

Charlestown Climate Resiliency Commission

7/14/22 Regular Meeting

Attendance: VGu, DPrescott, SRacine, CDrummond, CFox Guests: PRubinoff, BOakley, SMcCandless, Council President Deborah Carney, Town Administrator Mark Stankiewicz, various town staff & citizens

5:05 Call to Order

Approval of Minutes from the 6/9/22 Mtg

Motion to Approve by DPrescott

2nd by CDrummond

Passed unanimously

-Discussion related to Resilient Rhody (RR) participation and scope of work for CCRC members.

-Future Meetings

Postpone speaker and theme for Aug and instead dedicate next meeting to RR preparation.

5:20- Move to presentation on Coastal Vulnerability and discussion RE Charlestown Beach Rd paving

Residents have been complaining about the poor surface of the road and about the dust it generates. The Town Council agenda, of July 11, 2022, included a discussion of, and decision on the paving/resurfacing of the road, however, the council agreed, at the request of the Climate Change Resiliency Commission, to postpone a decision until commission has submitted a report on this July 14 meeting with Oakley and Rubinoff.

Bryan Oakley and Pam Rubinoff offered their thoughts on the Charlestown Beach Road ecosystem.

Oakley, who has been monitoring shoreline change along the beach for many years, said he was already familiar with the issue, because he was contacted during the COVID 19 pandemic by a homeowner who wanted to know what could be done about the dust.

Rubinoff opened the discussion with several photographs and graphics illustrating the impacts of storm surge and sea level rise.

Oakley described the dynamics of the beach and dunes, including surge channels and washover fans created during storms, and described conditions during several major storms, beginning with the hurricane in 1938 up to superstorm Sandy.

Oakley also addressed sea level rise, and how it will impact coastal ecosystems, including barrier beaches.

Oakley's concern centers on measures the town might decide to take to protect its investment in a paved road, since it is certain that the road would be overwashed during major storms. It is that stabilization that would compromise the barrier beach.

While permanent stabilization would probably not be permitted by the Coastal Resources Management Council, it is uncertain what the future holds for the CRMC.

Oakley also noted that "you don't have 50 years. You probably don't have anywhere near that, until the beach is lapping up against the shoreline protection structure."

Rubinoff wondered whether there was any remaining land for houses on the shoreline to retreat back to. In many cases, there is no remaining land for them to retreat to.

Oakley stressed the high degree of uncertainty inherent in forecasting storms and storm surge and sea level rise. He also addressed the issue of ground water, which is also rising and will undermine and weaken the structure of the road.

It was agreed that a cost-benefit analysis would be important in informing the council's decision. This would take into account the multiple factors at play, including uncertainty, and evaluate the options based on their benefits to residents, possible impact on the beach and the larger ecosystem, and the cost of maintaining a paved road, versus an elevated road with a permeable surface – or even, doing nothing.

The commission also briefly discussed what contribution. If any, the state would or should make, since the state owns the facility at the end of the road.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:50 p.m.

Minutes Submitted Electronically by C. Fox & C. Drummond

POSTED AT TOWN HALL	07/25/22	JJG
POSTED ON TOWN'S WEBSITE	07/25/22	JJG
POSTED ON SOS WEBSITE	07/25/22	JJG