

Update to Flood Protection Regulations March 14, 2011

Section 6.6 of the Town's zoning regulations contains standards and requirements affecting development located within "flood hazard" areas. All Towns are required to adopt and apply these standards in order to participate in the Federal flood insurance program. That program makes flood insurance available to persons owning property located within a flood hazard area.

Using satellites, digital imaging and more accurate computer modeling, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or "FEMA" has been able to produce more accurate "flood insurance rate maps," or "FIRMS." These maps were made available to the public by OPDS and will be effective on July 18, 2011. In addition to being available at OPDS, these maps can be accessed via the internet at FEMA's Map Service Center website <http://msc.fema.gov>. To get to the maps for Groton, click "product catalog" on the top red bar, then click on "future FIRM," choose "Connecticut" (under State) and "New London" (under County). Finally, click "Groton" and a list of map panels will appear.

In addition to using these new maps, the Town must update section 6.6 of the zoning regulations. The regulations contain standards which correspond to the different hazard areas shown on the new maps. In addition to updated standards, FEMA has created new terminology. Staff at the State DEP's Flood Management Program have reviewed the Town's existing regulations and have provided OPDS with detailed guidance. OPDS is presently reviewing this guidance and preparing draft revisions to section 6.6.

OPDS anticipates discussing the draft changes with the zoning commission at their April 6, 2011 meeting, and subsequently holding a formal public hearing on final proposed changes no later than their July 6, 2011 meeting.

When a final proposed version of these changes is ready, it will be made available for public review at OPDS, as well as on this link. As this is a Federal program, the Town will not have the ability to make changes to the standards or requirements. Therefore, unlike a public hearing on a conventional regulation amendment, the public hearing in this case is essentially a procedural matter required by State Statute. Failure to adopt the new standards by July 18, 2011 will result in the Town being suspended from the flood insurance program.