

Cape Cod Climate Initiative Community Meeting
October 22, 2019 | 6:00 - 7:00 PM
Cape Cod & Islands Association of Realtors Inc | West Yarmouth, 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 Ona Ferguson, Senior Mediator 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. Barriers, as well as strategies to overcome them, identified by participants, included:

Misinformation and opposition. Participants were concerned by the lack of accurate knowledge about climate change and opposition to mitigating actions or strategies for adaptation. To combat this, participants suggested education and awareness efforts, including careful

discussion that included all perspectives. They noted that there was hesitation from some individuals at all levels to invest in needed infrastructure changes, and suggested education that showed how economic goals and environmentally-friendly objectives need not exist in opposition to one another.

Fragility of Cape ecosystem. Participants noted the significance of the risks of climate change to the Cape, given the vulnerability of the coastline and locations of so many critical points of infrastructure. They felt that advance planning for protection and/or relocation of infrastructure would be necessary.

Bureaucracy. Another barrier mentioned was the slowness and lack of agility and urgency of regional and local government, which tended to get in the way of and slow down the significant policy changes/initiatives that would be needed. One solution would be demonstrations of cohesion from all Cape residents to advocate together to relevant authorities.

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:

Mitigation via conservation and renewable energy. Participants in this group emphasized their desire to see an increase in the use of renewable energy sources on the Cape as well as other climate change mitigating actions. Participants recommended increasing the use of solar energy and other renewable energy sources to get to net-zero energy across Cape faster, by creating incentives for solar energy in historic districts, rewarding transitions to solar power, re-consideration of wind energy, and updating building codes to promote the use of renewable energy sources; incorporating Stretch Building Code into town and regional building codes.

They also saw opportunities for increasing energy conservation/efficiency, by electrifying public transportation, encouraging the use of bicycles and other alternative modes of transportation, promoting the use of online tools available to Cape residents, like the Carbon Calculator, creating more electric vehicle charging stations, promoting plant-based diets (have smaller ecological footprint than other diets), and promoting strategic electrification of heating systems; encouraging use of heat pumps.

Education and outreach. Participants emphasized the opportunity to educate Cape Cod residents on climate change in the region and create a sense of urgency within community members that encourages them to take action. Education efforts should be accessible to all residents and learning styles and aim to communicate strategies that individuals can take to tackle climate change, including relevant regulations. Furthermore, participants emphasized that robust promotion of climate change education initiatives is key to their success.

Data and expertise. Participants underscored the opportunities available to make use of existing data (e.g., information available on coastal planner), and to collect more data to inform

the implementation of mitigation and adaptation strategies (e.g., effects of climate change on existing infrastructure).

Collaboration with experts. Finally, participants proposed the creation of a central registry of environmental groups active on the Cape and Islands region, and an increase in the collaboration between scientists researching climate change and policymakers.

Process and Outcomes

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

Policy changes around infrastructure were identified as focal points of desired outcomes for climate-related work on the Cape. Participants shared ideas about geospatial concerns and the built environment such as:

- Uniformity of zoning laws, mandatory designated Green Communities/Stretch Codes, promoting the use of heat pumps and associated incentives, and promoting the electrification of new construction.
- Planning for smart growth and the promotion of density
- Advancing strategic retreat efforts
- Increasing bicycle-friendly infrastructure and ensuring that new bridges incorporate bike/pedestrian access

Furthermore, participants suggested the process lead to recommendations for the reduction of fossil-fuel dependency on the Cape, including:

- Prohibiting the construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure
- Expansion of incentives for the adoption of solar power
- Carbon Neutral Cape Cod by 2030
- Permitting use of solar panels in historic districts
- Moving towards only using electric vehicles in the Cape

Additionally, group members underscored that many environmentally-friendly initiatives can be cost-prohibitive to many and urged that measures be taken to ensure that everyone can partake in these. Participants also asked for mitigation and adaptation processes to be undertaken with as much of an accelerated pace as possible, congruent with the sense of urgency they feel about climate change. Finally, participants suggested that all plans for the implementation of mitigation strategies should be realistic and done with transparency of the impacts on the community.

Many of the process suggestions centered around education and outreach, as participants outlined diverse strategies and goals to increase awareness about climate change and inspire action, aiming for 100% climate literacy amongst Cape Cod and islands' residents. They suggested using a broad range of possible avenues to provide information to those in the Cape, including:

- Going to where people are (beach, town centers, schools, etc.)

- Airing publicity about meetings on podcasts, social media, local tv and radio
- Engage older populations by connecting them to youth who can help them understand the urgency of climate change
- Storytelling opportunities for fishermen and residents to describe changes that they've seen/experienced already due to climate change (e.g., shrinking shoreline and beaches; tide going up further than ever, etc.), to open/change minds
- Emphasizing specific risks to Cape Cod and mitigation/adaptation actions that people can take to manage these risks.
- Involving elected officials in promotion of mitigation/adaptation actions

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.