

**MINUTES**  
**Morris County-Flood Mitigation Committee (MC-FMC)**  
**Via WebEx - Events**  
**January 8, 2024**

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 p.m. by Mike DiGiulio.

Members present:

Betty Cass-Schmidt ( <i>Arrived 5 :37 pm</i> )	Julie Baron*
Joseph Pawelczyk	Mark Venis
Larry Ragonese	

\*Members with asterisk only listened in via audio.

Also attending:

Virginia Michelin, Assistant Planning Director, Office of Planning & Preservation  
Joseph Barilla, Planning Director, Office of Planning & Preservation  
Mike DiGiulio, Flood Mitigation Program Coordinator, Office of Planning & Preservation  
Brenda Haycock, Assistant Planner, Office of Planning and Preservation  
John Napolitano Esq., Legal Counsel  
Stephen Shaw, Commissioner Liaison

**OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT**

Mike DiGiulio announced that in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, adequate notice of this meeting had been provided and filed with the Town of Morristown, the Morris County Clerk, the Daily Record and the Star Ledger.

**BOARD ORGANIZATION**

- **Reappointed Members:** Louise Davis was reappointed by the County Commissioners. Louise was not present, but Mike DiGiulio thanked her for serving another three-year term on the Flood Mitigation Committee (FMC).
- **Election of Officers:** On a motion by Julie Baron, seconded by Joseph Pawelczyk, the Committee elected Louise Davis to be the FMC Chair by a unanimous verbal vote. Mike DiGiulio assumed control of the meeting due to Louise Davis's absence. On a motion by Julie Baron, seconded by Joseph Pawelczyk, the Committee elected Betty Cass-Schmidt to be the FMC Vice-Chair by a unanimous verbal vote.
- **Member Roster:** Mike DiGiulio will send the roster to the Committee when it is updated.
- **2024 Meeting Dates [see email attachment]:** Meetings will be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month, at 5:30 pm via WebEx until further notice. On a motion by Julie Baron, seconded by Betty Cass-Schmidt, the meeting dates were accepted. The June 2024 and January 2025 meetings will be held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month; the November 2024 meeting will be held on the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the month; and the February meeting will be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday. The meeting schedule is as follows:

February 26, 2024  
May 20, 2024  
August 19, 2024  
November 4, 2024

March 18, 2024  
*June 10, 2024*  
September 16, 2024  
December 16, 2023

April 15, 2024  
July 15, 2024  
October 21, 2024  
*January 13, 2025*

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mike DiGiulio read the Virtual Meeting Statement related to members of the public attending the meeting and/or making comments. There were no members of the public present, but Commissioner Stephen Shaw said a few words on behalf of the Committee and Flood Mitigation Program staff. He thanked the Committee for giving up their personal time with no compensation to serve the County and its communities. On the eve of another big storm, Commissioner Shaw recognized the FMP as a groundbreaking program that Morris County took the initiative on and got recognition for. Commissioner Shaw included that as he drives through Morris County, he observes a lot more open space where flooded homes once were. The Committee members and County staff agreed and thanked Commissioner Shaw.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Minutes of the October 16, 2023 meeting were reviewed and on a motion by Julie Baron, which was seconded by Joseph Pawelczyk, the Committee approved said Minutes. The closed session minutes were reviewed and on a motion by Joseph Pawelczyk, which was seconded by Julie Baron, the Committee approved said Minutes.

## **PROGRAM UPDATE**

Mike DiGiulio provided the following updates:

