

## **Newburyport Resiliency Committee (NRC) Notes**

**3 PM April 26, 2023**

**City Hall, 2nd flr Conference Room**

### **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), Brett Lefabvre (co-chair), Sarah Tappan (note taker), Samantha Burke, Connie Preston, Barry Connell, Molly Ettenborough, Andrew Port, Julia Godtfredsen, Jon Eric White

Other attendees: John O'Connell (Newbury)

Absent: Joe Teixeira

Introductions: John O'Connell returned to visit with the resiliency committee. John was part of the team that developed the Newburyport Resiliency plan. He gave an update on Newbury's Resilience activities. Newbury has a standing committee called the Newbury Municipal Vulnerability task force. Kristen Grubbs is the new assistant town planner in Newbury. She is a member of the Newbury Municipal Vulnerability committee and will be appointed as a representative to the Newburyport Resiliency Committee. Previously Kristen was the town planner for Ipswich and most recently she worked for the Trustees of the Reservations. John was asked about the status MVP Plum Island Sea level Rise project. He believes that there are some loose ends from the study that Horsley Witten produced.

### **AGENDA**

- Public Comments - none.
- Approval of 3/15/23 mtg notes - Since the minutes had not been attached to the agenda, Jane proposed to redistribute them after the meeting and if no, comments they will be posted to the website.
- Guest Speaker - Mike Strauss, Chair, Energy Advisory Committee(EAC)— Goal of EAC is to get to net-zero by 2050. Three areas of energy consumption in Newburyport: Residential, Municipal and Commercial/Industrial. Three largest sources of emissions: Transportation, building heating and electricity. Newburyport GreenHouse Gas emissions for 2019 was 200,000 metric tons CO2 equivalent per year, primarily across the transportation, heating and electricity.

The city's Net-zero plan is to move everything to electric and green up the grid. The grid is mainly worked at the state and federal level. The local focus is on moving people off of fossil fuels and onto electric replacements. Solar/Batteries, electric cars and trucks, moving to heat pumps, bio-fuel can be a transition from oil.

Green Energy Offsets are controversial and there is debate on the benefits. Offsets help finance green energy. Generally encourage conservation first, off-sets as last resort.

Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) is another way we can get more green electricity. CCA bundles all residents into a single buying group for electricity.

CCA has the benefit of keeping residential electricity costs level over a period time but also allows the city to include more green energy.

It would be good if CCA could be combined with Community Solar. Community Solar is a program that allows residents to purchase electricity from green energy suppliers, but the goal is for Newburyport to be viewed as a single purchaser. The MA Dept of Energy Resources (DOER) has to approve the proposal to combine CCA and SMART program Community Solar. Colonial Power, the aggregator that implements the Community Choice Aggregation program, is working on this as a top priority.

Building Ordinances are important for institutionalizing improvements. The city has an ordinance that requires an annual energy report for all municipal buildings and an ordinance that requires new/rehab municipal buildings to consider the net-zero full cost of ownership as part of the planning process. In the future, Newburyport could consider similar ordinances for residential and business, Building Energy Use Disclosure Ordinance (BEUDO) but the EAC has not pushed on that.

Looking to adopt the MA Opt-in stretch code: Would have to be approved by city council. Stretch-code is considered net-zero ready. If building a new home or major rehab it must be electric or electric-ready. If a developer chooses to use fossil fuels, the equipment will have to be more efficient.

[Energize Newburyport](#) is a new website for community outreach. The Resiliency Project story map is linked to this page.

Buildings-up program - lots of Fed/State money for electrification - Federal Buildings up program is supporting communities in developing innovative approaches to moving residents to electric. Newburyport has received \$5000 to develop a proposal on how to electrify older homes with care. Preserving historic character. Proposal will ask for \$200K for phase 1 program to develop conversion roadmaps/decision tree for residents possibly train energy coaches. Decision in Sept whether grant is approved. Jane noted there is overlap with resiliency to help residents with cooling as temperatures increase over time.

Would specific homes be included in the proposal? Possibly to fund building scientists to develop recommendations for various types of heating systems. Would be unlikely to fund the heating equipment. Newburyport Preservation Trust could be asked to provide guidance.

