

## **Cape Cod Climate Initiative Community Meeting**

**October 21, 2019 | 1:00 - 3:00 PM**

**Wellfleet Council on Aging | Wellfleet, 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:

*Cost.* Participants raised concerns about the cost of many mitigation and adaptation strategies and wanted to explore ways to fund these. One suggestion was to communicate the negative economic effects of climate change on the Cape, including the danger of losing valuable real

estate, as incentives for residents to support an increase in taxes that could fund mitigation and adaptation.

*Education for all who enjoy the Cape.* Participants named as a priority the creation of strategies for communicating with different people who enjoy the Cape, including business owners, summer residents, visitors, and tourists. Participants specified that these communication strategies should aim to better inform non-residents (including part-time residents) about climate issues facing the Cape, increase buy-in and participation on mitigation and adaptation actions (e.g., how coastline can be protected), and reduce resident and non-resident barriers to action.

*Miseducation and apathy.* There was consensus among participants on the barrier posed by many residents' attitudes and lack of awareness of climate change. They named climate change denial and difficulty in changing some residents' mindsets as a "cultural challenge" for engaging in climate-related work in the Cape. Participants also noted that some residents with knowledge about climate change are overwhelmed by the issue.

To remedy these barriers, participants suggested various strategies, including:

- Providing knowledge and education regarding climate change which engages residents on intellectual and emotional levels and changes the discourse. Such education should address fears of change and inspire action, include kids, teens, and other youth, and occur in times and places that are accessible to families and working people
- Sharing accessible information sources for people to self-educate, including newspaper articles
- Focusing on a positive vision of what can be achieved, by adopting a "bloom, not gloom" approach. This might include overcoming fear by sharing local examples of successful adaptation and mitigation actions.
- Devoting more money for communication and public outreach on climate-related issues, opportunities, etc.
- Training engaged citizens to be climate leaders and promote educational efforts and climate-related initiatives.

*Wastewater and flooding.* Participants named wastewater treatment systems and the need for alternative/innovative wastewater solutions as an issue to overcome. Participants also mentioned the need to create/make more accessible maps that show potential water damage on the Cape, as well as the threats posed to communities in floodplains.

*Limits of town governments.* Participants listed a number of barriers that exist within town governments, including limited capacity to tackle climate issues and the challenge of coordinating actions among 15 separate towns. Some noted that the jurisdiction of regulatory boards was not uniform from town to town, and that planning was often shorter-term. They also noted an insufficiency of town bylaws to address climate risks, and no enforcement of green building codes. Participants suggested that more region-wide coordination, more

proactive and long term planning, and more climate expertise at the town level could be helpful to overcome these barriers.

### **Opportunities**

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

*Green economy.* Participants noted the opportunity for growth presented by the introduction of a green economy to the Cape region. They noted that the Cape could become a leader in new technologies around resilient coastal construction and manufacturing of solar panels, as drivers of new jobs. They also noted that a reputation as a climate leader could help promote more tourism, and also educate and inspire tourists to improve their own resilience back home.

*Education.* Participants in the opportunities group also emphasized the need to educate the Cape Cod population on issues of climate change to raise awareness, increase buy-in, and encourage action. Participants suggested the opportunity to leverage curriculum materials about climate change created by the Cape Cod National Seashore for public schools, teaching people about simple changes that all residents can make to advance mitigation, and creating a Cape Cod Climate Corp for youth and young adults to become experts on Cape Cod climate-related issues. Participants also noted the benefits of creating cost-benefit analyses of mitigation/adaptation strategies in the Cape.

*Mitigation with trees.* Participants suggested the opportunities provided by planting more carbon-absorbing species of trees, planting more of the right/native plants to enrich Cape Cod wetlands, and following guidelines for the preservation of wetlands and marshes, and ensuring that new solar farms do not rely on clear cutting.

*Policy and infrastructure.* Participants in this group named public policy initiatives and infrastructure as areas of opportunity. Similar to the other two groups, they named the importance of collaboration of towns across the Cape, and changes to state and local bylaws as key areas of focus. Additionally, they noted the benefits of collaborative watershed permits that ensure support and fit area's climate and drawing on recommendations outlined in Wellfleet's Shell fishing Climate Report.

*Cape Cod Commission.* Finally, participants in this group recognized the regional role of the Cape Cod Commission as an opportunity. They proposed that the Commission could be a convener of funding/grants to help towns in the Cape adopt climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.

### **Process and Outcomes**

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.

Process suggestions included:

*Educating residents via storytelling and climate change effects.* Participants suggested that awareness should be raised between events that Cape Cod residents are familiar with, like the increased presence of sharks along the coast, and the introduction of new species of ticks and mosquitoes to Massachusetts, and climate change, and that these connections should be utilized in climate change education efforts.

Other suggestions included:

- Public communications about effects of climate change in 20 years.
- Making connections between climate change and social issues, like housing affordability.
- Climate change education being implemented in schools at all levels/grades, and beyond.
- Transparency with residents and others at every stage of planning and executing climate-related work, including sharing successes from each town.

In terms of outcomes, Numerous participants emphasized their desire to see Cape Cod become a leader on climate action, with reputations similar to countries like Finland. A collaborative, connected Cape region where towns collaborate and work in harmony with one another on various mitigation and adaptation initiatives was expressed as an ideal goal for the way climate action is tackled on the Cape. They commended the Cape Cod Commission for already engaging climate-related work, and in its importance in connecting towns. Participants suggested additional actions that they would like to see as outcomes of this process, including:

- A formal commitment by the Cape Cod Commission to create climate adaptation and mitigation roadmaps and report cards for towns.
- The hiring of an economist by the Cape Cod Commission to calculate costs of climate change to the Cape Cod economy, which would set a precedent for the state to do the same.
- A county-level commitment to get all Cape Cod towns to become Designated Green Communities, with all towns committing to working on their own and together as a region.
- Cape-wide consensus on 1) a 10 year goal of zero emissions; 2) declaration of climate change as an emergency; 3) commitments to economy localization; 4) plans to improve social and psychological resilience to climate change, and 5) ecological restoration
- Adoption of the IECC (International Energy Conservation Code) 2019 Energy Code as well as Net-Zero energy code that is optional in all new constructions.
- Making use of fossil fuels illegal in building codes and ensuring that the transition to renewable energy sources is accessible to low-income households. This would include a customer-centric implementation of solar power, heat pumps, and batteries, and the creation of holding facilities where these can be recycled.

- Cape Cod towns working collaboratively to determine Cape Cod's greenhouse gas baseline using peer-reviewed methodologies.
- Conducting a study on the feasibility of construction of a tidal power plant, and research on making tidal power not cost-prohibitive to developers or homeowners.
- Making 208 watershed permits permanent and implementing appropriate stormwater and sewage planning in areas likely to experience inundation.
- Improving telecommunication infrastructure at the national seashore to ensure that residents in rural or remote areas are able to connect to emergency response services.
- The creation of town-wide plans for climate emergencies (e.g., long energy outages, and fallen trees)
- Land-use committees training locals on climate change and land use, to education about climate risks and building regulations.

*Managed retreat.* Participants introduced the idea of managed retreat with an acknowledgement of the discomfort the topic made them feel. They suggested utilizing federal buy-back programs, as well as looking at New Jersey's managed retreat program and analyzing strategies and lessons that can be applied on the Cape. Participants also brought up questions about how to encourage managed retreat to owners of multi-million dollar properties along the shoreline.

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.