

Nantucket Coastal Resilience Advisory Committee (CRAC)

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

Via Zoom

*Meetings are audio- and video-recorded

Members present: Gary Beller, Peter Brace, Dr. Sarah Bois, Matt Fee, Rachael Freeman, Dr. Jen Karberg, Christy Kickham, Doug Rose, and Joanna Roche (joined meeting in progress)

Members Absent: Tim Braine, Abby De Molina

Staff present: Leah Hill

Scheduled Speakers: Kim Starbuck, Alan Bartels and Kristin Uiterwyk of Urban Harbors Institute (UHI), and Dack Stuart of Woods Hole Group (WHG)

Members of the public: Jason Graziadei, Joyce Berruet, Elizabeth, Rick Atherton, Duane Jones, Tom Loughlin, RJ Turcotte, D. Anne Atherton

Recording available here: <https://youtu.be/f7V4KdzC5fs?si=Y0qTX6bh11fC0RWO>

1. Call to Order – 10:00am

- the meeting was called to order by chair Peter Brace

2. Meeting announcements

- Script for remotely conducting Open Meetings
- Meeting is being audio/visually recorded

3. Public comment on topics not on the agenda

- Hill read into the record four questions/comments submitted via email by D. Anne Atherton:
 - *Has the letter to ConCom regarding the construction of pools in a flood zone been made public?*
 - *In regard to Coast Resilience Plan (CRP) priorities, we are concerned about the island-wide sediment transport study. We are hopeful this can be addressed as expeditiously as possible.*
 - *In both the CRP and the Baxter Road Long Term Planning Memo, Arcadis recommended a feasibility study of nearshore breakwaters for Sconset. Why was this recommendation rejected in favor of a coastal engineering structure (i.e., geotubes), and by whom?*
 - *In recent storm activity, there's been no mention of erosion along Baxter Road, from the top of the bluff to the edge of the pavement. What are the most recent measurements?*

4. Presentation on coastal resiliency recommendations to include the Nantucket and Madaket Harbors Action Plan Update by Kim Starbuck, Senior Research Associate at the Urban Harbors Institute at UMass Boston.

- Starbuck provided a status report on the Harbor Plan Update.
 - *Update of the 2009 plan, recommending goals and policies to guide public and private land use along Nantucket's harbor waterfronts, to be approved by state*

regulatory authorities, e.g., Coastal Zone Management (CZM) and Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP).

- *Climate change and coastal resilience was not part of the 2009 Harbor Plan.*
 - *Asked for feedback on how best to engage with CRAC going forward.*
 - Bois encouraged the Harbor Plan team to bring CRAC targeted questions; that we should anticipate some natural differences due to new information and planning horizons; and that both bodies should be mindful to use compatible standards and data sources.
 - Fee underlined the island's culture of public access to coastal resources up to the high tide mark, and the need for additional boat ramp(s).
 - Hill spoke to the value of having consistency between the Harbor Plan and CRP projects, as it could strengthen future grant applications.
 - Consensus was to maintain regular communication between the two committees to ensure alignment and share insights.
5. Update on CRAC's application for the Offshore Wind Fund (OSWF) grant - Approval to submit needed.
- Hill reviewed status of OSW Fund grant application, asked for approval to submit.
 - Motion (Beller), second (Karberg), approved 8 votes in favor, with 1 abstention (Fee).
6. Discussion on site visit to Sewer Treatment Facility.
- Bois mentioned that the I&M recently showed some striking aerial views of the area; thanked Sewer Director David Gray for an informative tour; also impressed by the amount of monitoring equipment present at that location.
 - Fee suggested that the Town should be planning a structured dune.
 - Brace mentioned that Gray was looking into protective measures.
 - Karberg commented that the Sewer Department and the Land Bank are in active discussions about possible expansion locations at higher ground.
 - Bois asked what process would be used to determine when conditions at the sewer beds reach emergency status, and what protection measures will be permitted.
 - *Hill indicated that David Gray and members of the Natural Resources Department (NRD) will be meeting with DEP to begin that process.*
 - Public comment: Jason Graziadei of Nantucket Current asked if there were any implications to filling in the outermost sewer bed.
 - *Kickham's and Hill's understanding from the tour was that there was significant excess capacity at the facility, and that filling in the outermost bed would help prevent potential future problems with salt water infiltration.*
 - Related observations/takeaways from the visit:
 - *Fee's understanding is that the processing efficiency/capacity of the sewer beds has increased due to enhancements in pre-processing.*
 - *Kickham's understanding was that while relocation of the entire sewer bed operation would be an enormous undertaking, a more practical alternative may be to gradually reduce dependency on the most vulnerable parts of the operation by adding satellite capacity at higher elevation(s). He also raised the future issue of access.*

