Town of Barnstable, MA Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings May 31, 2019 Draft

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Introduction

The need for municipalities, regional planning organizations, states, and federal agencies to plan for increased resilience and adaption to extreme weather events and climate changes is evident, particularly in coastal communities. Cape Cod has already begun to experience the effects of changing climate conditions and associated natural hazards, including sea level rise and extreme weather events. The strong nor'easters of 2018 unleashed a new sense of urgency to act. Massachusetts Governor Baker's Executive Order 569 aims to provide communities with technical support, climate change data, and planning tools to identify natural hazards and develop strategies to improve resilience. This resulted in the Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program, which provides communities with funding to identify vulnerabilities and develop plans to specifically increase resilience to climate change.

Overview

The Town of Barnstable has the potential to be impacted by a wide range of natural hazards, and each one presents certain risks to life and property. With 170 miles of shoreline and natural resource areas, Barnstable's most notable risks are increased flooding due to rising sea levels, more intense coastal storms, and more extreme precipitation events. Together with flooding, Barnstable's future will likely include more frequent heat waves and droughts, as well as changes to coastal resource areas, with significant implications for the seasonal economy. These risks threaten Barnstable's population, building, infrastructure, landscapes, and ecosystem health.

The Town of Barnstable acts as a regional economic, jobs, transportation and service center for Cape Cod. Its southern coast is home to a major regional hospital and the primary passenger and freight ferry terminal providing service to Nantucket. These facilities, along with essential water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure, dozens of local critical facilities and millions of dollars of residential real estate and economic assets are located in the vulnerable coastal zone.

Tourism is one of the primary sources of economic development in Barnstable. A longer summer season and warmer winters may extend Barnstable's tourist season, which could have a positive economic impact. However, the potential negative impacts of climate change on Barnstable's beaches, marshes, and other natural and recreational assets may outweigh any benefits of an extended tourist season. In addition, tourist infrastructure in flood-prone areas, such as along the coast, is vulnerable to sea level rise and coastal storms. Further, many of Barnstable's most valuable homes and properties are in areas that are at risk from coastal flooding and sea level rise, and impacts to these properties could detrimentally affect the town's economy and tax base.

The Town is committed to taking a comprehensive approach to its planning efforts. With a \$35,500 grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs MVP Program, the Town of Barnstable contracted with staff from the Cape Cod Commission and Woods Hole Sea Grant & Cape Cod Cooperative Extension (the "project team"), certified MVP providers, to conduct the Community Resilience Building workshop.

With the Town Planning and Development Director as the lead, the Town established a Core Team of town staff to help prepare for and conduct the workshop. In addition to the Town Planning and Development Director, the Core Team included representatives from the Conservation Program, Marine and Environmental Affairs Department, and Department of Public Works. For a complete list of Barnstable Core Team members, See Project Team Members on pg. 13. The project team held a kickoff meeting with the Core Team in November to review the project scope, prepare for the workshop, and discuss ways to engage stakeholders to participate. This early meeting with the Core Team helped to identify a broad range of interests and an opportunity to brainstorm potential groups and individuals to invite to the workshop. The group discussed ways to engage participants, including flyers (see Appendix), a webpage

(https://townofbarnstable.us/Departments/planninganddevelopment/projects/MVP-Climate-Resilience-Event.asp), and email invitations to town boards and others. This meeting was also used to discuss background materials needed for the workshop.

The Core Team met with the project team again in December 2018 to discuss resource mapping, format, and timeframe for the workshop. At this meeting, the project team reviewed a draft storymap (produced by the Cape Cod Commission) with the Core Team that could be used to help educate stakeholders about the purpose of the MVP planning effort, provide resource maps and data on climate change, and to help identify critical facilities in the community. The group discussed needed content and ways to present that content, including defining resiliency, defining the planning horizon, identifying hazards on the tabletop maps, and collecting photos for the presentation and storymap. The project team agreed to work on the presentation, agenda for the workshop, storymap refinements and get those drafts to the Core Team for feedback.

