

# **PREPARING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE IN RYE**

## ***GAINING INSIGHTS AND CHARTING A COURSE***

### **Small Group Discussion Notes from Workshop #4** **August 27, 2014, 6:00-8:30, Rye Junior High**

*This document contains the notes from small group discussions at a public workshop. People at each of the three tables (Public Health, Stormwater, and Economics & Businesses) responded to the three questions listed below under each category.*

#### **Public Health discussion group**

##### **What are the key challenges?**

- Drinking water – wells flood, interconnection of water supplies
- Electricity – it's unreliable
- Ticks, West Nile Virus, Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), and other insects
- Septic Systems – flooding/inundation from sea level rise
- Red seaweed (changes in near-shore flora) has harmful bacteria?
- Flooding during medical emergencies
- Mold increasing with humidity (in both old and new buildings)
- Drought? Water bans when plants need to be watered, or bans due to water quality.
- Air quality – pollens
- Evacuation from the coast – roads are cut off

##### **What outcomes do you want to see?**

- A plan for backup drinking water (water systems are not owned by the town)
- Determine if electrical inputs are reliable (multiple transmission lines); answer the question, Why does the power go out so frequently?
- Dynamic evacuation plans communicate where roads are out. Plan would include How to get out, and How to stay home & survive.
- Bulk generator purchase
- Educated public about ticks, mold, etc.

##### **What actions are needed?**

- Possible interconnections between water companies?
  - What are the water companies' plans?
  - Attend Water Commission/Aquarion meetings
- Get the word out on personal preparedness
- Assess vulnerabilities of wells to storms
- Workshop on water (wells, etc) with Rye Water District

- Use multiple areas for education (all topics), including: schools, website, emergency prep. Info. Get everyone a packet electronically.
- Seek out champions/stewards, give them more info to share
- Hire a dedicated health officer, give them content to share – daily text.
- Go to Selectmen’s meeting on September 22, ask them what they will do?

## **Economics and Business discussion group**

### **What are the key challenges?**

- Regarding economics, resources that apply to other issues and how choices are made. What can you do with limited resources?
- Economic impact of loss of tax revenue from homes on the beach (potential loss)
- New FEMA flood maps – decreasing value of beachfront properties and increase in insurance premiums – will have a huge impact on the local economy.
- Despite repetitive losses, people still keep building in the same place.
- Electric reliability and keeping IT connections during intense storms that can bring down power
- Generators that run off propane – supply issues during outages.
- Wastewater system getting knocked out by storms.
- Home businesses – how many are there in Rye? Likely more than we think. What are the economic impacts to them? They are impacted as much as regular businesses. Loss of internet connection can be a serious impact for these businesses.
  - **ACTION: Have a business continuity session for home based businesses and others**
  - **ACTION: Inventory home based businesses in Rye**
- Disfunction of society that results from intense storms – people are not able to get to work or social activities such as church, etc.

### **What outcomes do you want to see?**

- People are aware of the effects of the costs and the fact that the town can lose tax revenue when property values go down
- People are aware of the risks
  - **ACTION: Town does a risk analysis on vulnerable areas**
- People have a dialog about being proactive in approaching these issues
  - **ACTION: Do a cost-benefit analysis**
- People know who is responsible for what
- Coordination between the town and the state, e.g. culverts on state roads (Route 1A)
  - **ACTION: Coastal Risks and Hazards Commission is a forum to get coordinated efforts with the state. Bring Rye issues to the CRHC.**

- Proactive planning before the crisis hits
- Town planner works with RPC and FEMA delegation
- Land is conserved to let water flood under certain circumstances
  - Keep marshes healthy
- Consistency with approaches to building sea walls in front of beach homes in town (currently each property owner does something different).
- Real Estate industry is involved
  - Planning board is currently exploring tear down and rebuild, looking at the possibilities.
- Getting variances to zoning should not be as easy to get as they are now
- Maintain wetland buffers
  - **ACTION: Need public education and awareness about the need for buffers and the role they play in protecting people and properties.**

#### **What actions are needed?**

- **ACTION: Since the 2010 ice storm and the 2012 Halloween storm, PSNH has been trimming tree limbs – fallen tree limbs were a major issue back then. We need more actions like this.**

### **Stormwater Management discussion group**

#### **What are the key challenges?**

- Zoning variances and insufficient development regulations allow building too close to marshes
- Water quality issue - cyanobacteria present in tidal creeks
- Impervious cover increase stormwater resulting in neighborhood flooding (roads, marshes)
- Tidal creeks have not been dredged to maintain their capacity for tidal and flood waters
- Balance between individual property rights and rights of others/town
- Lack of support for better stormwater management standards
- Apparent water quality impacts from septic systems, also health related impacts?
- Extension of municipal sewer perceived as encouraging too much growth, rather than eliminating WQ impacts
- Need for a comprehensive stormwater management plan town-wide for both municipal and private infrastructure and development
- Focus on land conservation in Berry's Brook watershed very visible, highly supported while other land is being intensively developed
- Need to improve protection of local aquifer and wellhead protection areas
- Miscommunication between land use boards, commissions and Selectmen (about impacts and vulnerability)

- ZBA granting zoning relief to allow more intensive development of waterfront areas
- Adherence to “the old ways” and refusal to acknowledge new science and issues such as climate change and related hazards, energy planning, etc.
- Need for investment in expansion of water and sewer in areas vulnerable to flooding (current and future projected conditions)

### **What outcomes do you want to see?**

- Need additional planning dept. staff and a full-time town planner
- Master Plan: 1) implement a more inclusive public input process for development of recommendations and actions; 2) adopt a new chapter on climate change; and 3) Vision Chapter should reflect public opinion and guide content of all chapters
- Zoning considers preventative management standards to avoid/minimize impacts from stormwater
- Acknowledge that Master Plan supports land conservation and less intensive development in shoreland areas
- Eliminate/reduce granting of variances to permit increased development in shoreland areas
- Elevate roads in areas subject to flooding currently and anticipated in the future
- Construct a wastewater treatment plant for the town
- Extend existing municipal sewer system to replaced aged systems and homes converted from summer cottages to year-round residences
- Eliminate inclusion of wetlands and very poorly drained soils from buildable area calculation and increase minimum percentage of required upland to create a new lot
- Implement standards to prevent intensive development of lands vulnerable to current and anticipated future flooding
- Change of administration to reflect public opinion and views
- Expand municipal considerations and policies to incorporate climate change impacts and hazard based planning
- A town that recognizes future impacts of climate change
- Create gathering places for dialog/discussion about important issues