

Newburyport Resiliency Committee (NRC) - Notes
3:00 pm Feb 28, 2024

NRC Mission Statement

The Newburyport Resiliency Committee will analyze, coordinate, and develop a plan in conjunction with regional planning efforts to increase community resilience related to sea level rise, storm surge, flooding and extreme weather events throughout the city. Further, the committee will advocate for and oversee implementation of the plan's recommendations.

NRC Attendees: Jane Healey (chair), Julia Godtfredsen, Sarah Tappan (note taker), Kristen Grubbs (Newbury), Andy Port, Molly Ettenborough, Jon-Eric White, Samantha Burke

Other Attendees: Rick Parker and Chip Wallace (West Newbury Climate Change Resiliency Committee), Shari Melto, Steve Uzell, Jaedin Guldenstern, Sandra Thaxter, Anne Spraker Judy Tymon, Barb Riley,

Absent: Joe Teixeira, Connie Preston, Barry Connell

AGENDA

- Public Comments - none
- Approval of 01/17/24 mtg notes - all Approved - Sarah will submit for posting.
- Welcome: Shari Melto, Steve, Jaedin - Climate Cafe
 - Shari introduced herself as the leader of the climate cafes. Climate Cafes are a recipient of NRC's Community Partner grant. Jaedin is an alum of the climate cafes, soon to graduate from BU, she is on the board of climate cafe and will be moderator for the climate cafe. Steve and Shari have been working on a book about the Merrimack and have been taking photos for the Resiliency Committee to use. Lon Hachmeister (not here today) has been a long-time supporter of the climate cafes, and is currently working with the climate cafes on water quality issues on the Merrimack as well as facilitating communication between MA & NH.
 - Climate cafe's have been around for 10 years. Original objective was to raise awareness among great marsh communities to raise awareness on the environment and issues on the coast. The idea was to give younger people a voice on what they were concerned about. Cafes are community conversations where young people facilitate and host a small group and talk about issues that matter to them. They have involved 200 students, have reached 2000 people, and involved 8 schools. Have achieved their goal to get youth voices in front of the community. Students report that they feel that they are taken seriously by the community. However, Shari believes that raising awareness and sharing info is no longer sufficient at this point in time. Students are not prepared to move into leadership roles as quickly as we will need them to and students need to be prepared to participate more actively in the community. By 2030 HS juniors will be in careers and hopefully active citizen stewards in our community. They don't yet have experience with real world problems and social change skills such as conflict resolution and leading community dialogs. The Climate cafe goal going forward is to raise the bar and shift focus to action and recognition that issues are not simple and straightforward. Shari would like the Resiliency Committee to engage more directly with students.

- The climate cafe in April will focus on the CSOs in the Merrimack and the associated public health issues. It will be on April 20th at the Senior Center, time 1-2:30pm. This will be a new group of students. Shari would like to invite all of the Resiliency Committee to attend. Because this is a new group of students, she is looking for co-hosts to pair up with a young person and help facilitate.
 - Jaedin has been part of the climate cafe's since 2015, she is in last semester at BU. She has been thinking about system issues as well as local issues. She would like to communicate how the intergenerational relationship with Shari has influenced her life and influenced her to go into the environmental field because of her involvement with this program. Young people perceive the world as exposed to havoc. Older generations feel uncomfortable with what is being passed onto future generations. Jaedin would like to focus on how we work with what we have right now and how we make this an ongoing future-based, less individualistic focus conversation. How can we create a future together where we address the current issues and look at the current reality. She wants to foster discussion on how we make decisions and get stuff done and focus on intergenerational agency.
 - Steve was dialed in from Colorado. Shari and Steve have been collaborating on effecting change along the Merrimack as a potential model for the rest of the country. Using a map of vulnerabilities created by the resiliency committee, Steve took high resolution drone footage of each area except the industrial park. The spillway was not photographed but will be in April. He took over 300 photos from all directions and above. Many have been stitched together as panoramas. Steve shared some of the photos of the artichoke reservoirs, the current lower artichoke dam, cashman park, lots of shots of downtown (including an 18 shot panorama of the waterfront), revetment and bike path, joppa park and plum island. Steve hopes to help the Merrimack be a model for river resiliency across the county.
 - The Resiliency committee expressed gratitude to Steve. Andy noted the photos are very helpful. He also noted that he's had a long-term goal of connecting more closely with students and sees the value of the cafe's in expanding civic's knowledge and how problems get solved in the real world. Jon Eric and Julia also expressed support. Shari noted that the more we can get young people involved in the real work of resiliency issues the better.
 - Molly and Jon-Eric suggested that a student's project could be to help the city with collecting drone footage on an on-going basis on CSO's and PI dunes monitoring. The city has lost that resource in the engineering department. The city has a drone and Molly has a drone. Julia would like to learn to use the drone as well so she can help. Steve will be back in the first week of April and there is an opportunity to go out with him. Jane mentioned the NHS Community Service program might be a good opportunity. Need someone to spearhead the project. Shari asked if she could follow up on some potential projects that would align with what students are doing in school. She suggested piloting a project this summer and offered to make a proposal. And if it works well, expand next year.
- Committee Updates
 - CommEdu
 - Future-proofing Newburyport's downtown waterfront drone footage - Jane had a request from a potential student intern for this summer. One idea is to make short youtube videos on the vulnerabilities.
 - Community Action Project

