
Coastal Hazards Adaptation Team (CHAT) Work Session #61

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

1:00-3:00PM

VIRTUAL MEETING

1. Introductions

CHAT Members

Jason Bachand – Hampton Town Planner
Jay Diener - Hampton Conservation Commission
Brianna O'Brien – Hampton Conservation Coordinator
Ward Galanis – Hampton Planning Board
Tom Bassett – Resident Representative
Stephen LaBranche – Resident Representative
Eric Sunderlin – Hampton Department of Public Works
Bob Ladd – Hampton Beach Village District
Barbara – Hampton Beach Area Commission
Mike McMahan – Hampton Emergency Fire Chief

CHAT Support Staff

Jen Gilbert – DES Coastal Program
Liz Durfee – Planning Consultant and CHAT Coordinator

Guests

Chris Muns – State Representative

2. Approve meeting notes from April 2024 (5 mins)

Motion: Mr. Diener moved to approve the April meeting minutes as written.

Second: Mr. Bachand

Vote: All in Favor, Mr. LaBranche abstained.

3. Relevant Flood Updates (20 mins)

Mr. Bachand

- On behalf of Ms. Hale, there will be a Kings Highway Drainage Project meeting on June 4 from 5:30 to 7pm. This meeting will cover design and scheduling for this project. See the Town website for more information.
- The Implementation Committee meeting will meet on May 22. The meeting will discuss zoning activity. One of the subcommittees will focus on enhanced coastal resilience. Some CHAT committee members are also part of the Implementation Committee.

Mr. Bassett

- Provided Flood Updates for the Meadow Pond neighborhood and surrounding areas.
 - There were five consecutive days of flooding from May 8-12 which seems to be the typical number of flooding days recently. The flooding seems associated with higher than 10-foot tides.
 - Mr. Bassett presented a chart showing that the recorded tides on May 8-12 were one to two feet higher than the predicted tides for those days. There was little rainfall during these flood events.
- Mr. Bassett and four other Meadow Pond neighborhood residents participated in the Hampton Seabrook Estuary Meeting on May 15. The group focused on Flood Ready Neighborhood programs and the hazards of contaminated flood water.
- Ms. Durfee stated the presentation discussed by Mr. Bassett will be available online and she can send the link for interested parties.

Mr. Ladd

- Stated the Hampton Beach Casino ballroom area is being considered for total reconstruction. A 1500 car garage is part of the reconstruction planning. The garage would be available to neighborhood residents free of charge during flooding events.

Mr. Diener

- Asked Mr. Bassett if he has historical record of flooding broken out by tide, rain, and sunny day flooding. Mr. Bassett stated he will assemble that data and possibly would be able to provide the data for the last year or two.
- Ms. Durfee stated this discussion is relevant to another agenda item.

Rep Muns

- The Flood Disclosure Legislation that has been in the works passed the Senate Commerce Committee with a 5-0 vote. It is now on the consent calendar for Thursday, and then the legislation will go to the Governor for approval. Per last month's meeting, the language of the legislation is less than what CHAT and Rep Muns would have liked. Rep Muns will continue advocating for a more robust bill that would also address rental properties.

4. Parking Placard Program – letter update (2 mins)

Ms. Durfee

- The draft letter was sent to the selectmen on May 7. Ms. Durfee is still awaiting a response.

5. Review of draft high tide documentation table (15 mins)

Ms. Durfee

- The information on high tides that Mr. Bassett has been collecting is useful to the Town and CHAT. Ms. Durfee would like to recruit more people to help document this information in a spreadsheet in a way that makes the data user friendly. Photos and information from the tide gauge would also be helpful. It is difficult to use the tide gauge to document historical data because the data is real time, which makes the snapshots collected by Mr. Bassett particularly useful.
- Ms. Durfee presented a rough draft of a spreadsheet that will be used to collect tide and flood information and asked for CHAT suggestions.

Mr. Bassett

- Stated his support for this project and stated that this information gathering takes him about half an hour. He stated he will share with CHAT which sources he uses to gather the data. He stated he is happy to provide a demonstration for how he compiles and documents the data.

Ms. Durfee

- Stated the goal is not to create more work but to share the burden and have other members document flood and tide information. This includes the sharing of flood pictures.

Mr. Diener

- Asked how this process would work if multiple people were to update the chart. Ms. Durfee stated it depends on who and how many people would like to assist. Ms. Durfee could grant access to the Google sheet, or she could update the Google sheet when data is sent to her. It all depends on interest level and level of Google sheets expertise. Training would be required at a CHAT meeting or one on one outside of a CHAT meeting.

Mr. La Branche

- Asked if the information in the top five lines of the current Google sheet could be converted into a chart or other visual data.
- Asked how often the data would be updated. Mr. Bassett stated he currently updates his data during flood events. He doesn't update every day. The timing of the update would be flood event related.
- During flood events, Mr. LaBranche stays home. He observes flooding near his residence but isn't prepared to go to where the flood event is occurring. This type of limitation might limit the amount of flood pictures other members or residents would be able to take. Not everyone lives near water and are not able to observe flooding events.

