
Coastal Hazards Adaptation Team (CHAT) Work Session #64

Tuesday, August 20, 2024

1:00-3:00PM

VIRTUAL MEETING

1. Introductions

CHAT Members

Jay Diener – Hampton Conservation Commission
Tom Bassett – Resident Representative
Bob Ladd – Hampton Beach Village District
Ward Galanis – Hampton Planning Board
Jason Bachand – Hampton Town Planner
Brianna O’Brien – Hampton Conservation Coordinator
Stephen LaBranche – Member at large
Jen Hale – Hampton DPW Director
Eric Sunderlin – Hampton DPW
Anne Cox – Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership
Chris Muns – Hampton State Representative

CHAT Support Staff

Liz Durfee – Planning Consultant and CHAT Coordinator

Guests

Kristin Uiterwyk – Urban Harbors Institute UMASS Boston
Nick Moriarty -

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

Motion: Ms. Hale moved to approve the July meeting minutes as amended

Second: Mr. Diener

Vote: All in Favor

3. Relevant Flood Updates (40 mins)

a. Project / Program Updates:

i. Hampton Voluntary Elevation and Property Acquisition Pilot

Ms. Hale

- The home elevation program is the current focus. Property acquisition is not the focus at this time. The previous DES grant provided assistance and a framework with which to roll out the home

elevation program. The current rollout is slow because of manpower capacity. A new grant proposal was recently submitted to address the manpower capacity and expand the program.

- The RCP was contacted and stated they will provide assistance.
- Recent steps forward include:
 - A letter of intent to FEMA is a requirement of the home elevation program. A letter of intent was drafted and will be edited per feedback prior to submission.
 - The program requires homeowners, in the absence of other funding sources, to fund the elevation and then seek reimbursement by FEMA. A letter for people interested in the program was drafted detailing this and other considerations.
 - Hampton's role is to be the intermediary to provide assistance to applicants, work with FEMA and Homeland security on checklists, and submit applications to FEMA on behalf of homeowners.
 - Applicants must be selected and there is no guarantee of selection. If the applicant is selected, Hampton will work with them to complete the process.
 - Interested homeowners will be selected via lottery and will receive assistance with applications.
- Ms. Hale and Ms. O'Brien have been receiving requests for information from Hampton residents. Some of this information is being updated on the Town website. There will be a FAQ section as well.

Ms. O'Brien

- When residents reach out for information, Ms. O'Brien adds them to a contact list so they can receive future updates. Ms. O'Brien also keeps an internal file of notes on applicable properties. The notes are updated with information provided by property owners when they contact her or Ms. Hale.
- The goal is to ensure that Hampton residents who apply for the program have a competitive application to increase the chances of being accepted. FEMA has certain eligibility requirements which property owners must meet to be eligible for the program.

Mr. Diener

- Asked if there is a proposed schedule for piloting the acquisition portion of the FEMA program

Ms. Hale

- Stated the elevation program is the current priority and there isn't a proposed timeline for the acquisition program. The acquisition program has a framework, but it is not fully developed due to the current manpower capacity. The acquisition program will be more complex and require more Town meetings and decision-making.

ii. Coastal Resilience Coordinator (CCR) Position

Ms. O'Brien

- The recently awarded Coastal Resilience Grant will build upon some of the goals and the groundwork accomplished by the previous CCR. There is an extension to the original CCR grant that has remaining funds. The funds will be used to accomplish the remainder of the grant scope.

Ms. Hale

- There is a need for a full-time CCR position, but the funding needs to be determined. Ms. Hale plans to move this conversation forward in the near future.

iii. Flood Parking Placard Program

Ms. Durfee

- Per the Town Manager’s office, 17 placards have been issued since July 8, with language reflecting the updated code. Eighty-eight placards have been issued in 2024, with nearly 20% reflecting the change to the town code that lowered the tide threshold required prior to parking in town lots.

Mr. Bassett

- Stated that 110 placards were issued last year per the Town Manager’s office. Ms. Durfee stated there are likely several factors impacting the decrease in issued placards so far this year, but the year isn’t over and the numbers will likely change. She feels the outreach about the placards likely impacted the number of people seeking a placard after July 8.

iv. High Priority Master Plan Implementation Actions

Mr. Bachand

- The Master Plan Committee recently conducted an exercise regarding zoning which was identified as an overall top priority. Another exercise was conducted regarding responsible parties.
- The plan has five central themes which were prioritized by year. Mr. Bachand showed a presentation on resilience priorities for 2024.
 - The 58 resilience action items were prioritized with some action items identified as the highest priority. The items at the top of the list are summarized below.
 - Some action items (4.13 and 4.56) have been addressed to an extent but will be readdressed in the future.
 - Some of the action items are ongoing such as 4.2.
 - Some items need more focus, such as 4.1, 4.4, 4.41, and 4.46.
 - CHAT members are welcome to review the list and provide feedback on prioritization.

