

Highgate Hazard Mitigation Plan Update
Meeting 1
February 17, 2026 | 6:00 p.m.
Highgate Town Office and Zoom

Attendance: Wendy Dusablon (Town Clerk), Jack Pelkey (PC), Thomas Conley, Ty Choiniere, Scott Bessette (Vice Chair PC, Parks and Rec), Richard Flint (Selectboard), Luc Dupuis (Chair PC), and Shaun Coleman (NRPC).

Shaun provided an overview of hazard mitigation planning and the process for updating the plan. He reviewed the plan's contents, FEMA requirements, community outreach efforts, timeline and roles and responsibilities. He reviewed the survey and outreach plan that he and Fredy developed as well as the Highgate Hazard Mitigation Plan project website that residents can link to via the Town's website.

The first hazard mitigation plan written for the state of Vermont was a joint plan between Swanton Town and Highgate in 1999. The town has a history of applying for FEMA mitigation funding to fix areas prone to damages from natural hazards such as the transfer station.

FEMA requires mitigation plans to be updated every five years. FEMA requirements for plan approval has changed recently. There is a need for public outreach which should be met through the community outreach plan and survey. The plan must be approved by FEMA first before the Selectboard can adopt the plan.

The survey is a way for town officials to collect information on what residents think the town's mitigation priorities and strategies should be. Some examples include replacing inadequate bridges and culverts that are prone to flooding, property buyouts for repetitive loss properties or in areas prone to landslides. It also informs local officials on how residents are made aware of emergencies (VT Alert, social media, etc.) and whether they have taken steps for a family disaster plan, fire alarm and/or CO2 detectors installation, etc. The survey is anonymous unless a resident provides their email address.

There will be mitigation plan meetings held each month for the next 4 months or more if necessary.

The group discussed various areas of concern around the community. There is significant concern about the possibility of a mile section of the Machia Road failing. The site is being monitored by VTRANS. There are monitoring wells place. The Town administrator will be alerted should the slope begin to fail. As the ground begins to thaw, there is concern that truck traffic could affect the stability of the road shoulder and slope. The group noted that the costs to stabilize the slope are excessively high, especially since any work completed would only serve as a temporary solution, based on the experience of a previous slope project along the same section of road. It would be better to close the road permanently and residents could seek an alternate route which would not be a burden in terms of time and distance.

Next Steps

The committee will meet again on March 17th to update the identified hazards and risk assessment. Future meetings will address a review of the town's capacity and capabilities including plans, policies, procedures and Town's mitigation action priorities.