Several weeks before the workshop the Town sought community members/stakeholder participation through invitations to local board and committee members. The Town Planning and Development Director also created a web page on the Town website with information about the workshop, including a public invitation to participate and a brief survey for those who registered. The event was widely publicized through a variety of channels, including a press release, coverage in the Town's weekly newsletter, social media posts, announcements to the Town Council, and a segment on the local cable access daily news program. The website provided a link to the storymap to help prepare and inform community members about coastal hazards prior to the workshop.

The Core Team and project team met a third time a few days before the workshop to finalize the agenda, confirm staffing and presenters, and discuss the addition to the agenda of an overview of potential project types and funding sources.

The goal of the workshop was to identify existing and identify future infrastructural, societal, and environmental vulnerabilities resulting from natural hazards and changing climate conditions and to collect, develop, and prioritize municipal and community response actions. Building on existing efforts, the Town sought to reiterate, augment, and prioritize opportunities for the community to reduce risks and build resilience.

The Workshop's central objectives were to:

- Define top local natural and climate-related hazards of concern;
- Identify existing and future strengths and vulnerabilities;

- Develop prioritized actions for the Community;
- Identify immediate opportunities to collaboratively advance actions to increase resilience.

The workshop was conducted in accordance with CRB guidance¹ and held on March 29, 2019 in one eight-hour session. In addition to the Core Team and project team members, approximately 26 stakeholder/community members participated in the workshops, including Town department staff, Town board and committee members, public safety officials, residents, local civic groups, and local business owners. Workshop participants were assigned to small diversified teams for the duration of the workshop.

This report provides a summary of the concerns, ideas, and priorities shared by these participants during Barnstable's CRB workshop. The summary of findings described in this report, including those that concern the evolving nature of risk assessment and associated action, are compiled from comments, discussion, and brainstorming from workshop participants and Core Team members.

Top Hazards and Vulnerable Areas

During the morning session of the workshop, participants learned about and discussed eight locally relevant climate hazards:

- Coastal erosion
- Flooding
- High winds
- Hurricanes
- Nor'easters
- Sea level rise
- Severe winter weather
- Thunderstorms

Greg Berman, Coastal Processes Specialist with the Woods Hole Sea Grant & Cape Cod Cooperative Extension, gave a PowerPoint presentation on top vulnerabilities/hazards identified by the State, regional vulnerabilities/hazards, and climate change projections in Massachusetts with data from the Climate Change Clearing House for the Commonwealth (www.resilientma.org). (See Appendix).

The morning session of the workshop focused on identifying top hazards, vulnerabilities, and strengths. The afternoon session of the workshop focused on identifying and prioritizing actions. Workshop participants were directed to sit at any one of five tables (A, B, C, D, or E) and were joined by a project team member, acting as facilitator, and a Core Team member (or project team member) acting as scribe. Basemaps with critical town information such as infrastructure, floodplains, public water supply areas, and conservation land were placed at each table (see Appendix). Each table worked on its own risk matrix through facilitated "small team" exercises and later worked together as a large team with all

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¹ CRB guidance: www.communityresiliencebuilding.org

stakeholders to consolidate information (See Appendix for completed risk matrices). The combination of the Risk Matrix and the basemap provided decision-support and risk visualization to enable stakeholders to identify the community's strengths and vulnerabilities and prioritize actions to reinforce strengths or mitigate vulnerabilities. The process resulted in informed input, shared experiences, and dialogue among stakeholders.

Using the basemaps and storymap resources as a guide, each small team engaged in a facilitated discussion to identify what it considered to be the top four hazards that pose the greatest current and future threats to Barnstable. To help each group determine the priority hazards, facilitators asked participants to consider where, how often, and in what ways hazards have impacted the community; what hazards are impacting the community currently; what effects will these hazards have in the future; what is exposed to hazards and climate threats; what have been the impacts to municipal operations and budgets, planning and mitigation efforts; and other concerns/considerations related to impacts.

