



Natural Resource Committee Meeting Minutes – February 20, 2014 3pm

Members Present:

Chris Constantino, Town of Milford
Justin Kates, City of Nashua
Ron Miner, Merrimack Village District
Jim Battis, Town of Hudson
Spencer Brookes, Town of Wilton
Lincoln Geiger, Temple-Wilton Community Farm
Celeste Barr, Beaver Brook Association
Tom Young, Town of Litchfield

Staff Present: Kim Goddu and Jen Cysz

The second meeting of the Natural Resources Committee began with a reintroduction of committee members and a welcoming to new members. After introductions, the committee reviewed the October 17, 2013 minutes and had no changes. The minutes were immediately approved. Next, the committee reviewed the current outline with changes made from comments received last time such as the addition of an invasive species section.

L. Geiger discussed the inclusion of a list of farms in the region into the chapter and barriers farmers have with current zoning laws, differences between farming in a mountainous and flat area and the burden of making a livable wage through agriculture. J. Kates noted there needed to be an increased emphasis on climate change.

Next, the committee reviewed the vision, goals and opportunities for the chapter draft. J. Kates expressed the lack of climate change in the vision section and argued for its inclusion as residents need to be more aware of how climate change fits into the regional plan. K. Goddu explained how the vision was created along with the inclusion of the, “what we heard” section from residents around the region. C. Barr wondered if access to the Merrimack River was for just the Merrimack River or if the tributaries are included in the comment. K. Goddu explained the comment referred to access on the Merrimack River specifically in Nashua. L. Geiger highlighted the fact that many of the comments are positive for natural resources and also noted the need to preserve land in the region through maintaining trails on town forests and the fact that most of the work needs to happen at the local level.

J. Battis pointed to the fact that the perception of water quality is good but data may not support it since many private wells may have elevated arsenic levels. L. Geiger added that the towns may lack the resources for water testing and this has led to polluted aquifers and a general lack of private well testing. Also, not all well drilling companies report findings to the proper agencies which decreased

dissemination to interested parties such as other residents or the towns. The Town of Wilton invited a member of the USGS to give a talk on water at a town meeting; specifically, how does geology affect water and how does climate change fit in. Apparently, the Town of Dublin has completed a study on their water.

J. Kates described the lack of concern for climate change in resident's comments and that residents don't know how climate change interacts with water infrastructure and open space. This lack of understanding manifests in not understanding how climate change effects their lives and properties since residents are so focused on day to day issues. C. Barr noted the importance of more bicycling, alternative modes of transportation and how diet and exercise habits of individuals can effect climate change. J. Czysz explained the origin of the survey responses and how the comments were similar to what we heard from the survey responses from the Natural Resources Committee. Czysz discussed the similarities of the comments focusing on day to day issues rather than long term plans: natural resources was associated with recreation, residents wanted more bike and trails and energy efficiency and natural resources are the most important to residents from the responses conducted by the UNH Survey Center.

S. Brookes noted a report produced by Tom Sloan, NH Agriculture, stating that water tables in NH dropped by 10% in 2013 and should be the start of the goals and opportunities for the chapter. Brookes will send K. Goddu the report for distribution. L. Geiger countered that the fluctuation in water table levels could be seasonal and the time frame may be a limiting factor. J. Kates brought up the point that climate change poses a threat to natural resources resulting in damage or devastation, but residents don't make the connection to climate change as a cause. J. Czysz agreed that climate change can pose a threat to recreation and other natural resources but efforts are open ended for protection and can use more support.

S. Brookes wondered if the Nashua region is more desirable to residents because of the loss of coastal land. C. Barr noted that we are experiencing a change in forest type and with current predictions, NH will eventually have the climate of the Carolina's and foresters don't recommend planting sugar maples in NH anymore due to forest changes. C. Constantino highlighted species migration of trees in the coming future and how sugar maples may grow at higher elevations.

J. Battis commented that climate change isn't a threat as some residents portray the situation. Climate change is a global effect and actions in the Nashua region won't have a major effect on climate change. It is not seen as an issue by local communities. The focus should be on adaptation and what towns can do to prepare for the effects of climate change. J. Battis also noted that the impacts on our region are minimal compared to others around the world. C. Barr noted the differences in emission scenario's and how to have lasting effects, we as a people need to be on the least case scenario but we are on the worst case scenario or the high emissions scenario. We need to implement severe measures to reduce our carbon emission and model appropriate measures where applicable.

The next item on the agenda was the discussion of the Natural Resource Committee Survey results. K. Goddu went through the highlights of the survey and noted any associations between questions or answers. Question four of the survey regarding top three water quality concerns spurred a discussion on road salt and the apprehension to using brine instead of salt as an alternative. J. Kates noted that the City of Nashua ran out of salt on the day of the meeting. K. Goddu mentioned the GreenSnoPro program through the UNH T² Center to educate salt operators on effective plowing techniques and using salt alternatives.

S. Brookes celebrated the Town of Wilton joining the Blue Bus Route which increases alternative transportation options in town. L. Geiger discussed current development patterns are based on the car and the regional need for infill strategies coupled with zoning changes and achievable goals. It was also noted that the resistance to development or certain ways of developing are changing with the generations. S. Brookes noted that Memorial Hospital's physical campus has expanded due to the increasing elderly population in Nashua while discontinuing a satellite campus in Milford. J. Kates highlighted that Nashua is more progressive for public transportation as there is no more room for sprawl which is causing more creative uses of land and transportation. After this discussion, J. Czysz explained NRPC's role in planning and assistance to communities since there was some confusion among committee members.

