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Barney S. Heath
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 22, 2018

TO: Councilor Albright, Chair
Members of the Zoning and Planning Committee

FROM: Barney Heath, Director of Planning and Development
Jennifer Steel, Chief Environmental Planner

RE:# # #488-18 - DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT requesting discussion and adoption of the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Action Plan as an amendment to the 2007 Newton Comprehensive Plan.

MEETING DATE: October 22, 2018

CC: City Council
Planning Board
Ouida Young, Acting City Solicitor
Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer

Background

Newton has made a commitment to become a climate conscious community and to that end has undertaken a Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA) and Action Plan focused on resiliency, is beginning development on a Climate Action Plan (CAP) focused on mitigation, and will be updating its Hazard Mitigation Plan focused on public health and safety.

In 2016 Newton began engaging City staff, stakeholders, and interested citizens to create a CCVA under the direction of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). In April 2018, the City submitted a well-documented and detailed draft Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA) with Action Plan to the State in hopes of meeting the qualifications for the State Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' (EOEEA) Municipal Vulnerabilities Preparedness (MVP) Program, with the intention of undertaking robust public engagement on resiliency and mitigation efforts in the months to come after

approval. Once accepted into the MVP program, communities are eligible for more grant funding from a variety of sources, including the MVP program Action Grants.

What is a Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment?

A vulnerability assessment for climate change impacts is the collection and analysis of data from a community to determine vulnerable populations and infrastructure, and then identify the strategic actions the community could take to increase its ability to resist and recover from climate change impacts.

Resiliency is the ability of an entity to be affected by an event but then return to a stable state. For Newton, resiliency could mean that as the risk of flooding in Newton increases, fewer homes are built in floodplains and stormwater/floodwater management becomes a higher priority for capital improvements.

For Newton, our community vulnerabilities, which more deeply affect vulnerable populations like the elderly and non-English speakers, are increased flooding, more high-intensity storms, and an increased heat island effect. The goal of developing a vulnerability assessment is to allow a diverse group of community members, along with City staff and other stakeholders, to review our communities' vulnerabilities and strengths to develop a set of actions that the City can take to increase resiliency to these climate change impacts.

Current Steps

Prior to their approval of Newton's CCVA, EOEEA asked the City to undertake the community engagement portion of the CCVA. In May of 2018 City staff applied for and received a Planning Grant of \$48,000 through the MVP program to engage in a robust community discussion and finalize the CCVA with the state. Planning Department staff and MAPC staff will be putting on one ZAP presentation (October 22nd), one public workshop (October 29th), and one ZAP Public Hearing/"listening session" (December 5th). With this level of community engagement, we will satisfy the requirements of the MVP program.

Goals

Our ultimate goal is for the approved CCVA with Action Plan to be adopted as an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan to provide Newton with a clear picture of the steps needed to prepare our community for the ongoing impacts of climate change.