

DRAFT Minutes

Pawlet Select Board Emergency Preparedness Meeting

Sept 13, 2011

West Pawlet Volunteer Fire Department

Present

Select Board: Mike Beecher, Sue LaPorte, Clarence Decker, Bob Jones, Joseph Clark

Highway Department: Keith Mason, Dale Decker

Pawlet Volunteer Fire Department: Jim Andrus, Robert Morlino, Bill McKenzie, Bill Waite

West Pawlet Volunteer Fire Department: David Hosley, Joey Mullen, Ron Taylor

West Pawlet Ladies Auxiliary: Shannon Landon

Others: Marlee Mason, Alice Ricard, Elizabeth Gibson, Dolores Luebke, Jay Luebke, Liz Kurjiaka (Pawlet Health Officer), David Ricard (Constable), Tom Collard

Mike Beecher called the meeting to order 7:36 PM and asked the audience to first identify the situations that were dealt with during the course of this flood, how they were handled and what improvements can be made so the town can move forward on its emergency action plan.

Dale Decker (Highway): I went around and tried to address situations where we could get water to go where it should go. There was too much water, and for a short period in the middle of the day, nothing we did made any difference. The fire departments handled the big emergencies and let me know where I was needed. West Pawlet has our high band frequency and base radio in the two pumpers but not necessarily with us that night. We carry low band radios for fire control, so that is one issue. If we wanted to talk we had to come back to the truck. The radio traffic was unbelievable; communication was an issue. In the future if there are any situations that need highway to save a road, let us know right away on our frequency. We might need funding to pick up a couple more frequencies, and it might help to have it in more vehicles.

Dale mentioned that he would not have heard about the Route 153 incident, for example, if he had not stopped at the WPVFD that night. We were lucky we didn't lose power, it would have been a lot worse.

Clarence Decker (SB): described several incidents where the road was washed out — Jimmy Cramer's, Rte 153 (fixed but needs work on blacktop), Cubby's bridge by this side of Rupert line, dry hydrants across the road from school (insurance company says they won't cover but FEMA will help 75-25 match), Heatherington Road washout along side of road, work in

progress. Bauer road, class 4 bridge falls under FEMA. Edge street pumping station is working fine but needs attention gravel over manhole. Briar Hill Road minor washout. Hickory Lane washed out and is back together. Towlsee Hill Road culvert replaced; that culvert is massively undersized, about 1/3 what it should have been. Andrus Drive/Deer Run Road washouts repaired. Danby Mountain road by Andrus washout by driveway, Tadmer residents and Betts Bridge on NE side as well need work, Kelly Hill Road. Minor repairs on Herrick Brook road and Rupert Mountain Road.

Clarence Decker: for a penny on our tax dollar, get \$20K work on roads, as in Chet Clark Road work that held up really well under the flood. Ditto Briar Hill, Kelly Road, and Beamens Hill on Waite Road. Where work has been done, it has really paid off. Clarence is about to send in Better Back Roads grant re: future of our roads. Overall Clarence said he was very impressed with fire departments and highway doing whatever firemen said was a problem. At times the situation was chaotic, but everything seemed to work. He complimented Jim Andrus on having 3 fire trucks in 3 locations so he had personnel at three points to get to anyone who needed help.

Pawlet Fire Chief Jim Andrus: We started with a few cellars flooding and also put out a few cones. The water kept rising; we didn't have much time to think about it. We moved the trucks when it started to come in the firehouse and notified residents about leaving. Some people refused to go. Basements flooded. We went through a lot of cones, but we had a lot. We lost a lot, too. I got some grief about not doing more downtown. I was on the 133 side of the incident. We had a lot of new guys and some issues with numbers so we did the best we could. We are not road builders. We did all we could to keep people out and stop traffic. Incident on Rte 30 with slate, I was out of the picture and it wouldn't have been my call to say yes or no anyway. It's a state road. No one got hurt; that is the main thing. Roads can be rebuilt and houses can be fixed. We came back the next day and started cleaning it all up. It's pretty much all put back together now. We will get some reimbursement from leagues and cities. Luckily the boys chained our propane tank so the tanks did not go downstream. In situations like this you've got to let Mother Nature run its course and clean up afterwards.

Jim continues: We could have used more manpower, in case we had had a call while we were pumping basements, although we could have assembled a team and abandoned pumping, if necessary. Regarding radios — we were dispatched by Washington County and there were communications issues because there was so much going on, which is what you expect with a statewide emergency. Spectators were a problem. People need to stay home.

Jim asks: If people need to evacuate homes, where should they go? Not Pawlet fire department; it flooded. School, but who has key? WPVFD could be a shelter. Hebron brought 6 people off Rte 31 here and some people from Egg St. Dave Ricard has a key to the school, but need someone to coordinate the people who are dropped there.

C. Decker: need to touch base with Red Cross, WPVFD is the only "shelter" in town. Once school gets generator, they will qualify. You have to have a generator.

Jim Andrus: Rte 133 has been neglected since state took it over. State brought cones but didn't offer to help stop traffic, etc.

Sue LaPorte: The irony was that the state had started to work on 133 from MTS down.

Jim Andrus: We can't expect much from state highway dept in an emergency other than bringing a few cones.

C. Decker: Pawlet and Rupert are towns furthest from state highway department. Have to rely on your constables, but they have their jobs too.

