

MVC Climate Resilience Committee (CRC)

Stakeholder Listening Session: MV Chamber of Commerce

January 6, 2021

CRC members present: Liz Durkee, Richard Toole, Ben Robinson, Christine Flynn, Dan Doyle

Chamber members in attendance: Nancy Gardella (E.D. MV Chamber of Commerce), Debra Cedeno (architect), Courtney Marek, Rich Dewitt, Richard Leonard (Cape Cod 5), Doug Reece (Realtor), James Joyce (Realtor), Joanna Fairchild, Rebecca Gilbert (farmer), Joe Gervais, Couder Kirk, Holly Bellebuono (E.D. of ACE MV)

Others: Oak Bluffs Zoning Board of Appeals

Meeting opened up with a short presentation by Liz Durkee, Chair of CRC and MVC Climate Change Coordinator. The floor was then open for discussion.

Key Points

Workforce

ACE MV is focusing on the new skills and technical acumen needed for blue economy jobs and green collar employment.

These new jobs extend to facilities management, as well.

We have significant endangered species habitat on the island, along with emerging species (ie. red algae) that are beginning to thrive here with a shifting climate; we should work to better understand climate change on both of the fronts, locally.

In assessing new job skills, it's important to also allow for our current jobs to simply evolve, through adoption of new practices – as opposed to a change in title.

That being said, enrollment into the wind technician certification program attracted community members of mixed ages, and entirely unrelated fields.

In workforce development, 16-26 year olds are the most impressionable ages. Through matching employer demand and skill training, we can better keep this segment here instead of losing talent;

The climate bill being debated within the state Legislature includes notable funding for job training, should it be signed.

In building the skills needed to become increasingly resilient, there is a great opportunity to create jobs that boost our year round presence, and economy. Our shoulder seasons continue to broaden; the local economy reflects this.

ACE MV and MVRHS are working hard to prepare the young workforce both opportunities that will enable graduates and other islanders to remain here, with economic independence. This importance is further compounded by prohibitive costs of attending a 4 year college (though this trend may abate somewhat given more remote enrollment opportunities).

Economy

CPA funds underwrote a study quantifying the economic value of our ecosystem services in Oak Bluffs; this study included recreation, fishing, shellfishing, the beaches, painters using scenic terrain and viewshed, festivals, and greenways, amongst other environmental variables impacting the economy.

The wealth of knowledge on our island must be leveraged in this resiliency work. This represents a way we can reinvest in ourselves, in our own community.

Short Term Rentals (STRs) have gutted affordable rental opportunities; we might consider zoning limited areas where these types of rentals are permitted, and rezoning other areas where dense, affordable housing development can happen.

- Nantucket achieved this rezoning that permits greater density; it will be the only way we can develop at the scale necessary to preserve a key cross section of our demographic.
- Jackson Hole, Wyoming has banned STRs in all but a few areas of the County; remaining rentals must be 30 days or longer.

We must ensure best practices are shared and that we use our local resources whenever possible. For example, Eversource must maintain its assets; island entities represent potential resources who could be contracted to do that work; this would be a boost to local business AND could preclude herbicide spraying.

Shifting climate will force us to adapt what crops are best suited for the island.

Real Estate Industry-Professional Services

It's the responsibility of realtors to educate their clients regarding vulnerability and risk; these factors impact negotiations and final selling price, and ultimate satisfaction of clients.

- A Chilmark beachfront property was assessed at \$3 million but only sold for \$750K given the rate of significant annual erosion had been documented, and it became evident the property was highly vulnerable.

Many clients are interested in understanding their carbon footprint when hiring architects and engineers to design their homes and properties - and the systems that heat and cool them.

Ecology

The shoreline requires a range of strategies to mitigate Sea Level Rise (SLR) and more frequent storms.

The ecological health of our ponds are critical; a strong testing program for bacteria, along with remediation to improve flushing and dredging must be pursued.

Local pond associations are a force on the island, and they should be included in our broader climate change discourse on the island.

There are local groups working hard to best educate property owners on regenerative land use practices.

Additional Thoughts

Young people will be less likely to get involved in these issues unless the rest of us take meaningful action; short of that, we risk losing their respect.