

Nantucket Coastal Resilience Advisory Committee (CRAC)

Tuesday, May 14, 2024

Via Zoom

*Meetings are audio- and video-recorded

Members present: Gary Beller, Dr. Sarah Bois, Tim Braine, Matt Fee, Rachael Freeman, Doug Rose, Joanna Roche (joined @ ~10:04), Dr. Jen Karberg (joined @ ~10:09), Peter Brace (joined at ~10:33)

Members Absent: Abby DeMolina, Christy Kickham

Staff present: Leah Hill, Holly Backus

Scheduled Speakers: Art Gasbarro, Chair of the Airport Commission; John Brescher, Vice Chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA); Barry Rector, Chair of the Nantucket Planning & Economic Development Commission (NP&EDC) and member of the Planning Board; Ray Pohl, Chair of the Historic District Commission (HDC)

Members of the public: Toni, Caroline Baltzer, Joyce Berruet, D.Anne Atherton, Gerry Connick

Recording available here: https://youtu.be/r_tX1HHZNQI?si=LNrRLnDqPOLOvTcR

1. Call to Order – 10:03am

- the meeting was called to order by vice chair Dr. Sarah Bois

2. Meeting announcements: Bois read abbreviated script on how the public can participate.

3. Public comment on topics not on the agenda:

- Hill read into the record a letter from Gerry Connick of Washington Street dated 5/10/24, expressing concerns with Article 69, which was approved by voters at the 5/9/24 Town Meeting. He expressed concerns relating to the application of betterments to fund coastal resilience projects which benefit the entire island population.
 - *Hill advised the Committee that she has reached out to Mr. Connick to follow up; he stated that he will contact Hill when he is on-island.*
 - *Bois advised the Committee that there will be an agenda item in a future meeting to debrief results from Town Meeting regarding coastal resilience measures.*

4. Approval of Minutes: March 12, 2024; March 26, 2024; April 1, 2024; April 9, 2024

- Motion to approve (Fee), seconded (Beller), approved 8-0.

5. Review and approval of CRAC's 1st quarter report

- Hill reviewed the draft report
 - *Rose suggested that the efforts with Shelly Lockwood to inform real estate agents and homebuyers about coastal resilience might be worthy of highlighting.*
 - *Backus reminded the Committee that a Resilience Toolkit is on the Town website.*
- Motion to approve (Beller), seconded (Fee), approved 8-0.

6. Discussion with Town regulatory boards and commissions on how they apply and plan for coastal resilience including: current regulations, policies, or by-laws with coastal resilience

in mind; Town's Coastal Resilience Plan; sea level rise; associated maps and models for Nantucket; at risk areas; questions they are receiving from applicants; challenges and issues they are facing, how can CRAC help?

- Brescher indicated that ZBA rarely deals with coastal resilience issues directly, as it adheres strictly to the zoning bylaws.
- Gasparro invited the Committee and members of the public to attend an open house at the airport on 5/15/24. He indicated that the Airport Commission actively monitors erosion at the south end of the airport property and the positioning of the south fence, but the rest of the airport is at sufficient elevation to not be facing any threats to its operations for the foreseeable future.
 - *Hill asked Gasparro if the Airport Commission is considering dune restoration in its 10-year plan – specifically relating to the Coastal Resilience Plan (CRP) Project #6.1.*
 - ◆ *Gasparro indicated that the Airport Commission is aware of the CRP and the need for long-term coastal resilience planning. Specific to dune restoration, he offered some personal reservations regarding the cost/benefit.*
 - ◆ *Brace asked if the airport has space to shift runways upland if necessary; Gasparro indicated that this is a complex issue due to safety zones, but indicated that landward movement may be possible for the long term.*
 - ◆ *Bois and Brace suggested that what matters is that commissions are considering coastal resilience in their long-term planning; Gasbarro confirmed that the Airport Commission is doing so.*
- Pohl indicated that FEMA regulations and sea level rise are regular topics of discussion and concern in the HDC's deliberations. He mentioned that a particular challenge is the fact that the ConCom and the HDC each have to work within their own regulatory frameworks, which sometimes are not entirely compatible.
 - *Of particular concern for Pohl are areas like Brant Point, where the rising groundwater table creates challenges not only for new construction, but also for historic homes that need remediation.*
 - *As a blue-sky thought, Pohl encouraged the Town to consider adding positive incentives (carrots) to help balance restrictions (sticks).*
 - *Pohl also called out the combined effects of 1) the ConCom's interest in increasing setbacks in wetland resource areas, 2) the HDC's interest in limiting ridge heights and second floor massing, and 3) FEMA regulations which require minimum first floor elevations in flood-prone areas. Together these three competing interests are creating an increasingly challenging regulatory environment for Nantucket.*
 - *Fee spoke to the history of Brant Point, when homes were all built on pilings, and the possibility of offering incentives for architects/builders to employ design and engineering strategies that are adaptable to the need for future height changes.*
 - *Backus provided background regarding the Secretary of the Interior's new Standards for Rehabilitation & Guidelines for Flood Adaptation for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, which reflects FEMA guidance. Nantucket is the first historic district to adopt these standards, which serve as the basis for the HDC's resilience design guidelines. She mentioned that while these guidelines allow for exemptions to be*

