

**The Seawall Subcommittee**  
**SLR and Storm Surge in Watch Hill**  
**4:00 - 5:00 PM, May 13, 2021 via Zoom**  
**Minutes**

**Subcommittee Members Present:** Joan Beth Brown, Elizabeth Bean, Grant G. Simmons, Mark Szaro, Hilary Addington, Richard H. Sayre, Richard Holliday, Dennis Algieri, Deborah Lamm, Pete August, Janice Sassi, and Jocelyn Lahey. Guests: Joanne Throwe, Dan Nees, Andrew Homan, Christopher Corrinet, Stephen Sills.

Meeting convened at: 4:03 PM

Jocelyn Lahey reviewed the goals of the meeting.

Deborah Lamm & Joan Beth Brown welcomed everyone thanked them for taking the time to join the session.

Beth Bean & Joan Beth Brown reported on the DEM Grant and 2021-2022 SLR budgeting in the Fire District

- No DEM agreement and no response from DEM despite regular inquiries
- Working with Docko Engineering on plans to raise raising the low sea wall. Estimated to cost \$1.5 million (\$3,000 per linear foot).

Jocelyn pointed out the new ecoRI series on coastal erosion and sea level rise in Rhode Island - Shifting Sands (<https://www.ecori.org/shifting-sands-landing>). Watch Hill and Napatree were prominent on the opening of the series. There will be 22 stories in total.

Dan Nees discussed funding and financing SLR mitigation projects. Dan is project partner at Throwe Environmental and a Sr. Fellow at the U Maryland Center for Global Sustainability. He spent most of his career helping local and state government finance and implement mitigation projects. Main points of his presentation:

- Dan's focus is on:
  - Help find revenue streams to pay for a project. Revenue is the ultimate amount of money needed to do project.
  - How to capitalize a project. Issues: need to get work started, need cash on hand. Sources of capital: bonds, loans, private sector investment, cash flow management. Throwe Environmental figures out how to make financing happen.
  - Must make sure a proposed SNEP or NFWF project meshes with future work.
- There are grant programs available which we can compete for. But, there is never enough grant funding available to cover big projects. Must look beyond grants – this is the financing part of the process.

- Andrew Homan – will Watch Hill be able to receive Federal Infrastructure funds that are being debated in Washington now?
  - Short answer – unclear. Communities that are most successful finding grant funds based have an implementation program and financing plan to do their work. Best to use community funds to leverage grant funds, especially when match is required. Rare that a project can depend on a single federal grant.
- **Have a mitigation plan in place. Know what you want to do! At least 20-30% design.**
- Grant Simmons asked -- will we need to coordinate with the town of Westerly on mitigation projects.
  - Short answer, yes, it helps to show how a community project is consistent with community and regional goals.
  - Use every asset you have (Throwe Enviro, NFWF, SNEP)
  - Make sure each partner has a clear understanding of obligations.

Joanne Throwe discussed financing NFWF and SNEP opportunities.

- SNEP, comprised of 15 organizations funded by EPA. Throwe Environmental focuses on climate change mitigation financing.
- Throwe Environmental centered in Bristol, RI. Works with local governments who are engaged and committed. They like Watch Hill because we are organized. By late summer/early Fall SNEP will launch a call for participants in SNEP technical assistance program grants. Watch Hill can be a strong applicant for guidance on financing projects.
- On any project, **must** have coordination. Who are other partners? Role of the town? Learning Exchange - how can partner organizations learn from a SNEP engagement (very attractive).
- National Coastal Resilience Fund (NFWF) provides planning grants. Very competitive but RI-based proposals would be most welcome. Throwe Enviro can help us develop a strong NFWF proposal if we are awarded a SNEP award.
- NFWF proposals – want to see a resilience plan. Must show plan and funding options. Any skin in the game (funding) can increase chances of success. Funders want to know what the risk is, how to mitigate it, and what is their return on investment.. This is a planning effort.
- SNEP -- take a plan and look at finance options (SNEP service). Want to know we are interested in financing assistance. NFWF – make a plan, not financing. Doing a SNEP project first would make us competitive for a NFWF for March 2022.
- Question: Have we entertained doing a cost-benefit analysis?
  - Yes, we have but we need to know the mitigation plan before we can estimate the cost in order to evaluate to benefit.
- Dick Holliday – we need to show continuity of solutions – short-term intermediate fixes must feed into long-term solutions.
  - There was strong endorsement of this from all parties. This is VERY important.

Deborah Lamm and Jocelyn Lahey, thanked Joanne and Dan for their presentations. Next steps, we will prepare a synopsis of all the meetings this winter/spring, present them to the larger WH Resiliency group, and decide next moves.

Next Meeting: TBD

Adjourn 5:20 PM