The last activity of the meeting was a brainstorming session to identify strategies for the regional plan. J. Kates offered the suggestion of identifying a contact in each town for adaptation planning such as the Conservation Commission, Select Board, Planning Board or local emergency managers which could be determined by each community. NRPC has excellent resources but sending out cold emails can lead unused resources and the potential relationship lost. Communities need a staff person (paid or volunteer) who can collaborate and share local projects thus bridging the gap with NRPC resources and local adaptation efforts. T. Young suggested the NRPC Commission could be contacts since there is already one point person from each community on the board but the commission needs to be asked first since some members may have other commitments.

L. Geiger then offered the promotion of a contact person idea at the state level. J. Czysz explained NRPC could coordinate with the municipalities and develop linkages to each community. J. Kates noted that every town needs an emergency management director as it is directed from the state, and not all towns have them. J. Kates also noted that rebuilding better after a storm decreased infrastructure loss and increased adaptation to coming weather events. It is important to identify reoccurring losses every time since there is a direct correlation between weather events and property loss. For example, building in the floodplain will cause your house to end up under water at some point.

J. Battis pointed out that town engineers and planners are too busy with their day to day responsibilities to focus on long term planning. L. Geiger noted there is much focus on infrastructure failures after a storm but not before (disaster apathy). T. Young highlighted an example on the Spicket River in Peterborough and associated flooding problems. S. Brookes discussed the concern that residents are living and building in a floodplain due to limited income. The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is

a good indicator of what will be underwater 100 years from today. R. Miner noted how Merrimack is currently performing an asset management inventory funded through a grant from NHDES. The Town of Merrimack is currently redesigning a bridge with the 500 year floodplain in mind rather than the 100 year floodplain. It was suggested all towns should be using the 500 year floodplain rather than the 100 year floodplain for new transportation projects. J. Battis discussed funding and the fear of increased cost as a barrier to building a roadway with adaptation in mind. J. Kates commented on a recent article in the Harvard Business Review which compared the cost of implementing mitigation strategies compared to the cost of disaster recovery. J. Czysz suggested communities use their Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) for adaptation and mitigation projects to ease disaster recovery and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) through FEMA as an additional funding source for mitigation projects. CIP's must have a good cost-benefit ratio to receive funding. J. Kates highlighted an example in northeast Nashua which causes frequent flooding events due to an undersized culvert. The cost to repair the culvert needs to be in conjunction with a cost benefit analysis and three alternatives in order to receive funding from NHDES. Other towns have purchased parcels with reoccurring flooding events and undersized culverts. Nashua needs an inventory of culverts completed to determine which projects have the highest need. R. Miner discussed the asset management inventory currently underway in Merrimack including the age of the infrastructure and the useful life. R. Miner explained how funding from NHDES was acquired and how the state may begin to require an asset management plan from a town before distributing grant funding.

J. Battis noted that HAZUS can be used for floods and hurricanes for inventories and NRPC can help with the technical aspects of HAZUS. J. Kates explained the Northeast States Emergency Consortium (NESEC) can provide assistance with HAZUS software. HAZUS software can help communities plan for future natural disasters through historical data. In conjunction with HAZUS software, Nashua needs asset management similar to what is being completed in Merrimack. The Southern NH Climate Assessment could be used by mayors or selectman for future storm preparation. Currently there are poor records kept on losses of damage.

J. Battis emphasized the importance of case studies from other communities and how funding is secured are issues for decision makers. S. Brookes expressed the dire need for citizen and municipal board education and training. L. Geiger noted the importance of framing the situation as a question for citizens, what is their stake in climate change. Towns must demonstrate the risk or cost to the citizen. One example discussed was fire education which is taught in schools, educational forums and the media. It was also noted that very few residents of the population between the Nashua region and Boston make a livable wage off of natural resources which increases the difficulty for natural resource protection. J. Kates highlighted the target market for fire prevention and crime prevention is school age children. Kids could make excellent champions if they were engaged in the climate change discussion. Other examples of increasing community awareness are: a community forum between the City of Dover and MIT to discuss climate change issues, the image of the Boston transit system that will be lost due to sea level rise and "Dire States", a campaign for increasing the awareness of the deteriorating infrastructure in the United States.

The committee concluded with ideas from R. Miner explaining in more detail the asset management project being completed in two parts. The first is a map or current inventory of MVD's infrastructure along with its use full life and the second is what needs to be put away for the future. T. Young noted there are new technologies for prolonging existing infrastructure such as pipe lining. J. Battis emphasized that NRPC can educate selectman and other municipal boards on new data to educate citizens on the origins of the scientific data which is not arbitrary data. R. Miner suggested NRPC can act as a grant database for finding funding sources of municipal projects. J. Kates noted the importance of Miner's idea and suggested assisting municipalities with prep work for grants to rank priorities. Kate's also explained how the campaign to recycle is now an everyday practice and a good education model to simulate. It was also noted by the committee members the significance of using Best Management Practice (BMP's) for recycling and that Wilton was the first locally funded recycling center in the country. L. Geiger cited the example of public energy committee's as an important resource for reducing energy consumption and the need for communities to have access to resources in different state agencies. T. Young concluded the meeting with the need for an engaged residents and minimal public apathy in order to gain support for local adaptation projects.

K. Goddu adjourned the meeting.