC River Engineer can show a history of damage from prior flooding. The payment to the homeowner is determined by the appraiser who would be hired to determine either full fair-market value or pre-event evaluation if there was damage.

The town could list multiple properties on the same grant application if more homeowners pursue the FEMA buyout. The town will be responsible for future maintenance of the property as green space. There will be deed restrictions that the town will have to accept preventing any building on the property. The property cannot be resold unless to a non-profit conservation, or government organization.

Kelly Garnish asked about reimbursement for damages she sustained in the July flooding event.

MOTION by Mike Denault to adjourn. SECONDED by Nancy Bushika. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting ended at 4:40 p.m.

Nancy Bushika
Clerk pro tempore

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