

**Cape Cod Climate Initiative Community Meeting**  
**October 21, 2019 | 9:00 - 11:00 AM**  
**Chatham Community Center | Chatham, MA**  
**Meeting Summary**

**Background**

The Cape Cod Commission initiated series of facilitated sub- regional community meetings to solicit input regarding planning priorities, concerns, and barriers to moving climate adaptation and mitigation actions forward throughout the region. These discussions will help to inform a strategic framework and a broad collaborative process to address the region's contributions to and threats from climate change. The community meetings took place in the latter half of October in: Chatham, Wellfleet, West Yarmouth, and Mashpee. The goals of the meetings were twofold:

- To share current, past, and anticipated climate-related initiatives on Cape Cod in order to clarify and the context of the initiative and elicit input on additional activities.
- To solicit input regarding planning priorities, concerns, and barriers to moving climate adaptation and mitigation actions forward throughout the region.

**Introduction and Meeting Opening**

To begin the meeting, Kristy Senatori, Executive Director of the Cape Cod Commission, welcomed participants and summarized the goals and desired outcomes for the meeting. Ms. Senatori introduced the meeting facilitator Stacie Smith, Associate Managing Director at the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), who gave a brief overview of the agenda for the meeting.

**Cape Cod Climate - Risks and Initiatives**

Ms. Senatori provided an overview of the climate-related risks facing the Cape Cod region, including the 586 miles of vulnerable shoreline, and \$16 billion in property values, 30% of critical facilities, and over 1500 of inventoried structures at risk in FEMA Special Flood Hazard Areas. She provided working definitions of climate mitigation (*limiting or preventing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing activities that remove these gases from the atmosphere*) and climate adaptation (*adjustments in human and natural systems, in response to actual or expected climate stimuli or their effects*). Ms. Senatori then presented some of the current climate-related activities being undertaken by the Cape Cod Commission. These include the Resilient Cape Cod initiative, their support of the Commonwealth's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program, their work with communities to develop a model coastal resiliency bylaw, and the recommended actions outlined in the 2018 Cape Cod Regional Policy Plan, the Cape Cod Regional Transportation Plan, and the Climate Change Innovation Initiative within the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

**Cape Cod Climate Actions**

Following Ms. Senatori's presentation, Heather McElroy, Natural Resources Program Manager at the Cape Cod Commission, shared a timeline that the Commission has begun that highlights key events and actions on climate taken at/by different levels of governance, from the national to the municipal. She highlighted a few examples, including: the creation of the

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988, the first Cape municipal Hazard Mitigation Plan, developed by Sandwich in 2002, the 2010 establishment of the Barnstable Renewable Energy Commission, and the Net Zero Cape and Islands Roundtable earlier this year. She noted that these actions and efforts should all be considered as inputs to the broader Cape effort that is now being developed, and that meeting participants could assist by enumerating additional past or on-going efforts. She then invited participants to add sticky notes with events of relevance to one of two large printed timelines that had been hung on the walls of the meeting room.

### **Small Group Discussions**

Attendees were then invited to join one of three groups, thematically divided, where they could give their input on Barriers and Challenges, Process and Outcomes, or Opportunities for climate-related work on the Cape. There were two 25 minute rounds of discussion to give participants the opportunity to join two different groups.

The key questions for the small groups were as follows:

- **Barriers and Challenges**
  - What are the biggest barriers and challenges to making real progress on mitigation and adaptation on Cape Cod?
  - How can these be overcome?
- **Opportunities**
  - Where are our greatest opportunities for impact?
  - How can this initiative leverage and coordinate with activities already happening?
- **Process and Outcomes**
  - Where would you like to see the Cape on these issues in two years? What would we have accomplished together?
  - How should this initiative engage the range of actors and stakeholders to maximize meaningful impacts?

Each group was facilitated, and staff from the Cape Cod Commission took notes on the discussions. While each group focused on separate questions, there was inevitably overlap across the discussions. The key themes raised by participants in these small groups are summarized below.

### **Barriers and Challenges**

Participants in this group were asked to consider the most significant barriers and challenges to making real progress on mitigation and adaptation efforts on Cape Cod, and to brainstorm on how these could be overcome. They raised the following ideas:

*Miseducation and apathy.* Participants were concerned by the general lack of a sense of urgency and the need to actively involve more people - particularly the youth, elected officials, and “those in the middle.” Misinformation, lack of trust of the scientific community/denial of

evidence of climate change, and a prioritization of convenience over necessity were identified by group members as factors that lead to a sense of apathy towards climate change that gets in the way of behavioral change for individuals.

Participants had a number of ideas for tackling this: there was consensus that more education and outreach are necessary to create a sense of urgency and to fight misinformation and disbelief of climate change and its effects. The need for positive education structured to avoid apathy, and values-based for those who disbelieve science were also emphasized.

*Transportation.* Another issue that was emphasized was the lack of public transportation, and the heavy reliance on cars to get around in Cape Cod towns and within the region. Ideas on overcoming this issue included: building more electric-vehicle charging stations that are situated at spaces where people are likely to spend time (hospitals, town centers, beaches, etc.) compatible with popular electric car models to encourage their use, and expanding public transportation options on the Cape with accompanying encouragement to use them.

*Built environment.* Some of the main points expressed by participants centered around the host of challenges related to the built environment in the Cape. Attendees mentioned the need for retreat and rebuilding, the challenges posed by the historical structures and private properties that are most at risk, as well as the challenge of “Not in My Backyard” (“NIMBYism”) attitudes regarding the construction of new spaces necessary for retreat, and the need for municipal funding and support to enable retreat.

