

SPECIAL WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING

September 1, 2011 – 7:00 p.m.

The West Amwell Township Committee met on the above date at 7:10 p.m. Present: Mayor Molnar, Committeemen Fisher and Rich. Also in attendance were Rob Tomenchok, Randy Hoagland, Patrick Eckard, Mike Pearson, Frank DeFazio, Rick Carmosino, Jeff Ent, Steve Bartzak, Harry Heller, Joseph Romano, Jim Mastrokalos, Chris & Pete Salvin, Hal Shute, and Susan St. Clair

In compliance with the Public Meetings Act, Mayor Molnar announced that this Special Meeting was called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act with notices faxed to the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Trenton Times on August 29, 2011. A copy of this notice is and has been available to the public and is on file in the office of the Municipal Clerk.

The assembled group joined in the pledge to the nation's flag.

The meeting was recorded via digital recording system.

DISCUSSION WITH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – STORM FOLLOW UP:

Mayor Molnar explained that this meeting is to gather recommendations for the future not for finger pointing. Anyone needing to leave early was invited to come forward.

Harry Heller advised of the 4 four phases of emergency management and described the preparations undertaken by Roads, Fire and OEM. A distribution of information on how to get ready for the hurricane, as well as other appropriate information, was placed on the website. His report follows:

The response by fire, police, road department personnel was great. However, the OEM Director, was tied to the 911 Center until the next day and the Deputy Director was not available due to the demise of his cell phone. The fire house generator died after 36 hours of use; the emergency operations rooms flooded and paperwork, including the Damage Assessment Manual, was destroyed. A search for replacement copies is underway. The phones do not work as the sets got wet. In addition, it has recently be learned that Verizon has apparently cannibalized the OEM lines. The phone line being used is assigned to ABC on Route 179. Anna Lustenberg of Verizon will be contacted.

Solutions: Add more command staff. The recommendation is for another deputy emergency management director, perhaps a retiree with experience in emergency services and with command staff experience and not as involved in other areas. More bench strength to the OEM council would be helpful. A replacement for the Damage Assessment officer is required as Mr. Lelie was hospitalized with an anxiety attack and will be resigning. Rick Carmosino has taken over those duties for now.

Unacceptable: The Red Cross never showed with water; the phone numbers on the paperwork were no good; their story today is that they 'forgot.' Water and ice will finally arrive 8 a.m. Friday at the South County garage for all south county area residents that have no power. The generator needs repair. (ESS of Quakertown PA has been contacted for a cost estimate.) The Sergeantsville generator was not available as it was needed for their water utility. The County was contacted for portable units but none were available.

The situation has moved from response to recovery. Preliminary PDA's were submitted yesterday. Chief Ent provided a list which has been passed on the County. There are still private losses to be added. The addresses of those with damages reported to date have been recorded. Information has been sent to the website.

The Township Engineer needs to look at Mill Road, the bridge on the Coleman (Toll) farm, and Stymiest Road in order to arrive at public loss numbers. The private bridge on the Salvin property actually goes onto Mill Road. The homeowners with bridge losses have been instructed to contact their insurance companies first. As usual, all departments are to document overtime and expenses. Although Lt. Bartzak, Randy Hoagland, Jeff Ent and he have been thought this before, the CFO should also be aware of what is needed.

The County has not yet been declared a disaster area; the PDA's feed into this type declaration; and, the Township's PDA has been accepted. Once the declaration is issued, the labor and equipment usage forms need to be completed. As for the general public, FEMA will open a disaster assistance center at that time.

Residents need to do two things – document losses and call their insurance company. An insurance refusal form is needed to make application to FEMA. A spoiled food advisory has been sent to the website.