- The Newburyport Climate Survey was distributed. This will feed the community forums. Over 350 people have responded and the majority are interested in the Forum.
- Community Forum for Climate Action - April 2nd (first of four). 3 in May are to be scheduled.
- Leadership Dialogues - May 20 is the date. Will be facilitated by the Collins Institute. The Mayor has requested that all department heads attend.
- The 3rd newsletter was distributed today.
- Community projects are going to be heavily focused in April.
- Good coverage in the paper over the last month. Jane and Sarah met with Dave Rogers and he wrote the first article. Jon-Eric asked if we have a plan for a regular column, such as each of the capital improvement projects. Judy Tymon noted that the housing coalition has been doing weekly articles and the paper has been very receptive to running them.
- Goal is to fill the last few Community Activist slots over the next month.
- Regs Working Group
 - MC-FRM floodplain mapping/Resiliency Checklist - so close to being done. Goal is to have these available to the Community Forum in April. This would be a good topic for a newspaper article. Need a separate meeting to finalize the review. Questionnaire is also almost complete.
 - Rick P. is anticipating 2030, 2050, 2070 maps of the River Road area as an output of the West Newbury MVP grant project within the next couple weeks. If these get folded into mimaps it would be good to have a common color scheme across the communities. Rick will share their maps.
- Finance & Funding
 - MVP 2.0 - decision was made not to fold the MVP 2.0 requirements into our current grant. Newburyport's current plan is to apply for MVP 2.0 this fall and go through the standard process in 2025/2026. Deadline for applications was moved from the Spring to the Fall. We need to keep Nancy in the loop to move forward with that application.
 - Heat mapping grant application w/ MVPC - We made a decision with MVPC to not pursue the NOAA heat mapping grant for this summer. MVPC believes there are other possible funding sources for this in the future and we will have more time for it after this grant. Methuen is applying and if accepted MVPC will be involved we can learn from their project.
 - Other Grant Opportunities – Julia mentioned a NOAA regional grant for education and outreach and an Essex County grant for which we submitted a letter of support. If either grant is awarded, Newburyport would be a minor contributor.
 - Molly mentioned the state's Climate Leaders program. Since Newburyport is a green community in good standing we are applying to be a climate leader, which will give us opportunities for grants for renewable projects. It requires adopting the Specialized Energy Code requirement (step up to current stretch energy code) and a carbon reduction plan which we already have. Molly agreed to share the pointer to the carbon reduction plan.
- Discussion: Community Event - Water Reservoirs Site Visit (planning) - Jane proposed a community education field trip to the water reservoirs. The Mayor is very supportive. Connie Preston is also supportive, and believes council members will be interested..l.

