

MVP Core Team meeting notes 10/28/2020, 7 pm

Present: Liz Callahan, Nancy Pau, Patricia Reeser, Wendy Reed, Rick Parker, Chip Wallace, Hannah Grinnell, Elisa Grammer

Next meeting: December 2, 2020 7 pm See meeting information below

At the outset, Elisa Grammer noted that West Newbury has received official status as an MVP Community. She said that the people at the state are happy that we are continuing to meet and that grants are becoming more competitive. If and when we do have a grant proposal, we should be sure to work with our state contacts before we make a submission. They also suggest that we keep climate change preparedness issues before the townspeople with announcements, website postings, etc.

1) Going forward: issues to pursue

Invasive plants

Nancy Pau reported that the Invasive Plants Subcommittee met in early October. A number of Core Team members participated and the enthusiasm level is high, and focus will be important. *The next meeting is scheduled for November 9.* Three subgroups have formed and will work on knotweed, early detection of black swallow wort, educating townspeople, mapping and engaging community members. Outreach and coordination with the Garden Club and the Open Space Committee is planned. There is also interest in working with volunteers. Nature Groupies has an invasive academy online available for free to those who commit to providing some volunteer work.

There's an interest in using young people as interns to help manage invasive species. No immediate Town funding mechanism came to mind, although Parks and Recreation hires young people for the summer. Also the [Open Space Committee received Community Preservation Act funding plus a grant to use AmeriCorps volunteers to build some bridges on Town trails across wetlands](#). Wendy Reed said that the Conservation Commission has a fund for consultants. *She will look into that.* Liz Callahan noted that it would be good to have a firm idea of how many interns, how many hours, etc. would be involved.

Additional thoughts included providing information to allow homeowners to identify and act on invasives as soon as possible; having a tour or walk to help people identify invasives (made more difficult with COVID), and taking action to remove a large amount invasives at Cherry Hill Reservoir—this would be a big job and would likely involve hiring help to accomplish this.

Elisa Grammer [researched regulatory provisions concerning invasive plants and fill soils](#). She noted that the Open Space Committee website has links to information about invasives and she did find references to fill soil as a factor in introducing invasive plants. Salisbury has extensive rules about soil fill and septic rules contain specific requirements for certain soils. No easily usable regulatory model for this issue was readily apparent.

Wendy Reed said that she addressed the issue of fill soil as a potential pathway to introduce invasive plants with the Conservation Commission, which does have standard conditions requiring that if fill soil is used, it must be clean and free of various contaminants. *The Commission will be looking into adding to this to avoid introduction of invasive plants* and noted the value in having the Conservation Agent able to do some ongoing monitoring

Stormwater & roads

Hannah Grinnell said she reached out to Climate Café contacts about rain gardens. They did a design, but were unable to build one. *The group expressed interest in a virtual workshop on rain gardens, perhaps in February-March when everyone is ready for winter to end, thinking about gardening, and identifying drainage issues on their property.*

Liz Callahan noted that the WN Energy Advisory Committee had just discussed having an energy/environmental/sustainability fair covering a range of topics. She noted that the rain garden session could be part of that. The Water Department also has information about various seminars on water conservation, etc.

Patricia Reeser said that [Greenbelt is proposing a series of webinars](#). This approach could be a model for what we could do. *Elisa Grammer will share information about the Greenbelt program with the Core Team.*

Elisa Grammer noted that West Newbury is to be working on stormwater management bylaws, and there's a link between getting the bylaws right and costs to the Town. If stormwater is not managed correctly, we will be building more and bigger culverts and doing things to salvage roads.

Wendy Reed said that as part of the permitting process, the Town will need to write new stormwater bylaws in any event. She has contacted various Town actors about getting an MVP grant for this but has not heard back. The MVP grant could look at roads as well, like River Road where only some riprap is keeping the river and the road separate. *Nancy Pau said she would look into the [Massachusetts Coastal Resilience program](#) for grants as well.*

Communications

Elisa Grammer noted that she had previously reached out to Theresa Woodbury of the Council on Aging and to Lee Ann Delp at Emergency Services with examples of some ideas (e.g., more & better use of Code Red, neighbor-to-neighbor contact systems) that other towns had suggested to improve communications with climate change in mind. This was left that if either of them wants to develop a solution that could use support from the MVP Working Group or an MVP grant, they should let us know and we would be happy to help.

Power Outages

No update.

Protecting & Securing Water Supplies

No update other than Newburyport is continuing to pursue its proposal to be able to use temporary measures to raise the level of the Artichoke dam spillway if the Merrimack River threatens to flood into the reservoir.

