

Cape Cod Climate Initiative Community Meeting

October 29, 2019 | 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Mashpee Public Library | Mashpee, MA

Meeting Summary

Background

The Cape Cod Commission initiated a 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.

Changing routines. Participants predicted that Cape residents would be resistant to changing their lifestyles to engage in mitigation and adaptation actions. They recommended that making information and solutions more widely available, and breaking down actions into easy steps more digestible to the wider public could help remedy this issue. They also talked about how some residents' reluctance to change might be rooted in fear of getting out of their comfort zone, and how focusing on building common ground with other residents around shared interests (e.g., saving money via making homes more energy efficient) could be used to overcome that.

Lack of unity and coordination in the Cape. Participants shared that they want to see more regionalization. They pointed out that mitigation and adaptation initiatives taken on by individual towns on the Cape often result in similar mistakes, which could be prevented and remedied by increased communication and collaboration between towns. Participants noted that lack of municipal resources also poses a barrier for towns who want to do more climate-focused work, and they recommended that the town look towards the Federal government for funding and support.

Miscellaneous. Other challenges and barriers that participants pointed out included:

- Coastal property, which makes up a significant proportion of many town's tax base, are threatened. A Coastal Hazard Overlay District was recommended as a possible way to address this barrier.
- One person noted that the Cape may not have a sufficiently-large workforce available to implement solutions.
- Lack of sufficient public infrastructure, in terms of transit options, sufficient car charging stations, and more durable bridges, were also pointed out as significant challenges.

Opportunities

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

Youth engagement. Participants pointed out that there are many opportunities for climate-related engagement for young people within the community. They indicated that municipalities could hold meetings to talk about climate change at schools, and time them to be right after school to encourage attendance of students. Participants also indicated that many young people are already engaged and passionate about climate change, pointing out local and global climate-focused efforts that have been youth-led (they offered climate marches and the climate strike, as examples) and that could inform similar grassroots youth-led efforts in the Cape. Furthermore, participants emphasized that activities meant to engage people of all ages should draw on activities besides lectures. Suggested climate-focused activities included: hackathons, living classroom programs at schools, and seasonal fairs to engage parents and students alike.

Education and awareness. Participants emphasized the need to educate all Cape Cod residents on climate change and actions that they can take towards mitigation, and advised mindfulness to diminish the discomfort that can sometimes arise out of such conversations. They recommended providing education on the pros and cons of renewable energy, and where the benefits of using renewable energy sources not related to climate could be shared (e.g., lower energy costs, the ability to qualify for and use relevant tax credits, etc.). Another suggestion was to connect Cape Cod residents who are most involved in climate-related work to residents who are not as engaged, in order to foster a sense of stewardship over the Cape's natural environment in the latter.

Local governments. Participants saw many opportunities for advancement within the operation of the municipalities and town governments on the Cape. They suggested that local governments should have more direct engagement with climate-related issues. Specifically, participants suggested that town boards hire more staff to focus on local sustainability efforts, and that considerations for climate impact, mitigation, and adaptation should be integrated into every decision making process. They also suggested that the Chamber of Commerce can be used as an avenue of opportunities for climate-related work in the Cape that can enhance the local economy and creates more jobs. Participants also suggested that towns should support sustainable and zero energy new buildings and structures. Finally, participants suggested many opportunities for collaboration among town governments and between them and experts, including research centers like the Woods Hole Oceanic Institution, Woods Hole Research Center, and Marine Biological Laboratory, and local Native American tribes (please note: a representative for the Mashpee Wampanoag specified that they should be actively involved by

local officials in climate-related work on the Cape). Participants noted the importance of having the Cape Cod Commission as a regional convener that could advocate for stronger development requirements, and open space preservation requirements.

Local economy/economic incentives. Participants indicated that there are many climate-related economic opportunities available to Cape Cod residents, and many potentials for the development of a green economy.

Coastal Protection. Participants indicated opportunities that exist to protect the Cape's coasts and ocean. They suggested that the number of designated vulnerable coastal areas should increase, and that protections need to be set in place to ensure the safety of whales and other marine life. Additionally, participants recommended that Cape Cod towns look into marine energy generation technologies.

Process and Outcomes

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

Regional approach. Participants emphasized their desire to see all towns that make up Cape Cod acting in concert when making decisions regarding climate change mitigation or adaptation. They suggested that the Cape Cod Commission should be granted additional authority to add regulations in areas where town leadership is reluctant to do so. They also noted that if the region acts in concert, the Cape can advocate for legislation at the state and federal levels as a region, which would have a stronger effect.

Spreading knowledge and involvement. Participants in this group also highlighted their desire to see more people involved in discussions about climate change in the Cape. They named youth involvement as a key goal, and suggested the incorporation of schools in these discussions as a way to facilitate young people's involvement. In addition, participants suggested sharing knowledge about meetings taking place and actions that individuals can take towards adaptation and mitigation via public service announcements. Participants also recommended that future meetings on climate change focus on the shared needs and concerns of all Cape Cod residents, and how environmental changes affect all aspects of life. One person suggested having assigned advocates for the natural environment (e.g., a person advocating for beaches as an ecological space) in these meetings to ensure that attendees keep in mind the effects of climate change on all living things.

Financial accessibility. Participants highlighted how cost can be a barrier for individuals who want to take on more adaptation and mitigating actions. They suggested that towns can help facilitate action by educating residents on the economic benefits of moving away from fossil-fuel reliance, and helping residents work together to minimize the costs associated with doing so.

Miscellaneous. Other process and outcome related ideas and suggestions that people had for the Cape Cod Commission included:

- Thinking about biofuel as an option for alternative energy.
- Ensuring that lessons learned from water quality discussion are taken into account.
- Reducing open spaces standard for activity centers.
- Thinking about the pros and cons of new construction.
- Looking at best practices elsewhere.

Conclusion

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.