Furthermore, people pointed out the need to change existing building code, as well as zoning and wetland laws at the state and town board levels. In addition, participants highlighted the need to pass legislation to prevent the building of more housing and other structures in at-risk areas, especially taking into consideration how many of these are built for seasonal use. The example of Martha’s Vineyard limiting home sizes was offered as a way to deal with the overconsumption of space.

Additional concerns and suggestions included the need to ease and promote the change of heating fuels, concerns about cutting of trees to accommodate the installation of solar energy, barriers to installing solar panels on historical buildings, including NIMBYism, and the need for better recognition and outreach to those individuals and organizations who are leading the charge on climate change on the Cape.

### **Opportunities**

Participants in the opportunities group were asked to list areas of opportunity for climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts on Cape Cod.

*Efficient Transport.* In thinking about how carbon emissions can be reduced in the region, people listed transportation onto the Cape for tourism as a major contributor to greenhouse gases. Hence, tourism was noted as a significant opportunity for greenhouse gas reduction, by

expanding public transportation access, for example, and increasing the access of electric vehicles.

*Alternative energy.* A significant proportion of participants mentioned opportunities available to move away from the use of fossil fuels in the Cape. Many different kinds of alternative energies that could become (more) available to the Cape were suggested, including:

- Nuclear power, as the most reliable and cheapest form of power, with recognition that its waste would be a major concern
- The creation of more solar power farms in brownfield sites and parking lots, so that fauna was not disrupted and trees were not cut down
- The reconsideration of wind farms, as they produce more energy than other methods of green energy production
- Tidal power and hydroelectric power

Some of the discussion surrounding alternative energy opportunities focused on moving away from harmful fossil-fuels to natural gas (cleanest of all fossil fuels), ground-level heat pumps and coal, and geo-thermal energy (which was named as particularly expensive). Heating homes via electricity was also posed as a viable option, with solar power and batteries serving as back-up energy generators during electrical power outages.

*Flooding and wastewater.* Participants discussed the various technologies available to predict flooding and inundation pathways. Mass DOT's upcoming inundation study, which is coming out in six months and incorporates a 10-point system that will better predict inundation was shared as one example.

Flood-predicting technologies were noted as a great opportunity because they can be utilized to prevent development on flood-prone areas, as well as by homeowners outside of the highest risk areas whose properties might nonetheless be affected by seeping flood waters. One participant indicated that Cape residents should be wary of inaccurate information on flood risk provided by insurance companies and suggested that citizens contact realtor organizations which can sometimes provide more accurate information.

Wastewater was likewise seen as an area of opportunity by participants. Participants suggested more investment in alternative wastewater systems to prevent water pollution that happens due to flooding, such as European circular economy models, Permeable Reactive Barriers, and other wastewater innovations. They noted opportunities for sewage issues to be addressed in a methodical way informed by scientific findings.

*Education.* Climate education was pointed out as a powerful area of opportunity for the Cape Cod region. Participants recognized a need to increase awareness and a sense of urgency regarding issues of climate change, and offered several ideas to do so, including:

- Municipalities and town governments providing up-to-date facts on climate change and FAQs to address common misinformation
- Holding more community sessions similar to this one

- Providing education to adults in ways that are brief and accessible to all with professional educators, accounting for different learning styles, and using curriculum that addresses feelings of denial. Education should aim to help people identify climate change as a crisis, and encourage people to act with a sense of urgency on an individual level
- Finally, people mentioned the need for fishermen and other severely-affected and trusted populations to be present at meetings like this one and speak to how climate change is affecting their livelihoods

*Political power.* Finally, participants in this group spoke about the need to explore ways that municipal governments around the Cape can act to enforce codes, laws, and other regulations that can serve to support climate mitigation and adaptation efforts. People suggested changes to the capital tax structure, to zoning laws that allow for more public transportation and affordable housing, and the planting of native trees, as things that can be addressed at the local level.

### **Process and Outcomes**

This group was dedicated to brainstorming ideas around desired outcomes and processes for upcoming climate-related work done in the Cape.

Participants' suggestions for ensuring that the process was effective, focused, and constructive included:

- The setting of short-term and long-term SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely) goals
- The integration of public health officials and other highly trusted parties in the process
- Coordination as a region on climate-related actions, moving out of town-centric silos, including integrating the process into existing forums where town managers and staff meet to collaborate Cape-wide
- Participation from public goods and services providers (e.g., energy, transportation, and housing), to support planning and working cohesively.
- Transparency on the who, what, where, why, and how of objectives set
- Operations/initiatives informed by key tenets of climate justice
- Meetings held on Saturdays and evenings to best accommodate working individuals.
- Clarity on the role of the Cape Cod Commission

Their suggestions about the Process Outcomes included:

- More understanding on the impacts of climate change on the water supply, as well as more planning and investment into maintaining it
- Increases in affordable housing and young family home ownership
- Implementation of a 2-year timeline to transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy
- Shifting from a focus on energy efficiency to a goal of being carbon neutral
- Improved environmental quality of estuaries
- State and local changes to coastal development by-laws to prohibit the building of new structures

- More power given to towns to decide how they want to regulate certain things (e.g., Carbon Pricing Bill)
- The setting of consistent and recurring gatherings for community education on climate change

At the conclusion of the small group discussions, participants reconvened to the full group to hear about next steps, presented by Erin Perry, Deputy Director of the Cape Cod Commission. Ms. Perry informed participants about additional community meetings and noted that summaries from this meeting would be sent to participants and posted on the Commission's website. Participants were encouraged to write down any additional thoughts on the topics of discussion on forms provided, or to send them to the Consensus Building Institute in the coming days. Ms. Perry closed by reinforcing that this was the first step of collecting input and ultimately designing a community process, and thanked participants for their engagement.