Other matters

--Composting

The group discussed composting generally in town and more specifically, composting at the schools. Black Earth Composting has [programs for composting at schools](#), and it has programs for townspeople participation with rates that decrease with increasing subscriptions in a given town. It was suggested that more dense housing areas, such as Follansbee or Drakes Landing, might be good candidates, where

they have less land to do DIY composting. Nancy Pau noted that her children are part of a school composting program that works well. She added that Ipswich has a high degree combustion composting system that can handle cornstarch plates & utensils. Chip Wallace noted that current MA rules require composting of food waste for institutions producing 1 ton per week—a 4,000 pupil school. Liz Callahan said that the current thresholds will ratchet down over time. *Nancy Pau said that she will speak with Marie Felzani, (on the School Board) about this. Elisa Grammer will find out how her husband worked with Environmental Club at the high school where he taught in VA to institute food, plate & utensil composting.*

--Multi-jurisdictional Rivers Group Wendy Reed reported that she is participating in the multi-town project for managing rivers and that group is looking at such issues as water conservation, stormwater management, and MVP action grants. This is also an opportunity to find areas of collaboration among towns.

2) Presentation to BOS

With respect to a MVP presentation to the Selectmen, the group agreed that

- We will aim for the December 14, 2020 Selectmen meeting
- Chip Wallace will do the presentation
- The presentation will cover 1) the high level conclusions/action items from the Final Report (in Rick Parker's Listening Session Powerpoint and 2) highlights of what we are pursuing now
- The presentation will use a short powerpoint that can be put on the website and publicized to remind townspeople about this

Rick Parker will send a request to the Town Manager for 15 minutes in the 12/14/2020 BOS meeting for the MVP presentation.

3) Next meeting: December 2, 2020, 7 pm via GoToMeeting

WN Municipal Vulnerability Core Team
Wed, Dec 2, 2020 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM (EST)

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/632753733>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

Access Code: 632-753-733

Notes from Prior Meeting

MVP Core Team meeting notes 9/30/2020, 7 pm

Present: Liz Callahan, Nancy Pau, Patricia Reeser, Wendy Reed, Rick Parker, Chip Wallace, Hannah Grinnell, Veronica McDonough, Elisa Grammer

1) Going forward: issues to pursue

Improving communications

Elisa Grammer said she contacted Emergency Preparedness Director Lee Ann Delp and Council on Aging Director Theresa Woodbury, providing a list of potential actions other towns had developed using MVP action grants, such as expanded Code Red usage, a neighbor-to-neighbor communication system, etc. Ms. Woodbury indicated that it has been difficult to reach out successfully to the elderly population, particularly with COVID related information, and Ms. Delp said she appreciated the list of ideas.

Elisa Grammer will respond to both, saying that the MVP group stands ready to assist them with efforts to obtain grants to support their actions to improve communications.

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Invasive plants

Nancy Pau said that her subcommittee will be meeting in the near future.

Elisa Grammer noted that she observed Japanese knotweed behind the Pentucket middle school near the new track and the new tennis courts. She posited that the knotweed could be introduced with “clean” fill soils. Perhaps construction projects involving fill could be conditioned on a requirement that for the 2-3 years following construction, the area should be inspected for invasive plants and if found, those plants should be suppressed.

Nancy Pau stressed that to be feasible, it is important that this effort focuses on certain plant species (knotweed, black swallow wort, etc) and/or certain locations. She noted that knotweed can spread if any small part of the plant is in the soil. She noted that best practices include such provisions as washing mowing equipment. She also said that the key is to treat any outbreak right away.

Patricia Reeser noted that past work had been done on drafting a bylaw definition of clean fill. Liz Callahan suggested that perhaps developers could be required to put funds into escrow to deal with invasive species outbreaks they may cause. Rick Parker said that state laws limit a town’s ability to do this.

Wendy Reed said that she will put this issue of clean fill on the Conservation Commission agenda and will raise this with the Planning Board.

Elisa Grammer will look into what other towns may be doing about invasive species, particularly in terms of the question of fill soil.

Nancy Pau will look into other potential funding sources to address this issue.

Storm water management

Elisa Grammer said that a townsperson whose well ran dry in this drought suggested a rain barrel program. She noted that storing rainwater addresses issues of drought and storm water management. Other places use cisterns, rain gardens, etc. to both hold water and manage runoff.

Chip Wallace said that Newburyport had a rain barrel program and Wendy Reed said she had spoken with WN Water Department Director Mike Gootee. He said that West Newbury had had such a program, but the townspeople did not respond. If we want to try this again, we would need to have a publicity and educational push to generate interest. Liz Callahan said that EPA has a [Soak Up The Rain](#) working group that has put together educational materials.

Hannah Grinnell, a recent Pentucket grad, and Veronica McDonough, both Climate Café participants, said that students had been considering rain gardens, including potential development of a demonstration area. *Veronica McDonough, a Pentucket student, said that she would reach out to high school contacts about this.*

Elisa Grammer raised concerns about the section of River Road that borders fields just beyond the hill at Rocks Village Bridge has flooded historically and now no river edge but rather repeated dumpings of riprap to hold the road from falling into the river. She is concerned that this could be a major Capital Improvements item. She spoke with DPW Director Wayne Amaral, who knows about the issue and who does not have the capacity to do grant administration in addition to other duties. Nancy Pau suggested looking into the [Coastal Resilience Grant Program](#) and consulting the MA SLR and Coastal Flooding Viewer: Zoom to West Newbury, and click on the different tabs on top to see the projections [Story Map Series](#).