Small teams discussed whether top hazards should be identified as those with the most impact, such as a hurricane, one that occurs more frequently such as flooding or high winds, hazards that the town was least prepared for or would impact the town's budget and/or impact the most people. Stakeholders also felt that there was significant overlap among the top hazards, such as high winds and hurricanes, or nor'easters and winter weather. Stakeholder discussion was focused primarily on current hazards; while sea level rise was identified as a top priority hazard by 2 of the 5 small teams, there was less consensus about this being a top hazard for the community.

Top Hazards

Based on the results of the small team exercise, workshop participants identified the following as the top/priority hazards:

- Flooding
- High winds
- Winter or Extreme Weather
- Coastal erosion
- Sea level rise
- Wildfire
- Climate change and ocean acidification

Flooding was identified as the hazard having the greatest direct impact on the Town of Barnstable both currently and in the recent past, particularly the impact of flooding on regional and local roadways. The groups identified Routes 6A and 28, Ocean Street, Squaw Island, Main Street Cotuit, Bridge Street, and Duck Pond as being particularly vulnerable. The group also noted the large number of homes and businesses located within the floodplain, as well as harbors (Hyannis and Millway) vulnerable to storm-related and sea level rise flooding.

High winds and severe storms such as nor'easters and winter storms were also identified as a major concern for the community as these events result in power outages, downed tree limbs, and place a strain on public safety resources and personnel.

Coastal erosion was another priority hazard as it impacts bayside beaches, parking lots that serve these beaches, and numerous private properties. Maintaining access to local beaches presents natural resource concerns and is an economic priority for the community.

One of the small teams identified wildfire risk as a threat in areas of town where there are large woodlands with tinder build-up, and proximate to densely populated areas. Another group identified climate change generally, and ocean acidification and rising temperatures more specifically, as threats to the town's economic well-being and health.

Areas of Concern

Following the discussion of hazards, each small team identified infrastructural, societal, and environmental community vulnerabilities and strengths, including town and private assets. Areas of concern identified during the workshop were grouped into the following categories:

- Transportation: many low-lying roads that presently flood during storm events or even during king tides; bridges and culverts that are undersized; access to the Hyannis Transportation Center may be affected by flooding; ferry terminals may be affected by sea level rise.
- **Emergency Services:** the regional hospital, emergency responders, and fire station(s) may be affected by flooding.
- Other Infrastructure: above-ground electrical and other utilities, including communication, are vulnerable to damage/outage from storms/high winds; sewer pump stations and the sewage treatment plant could be vulnerable during power outages; stormwater systems may be inadequate.
- **Public Amenities/Facilities:** marinas (access and fuel tanks), boatyards, yacht clubs, and beach facilities (bathhouses, parking lots, etc.) that are vulnerable.
- **Ecosystems:** Barrier beaches that provide protection to mainland structures, beaches that provide recreation and access to the water; salt marsh health and ability to provide important services such as flood storage and filtration; water quality of both salt and fresh water, including ponds and drinking water; long term viability of endangered species; farms; trees as carbon fixers, temperature regulators, and role in improving air quality.
- Social: homes and septic systems, some private wells located within the floodplain; vulnerable
 populations, including seniors, homeless, and environmental justice communities vulnerable to
 multiple threats; farming, including shellfish.

Current Concerns and Challenges Presented by Hazards and Climate Change

The Town of Barnstable has shoreline on both Cape Cod Bay and Nantucket Sound, each with its own set of challenges. The Nantucket Sound shoreline is highly vulnerable to tropical storms, which are relatively low frequency but can be highly destructive. Additionally, sections of this shoreline (for example, Long Beach and Short Beach) are susceptible to permanent inundation by even 3 feet of sea level rise. The Cape Cod Bay shoreline experiences a much larger tide range, with potentially less infrastructure in the way of rising sea levels, however the relatively frequent winter storms are eroding coastal landforms across this area. Coastal bank erosion has permanently removed sections of upland property; at the same time, this erosion has provided the material for dune and beach recovery.

