

Listening Sessions – November 30th and December 1st, 2020

Organized with assistance from Healthy Aging Martha's Vineyard

Notes

In Attendance (at one or more of the sessions): Louise Clough, Cindy Trish (Executive Coordinator), Don Ogilive, Paddy Moore, Bill Craven, Ben Robinson (Climate Action Task Force Chair), Liz Durkee (Climate Resilience Committee Chair, Peter Meleney, Debbie Rosenthal, Anne Charnley, Catherine Yong (and husband), Dan Doyle (MVC staff), Richard Toole (CATF member), Meghan Gombos (CATF member)

Key Issues impacting Aging Residents

Climate Control: Extreme heat and extended stretches of high temperatures are forcing more homes to install air conditioning; some aging residents are averse to air conditioning but they represent a cohort that can be acutely impacted without a cooling refuge; some co-benefits of climate control are that cooling installations help mitigate conditions rife for mold growth inside homes;

Heating and cooling of homes is increasingly taking place through a single unit (air source heat pumps); these units are a win-win in that they save heating and cooling costs over time and they also reduce greenhouse gas emissions as our electrical grid becomes increasingly powered by renewable energy.

Social Infrastructure: during storms, police departments are often praised for checking in on vulnerable residents who may be living in isolation. Participants indicated that is not a strong long term solution; that resource will be increasingly stressed given greater frequency of storms and a growing aging population. There was general uncertainty about where to go for key communication materials regarding evacuation and otherwise; this is becoming more complicated by the bundling of phone and internet; when one network goes down the other is often impacted as well.

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) are a useful model to consider; Aquinnah formed one in recent years, where they partner with their Emergency Manager to train volunteers, provide hand held radios to CERT members responsible for checking in on vulnerable residents across different zones within town, and staff sheltering facilities. Tisbury is considering a CERT of their own.

Regional Collaboration: An example of island-wide collaboration that might prove informative for a more coordinated emergency response include the Food Equity Network. Island Grown Initiative (IGI), the Food Pantry, and churches are partnering together to ensure better access to nutritional, fresh foods. That being said, this was achieved thanks to the non profit sector

collaborating and filling a void; towns were not instrumental. For Emergency Response, a town-led initiative is likely more important. CERTs represents somewhat of a hybrid.

Storms: How will storms impact our economy? Participants cited tangible examples of local impacts from a recent storm; SLR will force us to rethink economic value of certain vulnerable lands; our environment is directly connected with our economy.

Generators for backup power are a big investment: older adults are increasingly averse to being without heat and power, yet only a certain cross section can afford them; generators are more valuable than ever given our phones and internet are now connected, yet they are also inefficient because they must run at full tilt no matter what the energy demands in the moment.

Beach Road industry: There was concern that major employers along this road are not being supported; facilities need to be hardened, some retreat should be facilitated; a new paradigm within the towns is needed to relocate or adapt.

In the interim, lapsed drainage systems must be resolved. Members agree that water dependent businesses must be protected.

Alternatives being examined: can the B2 district up near Cronig's in Tisbury absorb some of the businesses that will retreat?

Proactive businesses: Packer and Tisbury Wharf have been slowly raising their property; MV Shipyard may raise grade 18". The Marine yard will be raised a foot.

Economy: MV has a growing service oriented economy, which continues to trend upward; this is a foundational part of our of employment structure on the island.

Jobs should be kept local; those related to adaptation to climate change should be largely comprised of a locally trained workforce; this commitment augments the broader effort to become more self-sufficient; the less reliant we are on off island transport, the more resilient we become.

Up to 800 people come over from off island every day as part of our workforce; Elder Services can't find employees who can secure housing here.

Housing challenges are now a crisis: Affordable homes have never been further out of reach; younger people are a critical segment of the population being forced off the island.

Pandemic has changed our economic profile; telecommuting is more feasible and attractive, enabling more second home owners to make the Vineyard their primary home. Those looking to leave urban areas altogether find the island a popular alternative; they can often afford price points far out of reach for local islanders seeking to purchase real estate.

Transportation: Transportation on and off island: boat cancellations are increasingly troubling and SSA needs to become more resilient; some older adults need to receive daily treatments in Falmouth.

MV Hospital: Road access is a key issue; time is dwindling on our ability to address particular segments; we must raise or relocate certain vulnerable roads.

CATF alerted group of CZM grant taking place focusing on VH Harbor; town is presently in second phase. Task Force is very troubled that state-owned Beach Road was not redesigned by the State to account for SLR. Low spot in front of MV Times is not even being addressed. We must communicate more to the State.

SSA will work toward a new ferry in 2022; more resilient and cleaner ferries are needed. Shoreside battery storage is needed; new Woods Hole facility is being raised but battery storage is not being addressed.

Most of our island's heating and cooling fuel comes over on ferries; some of it arrives on back barges; in summertime, there is less than 48 hours of supply.

Additional themes raised by HAMV participants: Winds on the Vineyard Sound are increasingly an issue that ferries must contend with; climate change messaging should be given a lot of attention; after pandemic winds down, a campaign should be considered to raise awareness and mobilize support; our summer contacts could prove a valuable resource; they might also help us leverage contacts within the state as well; MVH Hospital workers generally comprise a young and active labor force and could be leveraged as assets in this effort.

Sheltering: new alternatives must be addressed (they must become larger); Could the State Forest potentially be used? Could Airport land possibly be used? Perhaps the Airport Commission should reconsider and appeal the decision that eliminates their influence on airport uses.

Councils on Aging: their outreach should be expanded, yet it's not their focus, presently.

Impacts of climate change on water tables and low lying aquifers should get even greater focus; if it continues unabated, Sea Level Rise (SLR) can penetrate sources of freshwater.

More accessible language needed in presenting climate related issues; even well educated people may not be familiar enough with the discipline (ie. "sequestration" is not a readily understood concept).