Ms. Durfee

- Stated that graphs and visual data can be created from the information in the Google sheet.
- Regarding determining when to update this document, Ms. Durfee suggested looking at the annual tide chart to determine the monthly anticipated highest high tides. Those days could be flagged as potential days to look at the tide chart. Additionally, the weather forecast could be used.
- It is a good idea to create instructions for how and when to fill in the Google sheet.

Mr. Diener

- Concurred with Ms. Durfee's suggestions and stated most of the data can be accessed online, with the exception of local flood pictures.

Ms. O'Brien

- Asked for clarification of how this tool would be used. How and for what would this data be used long term.
- Would this tool be available to the public? Would CHAT ask residents to assist with filling in the data?
- How would this tool be protected so that the information couldn't be accidentally deleted or changed if this was a publicly available tool?

Ms. Durfee

- The information could be useful to document when the flooding is the worst with respect to when the high tide occurs.
- It would be useful to have all the tide and flooding data compiled in one place so that trends could be tracked more easily.

Ms. O'Brien

- Stated it might be helpful to determine who besides Mr. Bassett are already compiling flood and tide data and select volunteers from that pool to help populate this tool. The volunteers could be selected based on where they live in town. This might be a better option than opening this tool to the public.

Ms. Durfee

- Stated that a non-editable version of the document could be available to the public to view.
- Crowdsourcing data could be beneficial depending on public interest.

Mr. LaBranche

- Stated that the weather reporters at local newsrooms may already be tracking this data. It may be helpful to ask if they would be willing to share the data if requested by the Town.

Mr. Bassett

- Recommended speaking to Kirsten because his data compilation is based on a report she wrote about the differences between actual and predicted tide levels.

Mr. Galanis

- Asked if the information on the top three lines of the Google sheet came from the NOAA tide charts. Ms. Durfee stated the information comes from NOAA and the hydrographs (tide gauge data).
- Requested that Ms. Durfee send him the sources for the data because he has an idea about setting up an automated request for data from government websites. He would like to work on automating some of this data collection. It will take him about a month to work on this project.

Ms. Durfee

- Stated that she will do some research and determine how to source the tide and flood data. She will send Mr. Galanis the links she currently has.

Ms. O'Brien

- Stated that she requested data from NERACOOS and received raw data, but it was not user friendly and it was raw data.

6. Recommendations status update (1 hr)

- a. Review recommendations and progress
- b. Identify any amendments and additions to the recommendations
- c. Prioritize CHAT's next implementation efforts

Ms. Durfee

- Shared the status of recommendations for CHAT. She asked if members would make a note when they give flood updates that are relevant to any of the recommendations. This will help CHAT members recognize any progress made towards implementing the recommendations. Ms. Durfee will annotate the progress of implementation.
- Ms. Durfee went through every recommendation and provided updates on each one. She asked for input and updates from CHAT members.
- Outreach
 - Ms. O'Brien stated that the tabling that occurred last year is a great way to interact with the community. She would like to volunteer her time to do more tabling if there is interest in it. Tabling refers to having a table with information at different events and locations.
 - Mr. Diener agrees that tabling is helpful and would like to see more of it.
 - Mr. Diener stated that CHAT members who are part of other community boards or committees should provide CHAT updates as part of regular agenda items. This is another method of public outreach.
 - Ms. Durfee stated that 40% of people who responded to a survey about property elevation and buyouts didn't know if their property was located within a special flood hazard area. This seems to be an opportunity to provide outreach to this part of the population.
 - Mr. Diener stated there was a presentation to the board of selectmen recently and there will be a survey going out soon with a link for residents to determine if they are in a flood plain.
 - Ms. O'Brien stated there will be a lot of outreach associated with the pilot project for the voluntary elevation and acquisition program.

