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## Coastal Hazards Adaptation Team (CHAT) Work Session #30

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Tuesday, September 21, 2021

**2:00-4:00 PM**

VIRTUAL MEETING

### **Draft Minutes**

#### **I. Present**

Liz Durfee – Planner/Meeting Facilitator  
Rayann Dionne – Seabrook-Hamptons Estuary Alliance  
Tom Bassett – Resident Representative  
Jay Diener – Hampton Conservation Commission Vice-Chair  
Jason Bachand – Hampton Town Planner  
Michael McMahon – Hampton Fire Chief  
Debra Bourbeau – Resident Representative  
Nathalie DiGeronimo – NHDES Coastal Program  
Joe Lynch – Hampton DPW Deputy Director  
Bob Ladd – Hampton Village Precinct/Budget Committee? (Joined at 2:15)  
Jen Hale – Hampton DPW Director (join at 2:49)  
Barbara Kravitz - Hampton Beach Area Commission (joined at 3:07)

There was a brief round of introduction for those members present at the beginning of the meeting.

#### **2. Approve meeting notes from August 2021**

Ms. Durfee noted that the August minutes had just been recently distributed and more review might be needed. Members agreed to postpone the approval of the August minutes to the October 2021 meeting.

#### **3. Relevant Flood Updates**

Ms. Durfee asked if any members had flood-related information to share with the group. Mr. Bachand shared that the Master Plan Community Forum is coming up on Wednesday, September 29<sup>th</sup>. There are two meeting times that day and the event will be at the Hampton Academy Gymnasium. There will be multiple workgroup sessions, one of which will focus on coastal risks and natural hazards. The meeting date and times will be announced in the local newspaper and all pertinent information can be found on the Town's Master Plan Update webpage. Mr. Bachand encouraged everyone to share the event information and participate.

Ms. DiGeronimo shared that the NHDES Coastal Program's recent award from the NOAA's Project of Special Merit Program. Part of the funding will be used to support Hampton and the RPC's (Rockingham Planning Commission) design and implementation of a fair and equitable elevation and buyout pilot program in Hampton. She noted that Jamie Sullivan, Town Manager, will be the main point of contact for Hampton. She thought there could be opportunities for CHAT to be engaged in this process. Grant proposals for the

next funding round are due on December 3, 2021, and the Coastal Program has already begun noodling ideas. She proposed discussing later in the meeting the potential for including 18 months of funding in this next Project of Special Merit proposal to pilot the Hampton Coastal Resilience position that CHAT has been developing a draft job description for.

Mr. Bassett noted that around this time of year he usually shares images of his neighborhood (Northeast corner of Meadow Pond) flooding during the full moon/high tide cycle. However, remarkably this year there was no notable flooding. He also commented on how the skyrocketing prices of properties in his neighborhood which is in the floodplain. He felt this trend seems counterintuitive. He gave one example of a home purchased ten years ago for around \$400,000, recently listed at \$1.2 million, but then sold for \$1.4 million. He questions whether or not people really know what they are buying into. Ms. Bourbeau added that she felt they don't know. In her occupation which deals with NH state real estate transfers; the sales are going through the roof. Mr. Diener noted that until realtors are obligated to share whether a property is in a flood-prone area, it's up to the buyers to do their due diligence, and many don't know where to begin or what to look for. Mr. Bassett noted that another neighbor told him he wouldn't have purchased his property if he had known about the flooding issues.

Ms. Dionne shared that the SHEA is having its annual photo contest during National Estuary Week, shared a link to the webpage in the chatbox, and encouraged people to participate. Mr. Diener noted that the photo contest deadline is September 24<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm.

Ms. DiGeronimo also noted that the NH Coastal Adaptation Workgroup (CAW) will be having its annual photo contest this fall. They have rebranded the title from the "King Tide" to the "Rising Tide" photo contest. This is in an effort to recognize that communities are experiencing high tide flooding on a more regular basis, not just on the King Tides. This update is also an effort to make this contest as educational as possible. The 2021 Rising Tide photo contest will take place on Nov 5<sup>th</sup> through Nov 8<sup>th</sup> (Friday-Monday). During this time frame, Hampton is expecting high tides in the 10.7-10.9 range, and more intense flooding may occur if there is also a weather event. There will be a public online voting period, and prizes will be awarded in four categories based on their number of votes. There is a new category for capturing what makes a community resilient. Ms. Dionne asked if the photos must be taken during that November window and Ms. DiGeronimo said yes.

Ms. Durfee highlighted for the group that the FEMA BRIC grant funding opportunity is looking for letters of intent soon. Even if Hampton isn't planning to apply this year, it may be worthwhile to begin brainstorming and developing an application for next year.

