

Climate Change Resiliency Committee meeting minutes 3/23/2023, 5:30 pm

1910 Building, Town Offices, 1st Floor Hearing Room

Present: Mike Dacey, Elisa Grammer, Liz Callahan, Rick Parker, DPW Project Manager Christine Wallace.

At the outset of the meeting, Mr. Dacey showed a picture at River Road taken shortly after mid-March's nor'easter, showing a spot where a ravine in the riverbank, running from the pavement's edge to low water river bottom, had developed. *It was agreed that Mr. Parker, Ms. Wallace, and Department of Public Works Director Wayne Amaral would inspect the site the following morning.*

GEI Revised Scope

The Committee (with reference to Nancy Pau's written comments) reviewed GEI's most recent proposed scope of work, which was revised to take into account feedback from the state MVP program that emphasized 1) community outreach, education and consensus building; 2) vulnerability assessment using existing models such as the [MORIS tool](#) as opposed to extensive GEI modeling, 3) a focus including near-term (2030), mid-term (2050), and long-term (2070) vulnerabilities and solutions, and 4) a wide array of solutions including road relocation, nature-based solutions, etc.

The Committee developed the following recommendations and questions:

Task 1: Community and Local Official Engagement and Task 2: Education and Public Project Meetings

- Is the "organization specializing in community engagement" Gulf of Maine Research Institute? Has some other group been identified? Would that group be a subcontractor to GEI? How will the Committee be able to interact with that other organization?
- The scope should give some outline of what the public meetings will address and when they will take place. Timing is critical because tasks proposed for a FY must be completed in that FY to be paid by the state, and payment is based on tasks completed.
- Tasks 1 and 2 can be combined, with more specific content and timing. Meeting ideas discussed were:
 - A facilitated kickoff meeting could include an educational component—overview of climate change, MORIS predictions for River Road and Coffin Street (including nuisance flooding), slides of what the Committee has seen at River Road, GEI's discussion of what the project will encompass, an invitation to the community to become and stay involved. This would be well-advertised in Town and the website would be updated with this information
 - A sitewalk/community/youth event when GEI is using the drones with an informal discussion of problem, the type of work GEI does, how drones are used, etc, with state MVP people and others invited
 - A river boat tour with GEI to discuss vulnerabilities, work being done, etc
 - A final facilitated meeting after Task 7/8 with Select Board, townspeople, perhaps state reps to present study results and solution options, seek input/develop consensus, and consider next steps as a community

Task 3: Existing Conditions of Shoreline Survey

- As well as River Road, this should include the area MORIS shows as flooding at the bend of Coffin Street.
- The group concluded that the language does encompass under-road water flows, evaluated visually.

Task 4: Existing Conditions of Culverts Survey

- Culverts reviewed should include the culvert at the Coffin Street bend where MORIS shows flooding and any culverts near or potentially affecting access to Rocks Village Bridge.

- The map of culverts can be better—Christine Wallace knows of West Newbury maps for culverts.

Task 5: Vulnerability Study

- Vulnerability analysis for the problem area at Coffin Street should be included. (MORIS 2030, 2070 data pictured at right)
- Task 5.2 Merrimack River Flooding should include sea level rise nuisance flooding—its frequency and impacts on public safety, school bus transport, commuters, homes dependent on River Road, and recreational users.

Task 7: Infrastructure Flood Adaptation Options

- Rather than using lists that could be seen as highlighting concrete “hard” solutions, for the overview of options say something along the lines of “We will provide a general overview of adaptation options, which may range from nature-based solutions, to engineered solutions such as culvert improvements, to road relocation/managed retreat

Deliverables should include a monthly report of task completion to facilitate bill payment and feedback at monthly status meetings.

Action Grant application

Deferred since the RFR had not yet issued.

Community support/engagement/letters of support

Previously the Committee identified the following point people for letters of support:



DPW	Christine Wallace
Emergency Mgmt	Chip Wallace
Planning Bd	Chip Wallace
Conservation Comsn	Elisa Grammer
Tree Committee	Elisa Grammer
Capital Improvements Committee	Elisa Grammer
Finance Committee	Elisa Grammer
Bicycling groups	Elisa Grammer
National Grid	Elisa Grammer
River Access Committee	Elisa Grammer
Open Space Committee	Elisa Grammer
Garden Club	Elisa Grammer
Birding groups	Elisa Grammer (with help as needed from Nancy Pau)
Park & Rec	Liz Callahan
Nearby municipalities	Mike Dacey
River Road & affected residents	Mike Dacey (with help as needed from Nancy Pau)
WN Wild & Native	Nancy Pau
Boating groups (e.g., Plum Island Kayaks, marinas)	Nancy Pau

PIERivers	Nancy Pau
Greenscapes	Nancy Pau
Gulf of Maine Institute	Nancy Pau
Ipswich River Watershed Assn	Nancy Pau
Police & Fire Dept	Rick Parker
Merrimack Valley Planning Council	Rick Parker
State Senator Bruce Tarr	Rick Parker
State Representative Adrian Ramos	Rick Parker
Merrimack Valley Watershed Council	Rick Parker
Merrimack River Watershed	Rick Parker

Liz Callahan offered to take on additional contacts as need be.

The Committee decided that point people will develop their own suggested support letter templates suited to the nature of the entity providing the letter of support. A starting point, which will be edited by each Committee member to best fit the circumstances, was as follows:

In November 2022 West Newbury Town Meeting voted unanimously to appropriate \$50,000 for the project to study climate change impacts on River Road and its environs. The Town seeks MVP Action Grant funds to address flood risk and road stability concerns at vulnerable locations subject to Merrimack River flooding. The project will evaluate the risks from more frequent and extreme flooding events caused by climate change and sea level rise, and will enable the Town to identify, develop consensus about, and plan for an array of near-, mid-, and long-term resiliency options. Specifically, the project will focus on River Road and the lower portions of Coffin Street and Bridge Street where they are subject to Merrimack River flooding.

The [organization/person] supports this project. The affected area in West Newbury provides critical transportation access for school buses, commuters, and others traversing Rocks Village Bridge, and includes roadways essential for public safety, access to homes, and serves as a key recreational resource for birdwatching, fishing, biking, hiking, and similar activities. Evaluating the area's climate change vulnerability, informing the citizenry, and fostering consensus resiliency solutions will be essential to our ability to plan and prepare for the future.

Christine Wallace will consult with the Town Manager about the preferred addressee for letters of support. The letters of support should be sent to the point Committee member, who will forward them to Ms. Wallace for inclusion in the grant application.

Separately from the GEI work, Rick Parker and Elisa Grammer reported that they met with Corinn Flaherty, the Town's Library Director, about the potential for West Newbury to have a "[Read Up a Storm](#)" community outreach program like that pursued in Plymouth. *Mr. Parker and Ms. Grammer will follow up on this.*

CZM/MORIS

Ms. Grammer urged those who had not had an opportunity to do so to watch [this video](#) in which a scientist from Woods Hole gave a presentation much like what we would want to have for our Merrimack River flooding and sea level rise concerns. She noted that unfortunately, West Newbury is not among the towns eligible for the CZM Coastal Resilience Grant Program, but CZM's website says that we can receive CZM's technical support.

Approval of Minutes

The Committee unanimously approved the minutes of February 8, 2023, as amended.

Other Business

Next meeting

April 12, 2023

Adjournment

7:30 pm

Meeting materials

GEI revised scope

Comments from Nancy Pau

Notes from MVP feedback session

Draft support letter template

Draft updates for webpage