

Site Visit for River Road Residents, Nov 13, 2021

Members of the Climate Resiliency Committee (Rick Parker, Liz Callahan, Nancy Pau, and Elisa Grammer) met 13 residents of River Road (between Bridge Street and Coffin) and 3 residents of Coffin Street to discuss erosion and flooding issues.

After introductions, Rick Parker explained that during the Municipal Vulnerability Planning workshop, erosion and flooding along River Road was identified as a top vulnerability in Town. Town recognized that erosion or flooding that affects the ability of residents to access their homes or the Town to provide emergency services to those residents would be problematic. Rick discussed the loss and closing of a section of River Road in Merrimack, and that West Newbury would like to head off such scenarios for our section of River Road.

To address this issue, the Resiliency Committee are started to explore options for a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Action Grant (due March 2022). We have met with experts and town officials and committee members, and are now reaching out to River Road residents to share our plans and to gather local historical knowledge.

There was some discussion of issues/concerns River Road residence had.

Several residents suggested that Town look into **limiting heavy vehicles** for road integrity and to prevent damage to trees and power lines. Rick mentioned that there's a lot of hoops to jump through for something like this. A suggestion was to paint a yellow line as the large trucks would not be able to stay within the lines.

- Another concern was that there is **no speed limit sign** on River Road, creating a safety issue with all the people biking, walking on the Road. The speed limit is 25? or 30?
- Someone mentioned that the State had previously looked into turning River Road into a State Road (not necessarily something residents or Town is looking for). It's also a designated River Trail?
- Resiliency Committee will pass on the suggestions about limiting heavy vehicles and speed limit to the appropriate Town Committees. We will also look into assessing the road bed at certain areas for both integrity and erodibility.

We discussed the **loss of vegetation** along the Road, and people **trimming vegetation**. Some suggestions included:

- letting new residents know that trimming of vegetation is not allowed... one resident said that he did not know when he moved in. Since then, he has tried to plant some plants, but they were all eaten by deer.
- provide suggestion on how to trim/ clean vegetation in a way that protects the bank and complies with regulations. Prohibiting all trimming tend to result in illegal cutting under the cover of darkness. Several residents mentioned inconsistency of Conservation Commission in enforcing illegal cutting.
- one resident (16 River) mentioned that the undercutting is occurring in their backyard as well. Some vegetation has grown in since the initial slumping, but there's still sections that are still bare that they would like to see revegetated.
- one person suggested providing incentives to protect/enhance native vegetation— for example, tax credit for not cutting vegetation on the River front.
- Resiliency Committee will pass on suggestions to Conservation Commission. Potentially work with WN2, Open Space and Town interns to develop Best Management Practices for

vegetation along the River. We will pursue a contractor that can provide some technical assessment/ assistance for landscape for erosion control, as part of the grant.

Some residents provided **problem flooding areas**. As part of the grant, we will follow up with all residents to gather more of this information, and work with Town to map these vulnerable areas.

- 119 River Road— flooding from driveway to road... with culverts, sometimes the river flows both ways— flooding properties when river is high.
- 215 River Road— low area, has flooded 3 to 4 times in 20 years (high tide flooding).
- Hay field (where the site visit is)... this is the oxbow of the River (high tide flooding).
- Coffin Street triangle (both runoff and high tide flooding).

Part of the group climbed down the River bank and walked the floodplain to look at the **undercutting under the bank**. The group that stayed above was able to see some of the undercutting via FaceTime.

- We noted the **multiple erosion spots** along this section of the road, which is also an issue in other areas along River Road. Riprap had been placed by DPW Director at multiple spots as an emergency measure.
- Several pipes are placed under the road help pass the water.
- We discussed that as a floodplain, the road bed in this area may not be properly engineered, and the erosion may be caused by under road drainage from the hay field.
- At one section, we measured that the undercutting of vegetation was about 3 feet away from the edge of the road.
- Even though this first grant is exploratory, and really just understanding all the issues and what's contributing to the erosion and flooding. We discussed some potential solutions such as living shorelines, ways to redirect water if groundwater seepage is causing erosions, etc.
- We discussed the timeline for the grant (due in March, funds available in July if successful, and 25% match— mostly in in-kind services). We discussed opportunities for residents to help gather information (Crowd-sourcing); both capturing historical data, and having residents help collect real-time information such as height of flood water during the water. Residents expressed support and willingness to help with such efforts.
- Discussions down on the River?

Other items:

- John Lambert expressed interest in joining the Resiliency Committee, but cannot meet on Wednesday.
- Michael Dacey and Anne Treble expressed interest in helping out with the project. Nancy will follow up on the extent of involvement. Michael has background in geology and hydrology.
- On the sign -in sheet, participants indicated their interest in getting updates, and sharing their contact information with each other for future collaboration.