v. Flood Ready Neighborhoods Project

Ms. Cox

- On Wednesday there is an Emergency Preparedness Workshop facilitated by Flood Ready Neighborhoods and Seacoast Public Health Network.
- Hampton Flood Preparedness Day will be October 4.

vi. Kings Highway Project

Ms. Hale

- The project is out for bid. There may be a need for additional funding, which is being worked on currently.
- Aquarian Water Company is also doing a project, their project is out for bid as well.
- This project is designed to help alleviate flooding in the Meadow Pond area.

b. Other flood updates

Mr. Bassett

- July had a notable lack of flooding despite predicted high tides. The exception was July 24 with partial flooding.
- August flooding
 - August 4 experienced flooding related to high tides and rain.

- August 19 experienced partial flooding and August 20 experienced typical flooding related to high tides and rain.
- DES has been conducting water quality testing with results showing high enterococcus levels. The funding is nearly depleted, with final testing likely in September.
- DPW replaced weathered signs warning residents about flood water hazards.
- August 13 Flood Ready Neighborhood meeting highlights
 - The meeting was well attended by residents and local and state conservation, wetland and drainage specialist.
 - Ms. Hale presented information about the King’s Highway Drainage Project.
 - There was discussion about berm construction, and it was deemed not feasible due to logistical and financial obstacles.
 - There was discussion about restoring 30 acres of degraded wetlands north of High Street for the purpose of flood mitigation. This area does not include the Grist Mill Dam. The area was a wetland that has been invaded by woodland. The area is private property.
 - A petition was signed opposing a parking variance for 931 Ocean Blvd. The public parking area is the same area used by beach residents and used during flooding with the placard program.

Ms. O’Brien

- Met with the Manchester Street Flood Ready Neighborhoods group recently. As a result of this discussion, there will be a Flood Preparedness Day on October 5. This event will allow residents to receive sandbags at the transfer station and receive pallets for elevating furniture in their homes. Volunteers will be solicited to help with Flood Preparedness day and assist residents in preparing for winter storms. Forms are available online on Town web pages.

Ms. Durfee

- Shared an informational pamphlet from Ms. Bashline titled “Become a Changemaker for the Lamprey River and Great Bay”. This is an advocacy training program that applies throughout the seacoast area.
- Ms. O’Brien stated the advocacy sessions will prioritize residents in the Great Bay watershed area with a cap of 25 people. But interested residents outside the watershed area can apply to attend if the session cap of 25 isn’t reached.

4. Perspectives on Managed Retreat in Massachusetts, Kristin Uiterwyk, Director, Urban Harbors Institute (30 mins)

Ms. Uiterwyk

- Presented information about managed retreat in Massachusetts.
- In the past five to ten years, it has become evident that communities are struggling with addressing rising sea levels, erosion, and related climate change impacts which is the reason for this study.
- The term “managed retreat” means the movement of infrastructure, people, and properties out of vulnerable coastal areas through processes such as voluntary buyouts, relocation of roads, zoning, and other tools.
- In 2022, a survey was sent to relevant parties in communities along the Massachusetts coast. Typical responders were town managers, town planners, and conservation agents.
 - One survey question asked whether managed retreat is being considered and the data was analyzed to try to determine why some communities considered it and some didn’t.

- The survey identified perceived barriers to managed retreat ranging from potential tax revenue loss, lack of political and public will to move forward addressing climate change, and competing public priorities, among others.
- The survey identified anticipated benefits of managed retreat to include reduced flooding, reduced municipal infrastructure maintenance, and enhanced natural resources, among others.
- Some tools needed to enable communities to move forward were listed such as funding, education and outreach, and legal and planning assistance, among others.
- Survey respondents listed resources they need help from to include federal, state, regional, municipal, academic, and non-profit.
- Education and outreach audiences were identified as the public, political leaders. Respondents noted they would benefit from information such as lessons learned, case-studies and model by-laws. Respondents would benefit from information about non-monetary benefits and how to make a case for retreat.
- The survey noted some challenges with the terminology “managed retreat” because it isn’t always clear what it means and it has a connotation of giving up or failing. Retreat evokes a feeling of loss and emotions such as fear and sadness.
- A series of recommendations was compiled in response to the survey data.
 - Funding assistance: This includes funding for managed retreat actions and outreach
 - Accurate, accessible, trusted information
 - Equity: This was ranked low on the survey responses but needs to be elevated through outreach and advocacy
 - Planning horizons: This includes timelines and future steps
- A managed retreat support group was created in Massachusetts and meets quarterly. The group is not exclusive to Massachusetts communities. CHAT members can attend so let Ms. Uiterwyk know if you are interested. The report shared this evening is available on the website at www.umb.edu/uhi under “Completed Project”.
- CHAT members discussed the emotion surrounding the term retreat. Ms. O’Brien stated she heard from a resident that resistance to retreat occurs because of the tax revenue that the shore front brings. She asked if managed retreat concepts include discussion about redevelopment of the shore area further back out of reach of projected flooding.
 - Ms. Uiterwyk stated this topic has been discussed but she doesn’t have a specific answer at this time. However, the potential loss of tax revenue is a complex issue requiring complex solutions and will vary across municipalities.
- Ms. Durfee stated she agrees with the idea of looking at a 100- or 200-year time frame. With a long timeframe, there could be a phased approach that includes elevation in the near term, and managed retreat and redevelopment in the long term.
- Ms. Durfee asked if there were any conversations regarding how regions plan to address density and managed retreat if there isn’t a lot of land available for people who need to relocate. Ms. Uiterwyk stated that she is aware of Martha’s Vinyard and Outer Cape Cod communities discussing these issues. Currently, there isn’t any regional collaboration that she is aware of but this is a pressing concern.

