

Disaster Plan Update Will Keep Hunterdon Qualified For Federal Funds

Hunterdon County's Hazard Mitigation Plan, which qualified the County for millions of dollars in FEMA funding in the past, will be updated to meet new federal requirements, under a contract approved by the Freeholder Board at the July 21st meeting.

Freeholder Board Director Shaun C. Van Doren stated, "The Hazard Mitigation Plan update, which is federally funded, is vital to the County's and our property taxpayers' ability to deal with the extraordinary costs associated with disasters, like the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic."

The Freeholders approved a contract with Tetra Tech, a federally approved national and international consulting and engineering firm that prepared the 2016 Hunterdon County plan. The contract to provide the mandated update at a cost of \$124,958 is grant funded.

The Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, which received FEMA approval in 2016, must be updated every 5 years.

Van Doren added, "By having a hazard mitigation plan in place, Hunterdon County has received nearly \$2.5 million for the county and our municipalities in Hurricane Sandy Hazard Mitigation funds. It also allowed the County to pursue \$6 million dollars in flood mitigation grants, in partnership with Warren County."

Freeholder Matt Holt, the Board's liaison for Public Safety, pointed out, "The 2016 plan contained a disease outbreak assessment, identifying the exact situation of the COVID-19 pandemic.

And while the federal government has not yet made mitigation funding available under the COVID-19 Presidential disaster declaration, the County's plan will position our Office of Emergency Management (OEM) to pursue emergency response monies when they are finally made available."

Holt continued, “This project is also a shared service in that the County invites each of our 26 municipalities to participate in the planning effort, and to adopt the plan as their own, once it receives federal approval. In doing so, our municipalities are also able to participate in federally funded mitigation efforts.”

According to Hunterdon County’s OEM, the U.S. Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 amended the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to require each local jurisdiction to identify potential natural hazards to the health, safety and well-being of its residents, and identify and prioritize actions taken that can be taken by the community to mitigate those hazards – before disaster strikes.

Van Doren noted, “We are advised that for communities to remain eligible for hazard mitigation assistance from the federal government, they must first prepare, and then maintain and update a hazard mitigation plan.”

A copy of the 2016 Hunterdon County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan can be viewed on the web here;

<http://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/911/oem/mitigation/2016Plan.html>