

Climate Change Resiliency Committee meeting minutes 8/11/2021, 7 pm

Virtual Meeting via GoToMeeting

Present: Patricia Reeser, Elisa Grammer, Chip Wallace, Rick Parker. Also present, former Committee Member & Select Board member Wendy Reed.

Action grant, other grants

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--Invasive plants

Ms. Grammer noted that the issue of invasive plants appears in MVP reports of Groveland & Merrimac

--interns

Nancy Pau (who was not present but who sent a progress report to Ms. Grammer prior to the meeting) reported that she has revised and shared with Mr. Parker the scope and description and the draft Article Request Form to fund interns to work on managing invasive plants.

The Committee agreed that if it will be sponsoring the Article, it should review it and vote at the September meeting.

--crowd sourced photo study

Ms. Grammer noted that Ms. Pau provided the link to [Chronolog](#), a citizen-scientist project that provides a smart phone camera stand and allows passersby to upload photos to a website, providing a longitudinal study of selected environmental conditions at the chose site.

Ms. Reeser and others noted that this should be evaluated in terms of the objectives and benefits and that sites would have to be chosen. It was suggested that MVP workshop participant and Pentucket teacher Sandra Goodrich may know of a site at an environmental study area near Pentucket High School. Ms. Reed said that a site at Mill Pond might be used to monitor invasive plants in that area.

--River Road erosion

Mr. Parker reported that the Select Board heard from Nancy Pau about a possible study of erosion along River Road. *Ms. Pau will be working to see if expert/consultant Geoff Wilson would be available for a site walk in September.* Invitees could include the representatives from the Select Board, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Department of Public Works, as well as residents along River Road. The Town Manager suggested that the Assessor's Office could provide a mailing list of River Road residents.

Ms. Reed said that she has observed a concerning amount of cutting, including stump grinding, at the riverbank—which would hasten erosion. She suggested that the Climate Change Resiliency Committee send a letter to River Road residents explaining that River Road erosion was identified as a priority issue in the MVP process and is proposed to be studied—and that loss of vegetation will exacerbate the problem.

It was agreed that Ms. Reed will develop a flyer about waterway erosion (applicable to all Town waterways) being exacerbated by vegetation loss. This will be 1) put on the Climate Change webpage with an email blast and Town

Notice and 2) mailed to River Road residents, along with additional information about plans to evaluate erosion on River Road. Ms. Reed will send her draft flyer to Mr. Wallace for circulation to the Committee.

--Written outline explaining, re action grant 1) admin burdens to town; 2) how real is the \$\$ (matching obligations, timing of funds, etc); 3) obligations on the way the town does business (current, future, etc)

Ms. Grammer reported on the following exchanges with Nancy Pau and with our state MVP representative Michelle Rowden:

1) administration burdens—what are they, who will be responsible, what will Town staff have to do?

From Nancy Pau: Administrative burden for Town staff will be similar to MVP planning grant. Resiliency Committee members will lead project administration, coordination with MVP staff and any contractors, and reporting. There are discussions with other Towns about a joint proposal, which will increase our likelihood the funding. This additional coordination with other Towns may slightly increase staff time.

From Michelle Rowden, our state contact- Action grants have a requirement to provide monthly reports (there is a template provided) to the regional coordinator (me) to help EEA track progress, provide assistance and identify any potential obstacles. There will be a detailed budget that the town prepares with deliverables associated with funded tasks. The town would be expected to provide these deliverables to EEA throughout the grant duration according to the deadlines outlined in the budget. At the end of the project, MVP requires one powerpoint slide and a 2-3 page case study (templates provided) to sum up the project.

