

Newburyport Resiliency Committee (NRC)

3 PM July 19, 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.

Attendees:

NRC Attendees: Jane Healey (chair), Sarah Tappan (note taker), Joe Teixeira, Connie Preston, Andrew Port, Julia Godtfredsen, Kristen Grubbs (Newbury Representative), Molly Ettenborough

Other Attendees: Daniel Keating (DPS)

Absent: Jon Eric White, Barry Connell, Samantha Burke

- Public Comments - none
- Approval of 5/17/23 mtg notes – approved with no changes. ACTION ITEM: Sarah will request the notes be posted.
- Membership update – Brett Lefabvre has stepped from the Resiliency Committee. Jane has been thinking about the committee requirements for new volunteers. She thinks that the biggest needs are volunteers with skills in writing, marketing and communication skills. She requested that current members think about people who might want to join. Andy Port asked how much web-design technical skills were needed, as Brett was helping in that area. The story map application is template driven and managed by MVPC, but Brett was going to be the volunteer representative to edit the Resiliency page on the city's website when that capability becomes available and we need someone else to take that on. Jane spoke to some people who expressed interest at the volunteer fair in April and Jane will review those again.
- Daniel Keating is a temporary highway administrator, working for DPS since March, who had solicited feedback and support from the committee for his Dollar for Trees. Daniel is looking for information from the planning department or MVPC, GIS data, to gather evidence to support planting more trees. The city has accounts for tree maintenance and replacement. 32 percent of resident calls to DPS during a 4 month period this Spring were related to trees. The cost of taking down trees is less than replacing and maintaining. The 3.25% of the Highway division budget dedicated to tree related expenses is not enough to replace the ones that are removed. He's looking for data to support reducing heat islands such as on Inn Street. One concern Daniel raised with moving ahead with his proposal is difficulty in the administration of voluntary funds which would need to come to city council for approval. The Friends of Newburyport Trees (FONT) has suggested donations that are currently high dollar amounts, and there is no easy way to donate small dollar amounts. One idea Daniel is considering is to add a QR code to water and sewer bills that will take residents to the FONT page portal and solicit donations for small dollar amounts for additional trees. If this approach is effective then a future phase would be to generalize the program to support other types of green infrastructure.

Feedback: Andy Port commented he had previously worked on the city's tree ordinance. Tree removals and not replacing as many trees as are removed has been a long-standing issue. Suggests bundling small donations and holding them until reaching a larger dollar amount before bringing to city council for acceptance of the donation. Suggested looking at opengov portal as an option for handling the donations.

Connie Preston noted that she previously was the chair of the tree commission. Loves the idea of this initiative, especially providing a link to FONT on the water/sewer bills. FONT is a 501c3, so offers tax write off, direct donations to the city would not be deductible. Agrees with Andy on the idea of collecting donations for a period of time and when a large enough amount, bring it to the council. Agrees that there is a long-standing issue of removals out-pacing replacements. The city has a Tree City USA designation which states that we should replace as many as remove. Particularly there is an issue with Norway Maples across the city that are all aging out at the same time. Connie mentioned that the council approved the purchase of a stump grinder which will help the issue of stump grinding as DPS will be able to do this in-house. Connie had started an initiative with the prior head of DPS to look at revising existing tree ordinance. She believes we need to revise it and has spoken to Wayne Amaral about this as well. Wayne was previously a tree warden for Newburyport. Ordinance focus is on the structure of the tree commission and how it interacts with DPS. Suggested that if DPS wants to pursue this, she would like to help.

Julia agreed with the proposal and the suggestion to consider opengov as a portal to accept payment. Could conceive of adding the donation question to new permit applications for example.

Sarah asked about the magnitude of the needs. Daniel noted that his proposal is trying to calculate the needs. Daniel would like to get access to the mimap tree map layer. Connie noted that this was initiated by the Tree commission 5 years ago. Lance River uses the map with the DPS mobile map and updates with tree's added and removed but the size and health of trees data may be stale as the inventory was done 5 years ago. Action Item: Jane/Sarah will provide to Daniel.

We discussed potential teachers that would be interested in helping and will provide contact info.

Andy wondered if there was potential for a city wide donation mechanism and reinforced the value of working with the schools as it brings students into the resiliency efforts. Molly mentioned she had a meeting the next day with the middle school about a professional learning community and they wanted to talk about environmental concerns. She will add resiliency, heat mapping and tree maps to that discussion.

- Committee Updates
 - CommEdu
 - Storm Surge - public education project (Sarah) – Storm Surge would like to propose a community education project. We'd like to paint lines on the poles at the public boat launch, corresponding to the projected Sea Level Rise in 2030, 2050, 2070.
 - Paul Hogg would be the contact to coordinate with the state department of marine fisheries for permission. Mention the Resiliency Committee supports. Draft the email for Paul to pass on.
 - Suggested to consider a sign on the harbor-master building at Cashman park. Maybe consider painting the lines on the harbor-master shack.