- **FEMA Maps**
  - **pFIRMs/SRP** – SRP maps for Montville, Lincoln Park, and Pequannock are currently in a 90-day appeal period. The 90-day appeal period ends early spring 2024. If there are no issues during the 90-day appeal period, the Letters of Final Determination (LFD) will be released during the summer of 2024. The SRP maps will be effective 6 months after the release of the LFDs. By the end of 2024, the SRP communities should have effective, digital maps.
  - **NJDEP PMR** – FEMA partial county wide map updates and NJDEP PMR maps are being combined into one product. Currently, the NJDEP and FEMA are working together to resolve any issues/differences between the two maps. Expect a preliminary issuance at the end of 2024. The combined PMR and FEMA map will follow the same timeline as the SRP maps: 30-day comment period, 90-day appeal period, LFD issuance, and effective maps. If no delays occur, expect an effective flood insurance map by the end of 2025. Betty Cass-Schmidt asked Mike DiGiulio if the maps will have to be changed with the recent flooding events. Mike responded it is uncertain, but possible with the flooding and new stormwater regulations. Larry Ragonese then asked Mike if he anticipated any push back from the towns or SRP towns. Mike expects push back, but the towns can address any concerns through the comment and appeal periods.
- **CRS Users Group – February 13** – The next CRS Users Group meeting is February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024. A potential speaker for the February meeting is from Stevens Institute of Technology. The University has a flood advisory system to showcase. Mike has a meeting set up with them

on January 11<sup>th</sup> to learn more about the program and system.

- **NFIP Update** – Congress approved another short-term extension for NFIP reauthorization. The extension expires February 2nd. In February, Mike anticipates another extension without action.
- **Flood Disclosure Law** – The Flood Disclosure Law goes into effect March 2024. Mike stated this law is a great step for the State in establishing more stringent standards for flood disclosure for homeowners and renters.
- **December 17-20, 2023 Storm Update** – Mike DiGiulio gave a presentation regarding the December 17-20 flooding event. The presentation showcased storm data as well as images of floodwaters in Denville, Morristown, Lincoln Park, and Parsippany. Mike was unable to take images of floodwaters in Pequannock due to major road shutdowns from flooding. The last major storm event that caused this much flooding was Hurricane Irene in 2011. Mark Venis commented on how badly Denville Township flooded. Larry Ragonese agreed and stated locals are on watch for January 9<sup>th</sup>'s rain event. Larry also asked if this flood event brought forward inquiries from homeowners whose houses were flooded. Mike stated that there was an inquiry from a Denville and Rockaway resident, but the Rockaway resident does not live in the floodplain. The Committee thanked Mike for his presentation as it showcased the widespread flooding in Morris County.

### **CLOSED SESSION**

At 6:11 pm, on a motion by Mark Venis, seconded by Julie Baron, the FMC closed the open portion of the meeting pursuant to P.L. 1975 Ch. 231, the Open Public Meetings Act, and per the Committee's standard resolution language, voted to conduct a closed session wherein the subject of real property acquisition shall be discussed.

### **RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

At 6:20 pm, on a motion by Julie Baron, seconded by Joseph Pawelczyk, the FMC returned to open session by unanimous vote.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

No new business, but Larry Ragonese asked Mike and the Committee if we feel as though enough people know about the program. Larry experienced a situation where a homeowner, whose home frequently flooded, was unaware of the Flood Mitigation Program. Larry suggested another email blast or talk with the County Communications Office on how to reach larger target audiences. Mike stated that it is not uncommon that people are unaware of the program and agreed that more press can help create more awareness and knowledge of the program. Commissioner Stephen Shaw also agreed and stated that there were press releases for the FMP 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and the December storm event, and Commissioner Shaw spoke at a Denville Chamber Meeting specifically about the FMP, but the Committee and the County can always do more. Julie suggested notifying towns to include information about the FMP in their local newsletters. Mike agreed and added that last year, the FMP sent out letters to town administrators, mayors, engineers, and clerks. Betty Cass-Schmidt commented that a larger issue is new people move in and don't know of local flooding and long-term residents tend to forget the severity of previous floods over the years. Commissioner Shaw included that most people in floodways make calculations and, unfortunately, some people would not be able to afford the neighborhood if they were not risking their lives and homes by being in a floodway. Commissioner Shaw continued, stating that individuals and families want to be able to live in these nice neighborhoods and send their kids to good

schools, but that comes with the risk of flooding. The Committee agreed with Commissioner Shaw. Larry Ragonese stated that he wants to make the community as aware as possible of the FMP.

**ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Joseph Pawelczyk, seconded by Mark Venis, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 6:29 pm.

**NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next regular meeting is scheduled February 26, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. via WebEx.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike DiGiulio, CFM, AICP, PP | Flood Mitigation Program Coordinator