Flooding of the Cape Cod Bay shoreline occurred during the winter storms of 2018. The winter storm of January 4th and 5th, 2018 is the new record-breaking water level (Boston Tide Gauge), having exceeded the previous record (Winter storm of 1978) by 2 inches. The tide gauge record shows about 4.5 inches of sea level rise during the time between these two storms, meaning that the only reason 2018 was a record-breaking event was due to climate change. Another anomaly was the series of winter storms in early March 2018. The storm surge was 1-2 feet for over a week, which weakened many coastal resource areas and resulted in significant erosion. There are concerns that both long-duration and high water-level storms will be the "new normal".

The primary climate and natural hazards identified by the participants included winter storms and flooding. Nor'easters have impacted Barnstable for many years, but storm frequency and intensity in recent years have increased. In addition to Nor'easters, several participants noted concern about hurricanes, which can have different impacts than a Nor'easter. Participants identified areas where flooding impacts local roadways, and expressed concern about anticipated flooding along Route 6A, a significant east/west route. Participants also expressed concern about impacts from downed utility lines, communication lines and downed trees and limbs across roadways, hampering access/egress and communication during storm events. Erosion was also a concern, though there were fewer specific examples of erosion impacts than there were of flooding and winter storm damage. Looking forward, participants also recognized the threat of sea level rise and ocean acidification as something the community will need to contend with.

Specific Categories of Concerns and Challenges

Low-Lying Infrastructure (Transportation)

There are many low-lying roads in town (many noted on the maps, see Appendix), including portions of Route 6A, Route 149, Route 28, Squaw Island Road, Ocean Street, Main Street Cotuit, Short Beach Road, and Bridge Street. Undersized culverts and bridges associated with these roads and at other locations

(Keveney Lane, Millway, Eel River, Bumps River – see maps, Appendix) are also vulnerabilities. The group noted that the railroad tracks in West Barnstable are vulnerable to flooding. While not located in the town of Barnstable, the Cape Cod Canal bridges were identified as significant vulnerabilities, limiting egress during a significant hazard event.

Impacts to Human Health

Many infrastructure elements that support human health and wellbeing were identified as potential vulnerabilities during hazard events. There was concern about failure of sewer pump stations and impacts to the waste water treatment facility due to power failure. Septic systems and stormwater systems could be vulnerable to flooding, either fresh or salt, and then could fail, contributing to the nitrogen loading challenges in the bays and estuaries that the town already faces. There was also concern that with sea level rise there could be salt water intrusion into drinking water supplies.

Isolation, Emergency Access, and People in Harm's Way

All of the small discussion groups identified several populations under threat from coastal hazards. The groups under threat include many neighborhoods that either currently experience flooding, or are likely to in the future. Millway and Hyannis Harbors, and homes along Short Beach Road were areas identified as very vulnerable to flooding. Groups were concerned that the homeless population is generally more vulnerable during hazard events, but additionally that they tend to migrate toward lower-lying land and may have greater exposure to flood hazards. There was also concern about environmental justice communities where language or other barriers may contribute to greater exposure to hazards.

As with all Cape Cod communities, Barnstable has a significant senior population (including over 600 residents over the age of 90). Many of these seniors may have difficulty moving around during intense weather and may be confined to a home with limited food, water, medical supplies, and heating and cooling during significant weather events. Oyster Harbors was identified as an area where many residents are older and may need assistance.

Related to all of the vulnerable populations was concern that the town's shelters are likely under-sized and would be overwhelmed during a significant flooding or power outage event. Participants also expressed concern that first responders would be placed in harm's way.

Threats to the Environment

Barnstable is bounded on the north and south by coastal resource areas that can provide significant storm damage prevention, but are also vulnerable to the effects of severe weather, erosion, and sea level rise. Concerns were identified about the health of salt marshes and their ability to migrate landward with sea level rise, as well as ocean acidification and impacts on the shellfish industry. Rising ocean temperatures may have an adverse impact on existing fisheries, and the commercial and recreational fishing industries. Participants were also concerned about impacts to town beaches and barrier beaches, including Kalmus, Dead Neck Island, and Sandy Neck. Impacts to endangered species associated with a changing climate were also a concern. Wildfire risk, elevated due to decades of fire suppression and buildup of fuel loads in Barnstable's woodlands, was a concern both for the

environment and the human neighborhoods nearby. Specific areas of concern were identified both on the north and south sides of town.

