



Office of the Town Manager
Frank Cassidy

STAFF REPORT

Warrenton Town Council
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William Semple, Ward 2
Larry Kovalik, Ward 3
Michele O'Halloran, Ward 4
Eric Gagnon, Ward 5
Paul Mooney, At Large
David McGuire, At Large

Council Meeting Date:	January 13 th , 2026
Agenda Title:	Post-Disaster Update: July 16 Flash Flood Recovery and VDEM Public Assistance Process
Requested Action:	Receive the Information
Department / Agency Lead:	Office of Emergency Management
Staff Lead:	Johnny Switzer, Emergency Management Coordinator

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the catastrophic "200-year" flash flood event on July 16, 2025, the Town's Emergency Management Agency, in coordination with Public Works and Utilities, has transitioned from incident stabilization to the Recovery and Cost Recovery Phase.

While initial damage assessments exceeded \$109,000, aggressive internal remediation efforts by Town staff have already realized significant cost savings. Staff is currently documenting long-term infrastructure damage to stormwater systems and preparing to navigate the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) Public Assistance (PA) process to recoup eligible expenses.

BACKGROUND

On July 16, Warrenton experienced 4.7 inches of rain in three hours (2.5 inches in just 30 minutes). This intensity overwhelmed critical infrastructure, leading to:

A retroactive Local State of Emergency (July 16–21, 2025).

Multiple water rescues and submerged arterial roads.

Flood Stage 2 conditions at the Warrenton Reservoir and the closure of Blackwell Road.

Widespread impacts to over 75 residential and business properties.

CURRENT RECOVERY STATUS

1. Damage Mitigation & Cost Savings

Through the diligent work of the Public Works and Utilities departments, the Town has successfully reduced the initial \$109,000 damage estimate. By utilizing in-house labor and equipment for immediate debris removal and minor repairs, the Town has avoided significant external contractor premiums.

2. Infrastructure Assessment (Stormwater Systems)

Recent records research has confirmed the Town's maintenance responsibility for an extensive network of:

Underground stormwater piping

Open conveyance ditches

Complex drainage systems

Additional quotes are currently being solicited for the repair of these systems. Because these assets are subsurface, complete damage profiles often take longer to materialize than surface-level impacts.

3. Insurance and Reimbursement Strategy

Once all damage quotes are finalized, the Town will follow a two-step fiscal recovery strategy:

Comprehensive Insurance Review: A full claim will be submitted to the Town's insurance carrier to determine coverage eligibility for specific municipal assets.

VDEM Public Assistance (PA) Claim: Any "residual" damages (costs not covered by insurance) will be submitted to VDEM for reimbursement under the Public Assistance program.

THE VIRGINIA PUBLIC ASSISTANCE (PA) PROCESS

To recover costs through VDEM, the Town must adhere to a strict federal and state regulatory framework:

Step 1: Damage Survey Reports: VDEM and Town staff conduct joint site inspections to validate the scope of work and cost estimates for each damaged site.

Step 2: Eligibility Determination: VDEM categorizes work into Emergency Work (debris removal/life safety) and Permanent Work (restoration of infrastructure like roads and water systems).

Step 3: Cost Sharing: The PA program typically operates on a cost-share basis. Usually, the State government covers 60%–75% of eligible costs, significantly reducing the burden on the Town's general fund.

Step 4: Documentation: Every hour of staff labor and every piece of equipment used must be meticulously logged to ensure reimbursement compliance.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend that the Council approve a resolution authorizing the Acting Town Manager to execute the Notice of Intention to Proceed with the VDEM Public Assistance process.

Service Level/Collaborative Impact

The response saw seamless integration between the Town and Fauquier County through the activation of the Joint Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Furthermore, the ongoing recovery involves a partnership with VDEM Region 2. This collaboration ensures that Warrenton benefits from state-level expertise and technical damage assessment resources.

Policy Direction/Warrenton Plan 2040

This event reinforces the necessity of the Capital Asset Replacement Plans (CARP). Investing in resilient infrastructure (Goal CF-5) is no longer a "budgetary choice" but a requirement to protect the Town from increasingly frequent extreme weather events.

Legal & Fiscal Impact

Fiscal Impact: While the 200-year event created immediate financial strain, the pursuit of VDEM Public Assistance and insurance claims aims to minimize the long-term impact on the FY25/FY26 budgets.

The severity of the flash flood necessitated a formal legal response to protect the Town and its citizens:

Local State of Emergency: A local state of emergency was retroactively declared effective July 16, 2025, under Code of Virginia § 44-146.21. This declaration was legally required to activate emergency powers, streamline procurement for immediate repairs, and qualify the Town for state and federal financial assistance.

Maintenance Responsibility: Comprehensive record research has legally clarified the Town's obligation to maintain specific assets. Failure to address these documented damages could lead to potential liability should subsequent, smaller storm events cause property damage due to compromised infrastructure.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Resolution – July 16th Flooding PA Application
2. VDEM Notice of Intent to Proceed