James Mastrokalos, the operations manager for United Water, relayed that he is responsible for the Hill treatment plant and the Lambertville system in New Jersey in so far as service for Lambertville and Calton. The latter section was spared from flooding events and there was no reduction in water quality or service. Although there was a break in the distribution system on North Union in Lambertville, there was no affect to West Amwell. Mr. Mastrokalos noted that he is in attendance due to a question from Mr. Rich concerning the article in the Times concerning the status of the dam. The company issued a dam warning around 1:30 a.m. because of a significant rise of water in the reservoir. Their emergency management plan dictates that if there is concern that the dam is in danger of being overtopped, dam warning advisories are to be issued. They worked with Dave Burd to alert folks below that they were experiencing tremendous flows and evacuation would be a first step. However, the dam was never considered to be at risk of a breach. It was re-built 4 years ago and redesigned to withstand overtopping. The warning was lifted on Monday when the flow diminished. No damage was found. NJDEP and a 3rd party engineer came prior to that and Dam Safety arrived this morning. The dam was not impacted due to the flow of the storm event. He continued that the watershed was already soaked prior to the latest storm and that water was released from the dam prior to the actual event. The storm was monitored and dam elevation lowered 8 inches on Thursday and another 8 inches on Friday. Once it was determined that the area was in the path of the storm, the rest of the planks were pulled in order to get the water level as low as it could go. This was done before the first raindrop fell. There was no release during the storm and levels were monitored every 15 minutes and the primary spillway was left open. Even with this open, the water level rose. Mr. Mastrokalos continued to relay information on the dam and its construction; how the situation was handled; and, what was done once the rain stopped.

Mr. Rich raised questions about the effect on Calton homes due to problems experienced there, including the flash at approximately 1:30 a.m. Mr. Mastrokalos indicated that there was no affect due to elevation; explained that the storage tanks in Lambertville boost water to the development with pumps to provide pressure; and, that West Amwell is on a separate system from the gravity one in the city. That there was no power due to the JCP&L shut down was also noted. Mr. Mastrokalos relayed that United Water has water trucks in their service areas; can bring water in to residents; and, is willing to partner with the Township in times such as this. He would be the point of contact at the company.

Harry Heller commented that this is the first he had heard of a dam warning being issued and was advised that 101.5 ran it the night of the event; that notification was given to the Lambertville OEM at around 2 a.m.; that Dam Safety and BPU were contacted as dictated by the emergency plan but there was no answer; and, there was every confidence that the dam would perform as designed. Mr. Heller indicated that he had received no phone call at the County OEM. The records will be checked. A request was made by Mr. Rich that John Stevens be e-mailed our contact information so he knows to get in touch with West Amwell.

Mr. Fisher inquired about the structure of the dam and was advised that it was reconstructed in 2006/07. It's still earthen but completely renovated. There's more earth, concrete, monitoring systems as well as pilings in front of the dam. The reservoir was drained at the time and the D & R canal was used as a water source. It was a \$5 million dollar project and the cost rolled into the large United Water base in order to be affordable.

Pete Salvin, the resident who lost a bridge on Mill Road, inquired if the private dam on Lakeview has been inspected. His concern was that the Sullivan dam would certainly effect what happens to the creek and noted that the stream has become more violent in the past ten years. A lot has to do with the drainage into the stream and he expressed concern over repairing the road and having a re-occurrence as the water comes down the road as well as the creek. Mr. Salvin was advised that the responsibility for the dam inspection rests with the property owner. Mr. Salvin expressed appreciation to the DPW and Police for the evacuation noting that they did a splendid job. The Clerk was instructed to contact Dam Safety to request an inspection of the Sullivan dam.

Joe Romano of 8 Melody Lane engaged in an extensive conversation with Mr. Mastrokalos over the pre-release of water; questioned what the ground water monitoring told them; and, inquired about whether there was any concern over the effect on ground water elevation with the release of that amount of water. He noted that his basement was destroyed but that his sump pump started to work even before the rain hit. Mr. Romano was advised that if there had been no pre-release, there would have been more volume in the reservoir and could have overtopped the dam with much higher surges during the storm with all the rain coming down hill. It is a dilemma in that the choices are to pre-release or not. If they had waited, a release during the storm

would have been necessary. He noted that their first responsibility is to maintain the water and fire supply, provide for water quality and guarantee integrity of the dam. As for the release of water raising the water table of Music Mountain, there is no way to raise the water table that distance and the development sits higher than Swan Creek. As for the criteria for release of water, it was established based on the amount of rain and the size of the storm.

Rick Carmosino noted that in the past, emergency management had an overlay map; West Amwell is not affected by dam problems as Lambertville gets it all; that the amount of water flowing down Swan Creek has never been seen before; that the water was 5 ft over the Swan Creek bridge; and, that within minutes the level dropped. People were trapped with water up 7 feet on Swan and South Union Streets. A similar scenario was observed by United Water and even boulders were washed out and pipes exposed, according to Mr. Mastrokalos. He stated that the water rose, overtopped and lasted 40-60 minutes. A total 7.4 inches was recorded from start to end and around midnight, there was an accumulation of over 2 inches in less than an hour, which is unprecedented. There were no other adjustments that could have been made to the dam and when the supervisor called there was panic in his voice. The amount of power and water over the auxiliary spillway was scary. Everything possible was done to preserve the integrity of the dam. The amount of loss is a shame but the destruction is everywhere.

