

Newburyport Resiliency Committee (NRC) Meeting Minutes

3 PM January 19, 2022 Virtual Meeting

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: Julia Godtfredsen, Sarah Tappan, Andrew Port, Brett Lefebvre, Jane Healey, Joe Teixeira, Molly Ettenborough, Jon-Eric White

Absent: Rishi Nandi

Other Participants: Mark Wright

Note taker: Sarah Tappan

Minutes

- Approval of 12/15/21 mtg notes
Approved with no changes and will be posted to the web-page.
- Committee Updates
 - CommEdu
 - Speaker series (Sarah)
 - This month we developed slides for the discussion with the Mayor at the end of the month.
 - Planning has kicked off for the 2022 Storm Surge Speaker Series and there is interest in a couple of followup talks on the resiliency plan and a couple of non-resiliency plan topics. More to come as the planning progresses.
 - Website (Brett)
 - Drupal progress is much slower than anticipated although I am able to create layouts and pages.
 - Could use some help with website page content as well as the site layout.
 - Eventually we may need two servers for the site. A production site that will be live and a site for adding new content and making software changes. When new content is ready it can be deployed to the production site.
 - The expected budget for the two sites would be about \$100 per month.
 - Brett raised questions about how the finances work if the budget is approved.
 - ResilientNewburyport.com is the agreed on domain name, but it hasn't been purchased yet. Waiting for the budget approval.

Discussion:

Julia and Molly explained that the Resiliency program has an account number within the city's finance department. Approved budget would be allocated to that account. The Planning Department and the Sustainability dept have credit cards for expenses like this, and the expenses are then charged back to that account number.

Jane noted that we need a detailed plan for the upcoming budget cycle. There was a discussion around which department head would submit the budget request. Planning or Sustainability? Assumption is the Planning department. Andy noted that the council will ask why we can't use the city website. Jane agreed that we will need to provide justification as part of the request.

Jon-Eric raised the question of whether we should be requesting funding for staff for a resiliency department or a resiliency coordinator. Early in the life of the committee there was a desire to staff someone with the skills of Kristin Baja from Baltimore. Previously there had also been a discussion of a shared community resource model similar to the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission. Boston, and other larger cities have full time resiliency departments.

Molly noted that a new part-time special projects coordinator has been proposed by the mayor for the planning department. The role hasn't been fully fleshed out and it's not clear what their role would be with respect to resilience. Based on the proposed job description, Andy believes this person may be focused on coordinating between council and mayor with existing projects. The projects mentioned initially as examples were Waterfront park and Brown School. Julia asked for examples of what this resiliency coordinator resource would do, that the individual departments and committee aren't doing now. Jon-Eric responded that if we add an ordinance to fold resiliency into all departments and new projects, then we would likely need a person to coordinate tracking of this. This could be an administrator and enforcement person, analogous to Jennifer Blanchet's position for zoning. Molly noted that the person could track the net-zero requirements. Julia said this is currently covered by tech review and this committee. Andy said it's not likely that there would be additional headcount allocated.

Action item (Molly): Molly recommended an internal discussion between Molly, Andy, Jon-Eric, Julia and the Mayor's office to figure out what makes sense with respect to the role of the new special project's person with respect to resilience.

Molly noted that there is a communication component that she thought would be covered by the special projects coordinator.

Sarah noted that Salem and Beverly have recently hired resiliency staff and we could potentially find a job description.

Jane summarized that we need a short term answer to which department covers the resiliency budget. As far as a resiliency coordinator, as chair of the committee she can see a lot of work that a person in this role could help with, so she doesn't want this discussion to get lost, but the first step is to introduce the committee to the Mayor and that's going to happen next week. This might be a conversation that follows this meeting.

Jon-Eric's point is that as long as the resiliency committee is floating without being tied to a department and with no dedicated headcount, the committee could peter out over time. Jane responded that part of the committee's goal for this year is to integrate resiliency into all the departments and codify an ordinance for new buildings. A coordinator job description might fall out of that work.

Action Item (Jane/Brett/Andy) Andy agreed to include the website project in the planning budget if we provide the description of the line-item, the cost, and the rationale for why this doesn't get covered by the city web-site. This input to Andy is needed in the next two weeks. Andy would like an off-line discussion before submitting this.

