

Today we focus on a big issue we face as a community: flooding. At the March 9th Board of Trustees meeting, we unveiled the 2009 Phase of the Village's Comprehensive Flood Action Plan. Our next Village Manager, Rich Slingerland, made the presentation and his knowledge and experience have already been helpful.

Focus on Mitigation

Because flooding in Mamaroneck is mainly caused by our geography, which we cannot change, our plans focus on what we can do to mitigate, or lessen, both flooding and future flood damage.

Start with Good Planning

Prior to the devastating 2007 floods, Village staff had begun work on several projects that will help mitigate flooding. First is the development of the Village's Hazard Mitigation Plan. This is exactly what it is – a plan to mitigate damage from any potential hazard that may strike the Village of Mamaroneck, including flooding. Once our Plan is complete and approved by both NYS and FEMA, we will be eligible for grant funding to implement the plan. Our goal is to complete the plan in 2009.

The Village also began the implementation of a Geospatial Information System (GIS) prior to the floods. This multi-layered database that links data to a location on a map will be an invaluable planning tool for many aspects of village government.

In 2009, we will also revise and implement both our Comprehensive Master Plan and Storm Water Management Plan to ensure they adequately address flooding and are coordinated with the Hazard Plan.

Flood Mitigation – Plan A and Plan B

One of our immediate activities after the floods was to seek help from our elected officials and they responded. Congresswoman Nita Lowey continues to work diligently with the US Army Corps of Engineers and to secure funding for flood-related projects. The Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) now has full funding to commence the \$7.2 million analysis ("Plan A") of the Mamaroneck-Sheldrake Rivers watershed; we are just waiting for government lawyers to work out the agreement details. New York State and Westchester County are participating in this project and have committed funding as well.

Shortly after the floods, a consultant was engaged to develop what is now known as "Plan B," a \$25+ million project to widen the lower portions of the Mamaroneck River to help alleviate flooding in the Washingtonville neighborhood only.

Mitigation of Flood Damage

If we were building the Village of Mamaroneck today, we would do things very differently. Since much of the Village is in a flood plain, we would allow building there only if the building complies with today's codes. These codes, adopted by the Village in 2007, would result in less damage from flooding. Since we are a community that is largely built out, we can only address code revisions that would have marginal impacts. Thus far, we have revised our floor area ratio code and the Village attorney has inventoried the other related existing codes to determine what gaps exist. We are now

looking at lot coverage, water course protection and other environmental land use codes to determine what new measures we can implement.

Every mitigation action we take can mean money in your pocket if you have flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program. We are participating in the Community Rating System that will eventually give us credits for mitigation efforts and reduce premiums for eligible property owners. Once we have an approved Hazard Mitigation Plan, we can apply for these credits.

Maintenance of Waterways and Storm Water System

Last year, the Public Works Department began a program of preventive maintenance at the Mamaroneck River dam and in low lying areas. Before and after storms, the grates in the dam and storm drains in problem areas were checked and debris removed. In fact, Village staff checked the dam 57 times last year. This year, we are ramping up waterways maintenance and enforcement efforts.

We will soon begin a project to inventory and assess the current conditions of the Village waterways. These conditions will then be mapped in our GIS database and will help Village staff develop a plan for ensuring the waterways are cleared and stay that way.

Community Clean-up

On April 25, there will be a community clean-up – rivers and neighborhoods – organized by our Committee for the Environment as part of Green Week. Volunteers are needed and you can sign up by contacting Trustee Toni Ryan at trusteeryan@yahoo.com or by phone at 777-7738.

Disaster Planning, an integral part of the Plan, will be addressed in a future column.