#### **4. Emergency Management Planning discussion – Hampton Fire Chief**

Ms. Durfee introduced Michael McMahon, Hampton Fire Chief, and Emergency Management Deputy Director. Chief McMahon noted there have been several personnel changes. Police Chief David Hobbs is Director of Emergency Management, and Chief McMahon recently became Deputy. He is still getting up to speed on his new role and they are always fine-tuning their operations. He shared that although Hampton does experience frequent coastal flooding events in its most recent history, he's only aware of there being partial activation of an EOC (Emergency Operation Center). A partial activation also evokes

either Winnacunnet High School or Hampton Academy becoming the local sheltering center.

Mr. Ladd asked if there would be any benefit in creating an emergency management committee under the chiefs' direction to provide information, support, and feedback because of the complexity of situations in Hampton on items such as zoning laws. Chief responded that it appeared this group and the work that comes out of the Master Planning can address some of those complex issues. He agreed that these issues are not just a Fire or Police thing. He added that Emergency Management tends to be led by the Police/Fire Departments because of their consistent presence and involvement in emergency situations.

Ms. Durfee asked has the Town of Hampton had experience with coordinating evacuation events in the past? Chief responded that the last evacuation was about 30 years ago with Hurricane Bob in 1991 and then the no-name storm on Halloween that same year. The next most significant event was in January 2018 where individuals requested evacuation during the event. He noted that it's often best to shelter in place. Chief shared that Hampton has not had a mass or district-wide evacuation in quite some time. Ms. Durfee added that in the Seabrook Emergency Plan, in the case of a nuclear event, residents are directed to Dover whereas visitors go to Manchester. She wondered if the same approach/policy would apply to other types of evacuation events? The Chief responded that yes, it would make sense as this is the rehearsed evacuation scenario. He cautioned that Dover could be challenging in a coastal storm event that causes riverine flooding, making Manchester a better option. Mr. Lynch shared that the Town/DPW proactively puts out a notification/announcement when high tides are expected to exceed 10 ft. This helps to keep residents informed so that they can decide, before the weather gets serious, whether to evacuate or shelter in place.

Ms. DiGeronimo asked even though the Town has not had to issue an evacuation, has there have been medical emergencies that were difficult to access because of roadway flooding. Chief remembered having issues during the event in January of 2018. He noted that even though some apparatus can go through high water, it can come at an expense/damage to the vehicle. A few years ago, the Police acquired a high-water vehicle and now there is a policy that restricts fire trucks from going through high waters. They also have a boat and drysuits for occasions when firefighters have to enter the water to help access someone.

Mr. Ladd asked if there would be any benefit to installing evacuation signage or at least consideration given to installing signage. His concern is that beach visitors will not be clued into Town flooding alerts. The Chief shared visitors who are not a part of the Hampton alert network will still get national weather/Amber alerts through their smartphones. However, in an evacuation situation, the Police will take control of traffic direction. Based on this approach, he was not sure if signage was necessary. Mr. Ladd noted that visible signs provide information/education before an event. Mr. Lynch cautioned that signage might not always direct people to the safest evacuation route. It is possible that one of the roads could end up blocked by a fallen tree; each storm event is a unique situation.

Ms. Durfee asked the Chief if there were any information needs and he shared not at this time. He will be spending more time familiarizing himself with CHAT and encourage people if they had additional information to email or call.

Ms. Durfee shared an image from Tom Bassett that showed his neighbor back in August needing emergency assistance and the ambulance parked just before a large puddle. Mr. Bassett noted that the road at this time had only minor flooding but does commonly have more substantial/deeper flooding. He wondered what happens when the water is deeper and access is difficult. It begs the question about how flooding can impact emergency access and care. The Chief responded that if the water is knee-deep, it won't be driven through. The Fire Department has an operations plan, that would involve using the 10' inflatable boat with responders in dry suits to walk in and take the patient out.

Mr. Lynch asked how do Fire and Police monitor road conditions for flooding as that might be something DPW could assist with. The Chief shared that Police tend to report to Fire on road conditions as they are out there more. Fire might also hear from DPW. If there's a particular area of concern or low-lying areas in general, the Fire Shift Commander might go out and look and report back.

Mr. Ladd asked if the Town is in coordination with Seabrook Power Station and School System – as they have two distinct evacuation plans and are they in sync with one another? The Chief responded that they might not be 100% in synch but all three school districts are part of the EOC plan.

Ms. Durfee thank the Chief for joining and offered McMahon to join when Chief Hobbs cannot. Chief McMahon shared that they are working that out and that CHAT might see him more in the future.

##### **5. Coastal Resilience Staff Position – Review of draft**

Ms. Durfee shared a visual copy of the draft Coastal Resilience staff position description. She noted that Ms. Kravitz shared some additional comments this morning. Ms. Durfee summarized that this draft description is a work in progress and originates from one of the CHAT recommendations. One of the goals of CHAT is to help assist in the development and outlining the potential responsibilities of this position and to address the needs that have been previously identified. Ms. Durfee noted that there are five primary areas of focus for this position and the task is to go over each area and discuss potential revisions.