5. Outreach Table Planning - Hampton Historical Society Fall Festival (20 mins)

Ms. Durfee

- Hampton received permission to have an outreach table at the Hampton Historical Society Fall Festival. The Historical Society would like more information about the information to be provided at the outreach table. They would also like a family friendly activity at the table because the theme of the event is “Family Focus Festival.”
- The date and time of the event is October 13 from 1:00pm – 3:00 pm. Are there CHAT members interested in volunteering and if so, what information would be presented.
- Ms. O’Brien stated she can help prepare for the tabling event but she is not available to help on October 13.
- Mr. Bachand and Mr. Galanis stated they will already be there for the implementation committee so they could help with a table if they are side by side. Ms. Durfee may be in town and would then be available to help.
- Ms. Durfee suggested interactive mapping or picture drawing as the family friendly activity. The Historical Society has an old drawing that projected what Hampton would look like in the future. It may be possible to use this drawing as part of the family friendly activity to tie in to current coastal hazards.
- Ms. Uiterwyk stated she works with The Stone Living Lab that provides age-based approaches to climate resilience. She added the link in the chat and recommended CHAT review the site to see if the information could be useful.
- Ms. Durfee will contact the Historical Society to clarify the theme. She will readdress participation in this event with CHAT members after receiving more information from the Historical Society.

6. Other

Mr. LeBranche

- Stated nearby Salisbury Beach was on the Boston news recently regarding rip tides. The Salisbury Beach community raised \$660K to put sand on the beach but a subsequent storm removed the sand. This spurred discussion about future storms and beach erosion. In response, the governor of Massachusetts set aside substantial state funds to replenish the beach sand again. Mr. LeBranche stated a Salisbury Beach representative spoke to CHAT years ago about the wall the community built in the marsh. The wall didn’t solve the problems. The water bubbles up under the wall and there is erosion in front of the wall. This highlights how much of a battle it is to fight flooding.
- Ms. O’Brien added context to the \$600K sand purchase at Salisbury beach. The sand was used to create a sacrificial dune so the sand did its job. The dune doesn’t replenish itself naturally due to infrastructure in the area so it is replenished artificially periodically.
- Ms. Durfee stated it is important to track public investment in protecting private property. What is the cost associated with replenishing the dune and protecting infrastructure over time compared to the potential lost tax revenue of the homes were no longer in the area.

Rep Muns

- Please contact Rep Muns if there are any concerns CHAT would like state legislature to consider. The filing period for new legislation is early September and then again in mid-November. This is the only time legislation can be introduced.
- Ms. Durfee asked how soon amendments can be submitted for the Flood Disclosure law. Rep Muns stated there is no recommended timeline but the election could make a difference. The current Republican committee member has made it clear he doesn’t support amendments to the law. If Democrats win the majority, they are more inclined to be open to amending the law.

- A new governor will be elected and they will be creating a new budget this fall. Hampton should identify budget needs that should be added. Ms. Durfee stated this topic will be added to the next CHAT meeting agenda.

Mr. Diener

- Stated there will be a real estate workshop later this fall regarding flood disclosures. The workshop is open to everyone, not just realtors.

Mr. LeBranche

- Stated there is a sea wall in front of his house, south of Boar's Head to Church Street, and wondered if it is possible to have a study conducted on the wall based on its age to determine maintenance, repair, or replacement needs. Seawall longevity studies could be part of the budget if they aren't already. Rep Muns will ask if this is being done already. Mr. Ladd stated he believes the original seawall funding came from the State Parks budget.

7. Next meeting: September 17, 2024

8. Adjourn

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*