- Brochure (Julia)
All edits to text have been made and submitted to Bill Goff at Mechanica. He was unavailable to work on it over the holidays and early January. Julia received an email from him last week that he will be picking it up again in the next few weeks. Once we get the final draft, she will forward it to the Mayor for his review and any additional comments before finalization, publication and distribution. We have discussed distributing it through city-wide tax bills but should identify other means/locations as well.
- Regs Working Group
 - Site design review/Resiliency Questionnaire
RWF has not met since last mtg. Mtg planned for 1/27/2022.
- Other Business
 - Nbpt Hazard Mitigation Plan (Julia)
Our last HMP Committee meeting with Jennifer Hughes was held in late December. We had finalized the updates to the plan and all action items and forwarded them to Jennifer for incorporation in the draft. On December 23, Jennifer sent me the following:

1) Updated Draft Newburyport Hazard Mitigation Plan: The plan is in excellent shape with all graphics and tables included. There is only one remaining piece of information necessary: "The largest employer in Newburyport is _____."

2) The Local Mitigation Plan Review Tool: This form/checklist must be sent to MEMA along with the HMP when it is ready to go.

3) Plan Submission Requirements: This is a useful checklist we can use to be sure we are following the correct process of submission and approval.

4) Draft Certificate of Adoption: This will be included along with the HMP when sent to the City Council for adoption.

The remaining items on the To Do list are:

1) Schedule the first "Listening Session." This listening session can be a Resiliency Committee meeting to which we invite the stakeholders invited to the previous "HMP Planning Session."

2) After this session, the HMP is sent to MEMA for their review and comment.

3) Schedule the second listening session . This session should take place at a City Council Meeting and include the core team, stakeholders, City Council and Public. Ideally, this meeting is where the City Council will adopt the plan.

4) Send the adopted plan to FEMA for final approval.

Jane asked Julia if she was able to get the language added for the community emergency planning discussion that we had? This was part of the conversation with Jennifer.

Action Item (Julia/Jane): Julia will need to review the comments to confirm whether this was added. Jane/Julia will draft language if it's not there.

- City Project Updates

- Lower Artichoke Dam Reconstruction Project (Jon-Eric)

- Jon-Eric forwarded to the W/S Commission seeking approval of a proposal from Tighe and Bond to get reimbursed for the work effort required to submit a grant application requesting design funds, up to \$250k. This will fund their design if we decide to go with them, which we will likely do. This is being discussed at tonight's W/S Commission Mtg. Grant applications are due Feb 1 or thereabouts.

- Lower Artichoke emergency temporary protection project (Jon-Eric)

- Waiting for Tighe & Bond to draft a MEPA package for the permit. Will need to go to MEPA and the conservation commission. Jon-Eric expects permitting to be completed in spring. West Newbury conservation commission has been extremely patient with us and has not asked for us to re-submit despite the delays.

- Indian Hill Raw Water Line and Pump Station (Jon-Eric)

- AECOM completed a peer review of Tighe and Bond's recommendation to proceed with their preferred routing option (Option 6 (out of 7)). AECOM agreed with their proposal and will discuss at tonight's W/S Commission Mtg.

- Water Supply Protection and Treatment Projects: Amesbury Interconnect – emergency and permanent, WTP Upgrades, watershed management (Jon-Eric)
No update
- WWTP Flood Protection - sidewalls (Jon-Eric)
Field survey ongoing thru early spring, then onto design.
- Central Waterfront Bulkhead Renovations (Andy) No update
- Central Waterfront Park (Andy) No update
- Waterfront West (Andy) No update
- Pl.Reservation Terrace status (Julia)

Jane asked Julia for an update from the emergency meeting yesterday with the Mayor and Representative Tarr. There was lots of damage from the storm on Monday. Probably saw from paper that one house was condemned. Coir bags and Rocks did their job and prevented additional damage. Rocks and Coir bags are stable. Next steps:: GZA is putting together 3 options to bolster the current barrier or add secondary barriers to prevent damage over the remainder of the storm season. Second, action is to contact MEMA and see if there is anything they can do for the residents. Third action will be to reconnect with the Army Corps of Engineers to push for the Merrimack River dredging project to stay on schedule and see if there are avenues to encourage them to fix the Jetty.

Finally there is a MRBA meeting on January 28 at 10 AM where all of this will be discussed in more detail. That's a public meeting on zoom.

Action item (Julia): Julia will send the MRBA meeting agenda and zoom link when she receives it.

Jane noted that there is a communication challenge represented by the Daily News article and its positioning of the rock wall as being built to protect the houses when it was approved to protect the roads and infrastructure. We need to promote the correct understanding of this so residents understand that this is not a precedent for protecting other houses on the island with hardscape walls.

- Preparation for Incoming Administration - A meeting with Mayor Reardon is scheduled for January 25 with Jane and the staff members on the committee.
- Finance & Funding
 - MVP Action Grant (final EOI due Feb 1) - water supply
 - Other grant opportunities

Discussion: The MVP grant expression of interest proposals are due 2/1. Julia explained that this is a very simple, very brief form that needs to be submitted. Julia thinks Jon-Eric has the knowledge to write this form. First choice for the grant request is 350K for design of the Indian Hill pipeline. Nancy was in the loop on this.