- made for historic structures as it relates to FEMA height standards, this in turn can lead to problems acquiring flood insurance.*
- *Beller expressed concern over the increasing presence of pools in Brant Point, and asked how HDC allows them.*
 - ◆ *Pohl sympathized, but clarified that HDC has purview only to the degree that features are visible from a publicly traveled way.*
 - *Pohl also spoke to how certain changes to zoning regulations relating to coastal resilience could potentially strengthen and simplify the HDC's work.*
 - ◆ *Brescher agreed: "If there was a zoning district, an overlay district, or whatever you want to call it, to help give the zoning board guidance, that takes coastal resilience concerns into account while interpreting the zoning bylaw, that would be tremendously helpful."*
 - *Rector spoke to the NP&EDC's and Planning Board's stance regarding coastal resilience.*
 - *Rector first asked if any zones or districts have yet been outlined.*
 - ◆ *Hill responded that FEMA and MC-FRM maps, but no zones or districts have yet been determined, as Article 69 only recently passed, and the Select Board has not yet determined a path forward.*
 - *Rector pointed out that there are a number of current maps that to some degree are competing. He said that if there was a way to create a more holistic zoning map that takes into consideration coastal resilience along with HDC, ConCom and Planning perspectives, that would be a helpful new tool.*
 - *He also cautioned that land owners have rights, and selective enforcement often leads to litigation. It's critical to have a rational basis for any regulatory changes.*
 - *Karberg asked what would be the most effective process to begin a holistic planning effort as it relates coastal resilience.*
 - *Rector encouraged CRAC to leverage the knowledge of administrative staff, and to investigate grant funding to hire an expert consultant.*

7. Discussion and approval on how to move forward with regulatory boards and commissions regarding coastal resiliency.

- *Backus recommended that CRAC consider Resilient Nantucket design guidelines as a building block for an overlay district regarding coastal resilience.*
- *Hill stated that the Committee needs to ask Select Board for approval to proceed with next steps on regulatory updates.*
- *Motion was made (Rose) to ask Select Board for permission to proceed with developing recommendations for regulatory updates.*
 - *Roche expressed concern over lack of strategy; suggested that CRAC focus on one area as a case study.*
 - *Rose offered a refined motion where CRAC would ask for Select Board permission to develop a hypothetical Coastal Resilience District (CRD), purpose of which would be to show a holistic approach to Nantucket's regulatory framework, weaving together wetlands and zoning regulations, as well as historic district design guidelines, all through the filter of a neighborhood's unique coastal resilience risk profile.*

- Braine asked for clarity as to whether the motion is combining two separate ideas.
 - *Beller expressed similar confusion/concern, and suggested that addressing refinements for each regulatory body be kept separate from discussion of CRDs.*
 - *Bois concurred.*
- Brace suggested that the focus of the motion be on advising regulatory bodies on appropriate updates, with the knowledge that in that process, CRDs may help in their application.
 - *Karberg concurred.*
- Rose acknowledged the confusion, and withdrew his motion.
- Beller made a new motion to advise (revised to “ask”) the Select Board that CRAC would like to begin the process of developing recommendations for each of the relevant regulatory bodies to consider regarding coastal resilience; the motion was seconded (Karberg), and approved 9-0.

8. Review of Real Estate and Homeowner’s informational brochure

- Hill reviewed the brochure. Comments included:
 - *Backus suggested that a link be provided to the Resilient Nantucket webpage.*
 - *Bois concurred on value of direct links, and spoke to the need for translated content.*
 - *Hill will follow up with the Town Communications Office.*

9. Discussion on site visit to the downtown area from Children’s Beach to Francis Street

- Hill reviewed the visit.
 - *Beller asked about the pumping station at Children’s Beach. Brace indicated that this topic was not addressed during the visit. Freeman suggested that if that topic is to be addressed in the future, either David Gray or Charles Johnson should be involved.*
 - *Fee expressed concern over cost/benefit of the concession stand.*

10. Discussion on sharing or taking over Secretary responsibilities

- Motion to continue (Rose), seconded (Beller), approved 9-0.

11. Public outreach ideas/strategies from committee members

- Motion to continue (Rose), seconded (Beller), approved 9-0.

12. New business, Natural Resources Dept. & Committee reports from Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Harbor and Shellfish Advisory Board, Select Board, Advisory Committee of Non-Voting Taxpayers, and other committee members.

- Offshore Wind Grant – Hill advised Committee that CRAC’s grant application was declined.

13. Discussion of upcoming meeting dates and topics: Next Meeting is May 28, 2024, on Zoom

14. Motion to adjourn:

- moved (Rose), seconded (Fee), approved unanimously (9-0).