

## Minutes from Climate Resilience Meeting 07-17-2023

Present: David Byrd, Jiffy Spencer, Irene Haines, Jim Ventres, John Olin, Amalia Shaltiel, Bernie Gillis, Pete Govert, Linda Zemienieski, Margo Burns, Bob Casner, Michele Velez, Joe Sina, Gary Wilson, Susan Kinsman, Alan Ponanski, Toni McCabe, Steve Gephard, Jesse Stone and 4 Chatham Health District Representatives including Russell Melmed and Liz Davidson

Mr. Olin facilitated the meeting.

Mr. Olin began by referring to the findings of the Community Resilience Building Workshop and suggesting an agenda.

- Resilient CT Connecticut Phase III project
- Choosing Climate Resilience Actions
- EH Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Communication

1. Mr. Olin reported on the evolving Resilient CT Phase III project. It requires setting up a town advisory committee. The project will involve studies, concept design, cost analysis and will put us in the pipeline for funding. Mr Olin made use of maps showing the Succor Brook corridor and the 50-year and 100-year flood plains. He explained that they will be remapped by NOAA with the new changing climate information. This is an evolving situation with some of the stakeholders present, including David Byrd from Goodspeed. Community members will also be involved. First Selectwoman Haines asked what the project intends to solve. Mr. Olin responded that the committee is intending to find the impact of flooding along Norwich Road stream corridor on the stakeholders. Mr. Govert summarized his understanding of this.

We identified the Succor Brook corridor as a problem area. CIRCA will support an engineering study to see how to fix it. These will be rigorous and professional studies that will lead to 2 or 3 different solutions. We would be left with an estimate and set of plans with which we could shop around for bigger sources of funding, maybe from federal dollars, for infrastructure solutions. Mr. Gillis added that it would be a hydrological study. Mr Olin added that CIRCA would contract firms to do the study.

2. Natural Hazard mitigation plan of 2021 reflects ongoing activity in public works and emergency management on roads and culverts and flooding. Mr. Olin mentioned the principle of Build Back Better and Sizing for disaster that is happening on the State and local levels. There are 2 jurisdictions involved of DOT and the town.

Mr. Olin reported how many of the things in the Summary of Findings are already addressed in the Hazard Mitigation Plan such as:

- Coordinate with DOT to address problems with pipes bridges culverts on state roads and overtopping problems.
- Conduct engineering studies to mitigate various town structures in need of repair.
- Support mitigation projects which will protect public and private property from natural hazards including storm water management.

- Identify funding to assist flood prone properties along the Connecticut River and Inland Streams
- Using debris management to identify locations for large volume of debris and comply with Debris Management standards
- Budget appropriation money for removing dead dying and dangerous trees and culvert construction.

These priorities are being addressed very capably by the land use office and other entities.

3. Mr Olin put up on a screen the 23 priority actions that were identified at the CRB workshop in April. And the additional actions

Mr. Olin scrolled through and mentioned a few priority issues such a flooding issues, debris issues, social issue and some of the additional actions mentioned such as neighbor helping neighbor, dam inventory, dead and dying trees, emergency management, communication to the public, Succor Brook, drinking water issues. He asked for comments from participants.

Pete Govert addressed forming neighbor networks to help each other in the event of storms. When things fall apart neighbors are a first level of help. Mr Govert shared his experience with creating block parties in his neighborhood. Coming together socially, exchanging meals developed to neighbor self-help projects with emails exchanged and contact with each other, keeping an eye out for each other's houses. Mr. Govert volunteered to share his experience and resources available in a public meeting. In discussion a woman suggested developing a neighborhood map with phones and emails. Mr. Olin suggested connecting to existing networks as node points.

Margo Burns suggested dividing the list between resiliency, which is a short time period that extreme conditions exist which we need to plan for so the community can recover back to the status quo' and sustainability which speaks of long term initiatives - of how to keep a community's wellbeing growing over many years.

