



CLIMATE RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

www.westport-ma.com/climate-resilience-committee

Regular Meeting Minutes of:
Thursday, September 28, 2023

John Bullard, Chair
Shana Shufelt, Vice Chair

CRC, Subcommittee Members, Staff & Others Present:

- John Bullard, Chair
- Shana Shufelt, Vice Chair
- Michael Burris – Town Planner
- Amy Messier – Assistant Town Planner
- Jim Whitin
- Michael Sullivan
- Joseph Inoldsby
- Phil Weinberg
- Lauren Miller- Donnelly
- David Sprogis
- Kim Botelho
- Sean Leach
- Donna Amaral
- Michael Yogman
- Ray Raposa

John Bullard called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM

1. **Introductions:** no new introductions at this time.

2. **Approval of 5/4/23 & 7/13/23 Minutes:**

Jim Whitin motioned to approve both sets of the minutes of 5/4/23 and 7/13/23, seconded by Mike Sullivan, the motion carried unanimously.

3. **Michael Burris – MVP 2.0 Update:**

Mr. Burris stated that Westport received funding for the program, and put out a request for proposal (RFP) in August, and in early September SRPEDD (Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic District) was selected as our vendor. Mr. Burris explained that we will be working with their environmental division and their division director, Helen Zincavage. Mr. Burris went on to say that since SRPEDD does not have an extensive background in doing diversity, equity and inclusion outreach, therefore it's necessary to find a subcontractor. SRPEDD met with a DEI (Diversity Equity Inclusion) firm named Conditioning Leaders, and they are an ideal fit as a subcontractor. Once the contracts are executed with SRPEDD and Conditioning Leaders, we will be able to move forward and get the ball rolling. In the meantime, Mr. Burris stated that he has been working on identifying community leaders (high school students, people living within an environmental justice community, people with jobs related to farming, people within the disability community, etc.) who can help gain connections to groups that may be disproportionately affected by climate change. The community leaders will make up half of the core team and will be referred to as the community liaisons. Our progress so far is somewhere in the vicinity of steps one and

two on the MVP 2.0 Summary of Actions, Deliverables, and Checkpoints slide (can be seen at 6:22 minutes of meeting recording). The other half of the core team is going to be town representatives (Planning Board will be represented by staff, CRC – Jeff Cantin), Mr. Burris mentioned that he would like to get the Commission on Disabilities involved, along with the Council on Aging. Mr. Burris went on to mention that reaching out to the Westport Food Pantry to see if they have anyone they work with that would be interested in being a community liaison to aid this process. It was stated that the volunteers will be compensated monetarily through a payment structure. Mr. Burris asked the committee for ideas on possible community leaders, which included the following feedback;

- Phil Weinberg: Council on Aging and Veterans to reach out and target the aging members of the community.
- John Bullard, agreed with Phil on COA and Veterans, also the Food Pantry.
- Michael Sullivan: Police and Fire Departments could provide insight on specific areas where they get the most E-911 calls relating to possible climate change (heat), homebound and have limited resources, etc.
- Joseph Ingoldsby: suggested connecting with the local Grange and SEMAP (Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership), along with interviewing farmers, fisherman, shell-fisherman and agriculture based people.
- Jim Whitin: Local real estate agents to help identify areas that have less resources (heat/ a/c), and restricted incomes.
- Lauren Miller- Donnolly: Churches located in North Westport (Highland Avenue & Sanford Road).
- Kim Botelho: schools in order to reach out to families that are involved in the reduced lunch program.
- David Sprogis: suggested that we should be looking at the entire chain from the vulnerable and up to the people that are going to help the vulnerable, with an emphasis on local farming and agriculture.

4. Subcommittee Reports:

- **Engagement & Fundraising:**

No update was provided at this time.

- **Water:**

Mike Sullivan stated that the subcommittee met yesterday and stated that the report is 80%-90% done, and a draft is expected to be finished within a month, and a report is expected to be submitted to the Climate Resilience Committee within about two months. Mr. Sullivan stated that the subcommittee has identified 6-7 risks to Westport (sea level rise, private and public infrastructures located along the water and the increase in vulnerability to those structures, etc.). Mr. Sullivan mentioned that the subcommittee would like to keep living documents as time passes and more information is available, etc. Lastly, Mr. Sullivan mentioned that there are active programs going on at the moment with Buzzards Bay and the Westport River Watershed Alliance (WRWA) to help address some of the problems mentioned above.

- **Infrastructure & Safety:**

No update was provided at this time.

- **Health:**

Phil Weinberg states that the last report from the subcommittee was submitted in June 2022, and although the subcommittee has been quiescent, he suggested that they regroup in order to

determine whether or not the report should be updated based on topics and concerns that have come up during the year. Mr. Weinberg expressed concern over how the information will be compiled and presented in a single report, and figuring out a format would be helpful going forward. Michael Yogman suggested reaching out to the high school students again to listen to their concerns about climate change and a rise in anxiety. Donna Amaral added that National Geographic has a program called the “2024 Slingshot Challenge” that is centered around engagement with youths relating to climate change, which asks students between the ages of 13-18 years old to create a one minute video about how they would describe an idea to solve environmental issues. Once the video is submitted, the youths get help from the National Geographic staff to help formulate what their plan would be. Ms. Amaral suggested that a program similar to the National Geographic one could encourage participation from the local schools while implementing a specific focus on Westport.