Mike has been looking at the Capital Improvement Plan and feels it will help the EAC track planned work in the future. Connie noted that starting this year the CIP will be handled as part of the budget process with the Council.

Finally Mike had reviewed the Newburyport Decarbonization plan prepared by John Snell & MVPC. Mike pulled out items that looked like they were related to resilience. DCR Forest resiliency program EEA 61C; MDAR Ma coordinated soil health program.

Action Item: Molly will provide a copy of the Newburyport decarbonization plan to the Resiliency Committee (done)

Questions/Discussion:

Clarify the movement towards upgrading energy stretch code? The updated stretch code goes into effect July 2024. The Opt-in stretch code (the net-zero ready code) would need to be voted on by the city council and the State's recommendation is to adopt the Opt-in stretch code 6 months ahead of July 2024. Mike and Molly are discussing the timeframe to bring this to the city council for consideration.

What is a stretch code? Newburyport adopted the green community act criteria in 2009/2010 which enabled the city to apply for certain programs. One of the 5 criteria was adopting the stretch energy building code. While the updates to the energy code don't require a council vote, the Opt-in stretch code does. [More info.](#)

Can you say more about why trying to create wholesale status for the city for purchasing solar requires regulatory approval? Adding community solar will require DOER approval. Where are we in this process and is it something that the council and the resiliency committee can help push for? We are working with our aggregator, Colonial Power who is pushing for this at the state level but also believe push from our elected representatives could help.

Action Item: Recommend joint letter from NRC, EAC and a resolution from the council to Representative Dawne Shand and Senator Bruce Tarr, requesting they encourage DOER to approve Community Aggregation programs be allowed to purchase energy from Community Solar/green energy suppliers. Mike thinks this is aligned with the state's goals to give Incentives for residential customers the ability to take advantage of green energy without installing solar panels, EJ support. (4/27 Jane followed up with Mike asking to let her know when the EAC is ready to discuss)

Decarbonizing impact on the grid? National Grid is coming to the EAC meeting tomorrow and hoping to hear an update on this. If all cars and heat are electric, it will require 2-3 times more electricity from the grid, but not happening overnight (approximately 400 heat pumps installed per year based on the number of houses transitioning 160 of these are oil & propane and have higher economic incentive to transition).

Opt-in stretch code is being discussed within the EAC building sub-committee. It would impact new multi-family developments (40R) and commercial developments such as Waterfront West, minimal new residential development in Newburyport. Retrofits will have historic exemptions.

Last year the DOER published a draft rule allowing 10 MA communities to ban fossil fuel in new buildings. In April a federal appeals court overturned a similar ban on natural gas in new construction in Berkeley, California. The court agreed the city bypassed federal energy regulations when it approved the ordinance. Opt-in stretch code doesn't rule out natural gas, but makes increased efficiency for fossil fuels.

The tax assessor has info on the heating source type for each home.

Industrial park has a lot of flat roof space & green space around each building. City could hire an energy consultant to analyze the cost savings for each business and encourage them to adopt solar. This could be a good grant opportunity. Solar suppliers like Energy Source are focusing on commercial properties.

City did a study on solar canopies in parking lots and determined it was not economically feasible due to a net metering cap for commercial properties (returning energy to the grid for credit) at the time. An alternative may be Battery storage facilities which would bypass the need to return to the grid. Nex amp - owner of solar farms, which supply power to the schools, is conducting a pilot to provide 20 houses in Newburyport with free backup batteries.

