
Coastal Hazards Adaptation Team (CHAT) Work Session #67

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

1:00-3:00PM

VIRTUAL MEETING

MINUTES

1. Introductions

CHAT Members

Jay Diener – Hampton Conservation Commission
Bob Ladd – Hampton Beach Village District
Ward Galanis – Hampton Planning Board
Jason Bachand – Hampton Town Planner
Stephen LaBranche – Member at large
Eric Sunderlin – Hampton DPW
Tom Bassett – Resident Representative
Jen Hale – Hampton DPW Director
Rayann Dionne – Seabrook Hampton Estuary Alliance
Brianna Hagan – Hampton Conservation Coordinator
Pat Sheridan – Hampton Budget Committee
Kate Bashline – Hampton Resident
Gary Bashline – Flood Ready Neighborhoods
Chris Muns – Hampton State Representative

CHAT Support Staff

Liz Durfee – Planning Consultant and CHAT Coordinator

Guests

Dr. Jennifer Jacobs – UNH

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

Motion: Mr. LaBranche moved to approve the September meeting minutes as written.

Second: Mr. Bassett

Vote: All in Favor

3. Relevant Flood Updates (20 mins)

Jen Hale

- Shared information about what DPW is doing in Hampton.
- A position has been created at DPW to manage projects.

- DPW has been working to address flooding in Hampton since 2018 particularly with Meadow Pond and the Harbor. The flood studies made recommendations to address the drainage system in Greene/Gentian/Meadow Pond area and ditch mitigation. These efforts are ongoing projects.
 - The drainage system project has been funded and contracts will be signed soon with the contractor. Construction projects will start on the discharge end of the south side of Winnacunnet Road and working up towards the neighborhood. This project is being done in conjunction with other projects in the neighborhood to mitigate multiple disturbances in the neighborhood.
 - Ditch mitigation: Hampton has contracted with SLR to develop a pilot project that would reduce the number of ditches and establish single channel hydrology. Single channel hydrology ultimately reduces long term flooding by protecting the marsh from sinking.
 - A plan was originally designed, submitted, and approved by DES for 8000 linear feet of ditches within the Hampton Seabrook Estuary. DES expanded on these efforts with the Town of Hampton and other local communities and with matching funds. Over \$2M was received to expand remediation efforts over 300 acres of the salt marsh and the estuary.
- NHDES Grant: \$50K was received a year ago for Project Recap. These funds were used to hire a Coastal Resilience Coordinator and update Hampton's Floodplain Management ordinance with higher standards. Using this grant, DPW developed a framework for Hampton to serve as a sub applicant to FEMA for the home elevations and acquisition program.
- Two additional grants have been secured relating to coastal resilience efforts.
- DPW will be working with RPC through Climate Ready Hampton (CRH). CRH will be a municipal based task force that will have a full-time coastal resilience coordinator. The coordinator will be engaged with CRH to engage with all the partners working on coastal resilience. Coastal flooding can't be stopped but these programs and partners are working on mitigating flooding issues.
 - CRH has monthly meetings with partners where resources are shared with partners. Part of the goal is to set public outreach initiatives, likely quarterly to start. The public outreach initiatives are designed to help CRH understand residents' challenges and concerns.
- Land use permit tracking database: This database tracks all developments in the floodplain. The database will be integrated with a new software platform that ties into FEMA's floodplain programs. This will help ensure appropriate elevation certificates and compliance with flood zone building standards so structures will be insurable.
- Home Elevations: Six properties have been chosen for the home elevation program through Swift Current. This program will reimburse 75-100% of elevation costs. DPW and Ms. Hagan are assisting homeowners with applications. Another round of home elevation selections is expected in the future.
- Coastal Resilience Grant: This grant will help Hampton organize all the coastal resilience efforts and identify options and opportunities moving forward. The coastal resilience coordinator will help Hampton look at what's already been done and what projects have been started as well as reviewing and integrating information from the Master Plan, the Natural Resources Inventory and SHEA's Estuary Management Plan. The goal is to build a roadmap so the Town can continue to move forward with coastal resiliency.
- Coastal program NRPC: This project of special merit program funded through NOAA is working to identify marsh parcel ownership to facilitate ditch remediation efforts. Ownership is sometimes in

questions which caused roadblocks working in the estuary. Some of these parcels can be purchased by Hampton as conservation lands.

