



Zoning & Planning Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Monday, October 22, 2018

Present: Councilors Albright (Chair), Leary, Brousal-Glaser, Krintzman, Downs, Danberg, Baker and Kalis

Also Present: Councilors Greenberg, Auchincloss, Kelley and Markiewicz

City Staff Present: Jonathan Yeo (Chief Operating Officer), Noah Rivkin (Assistant to the Mayor), John Lojek (Commissioner, Inspectional Services), Barney Heath (Director, Planning Dept.), James Freas (Deputy Director, Planning Dept.), Rachel Nadkarni (Senior Planner), Lily Canan Reynolds (Community Engagement Manager), Jennifer Steel (Senior Environmental Planner), Claire Rundelli (Assistant Environmental Planner), Rachel Powers (Community Development Programs Manager), Marie Lawlor (Assistant City Solicitor), Karyn Dean (Committee Clerk)

Planning & Development Board: Kelley Brown and Jim Robertson

#488-18 Adoption of the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Action Plan
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.

Action: Zoning & Planning Committee Held 8-0

Note: The first draft of *Newton's Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Action Plan (CCVA)*, along with the Planning Department memo on this topic, may be found at:

<http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/92273/10-22-18%20Zoning%20&%20Planning%20Agenda.pdf>

Barney Heath, Director of Planning, said the department has been working on the CCVA for some time and it mainly focuses on resiliency. He hopes to move this forward to completion and a vote as soon as possible. Jennifer Steel, Senior Environmental Planner and Claire Rundelli, Assistant Environmental Planner, have been the chief architects of this document.

This Plan will be combined with a larger effort for a Climate Action Plan for which staff is about to kick-off the public input phase.

Ms. Steel explained that the CCVA focuses on assessing the City's vulnerabilities and developing programs of adaptation, resiliency and resistance as much as possible. The mitigation side of climate change is looking at what the City can do to limit its contribution to the climate change

problem in an effort to help save the planet. Those issues will be the focus of the Climate Action Plan.

Ms. Steel explained that the City applied for and received a \$48,000 Planning Grant from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) for community engagement. In addition to this meeting with Zoning & Planning, there will be a public workshop on October 29th in conjunction with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) at 5:30PM at the Barry Price Center.

She provided a PowerPoint presentation, attached, to summarize the draft CCVA and the threats and vulnerabilities the City is facing now, and to explain how Newton has developed the CCVA thus far. Please refer to it for details.

Vulnerable Infrastructure

Newton's most significant threats come in the form of extreme heat events and inland flooding from increased precipitation. These threats affect vulnerable infrastructure such as emergency operation facilities, sewer pump stations, power substations, hospitals, various models of senior housing, affordable housing, communication facilities, schools and child care facilities. Please refer to the attached presentation for maps showing vulnerable infrastructure and their relation to heat islands, flood risk areas and how development has affected these areas.

Vulnerable Populations

These threats also impact vulnerable populations such as seniors, young children, limited-English speakers, people of color and low-income residents. This is concerning because Seniors (residents over 65) are the fastest growing population sector and more than 50% of them live alone. Isolation is one of the major risk factors for vulnerability to storms and other extreme climate events due to the lack of transit options and limited lines of communication. The number of households in the City that speak another language at home or have limited English is on the rise. Also, 50% of households are below the median household income of \$112,230, and 6% are below the federal poverty level of \$24,257. Newton has many ethnicities and cultures as well and numbers taken from the 2010 census show that people of color make up 20% of the total population in the City, which is up from 14% in 2000. Please refer to the attached presentation for detailed maps relative to these vulnerable populations.

Draft Plan

Ms. Steel pointed out that draft CCVA was built on existing planning and implementation efforts as well as existing adaptation strategies. Many City department heads and staff were involved so that cross-pollination could be strengthened, and areas of improvement could be identified and resolved. Please see attached presentation for details of these efforts and strategies.

All thoughts are welcomed by Ms. Steel and Ms. Rundelli and can be emailed to ClimatePlanning@newtonma.gov

The Chair stated that a public hearing on the CCVA as an amendment to the Newton Comprehensive Plan will be held in the Zoning & Planning Committee on December 10th at 7:00pm in City Hall.

Committee Comments/Questions

A Councilor asked what percentage of the 6% who live below the federal poverty line in Newton, are seniors. Ms. Steel said they were trying to tease out that kind of information, but she does not have it. She can ask their consultant for that information.

It was pointed out that the data in the CCVA are based on the 2010 census and, therefore, the senior population has likely grown since then and some of the MACP number seem to be lagging as well. Ms. Steel said they will speak with the consulting team to have the most current possible numbers available.

A Councilor noted that there have been more rat sightings are the Boston area. Ms. Steel said that many mosquito and ticks are not dying off in the winter, as they use to because of the warming climate, so diseases carried by these insects are on the rise. Similar trends are happening with rodents.

A Councilor had the following comments:

- There is some redundant language that could be edited for a more streamlined document.
- She was happy to see references to reducing impervious surfaces and related matters.
- She felt a database of vulnerable populations would be needed.
- Jackson Road and Jackson Gardens seem like very vulnerable areas because Cheesecake Brook runs under them.
- Controlling invasives is necessary and would require funds and wondered if any were available for that effort.
- She was concerned with how to control development in flood prone areas and how to let buyers know that what they are buying is in a flood prone area.
- “Dense Developments” in relation to heat islands refers to the amount of pavement, not that there are a lot of people there. It refers to densely covered areas with no open space. Green infrastructure and white roofs might help with some of that.
- Bridges, culverts and deep paving work by DPW is something that should be moved up to a more urgent need instead of being slated as “as needed”.

The Chair noted that National Grid stated were going to put in a 105 miles of replacement pipes in 2017. She asked Ms. Steel to find out if that has happened.

The Chair asked Committee members to forward any further comments on the CCVA to Ms. Steel as soon as possible. Ms. Steel said the document is a work in progress and will have a few more iterations before a final draft is brought forward. The Committee thanked Ms. Steel and Ms. Rundelli for their fine work on the CCVA.

Councilor Leary moved hold and the Committee voted in favor 8-0.