

Flood Planning Meeting April 4, 2013

Jim McDermott, Benton County Emergency Services Director, called a flood planning meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. at the Watab Town Hall on April , 2013. Those present were: Dan Metapen, DeZurik; Monty Headly, Benton Co.; Jim H., Sartell PD; Butch Rieland, Sauk Rapids FD; John Storkamp, DeZurik; Heather Winkleblack, ARC; Troy Heck, Benton Co. Sheriff's Dept.; Jerry Schubert, AIM; Kevin Winkelman, AIM; Jim Hovda, Langola; Drani Glaning, BCPH; Lisa J. Braun, RSVP; Angie Trulson, CERT; Guy Spence, LRLA; Gary Nib, BC Emergency; Perry Beige, Sauk Rapids; Tony Hommerding, SRFD; Chris Byrd, Benton Co.; Mark Ebnet, Benton Co; Adam Beilke, Benton SWCD; Scott DeZurik, DeZurik; Lloyd Erdmann & Craig Gondeck, Watab; Nicki Blake-Bradley, DNR; and Robert Cornelius, BCHS. Jim announced that there will be a public meeting on Monday evening at 7:00 p.m. at the Watab Town all for residents. The main purpose of this meeting is to determine what services can be provided by the agencies present in case of flooding, especially around Little Rock Lake.

Little Rock Lake tends to flood due to ice jams on the Mississippi River. Jim presented a handout that illustrated ice jam concerns on the Mississippi River for Sartell and upstream. There are some homes that flood nearly every year. Since the county ordinances have changed, construction restrictions have been put into place. Question was asked how often the measurement is made for the water level; Jim said that measurements are updated every hour or two hours. The flood page on the county website has the updated information. The state emergency system is now up for the flood season. The snow up north has record amounts of water content at 90%. The melting is compacting the water tighter in the snow. Frost is also deep up north at 44 to 49 inches. The ice from the Sartell dam is two to three feet deep, which is unusual, and is frozen at the bottom of the river. Our outlook for this year is not as good as last year. It may be like 2010 or worse. This will be an incident that we need to be quickly prepared to handle.

Warning evacuations: law enforcement will warn the people. This is a human services issue, and we don't know who all the at-risk people are. Jim explained the phone system to notify people of emergencies and how there is a new system in place with updated numbers. Unlisted and unpublished numbers are not included; Jim purchases a commercial list. 17,000 phone calls were made in 29 minutes in the test call. Tony Hommerding, Sauk Rapids Fire Department Chief described all the equipment the SR Fire Department has that could help. Also, the Benton County Sheriff's Department has three boats, higher vehicles, and cold water suits. Jim would look to the Sauk Rapids Fire Department and the Benton County Sheriff's Office for assistance. Website and phone system will be used for the notice.

Security would fall to the Sheriff's Department. Barricades would be placed to keep public out.

Volunteers: Jim said that he plans on using the town hall for his base of operation. Due to there being only one phone line, he may be relying on cell phones to notify residents. He announced a change in that Benton County will no longer compete with private business by providing sand bags. He said it is not the government's responsibility to protect private property, but rather only public infrastructure. For example, the National Guard can only protect public property. A suggestion was made to get this information out to residents since it is a change. Volunteers will be coordinated through the town hall. He said that in the past RSVP people and CERT volunteers have helped manage the phones.

Sand will be available at the Saldana pit or other places in the area. It costs about \$70 for a trailer. 4 – 5,000 sandbags are needed around an average size house, which could cost about \$1,600.

Watab Township has distributed flyers about Monday night's meeting so that hopefully people will be informed. He explained that flood insurance doesn't go into effect for 31 days after it is purchased.

Lloyd Erdmann explained that sandbags are totally useless unless people have pumps; otherwise the water comes up through the sand. Jim explained the proper way to sandbag, and noted that many people don't have this type of equipment. This will be explained at Monday's meeting. There will be computer links to sandbagging. Lloyd explained again about the need for people monitoring pumps if they sandbag. Volunteers cannot be held responsible for failure of sandbags. Family members should be asked to help. Craig Gondeck also recommended using radio announcements to recruit volunteers. Lloyd asked about government's legal responsibility to protect people's homes; Jim said there is none.

The dam is now property of AIM. Representatives noted that they have 30-plus years of experience doing this and will maintain the same level at all times. If the dam breeched, the Mississippi River would rise about seven feet. Lloyd Erdmann asked about potential failure of the Blanchard Dam, which he said is in poor condition. He stated that this would be a more serious problem for people on Little Rock Lake since it is upstream.

Jim explained the wristband system. Volunteers are covered by the county insurance if they have a wristband. Food will be needed to feed the volunteers. Red Cross can provide shelter for displaced people. There are several agreements in place for this area. They use shelters and not hotels. Red Cross cannot guarantee food for the volunteers but would accept a request. Salvation Army might be a better option.

Other comments included:

- Chris Byrd asked possibility of closing roads.
- Guy Spence said that the Little Rock Lake Association will seek volunteers to help neighbors and work together.
- Land around the dam in the City of Sartell is in the flood area; AIM controls the berm by DeZurik's.
- Public health issues are water quality
- Tony Hommerding pledged the assistance of the Sauk Rapids Fire Department.
- Jim Hovda is responsible for measuring water level on the north end of the lake. He wants a measurement by Little Rock Creek where the water usually opens first.
- Jim suggested that every township and city should list their cost to clean up after a storm or flood event for any public infrastructure. \$140,000 is the threshold for reimbursement.
- Lloyd Erdmann explained how West Lake Road goes under water when Little Rock Lake floods and if trucks drive on it, the road subgrade is destroyed. He advised against heavy trucks using the road.
- Nicki emphatically said that DNR would not allow anyone to use dynamite to break up the ice. Also, it is prohibited to put any sand into the lake or river from sandbagging, since it will cause increased flooding risk and pollution.
- Craig Gondeck said that Watab Township was pledging using of the town hall as the command center, getting extra phone lines if needed, and providing barricades for township roads as needed.
- Jim noted that Benton County's only role was to provide his time; everything else was being provided by Watab.

- Guy Spence said that he would discuss the information from this meeting at the next LRLA meeting. Education and information is very important at this time.

Respectfully submitted by Clerk Pat Spence