Telecommunications/Utilities

Barnstable is primarily reliant on above ground utilities, which can become incapacitated during and following storm events. Without power, residents may lose access to heat, food may spoil, and without telecommunications, it can be difficult to know if a household is okay or in need of help. Recent storms have highlighted the fragility of both the power supply and delivery infrastructure, as well as telecommunications.

Current Strengths and Assets

Workshop participants were aware of the community's strengths and how they relate to its vulnerabilities. It was a clear priority that these strengths be reinforced and expanded to increase preparedness and resiliency in the community.

Emergency Services

- The Town of Barnstable is fortunate to host the regional hospital for the mid- and outer- Cape, Cape Cod Hospital. The hospital, and associated medical services, is an incredible asset to the community. At the same time, the hospital is located adjacent to the floodplain and Hyannis Harbor, and access routes are vulnerable to flooding and snow accumulation.
- Emergency responders were identified as a strength of the community, and two airports (Barnstable Municipal Airport and Cape Cod Airfield in Marstons Mills) in town provide the infrastructure for moving goods and people into and out of the community.
- The town maintains a shelter at the Barnstable Intermediate School that functions as a regional shelter during emergencies.
- The Town operates a CodeRED system that is an alert system that enables town officials to send out notifications of emergencies to all users who have signed up for the service. This is an effective means of communication, but is limited by the fact that only those who have signed up will get the notifications.

Community

Groups identified the town staff as an asset of the community, including services provided by the senior center. A strong building code and zoning laws help address the threats. Town committees were identified as a strength of the town and town government. Participants also identified environmental, faith based, and civic groups as important components of the community fabric that help with education, communication, and project support.

Natural Assets

The natural environment, including town beaches, waterways, and woodland conservation areas are a significant draw to residents and visitors in Barnstable and all provide buffering from storm events. Participants noted that the town's marshes are community strengths, as they help absorb floodwaters and potentially sea level rise. Fishing and shellfishing, as well as water-based recreation and tourism, are also community assets, though it was noted that these are potentially vulnerable to impacts from climate change and severe storms. Farms in Barnstable were also identified as a potentially important asset.

Top Recommendations to Improve Resilience

In small groups, workshop participants developed recommended actions based on identified vulnerabilities. In the afternoon portion of the workshop, participants returned to their assigned small teams to complete the following:

- 1. Generate potential actions to reduce vulnerabilities and reinforce the strengths identified during the morning session;
- 2. Consider whether the actions address more than one top hazard, are intermediate steps, or strengthen existing initiatives;
- 3. Prioritize actions and differentiate them as short-term, long-term, and ongoing; and
- 4. Identify their top five recommendations to improve resilience to the top hazards in Barnstable.

The top recommendations reported out of the five small groups included the following:

- Make changes to zoning bylaws and regulations, including to reduce vulnerability of structures in the floodplain, grandfathered pre-1978 structures along the coast, and incentives for economic recovery.
- Conduct a feasibility assessment for the vulnerable neighborhood of Millway/Barnstable Harbor, including an alternatives analysis for adaptation and retreat.
- Conduct coastal resource planning for barrier beaches, beaches, and salt marshes (key locations).
- Plan for adequate size and number of shelters, and serving vulnerable populations.
- Protect wastewater infrastructure, including the Freezer Road plant and septic systems threatened by flooding.
- Achieve consensus on Sandy Neck coastal resiliency analysis and pursue action.
- Develop and implement community-based education programs with an emphasis on positive solutions, targeting multiple demographics and seasons.
- Land acquisition program to accommodate retreating salt marshes, saltwater facilities, beaches, etc.
- Improve resiliency of roads to coastal and urban flooding.

