

Resilient Connecticut 2.0 Town of Old Saybrook Meeting

1:30 pm, 4-27-22

Old Saybrook Town Hall

Present: David Murphy (CIRCA), Mary Buchanan (CIRCA), Margot Burns (RiverCOG), Marilyn Ozols (Borough of Fenwick), Larry Bonin (Old Saybrook Public Works), Chris Costa (Old Saybrook Town Planner)

Overview: CIRCA met with the Town of Old Saybrook, Borough of Fenwick, and RiverCOG to describe the expansion of Resilient Connecticut into the RiverCOG planning region and provide a forum to the local hazard mitigation plan team to comment on the status of a subset of the actions in the Old Saybrook Hazard Mitigation Plan adopted in 2019. These meeting notes will be provided to the Town and RiverCOG for appropriate filing related to the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

David commenced the meeting by providing an overview of the Resilient CT project and Resilient CT 2.0 future plans. During the discussion, the local planning team reviewed a subset of the Town's hazard mitigation actions that have potential relevance for the Resilient CT 2.0 project pipeline, and attendees had an open discussion about the Town's needs related to climate change and natural hazards.

During the discussion of HMP actions, town and borough staff articulated the need for taking a big-picture approach rather than many individual small projects with potentially inconsistent or contradictory designs. This observation is relevant to many of the following HMP actions.

- There are several independent groups of beach associations, which are very active and organized; often these groups want individual quick solutions.
- The town often receives complaints and requests for small-scale solutions that address or benefit individual sites or groups of properties, some of which intersect with one another. For example, Chalker Beach conducted a shoreline project, but Chapman Beach residents in Westbrook have alleged that this has affected Cold Spring Brook and their beach.
- The town and borough want to take a bigger-picture collaborative approach rather than each beach or community hiring their own consultants and doing individual projects. If a planned-out, organized approach to project prioritization is taken, then individual actions may have a lower chance of adversely impacting one another.
- The recent CIRCA municipal resilience grant for the erosion near Route 154 and Buckingham Avenue is an example of a project that had a localized genesis and the

Town of Old Saybrook eventually provided a letter of support, but the Town had not instigated the grant application process.

- Toward that end, the town and borough are working with Westbrook and Clinton on a 3-town planning grant application to LIS due in May 2022. If the grant is successful and the three towns and borough undertake the planning effort, the goals would be to accomplish the statement above (coordinated planning and prioritization) and also develop several concept designs for actions identified in the hazard mitigation plan and Old Saybrook Coastal Resilience Plan.
- The town and borough are not opposed to working in parallel with CIRCA as it executes Resilient Connecticut 2.0.

Review of Subset of HMP Actions:

Action #	Activity Description	Status
30	Action 30: Municipal Buildings Capabilities Assessment. Identify buildings for future investment for renovation or new construction to ensure the candidate buildings are in compliance with standards for use as a shelter.	Although a formal assessment hasn't been completed, these needs have been addressed. Cooling centers include the town hall and library. The emergency shelter is the high school, which can also be used for cooling. All of these buildings have generators except the library; the library is on the main trunk of the power system and outages are therefore reduced in frequency and duration. The emergency management department also has mobile generators. The chief of police may be able to provide transportation for residents to shelters if needed.
32	Action 32: Evaluate publicly owned and managed stormwater outfalls and outlets along the shoreline of Old Saybrook and Fenwick to identify infrastructure that would benefit from the installation of backflow prevention (e.g. tide gates, check valve).	The Indian Town Association area has backflow preventers, but the conveyances consist of cement pipes and groundwater finds its way in. The backflow flapper on Elm Street near the underpass needs regular servicing. These backflow prevention tools have reportedly not been as successful as hoped, and sometimes they are more of a challenge than a solution to flooding.