- **Agriculture:**

Joseph Ingoldsby suggested looking into seasonal crops and how they (the crops) and the farmers can survive in a changing climate – relating to the types of crops they are growing and from an economic standpoint, as well as how they are adapting to the seasonal changes (use of greenhouses, etc.). Mr. Ingoldsby also mentioned that he would like to take a look into hay production, fishing and shell-fishing. Ray Raposa stated that Meatworks was an asset to the community during COVID with the meat shortage. Furthermore, it was mentioned that farmers are now growing crops that were initially not able to grow in the Northeast, however with today's technology, an array of crops are now being grown more locally. Mr. Whitin spoke about the need for legislative changes relating to the state's ANR process, and noted that the land along Main Rd. could be ideal for agricultural use, however, it is mostly being used as frontage for development, specifically new homes. Mr. Whitin mentioned that re-zoning the agricultural land as being unsuitable for housing has generated pushback from the agricultural community and farmers in general, and would be supportive of rethinking how the ANR process works. Furthermore, Mr. Whitin stressed the importance of looking into how other areas are dealing with the soil issues relating to development. Ray Raposa suggested that it would be beneficial to reach out to State Representative Paul Schmid since he is the chairman of the Agricultural Committee for the state of MA in order to get a better idea of what could potentially be done legislation wise. Mr. Burris mentioned that the state of Vermont is very protective of its agricultural lands and has a restrictive program of agricultural soil impact fees in areas where there is prime and statewide soils, however he is unsure if this could be implemented on a local basis, but is something that could be explored with our legislatures.

- **Historic Structures:**

No update was provided at this time by the subcommittee members. However, Michael Burris stated that he has provided a map to the subcommittee of structures that are designated as historical in Westport in relation to the regulatory floodway.

5. Discussion Items:

- **Promoting further progression in subcommittee reports/ Available tools to help visualize and communicate potential impacts of climate change:**

- I. Mr. Bullard gave an overview of the discussion of the water subcommittee relating to the best progression of public input and the steps of the process of how a committee report happens, which included the following:
 - Subcommittees to draft their own reports with an established deadline. The CRC would then receive all reports from the various subcommittees and combine them into one which would be the “CRC Report”, which would most likely be done by the

Planning Department staff. Once finalized, the CRC Report would be presented to the Selectboard for review. Once the Selectboard approves the CRC Report, the CRC would then release the report to the public with anticipated feedback. Once feedback is given, the CRC would make changes to the report based on the feedback. Mr. Bullard stressed that the report should be comprised of information on the following; what is climate change; what are the risks/ drivers of climate change; recommendations of actions for individuals/ private entities within town; policy recommendations for the Town/ local government.

John Bullard opened the discussion up for comment which included the following;

- Joseph Ingoldsby: encouraged a template for easier assembly and continuity; recommends interviews with the farmers and fisherman to gain insight into their concerns and points of view; encourages the use of graphics to help people visually see the impacts of climate change, etc.
- Jim Whitin: expressed that each subcommittee may need a different format based on their different topics and information provided; does not think that the report should go to the Selectboard until the feedback from the public has been established. Mr. Whitin also stressed that this report should be a living document.
- David Sprogis: expressed that he is in agreement with Jim Whitin; expressed that there needs to be a formal process and would like to have it ratified by the public and the Selectboard.
- Michael Sullivan: in support of updating the Selectboard as the process progresses
- Shana Shufelt: recommends presenting the report and results to the Selectboard before the document is used in relation to grant applications, etc. and is in support of getting public comment back before its presented to the Selectboard. Lastly, suggests that a check-in with the Selectboard should be done in the near future to inform them of the CRC's next steps.
- Phil Weinberg: in support of an overall framework which is along the lines of; 1. identifying the problems, 2. listing the conditions, 3. listing the problems they are going to create, 4. listing potential responses, 5. ranking those responses. Mr. Weinberg also stated that having a consultant would be beneficial to help with the process and also posed the question of how the robust public process will be handled.
- Michael Burriss: recommends providing an update to the Selectboard about the problems the CRC has identified, as well as starting to have conversations with the community in order to get their feedback on those identified problems to help inform policy approaches. Mr. Burriss also recommended doing outreach outside of a public meeting setting, such as a farmers market, etc.

6. Other Business: none

7. Next Meeting Date: After reviewing the results of the poll that was sent out to the committee members, the results determined that the majority of the members preferred to keep the meeting time to 5:00 p.m. Therefore, future meetings will continue to start at 5:00 p.m. and meet every other month in order to allow the subcommittees to meet in the intervening months. The next CRC Meeting will be held on **Thursday, December 14, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.**

Whitin motioned to adjourn, seconded by Sullivan, with all members in favor, the motion carried unanimously.
The meeting adjourned at 7:00 P.M.

Accepted 12/14/23