

Climate Change Resiliency Committee meeting minutes 12/8/2021, 7 pm

Virtual Meeting via GoToMeeting

Present: Liz Callahan, Nancy Pau, Elisa Grammer, Chip Wallace, Rick Parker. Also present: River Road residents Michael Dacy and KC Swallow.

The group reviewed Nancy Pau's draft (available on [google docs](#)) of a [Letter of Interest](#) (due between January 21, 2022 and February 14, 2022, with priority given to early entries) for an Action Grant to be submitted next spring. The Action Grant would address 1) flooding/erosion along the Merrimack River, particularly on River Road and at the culvert by the High School and Middle School, and 2) management of invasive plants and installation of native species.

Focus on River Road & possible involvement of other towns

After discussion of other flood-prone areas (notably Ash Street), *it was decided to focus on River Road and the banks of the Merrimack River.*

It was noted that Ms. Grammer had reached out to Merrimac and Groveland, which might have similar concerns, so far without significant success. West Newbury's Conservation Agent Michelle Greene, who also works for Merrimac, expressed interest in staying aware of the potential Action Grant. Mr. Dacy observed that the work proposed here should be transferrable to other towns along the river. *Once we have our expression of interest lined up, we can share it with the other towns. Also, we can reach out to the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) about this.*

Culvert and stream at the Pentucket High School/ Middle School campus

Ms. Pau proposed including an evaluation of the culvert and storm water management at this portion of Town, noting that with the reconfigurations associated with new construction, there's now just a very narrow space for water runoff. This may threaten ongoing efforts funded in part by the Gulf of Maine Institute (GOMI) for work by students and others to restore the stream that runs through the site.

Ms. Grammer said that the plans for the new construction included an elaborate Stormwater Protection Plan that features, among other things, underground water storage to replace the pond that was removed. She suggested that an awareness of what is now being done might be advised before we hire consultants to look at this anew. She also noted that the new development at 87 Main Street has caused serious runoff problems, flooding and pouring silt onto the street. A concern has been that this would wash down to the school campus.

Ms. Callahan noted that a criterion in the Letter of Interest is the number of people affected and that the school campus affects very large numbers. Ms. Pau added that the issues present at the school campus are very similar to those on River Road and along the Merrimack. *This will remain in the Letter of Intent and Ms. Pau will contact the Conservation Agent about the school plans*

for storm water management. She will also discuss the 87 Main Street situation with the Conservation Agent and John Terry of GOMI, a neighbor of the development causing flooding problems.

Storm water management issues overall

Ms. Grammer identified two institutional problems with storm water management: 1) even when the Conservation Commission knows that flooding like that at 87 Main Street will occur as a result of a development, it does not have jurisdiction over non-wetlands areas until after the problem manifests, and 2) design criteria for storm water management use very old data for assumed rainstorm intensity, which we know has gotten worse and will worsen with climate change in the future—meaning that storm water management systems are knowingly being under sized. She noted that many other towns have used Action Grants to address storm water management issues with bylaws, guidelines, and practices, and suggested that a survey of work that has already been done might be useful. *Ms. Grammer will re-send the summary of this.*

Ms. Pau noted that a possible means of addressing these issues would be additional training for the Planning Board and education of townspeople about the importance of maintaining roadside ditches. She added that pilot projects using new bioretention techniques as opposed to old impoundment systems may require less maintenance.

Other comments on the draft

- The request for \$10K for a website will be removed
- Rain gardens will be put in one section or the other, cross referenced
- Consideration will be given to the proposal to use the grant for herbicide application
- Ms. Pau indicated that it may be best to focus on preserving relatively pristine areas, such as the field full of native vegetation good for pollinators at Indian Hill, where invasive species are currently only at the sides of the field

Plan for finalizing the Letter of Intent

It was decided that we will have a near-final draft to review at the next committee meeting on January 12, 2022. That done, this can be raised at the following Select Board meeting. To accomplish this, the following tasks were identified:

- Ms. Pau will contact Geoff Walker and Becky McKnight about consulting services and costs
- Mr. Dacy (who will be sent GEI's prior proposal about a WN Action Grant) will contact GEI about potential work on engineering assessments of wave actions, etc and about living shoreline solutions
- The potential consultants will be asked if they would support/ supervise use of interns
- Mr. Parker will contact Jen Hughes of MVPC and include Ms. Pau in a conversation about potential MVPC participation

- Ms. Pau will work to set up a meeting with the DPW Director, Conservation Agent, Town Manager, and Mr. Parker about 1) MS4 issues and what they would like to see in the Action Grant and 2) the situations concerning storm water management at the Pentucket school campus and 87 Main Street
- Ms. Grammer will provide information about other towns' use of Action Grants to address storm water management issues

Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes of the River Road site walks and of the November 13, 2021 meeting.

Adjournment

8:40 pm

Meeting materials

Draft Letter of Interest (available on [google docs](#))

MVP form [Letter of Interest](#)