

Nantucket Coastal Resilience Advisory Committee (CRAC)

Tuesday, June 25, 2024

Via Zoom

*Meetings are audio- and video-recorded

Members present: Gary Beller, Dr. Sarah Bois, Peter Brace (joined ~10:25), Tim Braine, Matt Fee, Rachael Freeman, Dr. Jen Karberg, Christy Kickham, Joanna Roche (joined ~10:10), Doug Rose

Members Absent: John Kitchener

Staff present: Leah Hill

Scheduled Speakers: Dr. Jen Karberg, Mark Willett

Members of the public: Shelly Lockwood, D.Anne Atherton, Rick Atherton, Claire Martin

Recording available here: <https://youtu.be/JFstuglnNIY?si=QU5ADhEvPqrhR4RU>

Packet available here: https://www.nantucket-ma.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/_06252024-13948

1. Call to Order – 10:00am
 - the meeting was called to order by vice chair Bois
2. Meeting announcements: Bois read abbreviated script on how the public can participate.
3. Public comment on topics not on the agenda: none.
4. Approval of Minutes: March 18, 2024; April 23, 2024.
 - Fee suggested that the minutes of 4/23/24 should note a comment from either Dave Iverson or Jon Trudell that CRAC should bring suggestions to the attention of the Planning Board. With that revision, Fee made a motion to approve, seconded by Beller, and approved 7-0 (Bois abstained). Beller and Rose later commented that the minutes from the two meetings with other regulatory bodies (4/23/24 and 5/14/24) were worthy of reviewing for follow up CRAC agenda items.
 - Minutes for 3/18/24 – motion (Beller), second (Rose), and approved 6-0 (Fee and Kickham abstaining).
5. Committee verbal response to public comment made by Gerry Connick at the 5/28/24 meeting
 - Rose speculated that Mr. Connick's concern may have been rooted in a motion that he (Rose) had made at the 5/14/24 meeting regarding the development of a prototypical coastal resilience (sub)district. He further suggested that Mr. Connick might be reassured by the fact that the consensus of the committee was that such a motion was premature, and it was withdrawn.
 - Fee advised the committee that Mr. Connick has expressed similar concerns directly with members of the Select Board; Fee reiterated that any progress on coastal resilience (sub)districts will involve extensive public input.
 - Beller suggested that Mr. Connick's comments are a reminder of voters' confusion over

the purpose, scope and limits of articles #67 and #69 at the recent Annual Town Meeting (ATM). He asked for clarity on next steps.

- *Hill responded that the approved bylaw (article #69) allows the SB to map certain areas of the island on the basis of localized coastal resilience needs, but cautioned that until the bylaw is codified, any development of CRD-related mapping is premature.*
- Public comment: Lockwood shared that the Nantucket Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB) recently updated the island neighborhood maps, and offered to share the new maps with Hill for distribution to CRAC members.

6. Introduction of the new Planning Board representative, John Kitchener

- Kitchener was unable to join the meeting.

7. Discussion and approval for CRAC's Chair to speak on behalf of CRAC at the Conservation Commission's final public hearing regarding the local Wetland Regulation update, June 27, 2024 at 4 Fairgrounds Rd community room.

- Brace advised that he and Hill will be present at the hybrid meeting, and asked for the consent of the committee to speak on CRAC's behalf.
 - *Braine advised that there is a commitment to take a vote at the upcoming hearing*
 - *Hill asked for a show of hands among committee members who expect to attend*
 - ◆ *Braine and Rose plan to attend; Beller and Freeman are tentative.*
- Motion to approve (Rose), seconded (Braine), and approved unanimously, 10-0.
 - *Freeman offered a reminder that some future coastal resilience measures may require use of wetland areas, when warranted, to protect critical public infrastructure. Brace acknowledged.*
 - *Others pointed out that the proposed wetland regulation update includes the ability for ConCom to grant waivers when measures are in service of the greater public interest.*
- Public comment: Atherton asked why the Select Board agenda includes the proposed local wetland regulation update
 - *Fee suggested that it may simply be another venue for the public to comment on the proposed changes.*

8. Conversation with Mark Willett, Director of Wannacomet Water Company, about the impacts of sea level rise on Nantucket's aquifer.

- Willett was unable to join the meeting.

9. Review and approval of CRAC's 2nd quarter report.

- Hill first reviewed the 1st quarter CRAC report
 - *Beller suggested that these quarterly reports be shared with the Advisory Committee for Non-Voting Taxpayers (ACNVT) and other organizations.*
 - *Brace added it would also be good to post them to social media; Hill concurred.*
 - *Rose suggested that these might also be of interest to the Nantucket Civic League.*

- *Motion to approve the report (Bois), seconded (Beller), and approved 10-0*
- Hill reviewed the 2nd quarter CRAC report
 - *Motion to approve (Rose), seconded (Beller), and approved 10-0.*

10. Update on CRP recommendation #4-3 Coatee Erosion management and Dune Resilience by Dr. Jen Karberg, Senior Wetland Ecologist and Director of Research and Partnership for Nantucket Conservation Foundation (NCF).

