

## Pembroke News

Pembroke News from the Hooksett Banner

### **Flooded and frustrated – Residents express distress at flood aid meeting**

BY [JUDITH DIONNE](#)

Although a May 22 meeting at Pembroke Academy for flood victims from Pembroke, Allenstown and Epsom was held to offer guidance in getting assistance for recovery, the discussion turned quickly from that to prevention.

After agents from the Red Cross, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Small Business Association (SBA) explained to residents what they are entitled to for assistance and the steps they need to take to secure it, the floor gave way to Mike Poirier from the Office of Emergency Management.

Discussions centered on the Suncook River, which jumped its banks in the Mother's Day floods of May 2006. Residents were enraged that nothing had been done yet to fix the river to prevent future floods and at this point studies of the river were only in the planning stages. They also wanted to know why no steps have been taken since last year to address the problem of the river changing its course.

Poirier said, "FEMA has two contracts out for bid now on two studies, and this planning did begin last year."

Pembroke resident Tom Baumeister said there seemed to be no urgency on anyone's part in getting these studies done or doing anything about fixing the flooding problem surrounding the new course of the Suncook River.

Poirier assured residents immediate plans were in place to walk the river before the end of May and that all agencies involved see the urgency now after the second flood.

He added that the studies would look specifically at the new flood stages the present course of the river may cause and sand and sediment impacts.

Poirier said the studies may show that nothing needs to be done adding, "Maybe we need to let nature takes it course."

Baumeister fired back.

"We don't need studies," he said. "I have a study for you. I've lived on the banks of that river for 30 years, and I've never flooded.

Since the river jumped its banks, I've been flooded twice in one year. There's your study!"

Many residents concurred with Baumeister, including Allenstown resident Evelyn Bernard. She said she and her husband have raised the foundation of their home more than 3 feet since the flooding began, and she's had more water in her basement in the past year than she's had in the more than 25 years she's lived on the banks of the Suncook.

"Why is this happening?" added Baumeister, "The river's broken and it needs to be fixed."

Poirier assured residents the studies would be done and come together so a proper plan can be implemented to address the river's impact on the communities that live along it.

Arlene Magoon from the Office of Emergency Management said she understands residents' frustrations and reminded them many agencies are there for them to utilize.

To address the rebuilding issue, she said the proper course of action for long-term relief would come through FEMA and the SBA.

Peggy Mowen from the SBA said residents could apply for low-interest loans to help them rebuild.

"People affected need to apply," said Mowen. "About 95 percent of all people that apply are approved for the loans. The rate now is 2.875 percent."

If people haven't filed already, John Stevens from FEMA encouraged them to do so because that is the proper procedure to begin with.

"After you file with us (FEMA) you'll receive a packet," said Stevens.

He borrowed an audience member's packet to show everyone the form they need to fill out to continue the registration process.

Stevens pointed out that the form said something to the effect of "So you want a loan?"

"Don't let that throw you," he said, "Many of you will say 'No, I don't want a loan.'"

He explained that, by filling out the application, other avenues for long-term assistance would be made available to them, this included SBA loans and Community Action Program services.

"I know this whole process can be very frustrating," Stevens said, "You need to know we've heard of Katrina."

What he meant was that although the scope of this tragedy is smaller in comparison to the devastating hurricane, residents along the Suncook have lost it all like those in New Orleans and are in a similar situation.

"This tragedy is just as bad as what other people have experienced," said Stevens.

Andy Labrie from the Community Action Program in Concord supported Stevens in saying how important it is for residents to register.

"We have 11 families in Epsom and 14 in Allenstown whose homes were condemned," said Labrie. "We can't find four of those families."

He added that they want to help those displaced families but they can't because they have not registered.

All the speakers were firm about making residents understand that all the aid they receive will not get them 100 percent back to where they were before the flood. They hope the financial assistance they receive through FEMA grants and SBA loans will bring them closer to recovering.

"We need to know what people need," said Magoon.

If people don't come forward, we can't help them, she said, and added if someone knows a neighbor or friend that needs help, encourage them to register if they haven't already. She said all the agencies available to them would help if they have trouble with the paperwork or are bogged down with trying to rebuild.

The deadline for filing for national relief through FEMA is June 26.

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