38	Action 38. Land Acquisition (Near-term): Identify and prioritize areas for the voluntary purchase of wetlands and other flood prone open space to enhance natural resources while improving coastal resiliency and flood retention.	Land trust regularly acquires property. The town has a substantial amount of open space.
42	Action 42: Dune Restoration: Implement dune restoration and marshland protection techniques for flood storage and surge protection based on the results outlined in the 2018 Coastal Community Resilience and Climate Adaptation Study.	The Hepburn Preserve dune at Fenwick has been completed and is so far holding up; this was a component of the adjacent living shoreline project. The new dune ridge helps protect the marsh behind it. The Sequassen Avenue dune has not been completed – it is hoped that this site will one day have a living shoreline project.

45	Action 45: Road Evaluation: Evaluate roads at least annually to develop plans for improvement or elevation for emergency access and evacuation....Develop conceptual plans and prioritization for pursuing engineering, design and construction funding of roadways identified in the 2014 HMP Update. Roadways should include: 1) Banbury Crossing; 2) South Cove Causeway; 3) South Cove Causeway; 4) Plum Bank RD and Salt Meadow RD near Cornfield Pt.; 5) Shetucket Trail; 6) Fourth & Sunset Avenues; 7) Old Post RD (eastern end); 8) Shetucket Trail-to-Bellaire DR; 9) Owenco, Obed & Nehantic Trails; 10) Mohican & Red Bird Trails; 11) Bokum-to-Barley Hill Road; 12) Dwayne to Kitteridge Hill RD; 13) Rock Ridge DR to Dibble RD; 13) Niabang Ave. at Route 154; 14) Great Hammock; and 15) Sequassen Ave. (Westbrook).	<p>Part of Sequassen Ave has been raised but not all of it. Nibang Ave at Rt 154 has been raised. Both of these were raised only a few feet and were paid for with borough funds. A reduction in nuisance flooding has reportedly been observed during the small storms that have happened since this elevation was completed.</p> <p>Upcoming road elevation work will be completed on sections of Hammock, Nehantic, Red Bird, Mohican, near a condo complex that leads to Chalker Beach. Currently the condo complex can be isolated. Aladdin Ave near Chalker Beach reportedly floods multiple times a month. The alternate route for access to a condo complex at Shetucket Trail has been moved to pass through Bel-Aire Manor due to flood risk on the original route, but the Manor opposes this usage. One concern for elevating some of these roads is that the houses would not be at the elevation for the road. Some Nehantic Trail homeowners have opposed the elevation of their road (or opposed the responsibility for adjusting their own properties to match).</p>
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46	Action 46: Per Attachment 7 of the 2018 Resilience Study pursue grant funding for engineering, design, construction (as needed) for Near-Term Roadway Improvement Candidates including: 1) Elm Street underpass and roadway toward culvert over Oyster River; 2) Main and College Streets in the low-lying areas b/w Maple Ave. and Saybrook Point; 3) Sections of Rt. 1/ Boston Post Road at lower elevations near and adjacent to the Oyster River; 4) Sequassen Ave.; and 5) sections of Maple Ave.	Amtrak has previously claimed that raising the tracks at the Elm Street underpass will require going a mile in each direction; David noted that this is a frequently-cited number when DOT discusses underpasses. Building a bridge overhead might be a more feasible option. If Elm Street is flooded people use Ingham Hill road, Research Parkway, Rt 1, and Mill Rock Road East. The Elm Street flooding is reported to be frequent, not just during storms.
47	Action 47: South Cove: Evaluate to develop plans for 1) improving emergency access and evacuation; 2) options for potential dredging to improve flood storage; and 3) to evaluate the potential for creating a harbor of refuge.	Not discussed.
50	Action 50: Repetitive Loss Area Analysis (RLAA). Many repetitive loss (RL) structures have been demolished and rebuilt or elevated to higher standards than minimum FEMA requirements. Based on this extensive and successful effort by the Town and residents, it is recommended to perform a formal RLAA to identify the impact to Town's NFIP insurance rate due to repetitive loss. The results from the RLLA will help further support Town and property owner resilience and mitigation activities, including acquiring, relocating and/or flood mitigation of RL properties.	Every December, Chris reviews FEMA's RL property list and notes any properties that are now compliant. Grant funding is not adequate to purchase these properties at the moment. Many properties are getting torn down and rebuilt. The formal RLAA has not happened, and likely would not reveal significant information aside from identifying additional elevations.
54	Action 54: INGRESS AND EGRESS: Roads. Develop a roadway improvement plan to identify specific projects, project costs and funding mechanisms. It is recommended that the plan include a strategy of improving only the portions of key roads that are subject to chronic and high probability floods in the near-term about 4 to 10 miles of road, excluding the causeway. Hold formal meetings with ConnDOT regarding improvement and resilience of State roads and bridges located within the Town limits.	See previous discussion on items 45 and 46. The meetings with DOT have not occurred – DOT is reportedly not strongly interested in addressing this challenge in general.
57	Action 57: PUBLIC SAFETY: Flood Protection. Provide flood protection for at-risk Essential and Life- line Facilities. Attachment 4 and Attachment 7 of the 2018 Resilience Study provides flood risk details and	See previous discussion on action 30. The Emergency Management Director (who is also Chief of Police) has done a lot of work to increase resilience.