- Dr. Karberg presented on the grant NCF and the Trustees received from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to build off their “Assessment and Analysis of Adaptive Interventions for Coatee-Coskata Properties”
 - 91% of the Refuge has a 100% chance of inundation each year during coastal storms
 - Goal of project is to identify and evaluate several feasible alternatives to minimize short and long-term ecological and public access impacts at each site
 - 2 areas will be studied, the Haulover and Coskata Pond, to do a site assessment, design alternative, and final alternative to 30% design
- Rose asked Karberg to share her thoughts on how a conservation organization like NCF weighs the impacts of human intervention to provide access *versus* their mission to preserve ecologically-sensitive areas.
 - *Karberg responded that NCF’s focus is on maximizing access while minimizing ecological impact; e.g., beach nourishment is not in NCF’s plans.*
- Hill commented that August will be an especially busy time for coastal resilience awareness, and that it would be good to coordinate on the event schedule.
- Brace asked if NCF has given thought to the long-term outlook for Coatee, and when it might no longer be possible for it to continue protecting the inner harbor.
 - *Karberg responded that no one knows what the next 30-80 years will hold, but it’s encouraging that there is an enormous amount of sediment that continues to accumulate in that area, and that barrier beaches are known for their ability to move and adapt over time. It is NCF’s hope that while Coatee continues to migrate and shape-shift, it may also continue to provide long-term protection for the inner harbor, without aggressive human intervention, e.g. engineered structures.*
 - *Freeman added that the barrier beach on Tuckernuck has shifted significantly over time, similarly to Karberg’s description.*

11. Recap and discussion on the two meetings with regulatory boards/commissions/committees – examples of potential, broad policy and regulation changes to incorporate coastal resilience to present to the Select Board on 6/26/24.

- Rose suggested that long-term coastal resilience considerations can and should inform Nantucket’s entire regulatory framework, beyond ConCom’s recent local wetlands regulatory update to expand minimum setbacks.
 - *Many examples came up in CRAC’s recent discussions with representatives of the Planning Board, NP&EDC, ZBA, ConCom, HDC, the Airport Commission and the Board of Health, among them:*
 - ◆ *the potential need for stronger limitations on impervious surfaces in areas facing*

rising groundwater;

- ◆ *more broadly, CRAC heard from multiple regulatory bodies about their desire for reasonable solutions to sometimes conflicting regulatory pressures. A vivid example was expressed by HDC Chair Ray Pohl, who described the growing pressure created by 1) FEMA's requirements for minimum elevations in floodplains, 2) the HDC's guidelines relating to height limits and massing, and 3) ConCom's understandable interest in increasing setbacks to protect waterfront and other wetland settings. The combined effect is that living space, and home design, is being increasingly squeezed.*
- Hill opined that CRAC should be offering suggestions to each regulatory body as to how their policies, guidelines and regulations might be updated to incorporate a coastal resilience perspective.
- Lockwood observed that some homeowners are currently feeling anxious about the ongoing Short-Term Rental debate, and cautioned that the prospect of more regulatory restrictions might not be well-received.
 - *Brace responded that the need for this work is unavoidable if we hope to preserve Nantucket, but will take years to become operational.*
- Lockwood also suggested that it might be more productive for CRAC to go to each regulatory body and ask them what it is they feel is needed in their respective area.
 - *Rose reminded her that CRAC has been doing just that in recent meetings, and that the feedback from the regulatory bodies is that they tend to operate project-by-project, within their existing regulatory framework. As a result, they are specifically asking for CRAC's assistance/guidance on how each of their respective regulatory frameworks needs to adapt to the long-term threats posed by sea level rise and climate change.*

12. Public outreach ideas/strategies from committee members

- Conversations with Inquirer and Mirror by Tim Braine
 - *Braine had a preliminary and positive discussion: coastal resilience and sea level rise have been identified by the I&M priority topics for the future. Braine to follow up.*
- Updated media scorecard summary by Doug Rose
 - *NRD/CRAC's CRP awareness campaign recently surpassed 300,000 total impressions since it started last fall.*

13. 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.

- Real Estate continuing education class – Hill shared that on 6/10/24, she and with the help of Shelly Lockwood co-taught a coastal resilience class for an audience of approximately 40 Nantucket real estate professionals. The presentation was extremely well-received.
- Visit from National Weather Service – Hill hosted the visit and received excellent feedback on how helpful it was for future flooding forecasting.

14. Discussion of upcoming meeting dates and topics: Next Meeting is July 9, 2024, on Zoom

- Rose reminded the committee of the site visit at Folger's Marsh
- Fee mentioned the concept of congestion pricing, and how Nantucket should be re-thinking our dependence on motor vehicles.
 - *Beller mentioned that Fire Island banned vehicles*
- Beller brought up our need to focus on strategic relocation
 - *Hill is developing a scope of work for a consultant to take on the project*

15. Motion to adjourn:

- moved (Fee), seconded (Beller), approved (9-0).