

Meeting Minutes**Wednesday, December 17, 2014**

(RIDEM, Room 300)

In attendance: Janet Coit, DEM, Council Chair
Michelle Burnett (for Jamia McDonald - Vice-Chair), EMA
Grover Fugate, CRMC
Dr. Michael Fine, DOH
Steven Hartford, DOA
Melissa Long (for Michael Lewis), DOT
Sue AnderBois (for Marion Gold), OER
Kevin Flynn, DOA – Planning

Director Coit opened the meeting at approximately 2:35 PM.

The first order of business was the minutes from the November 12, 2014 meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made and unanimously approved.

Michelle Burnett (RIEMA) made a short presentation to the Council on a 'Local Hazard Mitigation Plan' template as prepared by RIEMA. The purpose of the template is to provide a recommended and standardized framework to local governments to follow during the creation or update of their local hazard mitigation plans. RIEMA welcomes any feedback the members of the Council may have to offer.

Director Coit then gave a presentation recapping some of the conversations the Council has had since the spring on adaptation and mitigation, with particular emphasis on adaptation strategies. She discussed the wide "scope" of adaptation strategies used in other states, ranging from the natural environment, the built environment, and public health/safety, and within those categories a range of issues from agriculture to water resources to energy and so on. She shared pictures of adaptation projects from around the country and world, including green infrastructure, elevated structures in coastal zones, etc. Director Coit emphasized the need to think about coordinated and multi-sector adaptation strategies across Rhode Island, as well as the importance of quantifying the economic values associated with inaction vs. effective adaptation. Lastly, she emphasized some of the "lessons learned" which were emphasized at the Baird Symposium (including micro-grids and the need to be self-resilient).

Director Coit then turned the conversation to Jim Boyd (CRMC) to present on the "RI Sea Levels Affecting Marshes Modeling Project – Using SLAMM for Adaptation Planning". Over the last 200 years, RI has lost more than half of its salt marshes to man-made impacts, resulting in substantial losses statewide. Today, the CRMC and other partners are faced with trying to preserve and protect the remaining coastal wetlands being impacted by an increase in coastal flooding frequency, which is a direct result of sea level rise. Barrington, Charlestown, Portsmouth, and Narragansett account for over 40% of future coastal wetland loss in RI alone under the 5 foot sea level rise scenario. Jim discussed impediments to coastal marsh migration and used Jamestown and Barrington/Warren as examples to show coastal changes at the 1/3/5' SLR scenarios. More can be found online at www.crmc.ri.gov/maps/maps_slamm.html

Caitlin Chaffee (CRMC) then presented on “Shoreline Adaptation and Coastal Wetland Restoration - Improving Coastal Resilience Through Partnership Efforts”. She shared examples of adaptation techniques (retreat/removal, regarding, vegetation enhancement, use of coir logs/envelopes for bank/toe reinforcement). She concluded with discussion of the Salt Pond Restoration Project and Seapowet Point (Tiverton). In all, 16 projects were undertaken statewide. Caitlin has a list of potential projects that could be undertaken if funding is identified. She noted Save the Bay’s involvement in the project.

Pam Rubinoff (CRC/RISG, URI GSO) offered a summary of some of the lessons learned at the recent Baird Symposium held in Newport. She emphasized that small changes in the present can save a great deal of money in the future, and a great deal can be accomplished through the zoning and building code changes. Pam summarized some of the major points made by Louis Gritzko (FM Global), Lisa Konicki (Westerly Chamber) and John Englander (keynote speaker), and ended with a discussion on the potential positive use of tax incentives.

The members of the Council offered a few select comments on the presentations and discussed the amazing amount of work the state has to undertake in its efforts to become “resilient”.

Caroline Karp (Brown University) commented on the maps Jim Boyd showed in his presentation and offered comments on the possibility of not allowing some property owners to rebuild.

Tom Uva (NBC) offered some comments/questions about the SLR predictions being offered by CRMC.

Art Handy (RI House of Representatives) had numerous questions about how we can better help cities and towns plan ahead.

Meg Kerr (CWA) offered comments on rebuilding in Westerly after Sandy and how the EC4 needs to “nudge” cities/towns to be more flexible post-disaster. She also asked that we talk more seriously about purchasing land for migrating marshes; she would like to hear more specifics on this issue.

Peter Galvin asked that the Council allow more time for open discussion at future meetings.

Ken Filarski offered comments about green building practices and passive design.

Director Coit (DEM) offered some closing remarks recognizing the hard work of Jan Reitsma (Governor’s Office) and Bob Vanderslice (DOH – retiring).

Next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Feb. 11th at 2:00.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:00 pm.

(Approved by the Council on 2-11-15)