

# Charlestown Climate Resiliency Commission

04/20/23 Regular Meeting

1. **Call to Order:** 5:03 pm

2 **Roll Call:** D. Prescott, C. Drummond, K. Larrabee, C. Beasley, M. Viola, S. Racine

Absent: C. Fox, S. Cooper.

Others present: Steve McCandless (for first hour) Matthew Dowling, Emily Diamond

In audience, K. Andrew

3. **Approval of minutes** of March 2 meeting.

Motion to approve minutes by Cynthia Drummond, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Dave Prescott. Approved by all members.

Before the public communication, K. Larrabee asked S. McCandless about the destruction to East Beach by people driving on the sand and asked why there was a lack of enforcement.

McCandless explained the ongoing effort to restore and protect the dunes. He also noted that with an increased focus on public access to the shoreline, it would not be possible to completely block access.

McCandless has applied to the CRMC and RIDEM to put up snow fencing, which was denied. Rope fencing was approved

on the condition that there is ample signage explaining the purpose of roping off the area.

McCandless said the Municipal Resiliency Program (MRP) funding he is applying for will pay for coir bags to block cars from driving on the dunes. The bags will be placed in a pyramid behind the dunes.

#### **4. Public communication**

Quonochontaug resident Ken Andrew distributed copies of a proposal submitted in 2018 by hydrologist Bob Ferrari to the Quonochontaug East Beach Water Association. (The East Beach Water Association covers 115 homes and a second group, the Central Beach Fire District, comprises 200 homes.) The study described possible alternative water sources that might be explored in the future.

Andrew said Ferrari was amenable to expanding his work to include all of Charlestown.

Asked by C. Drummond about whether there are water conservation measures currently in place, Andrew replied that there were no water use monitors on individual homes, but the East Beach Water Association monitors daily consumption in the community with a monitor that re-sets at midnight. This community-wide monitoring, he said, also indicates whether there is a leak.

Andrew agreed that it was a challenge to persuade residents to use less water, especially on non-essential activities, such as lawn sprinkler systems.

Homeowners who are members of the East Beach Association pay \$475 per year for water. There are no limits on consumption.

## **5. Filling of commission Chair and Vice Chair**

C. Drummond nominated acting commission Chair David Prescott to the position of Chair. Larrabee 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. Vote to approve was unanimous with Prescott abstaining.

Vice Chair: Drummond nominated Sarah Racine to the position of Vice Chair with Larrabee 2<sup>nd</sup>. The vote was unanimous with Racine abstaining. (note: both of these abstentions should probably be recorded as recusals.)

## **6. Charlestown onsite wastewater treatment Program**

**Manager Matt Dowling** talked about his work with URI professor Alissa Cox on the development of an advanced septic system that can better withstand sea level rise and storm surge as well as rising groundwater levels, which compromise septic system function. Dowling said MRP funding would make it possible for Dowling and Cox to identify homes with substandard septic systems and offer homeowners the opportunity to upgrade their OWTS to more resilient systems.

Prescott proposed that any program should involve the entire community, including neighborhoods North of Route 1.

## **7. Emily Diamond, professor of environmental communication at URI, presented two options for**

encouraging broad community involvement in working with the commission on climate change adaptation measures. Diamond, who specializes in climate change communications, has met with Sarah Racine to discuss incorporating communications in the MRP.

Diamond said it would be important for her to understand the commission's goals for climate communication, to which Prescott replied that with no agenda and no political objective, the primary goal of the commission is to educate the public by "getting the information out there."

Commission members discussed the pros and cons of Diamond's two options: a new, climate change-specific survey or focus groups. It was agreed that focus groups would be more helpful in helping the commission to develop climate communications strategies.

**8. Charlestown Beach Road:** Sarah Racine recounted a recent meeting with the RMA engineering consultants doing the road improvement cost-benefit analysis. (Beasley and Prescott were also present at the RMA meeting. PLEASE CORRECT IF NOT ACCURATE)

Racine said the firm appears eager to receive feedback from commission members and has proposed evaluating seven or eight alternatives.

**9. Upcoming May 11 meeting:** C. Drummond has invited three guests to brief the commission on invasive species. Art Ganz will talk about salt pond invasives, URI researcher Laura Meyerson will present a global and regional perspective and

an overview of trends we should prepare for locally, and Kate Venturini, also of URI, will talk about the program she leads for the CRMC which involves training people to identify invasive plants and teaching them how to control them. It was agreed that each presenter would have 15 minutes.

There will also be a discussion of the MRP application.

- 10. Adjournment:** Prescott made a motion to adjourn at 8:01 pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> by C. Beasley.