Ms. Durfee shared that Ms. Kravitz had asked if feedback from Town Officials had been obtained yet. Ms. Durfee responded that it hasn't been officially shared but once CHAT is satisfied with the description it could be sent to the BOS and Town Manager for review.

The group began the review section I (Internal coordination and capacity building). Mr. Diener shared concerns about I.d (securing funds for assisting property owners) because the statement seems rather open-ended. Perhaps clarification is need as to when and how the Town can and will provide assistance. He noted that most of the funding that could be secured by the Town to help property owners would come from FEMA. Therefore, he recommended combining I.c and I.d. Ms. DiGeronimo recommended elaborating on the types of projects in I.c that could be used to support municipal resilient projects and potential property owner or neighborhood projects and then removing I.d.

Ms. Durfee shared that Mr. Bassett had raised the question about whether the order of the responsibilities in this document should reflect the position's time allocation/effort (most time-consuming/highest effort first). For example, Mr. Bassett thought that responsibilities 3 and 5 should be switched. Ms. Durfee said that they could be reordered if that was of interest. There was a brief discussion. It was acknowledged that the percentage of time on any particular item might vary monthly, weekly, and even daily. It was also noted that these responsibilities are intended to just be categories or buckets of work that this person would be acting on. At this time, it is most important to capture all of the responsibilities recognizing the actual job description will undergo formatting by the Town's Human Resource office. Overall, it was decided at this point to leave the order as is.

Ms. Hale recommended combining 1.a and 1.c because they are all talking about aspects of developing and applying for a grant.

Mr. Diener added that perhaps 1.g, 1.h, and 1.i could also be combined and Ms. Durfee thought 1.f could be added too since they fall under the idea of coordinating with departments/boards.

Ms. DiGeronimo shared more information on how this staff position would be eligible for the upcoming Special Merit grant round. She shared that establishing this position is innovative and fills an important need that the Town could pilot with this grant funding. It's an opportunity to test it out. She noted that like all other federal funding initiatives, these programs are looking for how proposals will incorporate equity, justice, and inclusion. She felt that if this position can incorporate resilience through an equity lens it would increase its competitiveness.

The group moved on to Section 2 (Resiliency planning and implementation) Mr. Diener recommended adding a reference to 2.b to the Hampton Beach Area Master Plan as well as the Hampton Master plan.

Mr. Bassett commented that he felt 2.c was very specific and speaks to work that CHAT does as a group. He wondered if 2.c was necessary if they are a member of CHAT. Liz reminded the group that the intent behind 2.c was that the staff person would play a role in working with other staff and committees to take a look at the recommendations formed CHAT, identify whether any changes are needed, and assist/support implementation efforts. Mr. Bassett clarified that this person would play an intermediate role between CHAT and the Town. In essence, translating the recommendation to the Town departments.

There was additional discussion on the wording of 2.c with the following recommendation:

- Mr. Diener recommended incorporating CHAT into 2.b or repeat the language from 2.b in 2.c.
- Ms. Hale recommended revising 2.d by adding tracking/coordinating implementations of CHAT recommendations approved by the Town of Hampton.
- Mr. Bassett recommended retaining 2.c but adding the concept of communicating to departments CHAT recommendations and then keeping 2.d because that's keeping CHAT informed about department/town progress.

Ms. Durfee said that she would provide a few different options for clarifying 2.b/2.c based on the recommendations discussed.

Ms. Kravitz reminded the group that this staff person is working for the Town not hired to implement CHAT recommendations. However, they can assist in implementing those recommendations that are approved/authorized by the Town.

The group moved on to Section 3 (Management of CRS). Mr. Diener recommended removing 3.b since the Town does not manage the CRS requirements, but rather tracks them which is already covered in 3a.

Ms. Kravitz asked about adding the task of helping residents understand how they can get the CRS discount. Ms. Dionne and Mr. Bachand clarified that once the Town is accepted into the CRS program the discount is automatic to flood insurance policyholders. Besides the CRS program, there are additional improvements that can be made to structures that can lower insurance policy premiums.

There were no proposed changes to Section 4 (Represent Hampton's interests). For Section 5 (Outreach and education), Ms. Dionne recommended adding NFIP (National Flood Insurance Program) to 5.b.

Ms. Kravitz asked whether this staff person would also need a budget beyond just their salary. She wanted to make sure this person had sufficient funding/resources to complete the work outlined. Ms. Durfee shared that she was not familiar with the Town's policy and procedures. However, it seems like the budget would be dependent on where this position is based (i.e. is it under an existing department or its own department). She noted that there have been some initial discussions about where this position might sit but there hasn't been a discussion about budget. Ms. Hale shared that she and perhaps others had not envisioned it being its own department but under an existing department. In that situation, minor budgetary details would be accounted for within an existing budget and additional needs would need to be added and approved.