7. Update on Conservation Commission meeting regarding proposed updates to local Wetland Regulations (see packet).
 - Brace briefly recapped the ConCom meeting, and expressed a need for more advance warning and clarity as it relates to upcoming topics of relevance to CRAC at other Town committees, commissions and boards.
 - *Fee applauded Brace's letter.*
 - Letter and comment protocol for the future.
 - *Hill stated that as an advisory committee, CRAC needs to secure approval from the Select Board in advance of making recommendations to other boards, commissions and committees.*
8. Update on Article 10 regarding coastal resiliency funds by Leah Hill, Town of Nantucket Coastal Resilience Coordinator.
 - NRD's internal project review process: Hill provided brief recap.
 - Finance Department's Capital Project's Collision presentation:
 - *Hill directed attention to the slide titled "Execution Collision", where constraints like budget (e.g., tax revenues, free cash, and debt), staff and management bandwidth, permitting timelines, abutter input, and unforeseen emergencies can all affect sequencing of projects.*
 - *Hill reviewed the foremost capital requests for FY 2025, discussed allocation increase recommendation that was included in Q3 report to Select Board*
 - Comments from committee members included:
 - *Roche stated that there is also \$100k in the admin budget for a grant writer/project manager (contract position), to be shared across multiple departments.*
 - *Kickham commented that the Capital Committee did not approve the NRD's Climate Action Plan, as it was too vague.*
 - *Rose commented that in addition to helping to prioritize coastal resilience projects, the CRP should also be serving as a filter for other capital investments, (e.g., does it make sense for the Town to be investing in refurbishing tennis courts in a flood zone?) Roche responded that the CRP is top of mind with FinCom, as well as at CapCom. Brace asked committee members to report back to CRAC on topics like this. Fee expressed concern that coastal resilience has gained awareness, but that some projects often gain a momentum of their own, e.g. the Harbor Master building, Tom Nevers fields, such that they proceed without sufficient concern for coastal resilience issues.*
 - *Fee reiterated his call for a new betterments program as top priority. Rose asked if there was someone in Town government who is accountable for delivering the local solution he's asking for. Fee responded that Town Counsel has spent some time on it, but without staff buy-in – he specifically suggested NRD – it will remain subject to approval in Boston. Hill expressed concern that betterments cannot cover operations and maintenance costs. Fee responded that it would take work to figure out those details, but believes it could be done through a combination of lump sum and annual votes.*

- *Freeman commented that her ranking of priorities continues to shift as her thinking evolves: she is sensitive to the collective desire for a visible, structural accomplishment (e.g., Ames Avenue bridge), but upon reflection sees how an initiative like the strategic relocation program might actually lessen the need for that.*
 - *Kickham asked Hill what is the first project that would satisfy the public desire for a visible, structural improvement. Hill responded with the Easy Street project, which just kicked off last week; Brace offered the Sesachacha Pond project as another highly visible, structural project.*
9. Discuss upcoming February 27th meeting (school break). After brief discussion, motion to cancel (Bois), second (Roche), approved unanimously 9-0.
10. Public outreach ideas/strategies from committee members.
- Hill reminded committee members to submit thoughts as to home buyers brochure.
 - Rose provided a brief update on the media scorecard: 132k impressions to date.
 - Bois asked whether it would be appropriate for aligned organizations (e.g., Linda Loring Nature Foundation) to tag NRD in its own content. Hill answered affirmatively.
11. Approval of Minutes. None available to review.
12. New business, Committee & Natural Resources Dept. reports from Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Harbor and Shellfish Advisory Board, Select Board, Advisory Committee of Non-Voting Taxpayers, and other committee members.
- Hill provided brief updates on:
 - *ConCom's next hearing regarding update of the Wetlands Regulations is Feb 1st. Beller later asked if the buffer zone issue would be discussed, and if so, if CRAC can offer its support for enhanced buffer zones. Hill reiterated proper protocol is for CRAC to share its recommendation to the Select Board prior to submitting to ConCom. Fee encouraged members of the public to express their support. Brace offered to draft a letter to be discussed at the next CRAC meeting. Motion to approve (Fee), second (Rose), approved unanimously 9-0.*
 - *Steamship Authority (SSA) has announced that \$1m budgeted in the FY 2025 for feasibility study for a climate-resilient Nantucket terminal, plus \$25M in FY 2030 and another \$25M in FY 2031 for construction of that terminal. Hill will keep the committee posted as this develops. Fee asked if TON can collaborate on grants and Federal/state funding. Brace and Roche underlined the importance of keeping aligned organizations in the loop on all developments relating to wharf resilience.*
 - *Brief recap of recent storm activity.*
13. Discussion of upcoming meeting dates and topics: Next Meeting is February 13, 2024, on Zoom.
14. Motion to adjourn - (Rose), second (Fee), approved unanimously.

