

Appendix A. Public Meeting – Notice, Press, Comments

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and State of Vermont are requesting public participation and input at an upcoming meeting to review the State's plans related to the re-occupation and new construction initiatives at the Waterbury State Office Complex. Discussions will focus on historic and environmental resources that could be affected by proposed demolitions, construction and re-occupation.

The public and all interested parties are invited to attend and participate in the meeting, which will be held Wednesday, May 30, 2012 at 7:00 pm in Thatcher Brook Primary School cafeteria, 47 Stowe Street, Waterbury. The meeting will be preceded by an open house from 6:30 – 7:00 pm, where meeting attendees will have the opportunity to view general information and talk directly to federal and state representatives.

Public comments will be solicited on FEMA's development of an Environmental Assessment as part of the review process required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). A preliminary copy of the Draft Environmental Assessment for the Waterbury State Office Complex will be available by May 21, 2012 at the Waterbury Municipal Office, 43 South Main Street, Waterbury (8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday-Friday), and the Waterbury Public Library, 28 North Main Street, Waterbury (10:00 am to 8:00 pm Monday-Wednesday, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm Thursday and Friday, 9:00 am to 2:00 pm Saturday) for public review.

Proposed changes to the historic complex and options to reduce future flooding and restore floodplain values will be specifically discussed. Comments about changes to the historic campus and floodplains would be particularly appropriate as part of FEMA's review under the National Historic Preservation Act and Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management). After the meeting, public comments will continue to be accepted until June 15, 2012 at 4 p.m. Comments can be mailed to Peter Thomas, Essex Junction Joint Field Office, 30 Allen Martin Drive, Essex Junction, Vermont, 05452.

The May 30 meeting will ensure that the public has an opportunity to inform FEMA and the State about environmental impacts that might result from planned activities. These comments will be integrated into the final Draft Environmental Assessment, the review and public notice process required by Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management) and during the detailed reviews of individual historic properties within the Waterbury State Office Complex as they occur in the coming months

Sign-In for Public Meeting, May 30, 2012:



FEMA-4022-DR-VT- Sign In Sheet
 Waterbury State Office Complex
 Public Meeting

Date: May 30, 2012

(PLEASE PRINT ALL ENTRIES)

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Chris Veens	Waterbury Ctr	Select Board	244-5546	CrP.Veens@gmail.com
Skip Flandus	Waterbury	Historical Soc	244-5299	wtfbskip@comcast.net
Rebecca Ellis	Waterbury	Town Select Board	839-0515	ellisvermont@yahoo.com
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Follow-up Article in Local Newspaper:

**DR-4022-VT and DR-4043-VT
Media Monitoring Report
Thursday, May 31, 2012**

Opinions sought on offices overhaul

[Waterbury Record](#)

May 31, 2012

Kristen Fountain

The plan for renovating Waterbury's State Office Complex calls for tearing down a half-dozen large buildings that have been part of the town landscape for more than 80 years.

Before helping to fund the massive demolition and reconstruction project, the Federal Emergency Management Agency wants to know what residents in and around Waterbury think about losing that connection to history.

That is one of several reasons the agency is seeking public comment on a draft "environmental assessment" available at the town offices and library. A public hearing Wednesday night offered one opportunity for people to air their views. Comments will also be accepted in writing until June 15 at 4 p.m.

"People have different kinds of attachments," said Peter Thomas, an archeologist formerly with the University of Vermont who co-authored the report on behalf of the agency. "Part of what we need to do is to get a sense of what people are thinking in the community."

Every project that the federal government either undertakes or, in this case, funds must undergo this kind of assessment. The goal is to consider what effects the project would have on the surrounding environment, both natural and manmade, and whether the project conforms with federal laws and regulations.

For the State Office Complex, the main impacts will be on the floodplain and on historic buildings, and those impacts are related, Thomas said. To restore the floodplain to its original state, many historic buildings there will have to be demolished.

“What it winds up in part being is a balancing act,” Thomas said. “There is definitely a trade-off.”

