

MVC Adaptation Master Plan Subcommittee (AMPC)

Meeting with All-Island Planning Board

September 2, 2020, on Zoom

AMPC members and MVC staff present: Cheryl Doble (also Tisbury planning board member), Liz Durkee, Alex Elvin, Beckie Finn, Christine Flynn, Meghan Gombos, Lucy Morrison (also Edgartown planning board member), Peter Neilley, Ben Robinson (also Tisbury planning board member), Richard Toole, Bill Veno

Planning board members and administrators present:

Tisbury: Connie Alexander, Dawn Bellante, Pat Harris, Elaine Miller, Paul Munafo

Chilmark: Peter Cook

Oak Bluffs: Bill Cleary, Ewell Hopkins, JoJo Lambert, Kim Leaird

West Tisbury: Jane Rossi

Edgartown: Doug Finn

Others present: Greg and Cristina Martino, Si Shapiro

Key points

- AMPC members requested that each planning board assign a member to serve on the AMPC, and that regular meetings occur between the AMPC and All-Island Planning Board to keep the adaptation planning process moving forward. (Aquinnah, Chilmark, West Tisbury, and Edgartown don't currently have a representative on the committee.)
- Some members of a Chilmark committee working to update the town master plan would likely be interested in joining the AMPC.
- Planning board members encouraged the AMPC to map out the responsibilities of each town board, and to align specific adaptation-related asks with those responsibilities.
- Some planning board members recommended presenting the new adaptation booklets to the selectmen and planning boards at the same time in order to facilitate more collaboration.
- Tisbury has major projects coming up in the near future, so it would be helpful to provide some adaptation guidelines before a final plan is ready. A list of five essential points or recommendations could be useful.
- Elaine Miller argued that a working document such as the adaptation master plan should be in place before serious adaptation planning begins at the town level, and that public education would best be pursued after a consultant is onboard.

Notable statements

Let's start with understanding where the responsibility and authority lie. I have no problem going to leaders, but we need to ask them for something they have authority to do. I encourage [the AMPC] to think about their authority, and align your asks to what they can authorize. – Ewell Hopkins

I encourage Ben and Liz to know what they want from day one. Then you can expand and modify. . . . Maybe it's as simple as you need money. If you ask for nothing you will get nothing. – Elaine Miller

Summary of meeting

I. Introduction to AMPC and climate regional adaptation planning

To provide context for the All-Island Planning Board (AIPB) meeting, Cheryl Doble described a general awareness of climate change impacts on the Island, and the fact that many of those impacts affect multiple towns simultaneously. Cheryl stressed the importance of Island towns working together to address those impacts, and she recalled the AIPB several years ago launching Housing Production Plan workshops in each town, which led to recommendations for both local and regional strategies. She said the adaptation master plan will open the door to more collaborative planning regarding zoning, permitting, and other issues.

Ben Robinson seconded Cheryl's comments, adding that Covid-19 has demonstrated the Island's ability to adapt to new conditions quickly, which can be applied to climate change, which will get worse over time. He hoped Island towns could work collaboratively to prepare for those changes.

Ben noted that the AIPB meeting was originally intended as a kickoff to Phase 2 of the MVC Action Grant process, but the MVC was not awarded those funds. He explained that the state had received 142 applications totaling \$46 million, but had only \$9 million to give out. Nantucket and Oak Bluffs were also denied MVC grants this year. Ben argued that the Island can't wait for state or federal support, and needs to do what it can on its own. Other funding opportunities are now being pursued.

Liz Durkee gave some background on the AMPC, which is a subcommittee of the Climate Action Task Force (CATF) that Ben established last year. In addition to the AMPC, the CATF Energy Working Group is setting the stage for long-term planning related to greenhouse gas reduction. Planning boards will be integral to the process of adaptation, which is aimed at lowering the risks associated with climate change. Liz outlined the planning process on the Island so far, which involved an MVP Action Grant to the MVC last year to develop a resource database and a series of adaptation booklets that will be presented to town selectmen, planning boards, and others this fall. At the same time, the AMPC has been holding listening sessions with key stakeholders including planning boards, harbormasters, building inspectors, and others. Notes from those meetings are available on the MVC website and will be provided to a consultant that the MVC plans to hire in the future to complete a series of public workshops and develop the master plan.