Julia asked why the artichoke dam design wasn't the first choice for MVP. Jon-Eric said that another grant was being pursued for that and the cost is about \$250K.

Is the bulkhead project a candidate as it is a sea-level rise resiliency project? Andy said so far we have only secured ½ the funding. Project cost is \$6M; we will ask for \$3M from economic development sources; but will need up to an additional \$3M to finish the project.

Jane asked Jon-Eric about the suggestion for a Plum Island utilities (vacuum systems) vulnerability study, which was mentioned as a potential MVP candidate project. Jon-Eric thinks this can be handled without a grant since it is an AIRVAC proprietary design and we should be able to work that in-house with them.

The construction of the sidewalls for the WWTF would be another option. This is approximately \$1M cost and will complete the work that the previous MVP grant covered for the Shoreline Resiliency/Critical Infrastructure Protection and Clipper Rail Trail Project. Sidewalls are in design now and will be completed this summer. Phase 2 for the sidewalls would seem like a logical candidate for the MVP grant but there was a previous discussion that it was unlikely to be funded by MVP.

Molly asked if American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding details are available yet.

Could we submit 2 projects for expressions of interest?

Action Item (Jon-Eric): Jon-Eric will follow-up on why phase 2 of the WWTF protection wasn't seen as a good candidate for MVP.

Action Item: (Julia) Julia will contact Nancy with the question about whether it's possible to submit two expressions of interest and whether that's a good idea and give her a heads up on the projects we are considering. Also ask whether ARPA funding is available yet.

Action Item (Jon-Eric): Jon-Eric will work with Nancy and submit the expression of interest form for the Indian Hill pipeline by the 2/1 deadline.

- **New Business**

- Potential pilot project w/ Tree Commission - stormwater mgmt/bump-outs
Sheila Taintor who is the chair of the Tree Commission approached Jane with a proposal that they are considering for a project to pilot a permeable bump-out on a street where it makes sense for both stormwater management, capturing run-off, and traffic-calming. The Tree Commission will likely pursue grant funding for this project..

Jon-Eric noted that the Engineering group can be helpful in proposing a place for this. There are a lot of wide streets that would benefit from being narrowed with grass swales. This type of project reduces pavement, and heat islands. It fits with the Resiliency Committee's advocacy role for actions that are outlined in the Resiliency Plan.

Julia mentioned that the Business Park needs additional trees to reduce mowed lawn and increase water uptake. There were previous discussions with the property owners but ran out of cycles. Jeff Esche was involved with creating a grant application. Met with Ralph Castagna and business park property owners. A plan was written 20 years ago for Malcolm Hoyt Drive. Everyone was in favor, property owners were willing to

fund but had limited time to volunteer. There is limited right-of-way on the roadways for trees but private property is an option. This could be a good project for the Tree Commission.

Jon-Eric suggested looking up Low Impact Development (LID) for roadway gutters. He noted that there is a long-term cost for people to maintain. DPW are not trained to be landscapers. Jane agreed but noted that we need to think about new approaches.

- Resiliency committee presentation to the NDCC.
Jane was approached by the Newburyport Democratic City Commission requesting a presentation/discussion on the resiliency plan priorities in early February. Initially they asked for a presentation on the risks to the water supply and Jane pointed them to Jon-Eric's Storm Surge talk from last Summer. Jane will reconnect to see what they are interested in hearing about. They are looking for a project to do. Jane would like to make this a discussion with residents of Newburyport to gauge their understanding of climate change and resiliency and assess what information they feel they need. This input would be valuable input for the Communication and Education sub-committee.

Jon-Eric suggested recommending projects that will reduce pollution and our carbon footprint. Protection of the Watershed. Molly agreed there are a lot of opportunities for projects aimed towards education on topics such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, pollution: Fats, Oil and Grease (FOG) in the sewers, PFAS in drinking water.

Brett gave some additional background on the project request. Mass Democrats are looking for ways to engage more voters by doing community-based resiliency projects to establish longer-term relationships with the community. Karen Trowbridge who is the chair of the NDCC had considered a resiliency-based project to allow members of the NDCC to work with members of the community. An education or smallish project would be appropriate. Jon-Eric suggested a community-art project related to sea-level rise. Joe suggested the space in front of Market-Landing park (where the white stone is).

Action Item (Jane): Jane will connect with Brett to discuss the DNCC request further.

Next Meeting: Feb 19, 2021, 3-4:30pm