

**Brandon Planning Commission Hearing
Flood Hazard and River Corridor Amendments to BLUO
March 16, 2020**

Board Members Present: Michael Shank, Stephanie Jerome, Lowell Rasmussen, Ralph Ethier

Board Members Absent: Allie Walter, Bill Mills

Others Present: Jeff Biasuzzi, Jeff Stewart, Linda Stewart

1. Call to order

Michael Shank, Chair, opened the hearing at 6:02PM.

2. Public Comments

Michael Shank provided a presentation on the flood hazard and river corridor amendments to the Brandon Land Use Ordinance. (See attached) The Planning Commission hearing was the first of three hearings, with two Select Board hearings to follow. Mr. Shank thanked the Rutland Regional Planning Commission for their assistance with the amendment that involved updating Article VIII of the BLUO.

Mr. Shank noted the purpose of Article VIII is to:

- (a) Implement the goals, policies, and recommendations in the current municipal plan.
- (b) Avoid and minimize the loss of life and property, the disruption of commerce, the impairment of the tax base, and the extraordinary public expenditures and demands on public services that result from flooding related inundation and erosion.
- (c) Ensure that the selection, design, creation, and use of development in hazard areas is reasonably safe and accomplished in a manner that is consistent with public wellbeing, does not impair stream equilibrium, flood plain services, or the stream corridor.
- (d) Manage all flood hazard areas designated pursuant to 10 V.S.A. Chapter 32 § 753, the municipal hazard mitigation plan.
- (e) Make the Town of Brandon, its citizens, and businesses eligible for federal flood insurance, federal disaster recovery funds, and hazard mitigation funds, as may be available.

Mr. Shank noted the Town does a good job with the flood hazard areas and river corridors to obtain the maximum funding available in the event of a disaster. Mr. Shank advised this information is available on the Town's website and noted the information provided is the latest update for obtaining the most reimbursement for both the State and Federal funds. Mr. Shank advised additional information could be viewed at www.floodtraining.vt.gov.

Mr. Shank advised that a protected river corridor will make room for the ebb and flow of the rivers to allow for least erosive path and the objective is to keep the rivers from straightening to avoid them from becoming more forceful and destructive. The new updates do not apply to anything preexisting and will apply to only new development going forward. The reason the update is needed now is due to the data that indicates our area is getting heavier downpours and flooding and will be much more likely going

forward. If the Town does nothing, it would not receive as much funding in the event of a hazardous event. The rivers change shape and it is the intention to assure that space is made for them.

Mr. Shank provided maps that outline the river corridor and the flood hazard areas. He stated it would be interesting to take photos over the coming years to collect data on how the rivers are changing. Mr. Shank advised the Town has acted on all flood hazard actions that will provide the Town the most reimbursement from the State at 17.5% for funding disasters, and the Federal funding at 75%.

It is important to protect the core functions of floodplains that include:

1. Flood water storage, flood water movement
2. Agriculture, forestry, reliable waterpower
3. Groundwater recharge
4. Water quality protection (trap sediments)
5. Soil development
6. Wildlife and fish habitat
7. Community recreation, beauty, inspiration

Mr. Shank noted the Town has made sure the banks are reinforced and work has been done to elevate some bridges. Jeff Biasuzzi advised that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife have been active in repairing wetlands and are refilling ditches and rechanneling the lands. Last year they had two projects in Brandon. Mr. Shank stated the plan will have a 50-foot buffer in the meander belt in the river corridor. There are lots of nuance and caveats that will require conversations with the Zoning Administrator to assure the future projects are as flood-proof as possible. Mr. Shank noted to the extent possible, there will be efforts to assure that peoples' homes are floodproof. There was a suggestion to also add utilities. Mr. Shank noted there are some towns in the state that are increasing efforts to assist with creating green space to absorb groundwater. Mr. Shank suggested it would be good to discuss this topic with the Greenways Committee. Mr. Shank noted the Town has a healthy respect for the rivers and the power of the rivers. Stephanie Jerome stated many towns are not on top of this effort and going forward, it will be important to have this amendment in place for the Town's preparedness. She is glad the Town is accepting of the Regional Planning Commission's recommendations.

The hearing closed at 6:19PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Bryant
Recording Secretary