Somers

The rural town of Somers is located in the northeast corner of the Capitol Region, along the Massachusetts border. The Town has a population of over 11,400, and covers a land area of 28.3 square miles. Elevation ranges from about 250 feet on the western side of town to over 900 feet in the hills on the eastern side. Somers lies in the Scantic River Watershed. Its major watercourses include the Scantic River and Abbey, Gillette, Gulf, Shady, Thrasher, Watchaug and Wrights Brooks, as well as Woods Stream. The main transportation routes through town are north-south state routes 83 and 186, and east-west route 190. Somers hosts the State of Connecticut Osborn and Northern Correctional Facilities. Somers is also home to portions of the Shenipsit State Forest. Principal industries are agriculture and diversified industry.

Challenges

Flooding is a concern for the Town of Somers. The National Flood Insurance Program has paid ten property damage claims in Somers totaling $243,412 to-date. However, there have been no Repetitive Loss Property claims in Somers to-date. No new development or demolition in floodplains has occurred since the 2008 Plan. A particular area of flooding concern is the site of the former Somersville Mill on the Scantic River. On June 1, 2012, the mill burned down and building materials were deposited into the River. The mill site spans the river, is located in the floodplain and restricts flow in the river. The bricks which were deposited in the watercourse as a result of the fire further restrict the Scantic River flow. The mill owner has abandoned the property and the Town is seeking state funding to remove the debris and thus reduce the environmental and flooding hazards here.

A significant flood event could result in much damage. CRCOG used FEMA’s Hazus-MH model to analyze the risks that the Town of Somers might face from a major flood. The model estimates that economic losses to the town including residential and commercial damage and business interruptions due to a flood having a 1% chance of occurring any given year (the 100-year flood) would be nearly $13 million. The impacts of such a flood are summarized below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Damages from 100-Year Flood</th>
<th>Households Displaced</th>
<th>157</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People Needing Shelter</td>
<td>145</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings at Least Moderately Damaged</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Estimated Economic Losses</td>
<td>$12,790,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Residential Building &amp; Content Losses</td>
<td>$4,920,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Commercial, Industrial &amp; Other Building &amp; Content Losses</td>
<td>$7,770,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Business Interruption Losses</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CRCOG also used FEMA’s Hazus-MH model to analyze the risks that the Town of Somers might face from a hurricane as powerful as the 1938 hurricane. The model estimates that economic losses to the town including residential and commercial damage and business interruptions due to such a Category 3 hurricane would be over $38 million. The impacts of such a storm are summarized below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Damages from a 1938 Strength Hurricane</th>
<th>Households Displaced</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People Needing Shelter</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buildings at Least Moderately Damaged</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buildings Completely Damaged</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Estimated Economic Losses</td>
<td>$38,200,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Residential Building Losses</td>
<td>$30,160,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Commercial, Industrial &amp; Other Building &amp; Content Losses</td>
<td>$4,420,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Business Interruption Losses</td>
<td>$3,630,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Debris Generated</td>
<td>42,316 tons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truckloads (at 25 tons/truck) of building debris</td>
<td>126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to information from the Connecticut Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, the three federally declared natural disasters of 2011 resulted in total expenses to the municipality of over $1.3 million. These expenses include debris and snow removal, emergency protective measures and repairs to damaged infrastructure and buildings but do not include damages experienced by private citizens and businesses.

### 2011 Disasters Damage Amounts Eligible for 75% Reimbursement Under FEMA Public Assistance Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Town of Somers</td>
<td>$52,949.48</td>
<td>$35,555.20</td>
<td>$1,218,810.02</td>
<td>$1,307,314.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Providing back-up power and sufficient sheltering capabilities during prolonged outages is also a concern of the Town. The Town’s primary shelter is the High School. To address the need to increase shelter capacity, the Town has discussed providing a secondary shelter/warming center. Such a secondary center would allow classes to resume at the High School while meeting residents’ needs at another location. The Senior Center has been considered for this purpose and could also serve as a backup polling place in the event of a power outage.
Goals, Objectives and Strategies

**GOAL: REDUCE THE LOSS OF LIFE AND PROPERTY AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES AS A RESULT OF NATURAL DISASTERS**

**Objective 1:**
Reduce the likelihood of flooding.

**Strategic Actions:**

1.1 Implement the recommendations of the Somers Floodplain Management Study.
   
   **Lead:** Floodplain Manager, Land Use, Engineering, Public Works, and Administration (Note: due to reorganization, the Land Use Department replaces the Planning Department for the plan update.)
   
   **Priority:** High (Note: The priority for this mitigation action was Medium in the 2008 Plan, however, the Town has revised the priority to High for the 2014-2019 Plan Update.)
   
   **Status:** There were several flood studies developed for specific areas of town. In 2013, the Town was awarded a $500,000 STEAP (Small Town Economic Assistance Program) grant to improve culverts on Battle Street and Mountain Road. As an initial project to be funded with this grant, the Town will hire a consultant to prioritize which culverts to improve. ACOE & DEEP permits will also need to be obtained.
   
   **Potential Funding Sources:** STEAP grants as well as LoCIP, TAR and bond funds as needed to undertake additional culverts.
   
   **Timeframe:** 2013-2015

1.2 Continue to use the Floodplain Management Studies as a resource in determining the potential impacts of proposed development and town projects to be included in the Capital Improvements Program.
   
   **Lead:** Floodplain Manager, Engineering, Land Use Department, Planning Commission, Zoning Commission
   
   **Priority:** Medium
   
   **Status:** As part of development review process, plans are reviewed for flood impacts and floodplain regulations are enforced. Peak runoff from new development is detained in detention basins per the town’s regulations. (There have been few new development proposals and subdivisions proposed in last 5 years, however.) The Town also uses the flood studies to identify projects to be included in the Capital Improvements Program. Also, a recent University of New Hampshire inventory and study of road surface conditions identified a number of road flooding issues. Use of the flood studies in the development review process will continue as a routine effort. Semi-annual reviews of road conditions will be conducted.
   