Sandra Thaxter suggested that the UU church green team might be willing to help. Andy noted that it could be a good media event. Anne noted that people don't understand that the river flows upstream. Timing-wise considered March 11/12 since there will be astronomical high-tide events, but that is too soon to pull it together. Jane was asking for input on whether it should be one location or multiple. Sarah suggested it would be valuable to include the water treatment plant and wastewater treatment plant and the spillway. Molly said this used to be part of the sustainability tour with GOMI and students. Students rode bikes between the locations. Maybe June when the weather is nicer. West Newbury is planning an event for their program during the March high-tide event. Might be a good model we could learn from (if open to the public Rick will let us know). Jane will schedule a follow-up conversation. Sandra suggested a followup discussion with people who go on the tour.

Jon-Eric noted that the breach was a good eye opener. The backwater event was thankfully quick and water from the artichoke river did not reach the area where the city's intake pipe is. The Water Treatment supervisor had been there for an hour before and had taken precautionary measures, including temporarily shutting down the pump station.

Jon-Eric further explained that the dam is 3000 feet upriver from the Merrimack. The water from the reservoir is flowing into the artichoke river and acts as a buffer against the merrimack water.

What moved back over the spillway during the high-tide was fresh water from the reservoir that had just recently flowed into the artichoke river from the reservoir. Test results for salinity showed no evidence that salt (ocean) water had reached the spillway. Breach was only inches over the spillway. DPS watched the water from the tide move into the reservoir and it only went about 30 feet upstream into the reservoir. Did not reach the location of the intake valve, which had been turned off as a precautionary measure. Anne noted that scum was visible and scum from the artichoke river was pushed into the reservoir. Jon-Eric noted that it would take a couple of hours of backflow for the water from the merrimack to travel 3000 feet up the Artichoke River to reach the dam, which was not the case here. Julia noted there is naturally-occurring scum from the marshes and biologics in the Artichoke River. The scum that was seen was very likely organic matter and floatables from those marshes floating on the water's surface. Anne noted that if the breach gets the projects done faster than it was a good thing to have happened.

There was a general consensus among the committee that flooding like that of January 13th will not be an isolated event going forward, and that the city must be prepared for more frequent and worse flooding than what has occurred in the past. Also general consensus that protecting our water supply continues to be the highest priority for the committee.

- City Project Updates
 - Lower Artichoke Dam Reconstruction Project (Jon-Eric) – Emergency Spillway foundation was completed. There is still some landscaping remaining to close the project out.
 - Dam project- Is in 30% conceptual design on the reconstruction of the spillway; next phase requires clearing some trees to allow for some soil boring on the existing dam. Hope to review the conceptual layout for distribution next week. Public reviews of the plans will likely be in the water and sewer commission meetings.

- Indian Hill Raw Water Line and Pump Station (Jon-Eric) - Also still in the 30% conceptual design stage.
- Water Supply Protection and Treatment Projects: Amesbury Interconnect – emergency and permanent, WTP Upgrades, watershed management (Jon-Eric) - No update, draft MOU is still with Amesbury's Mayor Gove office.
- WWTP Flood Protection - sidewalls (Jon-Eric) - no update
- PI Turnpike Feasibility Study (Jon-Eric/Julia) –Jon-Eric reviewed the RFP drafted by Newbury planning office, Kristen G.. RFP 95% completed to hire an engineering firm to investigate options for raising the turnpike to provide access to the refuge.
- Central Waterfront Bulkhead Renovations (Andy) – still proceeding on track.
- Central Waterfront Park (Andy) - still proceeding on track. Site grading is happening.
- PI / Reservation Terrace status (Julia) - no update
- CSO monitoring and communication alert system/app (Mayor's office) - no update

Other business

- In the upcoming budget cycle Andy is suggesting to the Mayor and Andrew Levine that resiliency is captured as a theme for CIP and budget.
- Jane mentioned that the MA Audubon is holding a meeting March 14, 10 am, to review the status of the living shoreline project. The Resiliency team and Conservation Commission is invited.
- Anne noted that since the power cable for Salisbury was sunk in the river, the boating community has had to replace their "zincs"/"sacrificial" anodes more often. Harbor is "hotter", more stray current corrosion, more electrolysis.

Next Meeting: March 20th, 3pm