2) how real is the money—matching obligations, timing of disbursements, etc;

From Nancy Pau: The State was very excited about our pre-proposal. They thought it was very original and met their focus on nature-based, long-term solutions. They also liked the involvement of so many community members and community engagement through the efforts of WN2 (Native Demonstration Gardens, Education, and Interns to control invasive and promote native landscaping). We had heard additional \$\$ was being added to MVP grants and resiliency project are a high priority for the State right now. 25% match obligation, but this is expected to be done with in-kind services from the Resiliency Committee volunteer time and West Newbury Wild and Native, and other Committees and groups' volunteer time. Any funding Town provides towards invasive control (e.g. DPW staff and Mill Pond Committee on knotweed, etc.), and funding of interns would count towards match if it fits within the timing of the grant, and would be a bonus, showing commitment by Town to support this project.

From Michelle Rowden Unlike the planning grants, the action grants are 100% reimbursable. The town should come up with a plan to pay any consultants/vendors for work on the grant and be reimbursed by MVP later. Some towns/cities request

reimbursement at the mid-point and end of the grant period, some wait until the end and get the full amount all at once.

MVP encourages all cities and towns to collaborate with local partners in the community to help shoulder the burden of administering grants. This is especially true for small towns with limited staff capacity. Local and/or regional non-profits, environmental or watershed groups, and community organizations can be very helpful with grant administration in addition to the traditional engineering consultants that we often see. We encourage the community to look for partners who have experience working in the area, with the specific type of project you are proposing, grant management, community engagement and facilitation.

3) what changes to the way the Town does business will be required—temporarily or permanently?

From Nancy Pau: We do not expect any changes at this time. This grant would be a feasibility study to see if we can use nature-based solutions to address concerns about road erosion and future flooding concerns. If results of feasibility study looks promising, then Town can consider details of such actions, and decide to apply for future State or Federal grants.

--Project timeline for grant application & allocation of task

No new developments

--Merrimac & Groveland--interest in working with WN

Ms. Grammer summarized her review of Merrimac and Groveland MVP reports concerning erosion and other issues of interest to West Newbury:

Groveland MVP report 2020

Identifies Merrimack & Parker Rivers as ecosystems & waterways of concern

Infrastructure concern—Johnsons Creek complex (dams, etc)

Stormwater management

Lower priority—plan for invasive plants in Johnsons Pond

Merrimac MVP Report 4/2020

Bank Erosion: Prior storm events have eroded banks and closed roads in Merrimac. Workshop participants recommended a bank restoration and management plan to address failing river and stream banks for resiliency to future and potentially larger storms. An educational flyer on bank erosion was another outreach example discussed in the second workshop. Areas of bank erosion include Lake Attitash, the Merrimack River and Cobbler's Brook. The Historic Commission was mentioned as a source of old photos to compare historic and existing conditions.

Flood Prone Areas: Merrimac stakeholders identified several farms and other areas potentially subject to development that should be preserved for their flood storage capacity. Land preservation

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was also encouraged by several workshop participants for its ability to sequester carbon and provide increased infiltration.

Priorities—stormwater management

Other projects identified

- ♣ Study and prioritize stormwater system improvements; develop maintenance plans for stormwater basins including provisions for access

- ♣ Bank restoration and management plan; education flyer on bank erosion

- ♣ Land preservation/restrictions for infiltration, flood protection and carbon sequestration

Explore and implement alternative management strategies for invasive species

Chair election

It was agreed that a focus of September's meeting will be to find a Committee Chair and to recruit additional (ideally mixed-aged) members. It was also agreed that additional involvement with Town staff is important going forward.

Mr. Parker will work a piece describing the need for greater participation with the Committee and describing the importance and urgency of West Newbury's climate change preparedness, in light of the recent UN report on climate change. This will be 1) put on the website, 2) advertised with an email blast and Town notice, 3) discussed in a Select Board meeting—and ideally picked up by our local newspaper reporter.

Ms. Reed also proposed to share a portion of the [UN study that allows interactive assessments of regional impacts](#).

Approval of minutes

The committee voted 3-0-1, Ms. Reeser, not present, abstaining to approve the draft minutes of the 7/14/2021 meeting.

Adjournment

7:49 pm

Meeting materials

Email exchange with MVP state rep Michelle Rowden, as discussed above