FEMA, the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation, and the Department of Buildings and General Services are close to an agreement on how to handle the historic buildings, Thomas said.

Each one, whether it is being demolished or preserved, must be looked at individually and a holistic plan developed. “If you are going to have an adverse effect, you look to do something to counterbalance it,” he said.

Historic Complex

Construction of the Vermont State Hospital began in 1889, prompted by overcrowding at the Vermont Asylum for the Insane in Brattleboro, which opened in 1834.

The early core of the complex was designed by the Rand & Taylor architectural firm of Boston, which was involved in the design of many of the country’s early hospitals and asylums.

The Waterbury buildings constructed between 1889 and 1896 are the most historically significant, according to a recent analysis by another Boston-based firm, Goody Clancy.

“The Vermont State Hospital at Waterbury is by far the largest and most intact collection of hospital buildings by Rand & Taylor anywhere in the United States,” the draft environmental assessment states. The firm also designed Worcester (Mass.) State Hospital and Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital in Hanover, N.H., but neither still exists in its former condition.

The alignment and structure of these hospital buildings — in one long, connected line — was thought by physicians and scientists at the time to be particularly conducive to the treatment of mental health. For a period, they also emphasized the importance of circular wards, which are another prominent feature of the Vermont State Hospital’s design.

“There are very few examples of circular hospital wards all over the world, even fewer in the United States,” the report states. “And hardly any that are still intact within their original layout.”

The first group of patients arrived in Waterbury in 1891 and by the turn of the century the population was already greater than the original design was intended to house. The first additional buildings constructed included a residence for nurses, now called Wasson Hall, in 1901 and a unit to house patients with tuberculosis, now called the Sewing Building, in 1904.

More and more buildings were added to the complex over the next 50 years, until outpatient programs, begun in the mid-1950s, began to slow the demand for space. The Vermont Agency of Human Services was the first non-hospital tenant of the buildings, starting in 1978.

Over time, many historical aspects of buildings were changed to adapt to the new use as office buildings. The report suggests that the state government could make up for the impact of tearing down some of the historic buildings by restoring exterior aspects, such as cupolas and towers, to the buildings it plans to keep and restore.

The A Building, which is slated for demolition, is of particular interest to historic preservationists. It was built in 1932 as a treatment center for “acutely disturbed female patients.” The construction occurred when Eugene A. Stanley was superintendent of the state hospital; he headed operations from 1918 and 1936, and Stanley Hall is named after him.

Stanley was a proponent of eugenics, a movement that advocated the forced sterilization of the “feebleminded and insane.” He testified in favor of bills approved in 1927 and 1931 that made the practice legal in Vermont until the mid-1950s.

Because A Building has been remodeled, “the extent to which this building architecturally manifests any association with the eugenics movement is debatable,” the report states, but says the issue should be studied.

Comments can be mailed to Peter Thomas, FEMA Essex Junction Joint Field Office, 30 Allen Martin Drive, Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Comment Received 06/05/2012 from Waterbury Resident

We read the recent article in the Waterbury Record by Kristen Fountain about the historical significance of the Waterbury State Complex buildings. It was interesting and informative. That the residents of Waterbury are being asked their opinions of the fate of the Complex is appreciated.

We live directly across from the Complex and have enjoyed the beauty and serenity of these structures and their landscape for many years. It would be a shame to see the architecture destroyed. It would be wonderful to continue to see all the visible-from-the-road buildings with their turrets, cupolas and towers kept exteriorly the same. We mean kept in good repair, inside and out.

The Dale building, "A" building, other damaged out-buildings in back need to come down. However, we are given to understand the Weeks building and the Environmental Lab, which has new brick work and improvements already, will be torn down. Surely, they are not going to be destroyed?

We hear from State workers that they would really like to return to the Complex, not in new, modern buildings, but in fully improved existing buildings.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to have our say in the future of the Waterbury State Complex.

Sincerely,

Sheryl L. Standcliffe



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