Appreciation was extended to Mr. Mastrokalos for his attendance and information.

Jeff Ent, West Amwell Fire Chief reported the following:

- Between 8 p.m. Saturday and 5 p.m. Tuesday, there were 453 man hours in West Amwell; 37 ½ in Delaware Township
- 31 fire/rescues and wire assistance
- 61 basement pump outs; 57 in West Amwell, 4 in Delaware Township and a total of 92 calls
- Two structure fires
- A manned trapped vehicle rescue
- Coordinated rescue on Mill Road with DPW equipment
- Good staff in Fire Department and manned for 25 hours straight
- Units blocked down wires
- Mt. Airy Village Road and 179 closings
- Fire calls with Lambertville
- Oil burner claim calls

Asked if he lacked anything in particular, Mr. Ent advised they had mutual aid for the fires. Otherwise, they handled everything themselves with the exception the water rescue where they had the squad in to check car victims and evacuate a resident. He noted that the total OEM group works via e-mail and the last storm was no different. However, some representation from OEM to interface with other OEM's would have helped as the Lambertville evacuation, or rumors thereof, had people coming up Route 179 to Mt. Airy, which was blocked, as was Queen Road. People couldn't get anywhere as they had no idea of the problems in West Amwell. Therefore, communications is a concern. Also noted was that the fax line went out and that the phone lines in the building do not work. Rob Tomenchok interjected that the copper is shot throughout the Township as far as phone lines are concerned. It was suggested that Anna Lustenberg be requested to attend the Sept 28th meeting.

- Fire house generator--worked 32 hours and died. A new belt was acquired and, although it started, it would not transfer power. The deputy chief reached out to the OEM Director concerning the generator in Delaware Township as it was thought theirs wasn't needed, which turned out to be a miscommunication. The generator needs to be fixed (it's a 1974 government surplus) but there is also a need to plan for failure. Attempts should have been made to get one as they cannot operate without it. As of 7 p.m. on Tuesday there were no bathrooms or lights, no fax, and no way to charge the radios. Rob Tomenchok offered that Texas Eastern is doing infrastructure work and perhaps the Township should ask for backup from them. The mayor will follow up on this suggestion.
- Facilities—no bathroom available to residents and the crew. There was no place to cook and food brought in was eaten by candlelight.
- Public works generator—needed to run the Township radio repeater to keep the system going. The township channel is used as it travels better and allows the fire channel to stay open. Moving the repeater to the firehouse was suggested but Mr. Heller noted that

coverage would be de-graded and supported the idea of a DPW generator.

- Phone lines—the municipal building should have a POTS line to bypass the current phone system as the phones were ringing into the building but there was no juice to the system for the Clerk to know that.
- Fuel—the fire company was in process of doing another project and a local contractor is willing to donate 50 gallon tank for placement in the utility truck in case fuel is needed during fire. This would have been helpful during this event whereby it could have been filled ahead of time and transferred to a vehicle if not used. They will proceed with this project. With no generator at the DPW, the Delaware Township Fire Chief was contacted and the mayor made contact with Roger Locandro which resulted in obtaining 91 gallons of diesel fuel. Rob Tomenchok offered that there is fuel storage at South that could be used in emergency and suggested that a relationship be set up. The problem with this idea was briefly discussed.
- Documentation—new forms were made to record calls. Half of the fire calls come to the fire house directly, not through communications. The latter has documentation.
- Contacts—a listing of township officials, especially in-house people that might be required for an emergency is needed—both home and cell numbers. Specifically mentioned were Construction officials, Roads, Township Committee, OEM and Clerk. Also requested were three copies of a resident list by streets from the Assessor's book and updated periodically.
- Water/ice—distribution point needed for the future. Mr. Hoagland noted that he has no fork lift to unload water. A truck where residents could obtain water in their own containers was suggested.

Mr. Ent concluded that the Fire Company had 5 pieces of equipment stationed throughout the Township which worked well and thanked everyone involved—Township Committee, the Clerk, the Road and Police Departments—stating that everyone worked really well together. Also noted was that the weather patterns have changed dramatically over the past ten years. He strongly suggested that the Township prepare for a reoccurrence of similar events.