- Ms. Durfee stated that outreach doesn't specifically have to be associated with CHAT activities to count as outreach.
- Master Plan
 - Mr. Galanis stated the board of selectmen is meeting and looking at implementation of priority items from the Master Plan.
- Ordinances
 - Mr. Bachand stated that when the Flood Plain Management ordinance was updated, three higher level standards were incorporated into the updated ordinance. The Coastal Hazard Overlay District was not incorporated but is still on the table for future updates of the ordinance. It will likely be included as an amendment in the 2026 update.
 - Ms. Durfee stated several amendments related to the flood plain ordinance just passed. Ms. Durfee is tracking amendments as compared to the CHAT recommendations.
 - Mr. Diener stated that reducing the substantial improvement threshold from 50% to 40% didn't make it into the updated ordinance but is being considered for future updates. 40% is a higher standard than FEMA's 50%.
 - Mr. Ladd asked about the definition of new construction. Would the legal definition of new construction be at risk with the reduction from 50% to 40%?
 - Mr. Diener stated the 40% threshold would be strictly for substantial improvements. Mr. Ladd stated his concern is that this would allow substantial improvements to existing structures, but no new construction on land with no structure. Mr. Diener stated the details still need to be worked out.
 - Ms. Durfee stated that "prohibit new construction within the SFHA" is for all construction, including critical facilities. Mr. Galanis thinks that will be hard to pass. Ms. Durfee asked if CHAT members think this should be removed from the list of recommendations due to the low chance of success. Ms. O'Brien asked if this could be kept on but as a "wish list item" with the caveat that CHAT recognizes this is not really feasible but based on conditions in the town of Hampton, it would be ideal to limit new construction in flood zones. Ms. Durfee stated this recommendation could be converted into an "educational item" discouraging new construction in the risk area.
 - Ms. Gilbert noted that Allentown and Salem prohibited new construction in special flood hazard areas. It may be helpful to speak with these communities for lessons learned.
 - Mr. Diener stated he does recommend CHAT keeps new construction prohibition language in some form because it is important.
 - Mr. Ladd asked if CHAT could ask the assessor's office how many properties are in the flood zone.
 - Ms. Durfee stated she is not sure if the assessor's office has this information, but this data has been compiled.
 - Mr. Diener stated that the SHEA economic report was completed recently. It might be helpful to discuss the report at the next CHAT meeting, specifically, the number of structures at risk from harm from flooding in upcoming years.
- Ms. Durfee asked if the items that didn't make it into the updated ordinance should be considered wish list items or if they need to stay as recommendations.
 - Mr. Bachand stated some of the items are still on the table as discussions about higher standards are ongoing.
 - Mr. Bachand stated the "cumulative improvements" item should stay on the list. Mr. Diener stated that it is difficult to track this with the current methods in place. There has been discussion about improving the systems at Town Hall to improve tracking.

- Mr. Ladd stated the “impervious surface” item needs to be clarified as to whether it is for new development or redevelopment. It would be more difficult to implement with existing development.
- The freeboard requirements are addressed in the ordinance with a detailed table. There is no more input from CHAT required on this item. Mr. Galanis concurred.
- For the recommendation to require compliance with certain standards for construction or substantial improvement within the SFHA, Ms. O’Brien stated that they should be built to VE standards.
 - This was not discussed during the ordinance update but will be kept on the list for future discussion.
 - This is a higher standard over FEMA’s baseline standard. The ZBA is still determining what it means for the Town to adopt this standard.
- Ms. Durfee asked CHAT members to let her know which items should be highlighted and covered in more details in future meeting.
- Ms. Durfee stated the recommendation below should be refined to better articulate the end goal of the recommendation.
 - “Restructure the development project review process to increase awareness of flood vulnerability”
 - The discussion concerning this topic centered on changing the order of timing when applicants discuss their proposals with different entities in the Town. Changing this timing would provide the opportunity for more education about flood hazards before the applicant goes to the planning board.
 - Mr. Diener asked for clarification of the extent of these discussions with the plan review committee. Mr. Bachand stated the plan review committee is part of the planning board’s application process. The issue with the current timing, for example, if the applicant goes before the zoning board, they seek variances before they go to the planning board. There needs to be a mechanism to get the information to people who aren’t required to go to the planning board. Flood awareness is important information to share with applicants.
 - Mr. Galanis received clarification that the building department is the first stop for projects. Ms. Bachand stated it is necessary to determine if the building department is will and able to disseminate flood hazard information. The information could be shared via an information sheet on the website with the application materials.
 - Ms. O’Brien stated that in the new building permit application, there is a box people are required to check if they are in the SFHA. The goal is for all structures currently in the SFHA to be entered in a database and then the building permit application will automatically check the box.
 - Ms. O’Brien stated that the Town is seeking funding for a program for development in the Flood Plain Management. The goal is to better educate the public.
- For the recommendation to encourage and incentive building in areas not vulnerable to flooding:
 - Mr. LaBranche stated that developers might disagree with this proposal because ocean front views are what sells.
 - Mr. Diener disagreed because there is currently development in Town in areas without ocean views. Perhaps the Town should explore financial incentives to encourage more development in areas away from flood hazard areas. In the past, redevelopment occurred with tax breaks as an incentive.
 - Ms. Durfee asked if there are housing-related incentives or upcoming regulatory changes that would encourage more dense development in some areas of the community.
 - Mr. Bachand stated the implementation committee is currently discussing some options concerning density.
- For the recommendation to pursue participation in the Community Rating System:

- Mr. Bachand stated that the Town manager and building inspector have been working with FEMA to address some of the non-compliant property issues.

7. Next meeting: June 18, 2024

In advance of the June meeting, please watch SHEA's presentation to the BOS about the Economy and Flood Vulnerability for Hampton, Hampton Falls, and Seabrook analysis. The presentation is scheduled for 5/20/24 and will be available online after the meeting.

8. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.

Members of the public are welcome at CHAT meetings. Visit <https://shea4nh.org/coastal-hazards-adaptation-team-chat/> to learn about CHAT. Please contact CHAT coordinator Liz Durfee at efd.planning@gmail.com if you have questions about how to join on Zoom. During the meeting, please:

- *Keep your microphone on mute to minimize background noise*
- *Use the hand raise function or type in the chat box if you have a question or comment*
- *Stay on topic*
- *Be respectful of all meeting participants*