

Board discusses Hazard Mitigation Plan

By Frank Jost, Sentinel reporter, fjost@lewistownsentinel.com

MIFFLINTOWN — A plan to develop strategies for responding to natural and man-made hazards in Juniata County is under way.

The county's board of commissioners met Tuesday with representatives of the Mechanicsburg-based Delta Development Group to discuss the necessary steps for implementing what will be known as the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

The plan's goal is to eliminate or reduce the loss of life and property from natural or man-made hazards that may occur in the future, said Thomas Arminio, director of emergency management services for Delta Development.

"Hazard mitigation is not disaster relief — they are two separate terms. Hazard mitigation is a proactive approach to eliminate or minimize the types of hazardous situations that can occur," Arminio said.

Under current law, counties without a plan are not excluded from receiving relief money from the government should a disaster occur, Arminio explained.

The advantage to having a hazard mitigation plan is it can allow the county to receive government funding for projects aimed at minimizing potential hazards in the first place, said Nathan Garman, an emergency planner for Delta Development.

"With a plan approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, you are eligible to pursue ... funding to pay for proactive measures before a disaster happens," Garman said.

Both men said a key element to getting the plan approved involves public participation on the part of the county's municipalities.

"Delta's approach is to formulate a county plan and then have the municipalities approve it via resolution," Arminio said.

Garman said the plan also will reach out to community members, businesses and healthcare facilities to be a part of the planning process and to help implement specific elements of the plan once it is adopted.

"We also will set up public workshops to allow community members to learn more about the plan and how it will work. A steering committee made up of various community members will be asked to help facilitate public involvement in the plan," he said.

Commission Chairwoman Teresa O'Neal said the board likely will issue a formal press release to announce the plan later this week.

In other business Tuesday, the board took the following actions:

= Acknowledged receipt of four bids from heating oil suppliers to provide heating oil to be used by the county.

The board accepted the bid from Nittany Oil Co., of Lewistown, for 6,000 gallons at rate of \$2 per gallon.

= Approved the 2008 holiday schedule for county employees and the 2008 meeting schedule for the board of commissioners.

The next regular meeting of the board is scheduled for 10 a.m. Oct. 9.

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