- Julia suggested considering as a backup or a second location the central waterfront bulkhead where boats pull up. Similar to what was done in Boston.
 - Andy suggested talking to Geordie Vining about the bulkhead idea for next Spring.
 - Suggestion to include a stencil of the dates on the colored lines.
 - Suggestion to mock up the photo of the launch with the lines so it is easier to visualize how this would look.
 - It was suggested that Jon-Eric would likely be able to help with the height projections.
- Regs Working Group
 - MIMAP floodplain mapping/Resiliency Questionnaire (Jon-Eric/Jane)
Jane is coordinating a conversation with Gregg Cademartori Gloucester's planning director, on their floodplain ordinance and which data layer they are using. State/woods hole model might be a better choice. Gloucester also has a questionnaire that will be interesting to learn about as it sounds similar to the one the Group is developing. Kristin noted that she would be interested in participating in this discussion with Gloucester.
 - Finance & Funding
 - NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge grant opportunity (for discussion - all)

Kristin noted that she was part of a conversation on this grant with PIE Rivers partnership and Hanna Morgensen, Coastal Resource Planner at Merrimack Valley Planning Commission. Hanna is the liaison for the eight-towns and the Great Marsh org. There was a lot of interest and ideas but no clear consensus yet. LOI due August 21. Email from Jon-Eric had suggested the artichoke dam and the WWTP side walls but the grant is regional and emphasis on green infrastructure. Grants are 15-75M with expectation of 50M so unless part of a regional project.

The MS4 permit process (stormwater management) required that towns could identify low impact projects during the first 5 years that could be implemented in the second 5 years of the process; greenscape projects. Discussion of bundling all the towns' projects. MVPC and the eight-towns and the great marsh org could potentially manage the cross community aspects of the grant. Jane asked if most of the discussion was mostly around tract 2 projects, Kristin said it was.

Andy suggested that if we can't get the mobilization of the groups within the next week or so, it would be unlikely to be achievable in this timeframe. This is a federal grant and it is expected that will be only 15 awarded across the country.

Julia noted that in discussing this with Nancy it highlighted that the list of potential projects for grants needs to be refreshed.

Sarah asked if investigation of storm-water runoff (pollution, pre-treatment etc) would be a potential regional project worth considering. Kristin said that was in line with the MS4 low-impact projects discussion.

Parker River Watershed hasn't had the same scientific level of study on water-supply resilience issues as Ipswich and Merrimack river watershed has had. Well health studies etc.

8-towns and the Great Marsh do not have a summer meeting scheduled. MVPC was going to think about their capacity in terms of driving this. Action item: Kristin will reach out to Hanna and cc Andy, Julia and Jane to see if she has any next steps.

■ Grants -other (Julia) –

Jane asked Molly if the Buildings Up grant request needed a letter of support from the committee. Molly said Mike Strauss has the application almost finished and they have a lot of letters of support so she didn't think so. She will ask Mike.

- City Project Updates - deferred to next meeting
 - Lower Artichoke Dam Reconstruction Project (Jon-Eric)
 - Indian Hill Raw Water Line and Pump Station (Jon-Eric)
 - Water Supply Protection and Treatment Projects: Amesbury Interconnect – emergency and permanent, WTP Upgrades, watershed management (Jon-Eric)
 - WWTP Flood Protection - sidewalks (Jon-Eric)
 - PI Turnpike Feasibility Study (Jon-Eric/Julia)
 - Central Waterfront Bulkhead Renovations (Andy)
 - Central Waterfront Park (Andy) - Andy noted that there will be a groundbreaking ceremony in the next couple weeks and it would be good to have the resiliency committee represented to speak to the resiliency aspects of the project.
 - PI / Reservation Terrace status (Julia)
 - CSO monitoring and communication alert system/app (Mayor's office)

There was a request in the newspaper this week looking for Plum Island erosion images. DPS has an image archive. Believe they are aware of this but should make sure. Julia thought they might be looking for photos from residents' perspectives. Andy noted the orthophoto images are particularly useful since they are geo referenced and dated. Molly mentioned that Mike Morris had a lot of photos.

Action Item: Jane will follow-up with Jon-Eric to check on the status of the on-going drone footage.

Action item: Julia and Andy will bring this up with the Mayor at their next meeting, so he's aware of the need for on-going drone footage for tracking.

- Other Business
 - Lower artichoke/Solar panels - no updates. Molly said the issue is there is no bandwidth to drive a meeting with this vendor currently; May revisit as part of watershed planning.

Next Meeting: August 16th, 3 - 4:30pm