II. Targeting of goals and message

At this point, the goal was to hear more from planning boards about what they think of the process, and what role they see themselves playing. Liz summarized some of the comments and concerns at the AMPC's listening sessions to date, and asked that 1) each planning board assign a member to serve on the AMPC, and 2) that the AMPC and All-Island Planning Board begin meeting on a regular basis to keep the process moving forward.

Ewell Hopkins noted several related goals, including bylaw changes, flood zone restrictions, and regional coordination, and encouraged the AMPC to clarify what it was asking of various boards including the planning boards. He also mentioned the MVC's adaptation context booklets, which are being finalized, and asked why the plan was to present them to town selectmen rather than the planning boards, which have more responsibility. He encouraged the AMPC to align specific adaptation-related asks with each board, based on its authority.

Liz said the plan was to present the booklets to the selectmen first, then the planning boards. Some planning board members recommended presenting to the selectmen and planning boards at the same time in order to encourage collaboration. Ben clarified that beyond the issues of land-use planning, the adaptation master plan will touch on other topics such as hazard mitigation and emergency management, where selectmen, conservation commissions and everyday citizens will need to be involved. He framed the booklets as a starting point and noted that they will be widely distributed. Liz added that one benefit of presenting the booklets to the selectmen is that it presents an opportunity to educate town leaders who may not already be familiar with the issues. Ben added that the listening sessions and other conversations happening now are intended partly to identify what the specific asks will be for each stakeholder group. Still, Elaine Miller and others encouraged the AMPC to have at least a preliminary idea of what it wants from each group at the outset.

Ben explained that the booklets are an initial resource for towns, and a starting point for discussion and collaboration, while the planning process as a whole (as proposed under the FY21 MVP Action Grant) will take about two years to complete and still only deliver a plan for how the Island can prepare for climate change. He echoed Liz's earlier statement that the immediate goal was to establish a general understanding among planning boards that they should be working together, and continue meeting as an all-Island board to share ideas.

Dawn Bellante noted that Tisbury has major projects coming up in the near future, so it would be helpful to provide some adaptation guidelines even before a final plan is ready. She suggested that a list of five essential points or recommendations could be useful for the planning boards to work with. She also asked how planning boards can better utilize the information already at hand.

Liz reiterated that she would like to invite at least one member from each planning board to serve on the AMPC and attend its regular meetings, and she asked the planning boards to provide a list of five things they would like the committee to be working on. Peter Cook mentioned that subcommittee in Chilmark has been working on a long-overdue town master plan, which could benefit greatly from more information about climate change. He suggested that some members of the subcommittee would be interested in joining the AMPC. Several meeting attendees emphasized the importance of planning boards working together on adaptation issues, rather than on separate initiatives in each town. Elaine argued that a working document such as the adaptation master plan would need to already be in place as a neutral starting point for serious planning at the town level.

Peter Neilley explained that the adaptation master plan process was intended to rely largely on the support of a consultant. Ben added that the adaptation plan would be just one part of a wider climate change initiative that also focuses on energy transformation and carbon sequestration, all of which will rely on town officials and others working together to educate the public. Elaine cautioned that starting to educate the public before a consultant is on board to guide the process could complicate things later

on, if it turns out we were mistaken about something. She preferred to wait until it was clear that a consultant would be hired, before launching a public education effort.

On the topic of planning board representation on the AMPC, Ewell said Oak Bluffs was already committed, with board member Bill Cleary having recently joined the committee. That leaves Chilmark, West Tisbury, Aquinnah, and Edgartown without a planning board rep. (Lucy Morrison, who serves on the Edgartown planning board, said she would no longer be able to attend the AMPC meetings due to scheduling conflicts; she recommended that Scott Morgan as a possible alternative.) Ewell mentioned that there was already some pushback on adaptation initiatives from Oak Bluffs officials. Cheryl asked that planning boards that don't currently have a representative on the AMPC bring it up at their next meeting and determine if anyone is interested in joining.