- Flood Preparedness Day: Approximately 400 sandbags were disbursed on the 1st Flood Preparedness Day. Volunteers helped fill, deliver, and set up sandbags. The Town transfer station waved fees related to clearing up after floods.
- Flood Ready Neighborhoods: DPW, DES, and town residents work together and determine how to ready their neighborhoods. Flood Ready Neighborhoods also works on dune restoration.
- Plaice Cove: Repairs are still occurring from Jan 2023 storms. A two phased approach will address these issues. First, an emergency authorization from DES will repair the current revetment. Phase 2 includes a more formal restoration plan, projected to occur in Spring, 2025. This project will require a full DES permit and FEMA funding.
- DPW is seeking zoning amendments to some ordinances relating to home elevations and floodplain management. Partnerships with UNH to better understand the research about floodplain management are continuing. Some areas of concern are vegetated dunes and diseases affecting them, replanting, and sand restoration best practices.
- Mr. Diener stated that the DPW project update will be shared with HCC and recommended the updates to be shared with other relevant boards and meetings. He also suggested sharing this information with Hampton town residents so they will be aware of all the coastal resilience efforts that are occurring. Ms. Durfee said updates are posted to SHEA's websites but is open to suggestions for ways to share this information with the public.

Mr. Bachand

- Stated the Floodplain Ordinance amendment regarding the elevation of nonconforming structures was tabled last year. This amendment was brought forward again this year as one of nine amendments that will be presented at the November 20 Zoning Board meeting.
- The ZBA is currently opposed to this amendment because they believe the applications should be reviewed by the ZBA first. The ZBA's goal is to make the properties more conforming. The issue is that it would be more expensive. For example, elevating a structure high enough to add parking underneath costs more than simply elevating a few feet out of the flood zone.
 - Ms. Hagan stated the ZBA has never denied an application for relief for a nonconforming structure which may encourage the ZBA to approve the amendment. Additionally, some structures simply can not be made conforming.
- If the amendment passes, it should help the community rating system. This amendment would create another opportunity to make elevation easier for homeowners. Ms. Hagan clarified there would be no negative effect on the eligibility for the community rating system. The community rating system standards are strictly floodplain management standards.
- The amendment was slightly changed from last year with wording added "*The structure is located entirely within the boundaries of the subject property and does not encroach onto any abutting properties.*"
 - This amendment refers to elevation only and doesn't refer to additions or new structures.
- This amendment helps homeowners elevate their structures out of harm's way.
- Ms. Hagan stated 27 homes in Hampton have applied for a permit for home elevations since October 2022, and 22 have been non-conforming.
- Mr. LaBranche stated CHAT should send a letter of support in support of this amendment. CHAT members concurred and a quorum was reached. Town employees abstained. Ms. Durfee stated she would draft a letter and Mr. LaBranche stated he would sign the letter on behalf of CHAT.

Mr. Bassett

- Commented that the King's Highway drainage project phase 1 is proceeding thanks to a supplemental ARPA grant for \$1.3M. This project funding reflects successful collaboration between many stakeholders.
- Provided flood updates for Meadow Pond Neighborhood with new drone footage.
- There were seven days of high tide flooding between November 12-17. The observed high tides were higher than predicted high tides. The flooding was all high tide flooding; there was no rain during this period.
- Aquarion contractors are working in the area to replace the water mains. They requested to start work at 5 am so they can work in non-flooding conditions. Ms. Durfee stated it would be helpful to get feedback from the contractors on the impact flooding had on overall project costs and schedules after the project is completed.
- The neighborhood has been in contact with the ZBA regarding some of the required variances that threaten residents' ability to park during high tide events.
 - The 931 Ocean Blvd redevelopment proposal is seeking a variance for parking to utilize public parking lots. If approved, this could reduce access to these lots by residents during flood events.
 - Mr. Bassett stated there was a request sent to the ZBA requiring applicants to post their variance application online so residents can review and make comments. This request was approved by the ZBA.