Jiffy Spencer of Emergency Management initiated a discussion about CERT in conjunction with neighborhood groups. Her ultimate goal is having volunteers mapped out into neighborhood watch groups. She talked about the need for volunteers to create teams. She would like to find more volunteers to take the CERT class and build up the roster and combine it with Pete Govert's idea. This would mean that the CERT volunteers would have the knowledge they get through the training, such as basic first aid, how to search and when not to search. She encouraged people to take the class. She hopes we can add a teen CERT class and involve the younger crowd. Other participants showed interest in this idea and CERT certifications. Bernie Gillis asked Jiffy what the enrollment in the reverse phone call emergency system was at present. He also asked about communication within the ambulance and fire department. Jiffy answered that communication was improved with radios that were given to the departments and that they reported back to Emergency Management who then reported it to Eversource and the State. Mr Gillis asked what a regular resident should do in case of an emergency such as a tree across the driveway. Jiffy explained that one would call Emergency Management. First Selectman Irene Haines explained the different methods of calling the trooper or calling public works. It's important that the calls go through the town as they keep a running list of all that needs to be taken

care of. Ms. Shaltiel suggested that emergency numbers be added to a Welcome Wagon package that is sent to new residents. She also suggested mapping neighborhoods in town and asking neighbors to create their own package of numbers. Mr Casner added an explanation of the Welcome Wagon Package and asked if anyone had information to add to the package.

Mr Olin steered the conversation toward long term issues. Mr. Casner brought up the question of solid waste and the verification of its being recycled – knowing where our recycling is going. Follow the trail of recycling so we can reassure residents that their recycling is not going into trash. Mr. Olin connected this to education.

Mr. Govert brought up the fact that Connecticut only produces 3% of the food that we eat and so a Sustainable long-term action would be helping people grow their own food. Mr. Govert reminded the group how this self-sustainability kept East Haddam from feeling the Depression as many had a cow and kitchen garden. Anything we can do to reclaim that agricultural heritage is time well spent. He mentioned our Right to Farm ordinance and our Community Garden as good steps in the right direction He also mentioned the Agricultural Commission as a strength. We can build on that through public education efforts to help people garden more. Ms. Haines added that Lauren Pszczolkowski is creating a farmer's stall trail and that we are in the process of getting a permanent structure for the farmer's market. She also suggested that people join the AG Commission. Margot Burns mentioned that there is also a Regional Agricultural Council. Ms. Shaltiel asked that the trail be put on the municipal site and not just on FB. She also asked for help for the Sustainability Team in convening a farmer's forum of small and large farms to find how we can help them. Ms. Shaltiel also asked if Michele Velez could give more information about recycling. Ms. Velez said that many of the questions, including those asked by Mr. Casner are answered on the Public Works Website. She will continue putting resources on the website, but education needs to happen to send people to the website. Ms. Shaltiel mentioned an idea of having a series of workshops at the transfer station to educate people about recycling and also gearing up for more advertising of the composting program and teaming up with Ballek's Garden Center for a series of workshops about composting at home to help people who have the ability but don't have the knowledge to keep food scraps out of the waste stream altogether. Margot Burns explained more about the possibilities of Soil Health that Farmers can tap into. Mr. Olin mentioned the problems of growing food with the changing climate.

Gary Wilson suggested concentrating on priority #6 which is mapping dams and bodies of water. Some of them are in bad repair. In the discussion Steve Gephard added that many of the larger ones can be found on DEEP website. Small dams are not on the list but if they fail they can take out culverts and have an impact. DEEP has a spreadsheet that needs to be converted to a GIS map. From there time can be spent looking at the deficiencies and then have a pretty comprehensive dam map of the town. A lot of AA are not on the map. Jim Ventres stated that the large ones are registered by the state. The smaller ones are not an issue. The one on Succor Brook on Boardman Road was taken down by the owner who did not have the money to maintain it. Mr. Gephard explained the review process by DEEP. The new State regulations require owners to have inspections. If you have a class C Dam it needs to be inspected by an engineer every 3 years. Even if it's an A it needs to be inspected but the timing is different. A lot of people don't 'do it. A lot of these registered dams are not in compliance with DEEP standards., but DEEP does not have the manpower to

inspect all of them. What is the town's role? You need to know who they are for resiliency reasons, but if someone is in long-term violation with a C dam it's in the provenance of DEEP and Attorney general. The town would not want to get in the middle of it. There is no trend of taking responsibility for dams on the state level. Jim explained that it is much cheaper to maintain what you have and keep your property value. Ms. Shaltiel asked what are the solutions. The cheapest solution is if a dam is not serving any purpose is to get rid of it. The solution to flooding is not more dams. They are the problem. State owned dams are rehabbed by the State. Mr. Gillis asked what if Pickerel lake breached. Mr. Ventres explained that the question is the downstream impact.

