

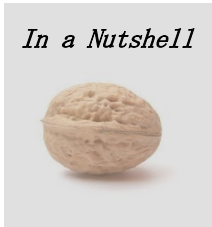


Climate and Energy Workshop

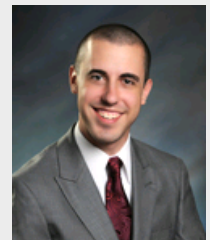
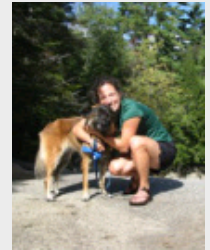
What We Heard

On September 10, 2013 the Nashua Regional Planning Commission hosted a Regional Climate and Energy Workshop to gather community input regarding the current state and future needs related to energy efficiency and climate issues in the region. Members of the public were invited, as well as planners, planning board members, conservation commission members, local energy committees and other interested individuals and organizations. Participants were divided into three breakout groups where they focused on major issues related to current and past projects on hazard mitigation, emergency planning, energy efficiency and potential climate issues. Jill Longval from NRPC discussed the current state of the Lower Merrimack Continuity Assessment and the Fluvial Hazard Mitigation Program. Next, Venu Rao highlighted present work being undertaken by the volunteer Energy Action Committee in the Town of Hollis. Mr. Rao provided a sequence of events for how the Town of Hollis began its energy work, funding sources and implementation strategies. Lastly, Justin Kates, City of Nashua, examined the importance of emergency planning for increased storm events and discussed some projects the City of Nashua is currently undertaking to prepare for climate change. Participants then brainstormed and identified *what worked* in the region, *what needed improvement*, and *regional needs* related to projects, funding and implementation. Staff facilitators noted this input in writing as well as in a shared spreadsheet through the use of iPads.

In a Nutshell



Across all breakout groups, several issues and opportunities emerged. Participants expressed satisfaction with statewide initiatives and utility programs. The workshop participants expressed appreciation for the amount of municipal case studies available. Participants also noted many areas of concern, including a lack of funding for projects and specifically a lack of sustainable funding sources. Several participants noted many projects have not occurred in our region due to a lack of significant storm events and competing public interests. Participants stated that guidance is needed on how to sustain energy efficiency projects and overcome public apathy. Lastly, workshop attendees took note of how NRPC can supplement municipal staff capacity and provide training and data management.



From the top: Jill Longval, Nashua Regional Planning Commission, Venu Rao, Hollis Energy Action Committee, Justin Kates, City of Nashua

Projects

Workshop participants discussed local and regional projects occurring in the NRPC region including types of projects, existing strengths and ideas for future projects related to hazard mitigation, energy efficiency and climate issues.

What Works:

- CORE energy projects from utilities
- Facilitating interaction between municipal groups and Local Energy Committees
- Municipal Smart Start program from PSNH
- There are projects on different levels of government, regionally and with local public utility commissions
- NRPC has identified culverts in certain areas
- Transportation models and build out analysis

What Needs Improvement:

- A challenge is getting the most current codes adopted and gaining support of businesses
- Coordinating projects on a regional level
- Anything seen has a hindrance to economic development is not desirable
- If it's not broke don't fix it mindset of citizens
- More projects than money to fund them
- Public denial and resistance
- Time constraints and getting busy working people to listen to the issues that face us

Projects, continued

Regional Needs:

- Upgrade culverts
- Conduct baseline surveys
- State, regional, local partnerships need to be fostered and asset management should be completed on all levels
- Dedicated funding
- Manage watersheds as watershed system
- Region needs safe, comfortable homes and schools

Financing

Workshop participants discussed available funding sources, barriers to adequate funding and opportunities for federal, state, local and private funding sources.

What Works:

- Grants—are easier to get support from voters
- Homeland security grants, always need more
- Larger culverts for larger storms
- Matching fund grants
- Municipal bond funding
- State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) being spent on local water treatment plant, potential to build energy improvements into existing planned upgrades
- Use business profit taxes to supplement projects, tax write offs
- MAP 21, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, federal aid transportation funding

What Needs Improvement:

- Mitigation funding is minimal
- Hard to fill all seats on a local energy committee
- Climate change and economic impacts are a challenge as they increase in frequency and severity
- Impacts of climate change on NH economy
- Flat funding vs. inflation
- Limited federal transportation funding
- Municipalities are expected to be self reliant
- Many great programs going on in Nashua but funding will not support them
- Recession
- Lack of private funding, only public funding sources
- Lack of financial resources and funding

Regional Needs:

- Need new bulletins or emails with opportunity updates
- It should be easier to locate financing tools and options
- Provide tax incentives using business profits tax
- More communication between towns
- Need more funding for staff
- Regional infrastructure vulnerability assessment
- Need Local Energy Working Group/NH Energy Solutions to send out bulletins
- NRPC needs to conduct joint regional local energy committee meetings
- Create a finance director position for energy audits to keep project implementation on time

Climate Adaptation Toolkits for Municipalities

Workshop participants received a list of existing resources on climate change, energy efficiency and hazard mitigation including links to adaptation toolkits for municipalities. The Climate Adaptation Working Group recently created a adaptation toolkit for municipalities in New Hampshire and will be available starting Fall 2013. In addition, toolkits for municipalities exist in other states and through corporations. There are many to chose from but three are listed below.

Climate Adaptation Toolkit
By: Climate Adaptation Working Group



Building Resilient Communities
By: The RAND Corporation



Connecticut Adaptation Resource Toolkit (CART)
By: State of Connecticut



Implementation

Workshop participants discussed strengths and weakness of project implementation.

What Works:

- Examples from other communities, Manchester contracts with Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC) for emergency management planning
- Committed staff, commissioners
- Existing partnership network between state, town, region
- Staff continuity at NRPC is very helpful

What Needs Improvement:

- Communities are not familiar with emergency management
- Competing demands with other town projects
- Funding
- Try to mitigate and not just respond

Regional Needs:

- Best Management Practices examples from other states
- Education is key to success
- Established network for towns through NRPC and state agencies
- Hire a regional resiliency manager
- Information sharing to reduce reinventing the wheel
- More communication between towns
- Emphasize emergency preparedness of municipalities
- Sample case studies of possible projects that communities can include in their Capital Improvement Plan
- Continuity of data



- No sense of urgency
- Competing demands with other town projects
- Budget cuts have reduced project implementation in the NRPC region
- Implementation is long term

Missed the Workshop?

Don't worry, there are still opportunities to lend your voice to the regional discussion on issues relating to climate and energy. You can highlight your favorite regional destinations on an interactive map and sound off on what you like, or dislike, in regards to public investment for local and regional energy and hazard mitigation, project financing and implementation. Visit granitstatefuture.org/regions/Nashua-region. We look forward to your input!

How can NRPC help?

Attendees were asked how the Nashua Regional Planning Commission could best aid communities with hazard mitigation, energy efficiency and preparing for a changing climate.

- Continue to host regional workshops
- Data collection and management with state agencies
- Coordinate meetings for all local energy committees
- Make the case for resilient communities
- Education for municipalities and citizens on opportunities and issues
- Policy audit to locate regulatory barriers
- Grant information, spread the word when money is available
- Provide towns with staff capacity for towns and training
- Coordinate towns better for wildlife corridor projects
- Research and share best management practices
- Incorporate climate change and energy in every chapter of master plan
- Branding for resilience