David Hosley (WPVFD chief): We started with mainly some flooded cellars and we addressed those as they came in and divided up into a couple of crews and bounced from one to another and got through all the calls. Some trouble getting around town with road flooding. Briar Hill Road became very important, our main access to our other part of the district until that culvert plugged and then we had to use Betts Bridge road. Issue on Rte 149 with people who would not leave their business; we told them they were on their own and we were not coming back. Billie Humphries was very helpful with setting up cones, and we had commandeered Bob Jones' cones from the 250 program, so we had plenty of cones. We had stranded cows on the tracks but we managed to get them back home even though they got into the river.

D. Hosley: We had one person that backed into the river to salvage a camper who could not get out, so we had to get him out. Several people needed repeat cellar pumpings. I didn't realize how bad it was in Pawlet and maybe we could have helped more in Pawlet; I couldn't get that whole picture that we had a river running down the middle of town there. At one point Granville had a structure fire so we were pretty much on our own; everyone had their problems to cope with.

Jim Andrus: Town needs to invest in road closed signs. People drive past cones.

Dale Decker: Road closed signs and pre-warning signs are also needed.

Bob Jones (SB): Where are the trouble spots and should we do some preventive maintenance work? Dale: hard to predict, depending on the type of event. Bob Jones: Bigger culverts might be in order. Jim Andrus: need to clean out the rivers some.

Joe Clark asks: When was the dam raised in the village? Maybe 20 years ago? Higher dam creates more of a water problem.

Dave Hosley: Auxiliary was here for the whole event and we had food here, that was very helpful. Regarding this emergency plan: we need someone to oversee everything. That would have been helpful from the standpoint of trying to keep track of everything to coordinate information with road crew, etc.

Dale Decker: we didn't know what roads were shut down; needed someone to tell us what roads were open and what were closed.

Clarence Decker: Need a person in charge, assistant person in charge and other key people in different organizations who relay to the assistant to relay to the top person. That is how it is supposed to work.

WPVFD is supposed to be the EOC center; you need your radios and your telephones. Makes sense because it's high and dry. We need to think about that and we need to have another meeting after we have thought about this and get someone who can do this. You need an EOC chairman and assistant chairman and get some others in the chain of command to coordinate everyone, all the departments, etc.

Dave Hosley: The emergency coordinator should not be a fireman. I don't have enough people for that position. Need someone who can sit back and look at the whole situation. And need a backup person also. It should be someone with some authority from the town.

Alice Ricard: JJ Kaveny is familiar with whole emergency situation.

Dale Decker: even the entire select board could do it; there are five of them; might get two out of five. You need a list that you can go down and hope that someone shows up for the job. Problem with appointing the entire board, how would we make a decision?

Bob Morlino: we don't have a system that has a system commander.

C. Decker: We have it here but it is not implemented. Originally was Ron Taylor, but he is called away because he is a lineman for NY state.

Bob Jones: The first person that shows up is the incident commander. You have a list and the first person on that list who shows up is the commander and you go from there.

Mike Beecher: We have an emergency operation plan that hasn't been drilled so no one is familiar with it. Next step is to ask people to apply for that position and SB will set it up.

Keith Mason: Your plan is there and your plan is compounded by our unique situation of two village centers with two fire departments, so there is communication problem. You might want two command centers that coordinate. If your commander is here and he doesn't know what's going on in Pawlet, that will be a problem.

Dave Hosley: But the commander would have access to all the radio frequencies if he is here.

Mike Beecher: We should be proactive the day before when we see something like this coming. All the town crews need to meet and have a plan.

Jim Andrus: I agree the emergency coordinator should be one person, but definitely you need a backup. We need full structure, and we need to decide what kind of authority they have in an emergency situation.

Shannon Landon: What would we have done if a health emergency happened with everyone out of town? I was around here, and the firemen were gone.

C. Decker: That is what your emergency command center needs to do and that is what we need to get set up.

Mike Beecher: That would be part of the plan, and the plan needs to be drilled yearly so it's all automatic. Need a yearly trial or even every six months.

Bob Jones: we have to look at all the aspects in terms of time of year and who is affected. The same command would command it but would be different priorities, skills needed, etc.

Dave Hosley: League of Cities and Towns resource for drilling and plan management.

Dave Hosley: It's not just coordinating roads washed out; have to coordinate Red Cross, supplies, FEMA help, if necessary.

Discussion regarding W. Pawlet sewage plant: doesn't operate in power outage, but a generator is planned for the sewer plant as part of the upgrade.

Mike Beecher: We need to get an emergency coordinator for this town. What are the criteria? Need a job description.

David Hosley: Go through VLCT and ask for job description.

Jim Andrus: Commander needs radio with high band frequency and need to think about upgrading radios in town trucks; 2012 deadline for frequencies to be upgraded anyway. Need second backup command post as well.

C. Decker: Anyone with flood damage needs to call FEMA and register. And Cemetery Hill Road in Pawlet Village will be closed in two weeks to replace wall on post office side. Road residents only will be permitted to use access at other end of road via Phil Mach's property, with proper signage.

E. Gibson: Names should be given to SB for people interested in board meeting. Need a job description and then put the word out. Come up with job description and check with RRPC for next board meeting.

Liz Kurjiaka: free water test kits; samples must be taken and mailed in on Monday or Tuesday only to get there in right amount of time. Some will be available at town hall.

Dave Ricard: concerned about the barricade system and signage. Whoever coordinates these events needs to get an inventory of cones, barricades, road closure signs, etc., so they are available in an emergency.

Dolores Luebke: The town did one fantastic job. The WPVFD saved our home and I am proud of you all and I want to say thank you.

Sue LaPorte made motion to adjourn at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Elizabeth Gibson