Mr Olin directed the conversation to Health and Social services.

Toni McCabe reported – We don't really know what the social needs of East Haddam are. East Haddam Youth and Family Services now has a Case Manager whose job is to begin to identify the needs in the community, identify the number of people in need and what their needs are and to centralize that information in a way that folks who are in need know who to contact and what services can be provided for them. This is in the early stages. Our case manager will be meeting with local providers that are part of an informal network and to try and centralize that, to understand what's being done locally and then to go regional and to look what's being done in other communities and what's being done at the state level. The goal is to actually create a directory of services that are going to be available to folks and hopefully by the end of this year to have true numbers, a true picture of what the social service needs are, what the housing needs are, fuel, food clothing, all the needs that folks are struggling with. So, this is the work while at the same time we are trying to provide services in a more comprehensive way. So we can begin instead of putting out fires find the reasons why and to deal with things in a longer more sustainable way.

In terms of health, Chatham Health District Director, Mr. Melmed, responded that the main question is water. With the changing climate, with more drought we see wells run dry, with storms we see power outages and water problems because people can't run their wells. Vector borne diseases, tick and mosquito borne diseases. We do education, free tick testing at the health department but that is not upstream prevention. Tick season is getting longer. He suggested deer hunts to reduce tick borne diseases. Taking care of the mice who overwinter in stone walls can also reduce deer mice population that carry ticks. Chickens were also mentioned as a way to reduce tick populations. Mr Melmed talked about mosquito borne diseases. Storms and then dry periods are great for mosquitoes. Another way of reducing water problems is Municipal water but that is a big infrastructure problem.

4. Mr. Olin moved to conclude the meeting by mentioning the scheduled open community meeting on September 17<sup>th</sup> at the Grange. He suggested a bi-annual meeting of this Group so we can report on our progress. He asked for last thoughts.

Bernie Gillis asked if there was a capability to supply electricity to the gas station were we to lose power? Jim Ventres said that to be prepared was the best practice and to have gas in the car before a storm.

Joe Sina reiterated and emphasized a couple of threads – there are things the town can do and are doing pretty well, such as Emergency Management and notifications. The question with other things that we have brought up is to ask what makes it important to the individual. Most people's reaction is that the town is going to do this and will not do anything

themselves. They will not be impacted by information on a website. But they will be impacted by grassroots contact of having a beer with one's neighbor. Educating the community through grass roots neighborhoods is important and the question is where you start educating on the grassroots level so you can build toward these priorities. How do you focus and target the things that you want people to really get involved with.

Pat Young mentioned that Eight Mile River funding is available. They have done a culvert study for the whole town, and if there are projects that speak to our management plan or a project we can focus on and is in our watershed please come talk with us.

Ms. Haines suggested more education to lake associations – roadside vegetation and stops to erosion if there are those kinds of things on how to get it out there. Might be one homeowner at a time. Neighborhood by neighborhood. Réservoir Préservation Group talk with Gary Christopher.

Working with business. With FEMA how to work businesses to create resiliency.

Sue Kinsman raised the problem of solid waste issue if you cut Japanese knotweed you can't leave it in place as it will re-grow. The Connecticut Invasive plant working group is looking at a protocol and recommend bagging it and tossing it. We need to create a way of composting. Old Saybrook has a biochar demonstration facility that burns it to create energy.

Ms. Shaltiel suggested that we continue to talk with each other. Mr. Olin reminded everyone that there was a meeting in September and another meeting scheduled for October and mentioned the Resilience site and we can use this as progress notes on where we are.