- Committee Updates

- CommEdu

- Storm Surge - Laura Ludwig, Center of Coastal Studies - Marine Debris Removal in New England, Wednesday 5/24 @ 7 pm at the Senior Center (Sarah)
  - Molly talked to someone from the Blue Ocean Society who was interested in trash in the river flowing into the ocean. Molly will connect her with Sarah. (done)
- Joint Press Release - NRC & EAC (Sam) - Press Release was published in daily news, the mayor's blog, sent to the Sustainability listserv, posted in nextdoor.
- MVP Action grant application - *Climate Resilient Newburyport: Community Collaboration and Capacity Building Project*
  - Due next Thursday at 2 pm. Application about 90% complete. Just tying off loose ends.
  - Includes 26 Community Partners doing smaller resiliency projects.
  - Community Forums, strong outreach to priority populations
  - Leadership Dialogs with city dept heads, staff and council members, education on climate resiliency and the plan and how that affects the departments.
  - Green Expo in 2025
  - Comprehensive communication strategy.
  - Climate Awareness Sculpture was not included since the specific proposal was not available in time.
  - The Sustainability Tour was included for FY24 and will focus on 2nd grade.
  - Julia is working on the MVP annual report and will have that within the next couple days. (done)
- City web page permissions & analytics – 64 hits increased from 12 last month.
- NRC table at Earth Port Film Fest table questions on market landing park expansion - suggestion to add more specifics on the resiliency aspects of the park project on the Resiliency Project's story map page. – Action Item: Andy will write up a few bullet items on the resiliency aspects and the updates to the culvert project. (Done)
- Plum Island story map: Original Plum Island home-owners guide with a resiliency spin. Brett has been adding images. Considering adding historical info, what is a barrier beach? Will revisit after the Grant is submitted. Some good historic images before the jetty was installed. Would want the emphasis to stay on sea-level-rise. Would be good to link to the sea-level rise viewer. Important for Newbury and NRC to review.

- Regs Working Group - no meeting this month.

- MIMAP floodplain mapping/Resiliency Questionnaire (Jon-Eric/Jane)  
New Dataset to be reviewed.

Existing zoning rules often allow for an easier process to gain approval for expansions on the island than on the mainland.  
Flood hazard zoning could apply to whole city

- Finance & Funding

- Grants -other FEMA/PI, MVP 2.0 (Julia) - no update
- Other Business
  - Town of Newbury - representative member - John O'Connell invited Jane to an introductory meeting with Kristen Grubbs (assistant planner). Recommending adding Kristen as a new representative from Newbury to join the committee. Newbury is looking to transition from Hazard Mitigation plan team to Resiliency Committee.
  - FLAP Grant for PI Turnpike Feasibility Study - Flap grant kickoff meeting was held yesterday - Newburyport/Newbury/Plum Island Wildlife refuge - \$175K for feasibility study for raising the turnpike from the wildlife refuge headquarters, including Sunset Blvd to the refuge. Need to get a handle on costs and permit requirements. Newburyport will put out the RFP for the study (Jon-Eric) Legal obligation of the municipality is still a question.
  - Lower artichoke/Solar panels - no update
  - City Boards and Commission Info Session - 5/4, 6-7:30pm @ City Hall Auditorium - Jane, Molly, Julia will be on-hand.
  - Intern - Sarah asked if the committee could use a summer intern. EAC could. Sarah will send contact info to Molly, Mike and Sam.
- City Project Updates
  - Lower Artichoke Dam Reconstruction Project (Jon-Eric) - no change
  - Indian Hill Raw Water Line and Pump Station (Jon-Eric) - no change
  - Water Supply Protection and Treatment Projects: Amesbury Interconnect – emergency and permanent, WTP Upgrades, watershed management (Jon-Eric) - no change
  - WWTP Flood Protection - sidewalks (Jon-Eric) ) no change
  - Central Waterfront Bulkhead Renovations (Andy) - no update
  - Central Waterfront Park (Andy)
    - Culvert project will be broken into phases. Part under the park will be prioritized in the short-term and is expected to be completed by the park contractor.
  - PI / Reservation Terrace status (Julia)
    - Dredging complete, 13 acres of new beach. Greg Moore planting beach grass program is in progress. DCR will be installing fencing and signage. Hopefully capture some sand over the summer with the beach-grass and fences. Restrict foot traffic? Mobi mats from CPC were approved.
  - CSO monitoring and communication alert system/app (Mayor's office) - no update.

**Next Meeting:** May 17th, 3 - 4:30pm –Will look into a hybrid format using OWL for the next meeting. Julia will be the host of the zoom meeting.