Mr. LaBranche

- Stated the drone footage from Mr. Bassett highlights concerns about building structures so close to the marsh. He feels the ZBA may benefit from drone footage to gain a holistic perspective of structures built close to ponds and marshes especially as flood events become more common place.
- Asked for a copy of the video of this meeting with the Ms. Hale's DPW updates. Mr. LaBranche will be approaching the Seacoast Media Group with this information in the hopes they will present this information to the public as a feature piece.
- Mr. LaBranche suggested this information about coastal resilience projects should be publicized on Channel 22.
 - Ms. Durfee requested feedback from CHAT members about sharing meeting videos broadly with the public.
 - Ms. Hale stated the DPW projects are the result of collaboration between a broad number of public and town entities. She stated all Hampton residents are invited to attend public meetings, planning boards, conservation meetings, etc. She doesn't recommend creating redundancies and feels that Ms. Durfee's time resources wouldn't be used effectively by providing edited CHAT meeting videos for Channel 22. The write up from the meeting can be shared with interested parties. These meetings are workshops, not final products.
 - Mr. LaBranche stated Ms. Hale's points are valid, and he would still like a copy of the meeting, but will step back from his idea about Seacoast Media Group.

Mr. Ladd

- Asked if Ms. Hale would approve playing her introductory video at a Village District Meeting.

Ms. Durfee

- SHEA has a meeting scheduled for December 11. Two of the discussion topics that may interest CHAT are updates on the Hampton Harbor bridge project and the Seacoast Greenway rail trail

extension. SHEA meetings are public and interested parties may attend. The meetings are recorded and excerpts are posted online.

4. Groundwater Rise Presentation (recorded), Jayne Knott, Hydropredictions, August 2024 Coastal Adaptation Workgroup (CAW) Talks Meeting and follow up discussion (45 min)

The pre-recorded presentation had technical difficulties and was unable to be presented. Jennifer Jacobs, Water Resources professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at UNH provided a summary of the presentation.

Dr. Jacobs

- Stated that sea level rise induced changes in groundwater has been an area of research for about 10 years. This research has led to a number of models to examine how groundwater rises as sea levels rise throughout the seacoast area.
- The models predict that close to the coast, groundwater levels will rise in similar levels corresponding to sea level rise. The signal for the groundwater rise is further inland with models predicting groundwater rise to reach Route 1 in Rye. Groundwater rise levels dampen further away from the seacoast.
- Recent research is being done to determine where the saltwater/freshwater line is. As groundwater levels rise, the saltwater will be pushed further inland. This means that formerly freshwater areas may become brackish and current brackish areas may become more saline.
 - Groundwater rise impacts
 - Possible impacts to drinking water supplies, septic systems, hazardous waste facilities
 - Groundwater rise can affect pavements and roads leading to cracking and breaking
 - Groundwater rise is a slower impact than flooding
- Current regional project:
 - Shallow groundwater wells (approximately 10 feet deep) have been installed in downtown Portsmouth to measure groundwater level with pressure transducers. The monitoring wells are designed to be long term monitoring wells over the next few decades. This will allow measurements to be tracked over time. The approximate cost for drilling the wells was \$6000 total. Ownership of the wells and instrumentation will be transferred to the city of Portsmouth for maintenance.
 - A concurrent project in Portsmouth is designed to create an action plan to identify triggers or thresholds where the city would want to employ an engineering or nature-based solution to deal with rising groundwater. Portsmouth engineers are concerned about the capacity of culverts.
 - The projects in Portsmouth were designed to be prototypes for lessons learned and best practices for other communities.

Ms. Durfee

- Asked for information about groundwater depth information.
- Dr. Jacobs stated the next step of modeling will address area where groundwater exceeds the surface.

Mr. Bassett

- Asked about effect of drought on groundwater levels and flooding.

- Dr. Jacobs stated groundwater levels fluctuate and can be impacted by drought.

Mr. LaBranche

- Mr. LaBranche stated his concerns about water wells becoming brackish based on reports from other US coastal communities. Is there a risk that Hampton’s drinking water from wells and aquifers will become brackish with groundwater level rising? Is this something Hampton should be planning for?
- Dr. Jacobs stated work has been done in Newmarket because some of their wells were becoming brackish. The problem may have stemmed from over pumping and bringing in water from Great Bay in conjunction with problems caused by rising groundwater. The solution was to move the drinking water source.
- Dr. Jacobs stated the town of Hampton should speak with Aquarian and Ms. Knott to get ahead of this possible problem early. Groundwater rise is slow, so there is time to enact a plan and get ahead of issues.