- Support and fund implementation of wastewater plan.
- Develop a green transportation plan including bike safety, transit and walkability.
- Prioritize and design high priority culvert replacements town-wide.
- Implement improvements to the town-wide water system, including expansion of the existing system, interconnections with neighboring towns, and open space acquisition for new wells.
- Develop policies for lowering emissions.
- Improve the stormwater system, including drainage maintenance, culverts, and pollution.
- Conduct a study to examine retreat or engineered solution to flooding in Hyannis Harbor and hospital area.
- Conduct coastal resiliency alternatives analysis for south side beaches.

These recommended actions were then presented to the large group and voted on through a dot exercise to identify the most important recommendations to benefit the community. The following actions represent the top recommendations of the assembled participants, organized by priority.

- 1) Changes to zoning bylaws and regulations. Several of the small groups identified the need to change zoning and other regulations to address vulnerabilities within hazard areas. This action, which included several sub-actions, received the highest number of votes. The sub-actions include identify new or different regulations for Land Subject to Coastal Storm Flowage (i.e. the floodplain), address current allowances for reconstruction of pre-1978 structures (stop the practice of grandfathering structures in hazard areas), create incentives for floodproofing of structures, updating the building code, and streamlining permitting to facilitate economic recovery after a storm event.
- 2) Achieve consensus on Sandy Neck coastal resiliency analysis and action plan. Two groups identified this action as one of their top 5, and it received the second most votes in the dot exercise. Planning has already been done and multiple meetings have occurred to address erosion of the Sandy Neck parking lot, but consensus on what option to pursue has not been reached. Assistance in guiding the community to consensus is needed.
- **3) Develop and Implement a community-based education program.** Three of the five small groups identified the need for improved public understanding about the hazards facing the community. Part of the emphasis identified in this action includes creating positive messaging, presenting viable solutions, and targeting multiple populations, including those with language barriers and seasonal residents.
- **4) Develop a feasibility study of remedies for the Millway/Barnstable Harbor neighborhood.** Two groups had identified a priority action seeking solutions to the flooding within this neighborhood, and the larger group agreed that this should be a priority for the town moving forward. Details include identifying alternatives for flood adaptation and/or retreat, and to use the feasibility study as a test case to utilize with other neighborhoods vulnerable to flooding.
- **5) Land Acquisition as a tool to accommodate retreat.** The group agreed that buying strategic properties to allow for the retreat of existing coastal resource areas such as salt marshes, beaches, and salt water facilities would be a valuable investment by the town.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Town of Barnstable will continue the MVP certification process by presenting and distributing this report to the public at a formal public information and listening session scheduled for June 11, 2019. This session will provide an opportunity for any member of the interested public to learn about the MVP process and provide feedback about the MVP workshop and recommended highest priority actions resulting from the workshop.

Priorities identified during the March 29, 2019 workshop will be integrated into existing local planning efforts. The Town will consider pursuing grant funding to implement the priority actions as appropriate to continue to improve the Town's resilience to climate change.

CRB Workshop Participants

Walter Watson, Planning Board Member Tom Lee, Conservation Commission

Farley Lewis, Land Acquisition and Preservation Committee

Peter Burke, Hyannis Fire Department

Candace Rufleth

David Anthony, Town of Barnstable

John Boyle, Infrastructure and Energy Committee

Frank Ward

Sean Duffey, Mass CZM

Theresa Santos, Town of Barnstable

Peter Rufleth

Gregory Egan, Business owner

Bill Monroe, Sandy Neck Board

Peter Doyle, Infrastructure and Energy Committee

Darcy Karle, Conservation Administrator

Shawn McCoy, Capebuilt Development

Kris Clark, Land Acquisition and Preservation Committee

April Wobst, Association to Preserve Cape Cod

Avery Revere, Friends of Barnstable Harbor

Bruce Epperly

Gordon Starr, Infrastructure and Energy Committee

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CRB Workshop Project team

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MVP Provider – Cape Cod Commission

- Sharon Rooney Chief Planner
- Heather McElroy Natural Resources Manager
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- Greg Berman Coastal Processes Specialist
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Appendices

[insert base map(s) used for participatory mapping exercise, participatory mapping maps (outputs from steps C&D), supporting risk maps (FEMA flood maps, etc.) used during workshop, and potentially PPT presentations or handouts used by participants]