	recommendations for the Essential and Lifeline Facilities.	
59	Action 59. Conduct a Resilience Corridor feasibility study of the adaptation alternatives outlined in Attachment 5 of the 2018 OSB Coastal Resilience and Climate Adaptation Study.	This will likely be incorporated into the larger planning process mentioned previously. The resulting corridor would likely be “the loop” associated with Route 154.
71	Action 71: Employ living shoreline solutions for select areas including low wave energy environments such as tidal marsh borders and river mouths.	See previous discussion about needing a larger plan to direct individual site solutions rather than responding separately to each beach’s concerns. Note that living shorelines are very costly and not a solution for all areas.

Open Discussion of Other Concerns and Potential Projects: David asked for a summary of major concerns and potential issues that would fit Resilient Connecticut 2.0, including riverine flood risks which had not come up in the preceding discussion of actions from the hazard mitigation plan.

- Chris noted that Old Saybrook residents and property owners have been reluctant to discuss retreat options.
- The underpass on Elm Steet is an ongoing concern.
- There is a need for a road resiliency plan, especially for “the loop” associated with Route 154.
 - o Marilyn suggested that Resilient Connecticut should note which roads are DOT-owned as well as bridges that could use investment/improvement (see below).
- Flooding on Mohican Road
- Risks along Maple Avenue
- There is a dip in the road on College Street, and some houses on Willard Avenue and South Cove Road experience flooding.
- Beaver Dam Trail washed out during 2021 storms at a tributary of Fishing Brook, and has been temporarily built back. The plan is to replace the box culvert, but it is very expensive and complicated further by the involvement of fisheries concerns.
- It might be useful to prepare an assessment of flooding on state-owned roads, so that if the DOT wants to address these risks in the future, the town will be ready to act immediately and work with DOT.
 - o Marilyn checks the tide before she leaves for work to decide which roads to take due to the extent of the flooding.
 - o One challenge here is that many of these roads are near tidal wetlands, and DEEP sometimes opposes road elevation because of the impact on wetlands.

Participation in the Community Rating System (CRS) was discussed briefly. The Town does not believe the benefits to insurance premiums would justify the staff efforts at the present time. David agreed that

CRS participation works best where the discounts truly matter to many residents of more limited means, such as in New Haven.

Follow-up:

- Please take a look at the map viewer for the Zones of Shared Risk and offer any corrections/additions. Link here:
<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/9a4f68dd99f44dc58b93fd85bcfe1255/>
- (Note: the Editor tool within the viewer does not always save reliably, so please email mary.buchanan@uconn.edu with any changes you'd like to see reflected in the Old Saybrook ZSR layer.)
- If possible, let us know whether any other projects or concerns come to mind after the town planning team has reviewed the full HMP.

Chris will be the main point of contact for Old Saybrook going forward, and Marilyn for Fenwick.