   **Potential Funding Sources:** Operating expense budget
   
   **Timeframe:** 2014-2019
1.3 Work with the DEEP to improve the Camp Road dam.
Lead: Public Works, Administration
Priority: Medium
Status: In the 2008 Plan, this strategic action was identified as, “Work with the YWCA and DEEP to improve the Camp Road dam, regardless of ownership.” The Town was awarded a grant in December 2012 to purchase the YWCA property and is currently finalizing the sales contract. Some improvements to the dam were made over the past few years: a clogged structure was removed and overflow pipes were replaced. Additional improvements and permitting are needed at the outlet.
Potential Funding Sources: Operations funding will be used for the additional dam improvements that are needed. Grant funding opportunities will also be reviewed as potential sources of funding.
Timeframe: 2014 to 2015

1.4 Improve drainage system through continued replacement and maintenance of older culverts.
Lead: Public Works, Administration
Priority: Medium
Status: In the 2008 Plan, this strategic action was identified as, “Improve artificial drainage system through continued lining of older culverts to increase flow capacity.” Gulf Road and Stafford Road culverts were relined over the past several years.
Potential Funding Sources: Operating budget, grants, CIP, bonding
Timeframe: 2014-2018: specific projects to be identified annually

1.5 Investigate participation in FEMA’s Community Rating System program.
Lead: Emergency Management, Land Use Department, Administration
(Note: due to reorganization, the Land Use Department replaces the Planning Department for the plan update.)
Priority: Medium
The Town plans to work in conjunction with CRCOG to establish the Community Rating System program in Town.
Potential Funding Sources: Operating budget, grants
Timeframe: 2014-2018

Objective 2:
Reduce the likelihood of damage from wind and severe storms.

Strategic Actions:

2.1 Continue preventive tree maintenance.
Lead: Public Works, Tree Warden
Priority: High (Note: The priority for this mitigation action was Medium in the 2008 Plan, however, the Town has revised the priority to High for the 2014-2019 Plan Update.)
Status: The Town maintains an inventory of trees requiring trimming and hires a private contractor to assist with tree trimming on an as needed basis. Over last three years, tree trimming has been done on average of three times per month.

Potential Funding Sources: DPW operating funds
Timeframe: 2014-2019

2.2 Acquire emergency generators at Town Hall and Senior Center to ensure continuity of government and provide additional sheltering capacity.
Lead: Administration, Emergency Management, Public Works
Priority: High
Status: This initiative is a refinement of a strategic action identified in the 2008 Plan to “Increase sheltering capacity and educate residents on emergency sheltering.” (See below). To address the need to increase shelter capacity, the Town has discussed providing a secondary shelter/warming center which would allow residents needs to be met at a location other than the high school (which is the Town’s primary emergency shelter) as sheltering needs diminish in the days following an event. A secondary facility would allow classes to resume at the high school while meeting residents’ needs at another location. The Senior Center has been considered for this purpose and could also serve as a backup polling place in the event of a power outage.
Potential Funding Sources: Grants, operating funds
Timeframe: By 2016.

2.3 Educate residents on having a personal family disaster safety plan and emergency supply kit.
Lead: Emergency Management
Priority: High
Status: This initiative is a revision of a strategic action identified in the 2008 Plan to “Increase sheltering capacity and educate residents on emergency sheltering.” (See below). Public outreach is and will be a routine effort.
Potential Funding Sources: Operating funds
Timeframe: 2014-2019

2.4 Encourage new developments housing special needs populations to include generators for sheltering on site.
Lead: Land Use, Building
Priority: Medium
Status: It is recommended this action be continued in the Plan Update. The Town intends to review ordinance proposals to require generators for new such developments.
Potential Funding Sources: Operating funds
Timeframe: 2014-2019: As developments are proposed.
Ordinance: 2014
The following mitigation strategy was included in the 2008 Plan; however, the Town modified this strategy for the 2014-2019 plan update replacing it with 2.2 and 2.3 above.

Increase sheltering capacity and educate residents on emergency sheltering.
Lead: Emergency Management and Administration
Priority: Medium
Status: The Town website has been used for educating the public on the availability of emergency shelter services and to advance notifications of impending storms. Press releases to Patch.com and other news outlets are also routinely used to notify about public about shelter facility and services. (Also see strategic action 2.2 above.)

Objective 3:
Reduce the likelihood of damage from forest fires.

Strategic Actions:

3.1 Continue installation of dry hydrants and cisterns in needed areas of Town.
Lead: Land Use, Fire
Priority: Medium
Status: In the 2008 Plan, this strategic action was identified as, “Implement regulations requiring installation of dry hydrants and cisterns in new developments.” The strategic action is restated for the 2014-2019 Plan Update because of the work the Town has accomplished in the past years and to address the fire suppression needs of existing development. In 2007, the Town enacted an ordinance requiring cisterns and dry hydrants for developments not served by public water. Implementation of this requirement will continue on a routine basis as a part of the development review/enforcement process. As developments are reviewed, the ordinance will be enforced. Also, the Fire Department secured grants in 2013 for dry hydrant installation in river at King Road.
Potential Funding Sources: Reviews to be done with current staffing through the Town’s operating budget; grants will be sought for additional dry hydrant installations to serve existing developments.
Timeframe: 2014-2019
Map 50: Somers Population Density, Dams and Flood Zones
Map 51: Somers Flood Plains, Repetitive Loss Areas, Dams and Important Facilities