Ms. Durfee

- Stated drinkable water can be impacted several miles inland from sea level rise induced groundwater level rise. This issue is not just a coastal issue, it is a Town wide issue.
- Wetland areas are areas of vulnerability.
- The presentation highlighted the fact that groundwater levels may rise and will need to drain. It is important to think of drainage and ensure that coastal flood mitigation efforts don’t adversely impact groundwater drainage.
- Ms. Durfee will invite Aquarian to a future CHAT meeting.
- There is an online map that shows areas impacted at different levels of sea level rise.
- The information in the Coastal Flood Risk guidance, portions of which are incorporated into Hampton’s Flood Ordinance, is being updated currently. Some of the information pertaining to groundwater modeling data will be updated.

5. CHAT Membership (15 mins)

a. Moment of reflection for Jim Waddell

b. Letter to BOS for new representative

Ms. Durfee

- Will draft and send a letter to the BOS to identify a representative who is interested in being part of CHAT.
- Mr. Ladd suggested waiting until the first of the year because this is budget season and the holiday season. Mr. Diener suggested not waiting and stated the BOS can table the selection if it is in their best interest.

c. New Budget Committee representative: Pat Sheridan

d. Membership renewals

Ms. Durfee

- CHAT membership terms are two years with the option to renew membership at the two-year mark.
- Members due for renewal: Mr. Diener, Ms. Hagan, Nicole the ZBA representative, Mr. Ladd, Mr. Bachand, Mr. Bassett, and Sharon the alternate planning board representative.

- Mr. Diener stated he is interested in renewing but will check with the HCC first to see if anyone else would like to fill the role. Mr. Ladd stated he will relay his decision after the December meeting. All other members up for renewal in attendance at this meeting stated they would like to renew their membership. Ms. Durfee will follow up with other members up for renewal.

e. Comments or discussion on membership

Ms. Durfee

- There is a loosely enforced attendance policy regarding meeting participation. The ZBA member has scheduling issues impacting attendance. Ms. Durfee will reach out to the ZBA member to solicit a member who is able to attend meetings.
- Mr. Bassett asked if DES could have a representative at the meeting and Ms. Durfee stated she will check with DES for future attendance availability, but they are not CHAT members.

f. Looking ahead

Ms. Durfee

- Recommendations and Interests and Goals will be a topic at the next meeting. Please think about topics for discussion. This will be an opportunity to revisit the recommendations. The list has been static for a while and might benefit from additions.
- DES and RPC are tentatively on the December agenda to speak broadly about elevation projects to include area challenges and best practices and findings from other communities.
- Send recommendations for topics to Ms. Durfee.

Rep Muns

- Stated that residents he spoke to during the election cycle asked about flooding and what the state and communities plan to do to address flooding. His perspective is that the public at large doesn't understand what is being done to address flooding. They don't seem to understand the work, how it all ties together, and the end goal. He recommends laying out a plan that discusses key milestones and timeframes. He also stated Channel 22 is an option for disseminating information.
- Ms. Durfee stated there is a plan to disseminate the information to include a roadmap for the plan moving forward. Ms. Durfee can send Rep Muns the recording from this meeting so he can view DPW's presentation of projects. It's important for residents to understand we can't stop sea level rise, so planning includes steps to mitigate the effects.
- Ms. Durfee stated it might be helpful to have a needs assessment to determine where people are getting their information. How do we reach people who aren't already engaged?
- Rep Muns stated this communication is important for the public and for him as well so he can understand the plan and his role in the plan. He is willing to seek funds and introduce bills, but he hasn't been asked to. Ms. Durfee will add this topic regarding funding and coordinating with Rep Muns to the January agenda.

Ms. Bashline

- Recommended a panel forum or some other form of outreach to communicate the issues and the plan to address the issues regarding a climate ready Hampton. She stated perhaps CHAT could spearhead this idea as an "In My Backyard Café".

6. Recommendations – Next Steps (10 min)

Tabled to next meeting

7. Interests and Goals for 2025 (15 min)

Tabled to next meeting

8. Next meeting: December 17, 2024

9. 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 Liz@efdesignplanning.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*