For members that joined later on, Ms. DiGeronimo gave a recap of the Special Merit funding opportunity. She asked for feedback about reaching out to the Town Manager to determine if there's interest in funding this position for 18 months with this grant. Mr. Diener shared there was a meeting with the BOS and Town Manager a few months ago about the concept of this type of this position using the draft job description available at that time. However, the conversation was more focused on RPC filling this role through the creation of a regional position. The Town liked this type of arrangement because it would be at a minimal cost to the Town as opposed to hiring a new employee. However, it was unclear if RPC would provide the same level and depth of service that a Town dedicated position could. The funding this position through a grant was not discussed at that meeting. However, Mr. Diener suspected that funding a pilot position at no cost to the Town would be appealing to the BOS and Town Manager. Ms. Durfee asked whether there is a match requirement for the Special Merit grant and Ms. DiGeronimo confirmed there is not. Ms. Durfee asked if the group supported Ms. DiGeronimo and Ms. Kirsten Howard (NHDES CP) engaging in some initial conversations with the Town Manager about this funding opportunity? There was consensus that this was a worthwhile opportunity and that given the grant deadlines they supported Ms. DiGeronimo and Ms. Howard moving

forward. Mr. Bassett asked if it would strengthen the proposal if the town agreed to partially fund the position either during the 18 months or following. Ms. DiGeronimo appreciated the idea but noted it's not a grant requirement. The intent is for the pilot position to address an identified need and provide the Town with the ability to see what can be accomplished in that time.

Ms. Kravits asked whether such a position would be better as a Town or coastal position. Ms. DiGeronimo responded that the work plan that CHAT has put together points to the need for Hampton to have a person dedicated to moving resilient efforts. A regional position would be great but the person's attention would be distributed and diluted across the participating communities. Therefore, Hampton wouldn't get the attention needed to make noticeable improvements. She noted that RPC is considering a regional position on resilience and sustainability which adds in another topic that further spreads that person's attention. If there were no other options then she would encourage the Town to take all of the help they can get from a regional position until they could fund their own position.

Ms. Kravitz asked about adding language to the staff description about coordinating with regional endeavors. Mr. Diener shared that this concept is already addressed and Ms. Durfee added that it's referenced in Sections 4.a and 4.c.

Ms. Durfee asked about providing Ms. DiGeronimo with CHAT's support either over email or at the October CHAT meeting. Ms. DiGeronimo would like to have a conversation with the Town Manager before CHAT's meeting on 10/19. Ideally, the conversation would happen before the next meeting, enabling her to give an update in October. If the Town is interested, they would need to provide a letter of commitment and she would request a letter of support from CHAT. The hope is to give as much time as needed to get those letters approved.

Ms. Kravitz recommended speaking with Budget Committee to get their input/support for the funding for the pilot staff position as they would be involved later on if the Town decides to create a new position.

Mr. Bassett asked how the staff position description would be used going forward. Ms. Durfee responded she would make edits based on today's discussion and then have another round of review at the next meeting. She wasn't sure that it needed to be finalized for the grant proposal or whether it would be included in the proposal. However, CHAT could make it a priority to get it finalized at the next meeting.

Ms. DiGeronimo added that they haven't figured out what would be included in the proposal, but it was unlikely that the pilot position would be described at this level of detail provided in CHAT's description. However, it would be nice to include a more refined draft when they speak with the Town Manager. She said it would be made clear in those conversations that the description is just a draft, but noted that it's a common practice to use draft concepts in these types of inquiries.

Ms. Durfee added she would also add a watermark to the draft document.

Ms. Kravitz suggested looking at other Town job descriptions to see how they structured. It might help with identifying the language used by the Town to introduce a new position. Ms. Durfee noted that at some point the draft description would be given to the Town for final formatting.

Overall, the group noted no major omissions in the draft description and felt it was coming along well.

6. Rules and Procedures – Brief review of CHAT member comments

Ms. Durfee said at the next meeting they would work on finalizing the CHAT rules and procedures.

7. Next Steps and Topics of Interest

Ms. Durfee asked the group to take a look at this list of potential topics and identify guest speakers or additional topics. She ~~shared that they spoke with~~ mentioned the climate in the classroom session Amanda Stone (UNH Cooperative Extension) ~~about the climate in the classroom session they~~ did last year at WHS. There is a video from that project. It might be nice to have students share that project with CHAT. Lastly, she shared that Mr. Diener and Ms. Dionne are working on the RFP for the CHAT outreach project. SHEA will release the RFP towards the end of September and plans to have a contractor on board by mid to late October.

8. Next meeting: October 19, 2021

9. Adjourn