

## Council Agenda Report

**Date:** January 22, 2018

**Prepared and Submitted by:** Sandra Tripp-Jones, City Manager

**SUBJECT:** 2017 Dorchester County Flood Mitigation Plan

**Recommendation:** That Council:

- A. Hear a presentation by Anna Sierra, Dorchester County Emergency Services Director on subject plan;
- B. Conceptually approve the Dorchester County Flood Mitigation Plan.

**Discussion:**

The purpose of a Flood Mitigation Plan is to assist State and local governments in funding cost-effective actions that reduce or eliminate the long-term risk of flood damage to buildings, manufactured homes, and other insured structures. The long-term goal of Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) is to reduce or eliminate claims under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) through mitigation activities. Dorchester County is required to ask local jurisdictions for their approval of the plan.

The key federal requirements for the County Flood Mitigation Plan include:

- Description of the existing flood hazard and identification of the flood risk, including estimates of the number and type of structures at risk, repetitive loss properties, and the extent of flood depth and damage potential.
- Identification and description of floodplain management goals for the area covered by the plan.
- Identification and evaluation of cost-effective and technically feasible mitigation actions considered.
- Presentation of the strategy for reducing flood risks and continued compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), and procedures for ensuring implementation, reviewing progress, and recommending revisions to the plan.

The Planning Committee included representatives of several jurisdictions including the City of Cambridge.

The Report presents several mitigation strategies but designates the following as high priorities.

- Encourage property owners to elevate structures
- Potential acquisition and open space
- Sea level rise vulnerability study
- Municipal participation in FEMA Community Rating System (CRS) –

Cambridge is one of the Municipalities that currently does not participate in the CRS.

### **Community Rating System (CRS)**

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) is a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum NFIP requirements. As a result, flood insurance premium rates are discounted to reflect the reduced flood risk resulting from the community actions meeting the three goals of the CRS: (1) reduce flood losses; (2) facilitate accurate insurance rating; and (3) promote the awareness of flood insurance.

Dorchester County is currently applying for eligibility in the Community Rating System. For CRS participating communities, flood insurance premium rates are discounted in increments of 5%; i.e., a Class 1 community would receive a 45% premium discount, while a Class 9 community would receive a 5% discount (a Class 10 is not participating in the CRS and receives no discount). The CRS classes for local communities are based on 18 creditable activities, organized under four categories.

A fact sheet is attached to this report.

The full Dorchester County 2017 Flood Mitigation Plan is available in hard copy at City Hall, City Manager's Office for public review.



# FEMA

# Fact Sheet

Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration

## Community Rating System

June 2017

*The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) was implemented in 1990 as a voluntary program for recognizing and encouraging community floodplain management activities exceeding the minimum NFIP standards. Any community in full compliance with the minimum NFIP floodplain management requirements may apply to join the CRS.*

### 1,444 Communities Participate in the CRS

Nearly 3.6 million policyholders in 1,444 communities participate in the CRS by implementing local mitigation, floodplain management, and outreach activities that exceed the minimum NFIP requirements.

Under the CRS, flood insurance premium rates are discounted to reward community actions that meet the three goals of the CRS, which are: (1) reduce flood damage to insurable property; (2) strengthen and support the insurance aspects of the NFIP; and (3) encourage a comprehensive approach to floodplain management.

Although CRS communities represent only 5 percent of the over 22,000 communities participating in the NFIP, more than 69 percent of all flood insurance policies are written in CRS communities.

### CRS Classes

The CRS uses a Class rating system that is similar to fire insurance rating to determine flood insurance premium reductions for residents. CRS Classes\* are rated from 9 to 1. Today, most communities enter the program at a CRS Class 9 or Class 8 rating, which entitles residents in Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) to a 5 percent discount on their flood insurance premiums for a Class 9 or a 10 percent discount for Class 8. As a community engages in additional mitigation activities, its residents become eligible for increased NFIP policy premium discounts. Each CRS Class improvement produces a 5 percent greater discount on flood insurance premiums for properties in the SFHA.

\* CRS Class changes occur on May 1 and October 1 of each year. The data contained in this fact sheet were current through May 2017.

### Best of the Best

Seven communities occupy the highest levels of the CRS. Each built a floodplain management program tailored to its own particular hazards, character, and goals. Under these programs, each community carries out numerous and varied activities, many of which are credited by the CRS. The average discount in policyholder premiums varies according to a community's CRS Class and the average amount of insurance coverage in place.