Patrick Eckard, Chief, Lambertville-New Hope Ambulance & Rescue Squad

- Noted that they were as prepared as could be; down one ambulance due to repair
- Two crews were on Saturday 6 p.m. through Tuesday 6 p.m. in addition boat crews, although when the latter was needed, Flemington had to be called due to tie up in Lambertville
- Amwell Valley had 2 crews on and served as the Township's primary ambulance; were initially pulled to the City and later diverted for the Mill Road rescue
- As for shelters, Lambertville OEM was advised that there would only be one shelter for the entire south County set up and manned by the Red Cross. Mr. Heller explained that since the Red Cross staffs it, it is easier and more central than having several spread around. However, there's a need to be ready to do local shelters if there is a snow event and folks cannot get to Flemington. Mr. Ent offered that, although this is understandable, it puts people in harms way, so it makes no sense on that level. On a conference call at the County OEM prior to the event, Mr. Heller relayed that South was offered but were told that JB Case elementary would be the only Red Cross shelter.
- There was no transportation of flood victims required, only medical emergencies and fire calls. Their group was prepared for a river event not a flash flood.

Mr. Eckard continued that he's never seen an event like this and has lived in the area his entire life. He too cautioned that there will be more events such as this and that only mother nature is to blame for this one.

Randy Hoagland, Roads Supervisor, relayed that this crew worked with the Fire Dept.

- Three to four trees came down; two of which blocked the roads
- Stymiest Road is not passable
- Other roads are being repaired

- DPW crew kept watch during the event but there were not terrible problems, road-wise, with a couple exceptions
- His equipment is still running
- The men performed well and appreciation was expressed.

Recommendations:

- A propane generator for DPW fuel pump
- 250 gallon tank for fire house generator in lieu of ½ gallon can refills; there are hooks on the tank for that purpose.

Steve Bartzak, Police Lt – No report. All issues covered previously. One new Tahoe has been delivered.

Tom Molnar announced that Senator Shirley Turner is to tour the Township.

Rob Tomenchok relayed that he fielded several calls for help; observed that folks are really ticked at JCP&L and the lack of information; that a better way of getting information from JCP&L would be a good thing; and, where to get potable water. The possible use of the water buffaloes for the latter was discussed but concern was raised about liability issues. As for the power outage, the area representative, John Anderson, was contacted several times but actual times were never nailed down; JCP&L never gave out more than an estimate; there was a lot of conflicting information circulating; and, the power company blamed Lambertville for why the power was cut to West Amwell. An extended exchange of information of these topics ensued.

The Clerk offered that she needs to assemble and keep emergencies numbers at home as well as a work; that centers be designated where residents can get up to date information when there's no power for the internet; that an alternate power sources for cell phones, etc. is needed; and, the municipal building should also have generator. Also noted was that the flow of information into the office in order to answer questions needs improvement and questioned how to keep the website up for resident information when no power is available. It has been suggested by a resident that corporate sponsors be solicited for generator purchase.

Rob Tomenchok suggested that there be a concentration on getting out the 'right word' out to residents, e.g., identifying chief communicators throughout the Township that would get information from a single source such as the mayor. Mr. Heller added that there are systems available whereby advisories can be sent out and recommended that people sign up for the County's reverse 911 systems. Flyers were distributed at the country fair, are available in the municipal building and have been sent to the website for posting. The list serve and emergency alert systems used by South were also mentioned as existing models to consider. Hal Shute advised that the website is moving along; the look will be the topic of the next meeting; there should be something for the Township Committee to look at by the September meeting; and, a list serve is being considered.

It was generally agreed that the Township did fairly well except for the area of communications with residents. There were no complaints as the roads were open and the police were out and about. The residents were mostly concerned about when they would get power back which is something that the Township has no control over.

The conversation turned to flooded damaged items and whether or not to get a dumpster to handle bulky items. Concern was raised about the need to monitor what is placed in the dumpster and the suggestion made that there be someone there. Several quotes were obtained and the nod went to Britton for one 40 cy roll off for Saturday. Placement will be in the recycling area. Mr. Heller advised that the cost could be charged to FEMA.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:50 p.m. on motion by Fisher, seconded by Rich.

Respectfully submitted,

Lora L. Olsen, RMC
Township Clerk