- **Roseville, California** was the first to reach the highest CRS rating (Class 1). Floods in 1995 spurred Roseville to strengthen its floodplain management program. Today the City earns points for almost all CRS-creditable activities. The average premium discount for policies in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) is \$963.
- Comprehensive planning has been a key to **Tulsa, Oklahoma** in reducing flood damage from the dozens of creeks within its jurisdiction. The City (Class 2) has cleared more than 900 buildings from its floodplains. The average SFHA premium discount is \$709.
- **King County, Washington** (Class 2) has preserved more than 100,000 acres of floodplain open space and receives additional CRS credit for maintaining it in a natural state. The average premium discount in the SFHA is \$722.
- **Pierce County, Washington** (Class 2) maintains over 80 miles of river levees. The County mails informational brochures to all floodplain residents each year. The average premium discount in the SFHA is \$846.
- **Fort Collins, Colorado** (Class 2) uses diverse approaches to keep its large student population informed. Identifying and protecting critical facilities and continually improving its GIS system help the city maintain its exemplary program. The average premium discount in the SFHA is \$703.
- **Sacramento County, California**, has steadily improved its rating since joining the CRS in 1992. Now a Class 2, the County's more significant activities are diligent public outreach on protecting waterways, purchasing flood insurance, and preparing for floods. The average premium discount in the SFHA is \$395.
- **Thurston County, Washington**, has a history of planning for hazard mitigation, watershed protection, and open space. Combining that with strict development standards and stormwater management has helped the County achieve Class 2. The average premium discount in the SFHA is \$577.

## CRS Credit

A community accrues points to improve its CRS Class rating and receive increasingly higher discounts. Points are awarded for engaging in any of 19 creditable activities, organized under four categories:

- Public information
- Mapping and regulations
- Flood damage reduction
- Warning and response.

Formulas and adjustment factors are used to calculate credit points for each activity.

The communities listed below are among those that have qualified for the greatest premium discounts:

Class 1: Roseville, California

Class 2: Sacramento County, California  
Fort Collins, Colorado  
Tulsa, Oklahoma  
King County, Washington  
Pierce County, Washington  
Thurston County, Washington

Class 3: Louisville–Jefferson County, Kentucky  
Ocala, Florida

Class 4: Charlotte, North Carolina  
Palm Coast, Florida  
Charleston County, South Carolina  
Maricopa County, Arizona

## Benefits of the CRS

Lower cost flood insurance rates are only one of the rewards a community receives from participating in the CRS. Other benefits include:

- Citizens and property owners in CRS communities have increased opportunities to learn about risk, evaluate their individual vulnerabilities, and take action to protect themselves, as well as their homes and businesses.
- CRS floodplain management activities provide enhanced public safety, reduced damage to property and public infrastructure, and avoidance of economic disruption and loss.
- Communities can evaluate the effectiveness of their flood programs against a nationally recognized benchmark.

- Technical assistance in designing and implementing some activities is available to community officials at no charge.
- CRS communities have incentives to maintain and improve their flood programs over time.

## How to Apply

To apply for CRS participation, a community must initially inform the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Regional Office of its interest in applying to the CRS and will eventually submit a CRS application, along with documentation that shows it is implementing the activities for which credit is requested. The application is submitted to the Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO)/CRS Specialist. ISO works on behalf of FEMA and insurance companies to review CRS applications, verify communities' credit points, and perform program improvement tasks.

A community's activities and performance are reviewed during a verification visit. FEMA establishes the credit to be granted and notifies the community, the State, insurance companies, and other appropriate parties.

Each year, the community must verify that it is continuing to perform the activities that are being credited by the CRS by submitting an annual recertification. In addition, a community can continue to improve its Class rating by undertaking new mitigation and floodplain management activities that earn even more points.

## CRS Training

CRS Specialists are available to assist community officials in applying to the program and in designing, implementing, and documenting the activities that earn even greater premium discounts. A week-long CRS course for local officials is offered free at FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI) on the National Emergency Training Center campus in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and can be field deployed in interested states. A series of webinars is offered throughout the year.

### For More Information

A list of resources is available at the CRS website: [www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program-community-rating-system](http://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program-community-rating-system). For more information about the CRS or to obtain the CRS application, contact the Insurance Services Office by phone at (317) 848-2898 or by e-mail at [nfipcrs@iso.com](mailto:nfipcrs@iso.com).