

CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE
Committee on Sustainability and Transportation
Councilor Regina Phillips (D3), Chair
Councilor Victoria Pelletier (D2)
Councilor Anna Bullett (D4)

Approved Minutes November 13, 2024

Members Present: Councilor Phillips, Councilor Bullett, Councilor Pelletier

Staff Present: Troy Moon, Katie Tims, Kevin Deneault, Bill Needelman, Greg Jordan

Guests: Dr. Hannah Baranes

Meeting was called to order.

October 9 Minutes

The October 9, 2024 meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Presentation Addressing Climate Vulnerabilities in Portland

Presented by Troy Moon, Kevin Deneault, Bill Needelman, and Dr. Hannah Baranes

Troy Moon, Sustainability Director, covered the City's action and assessment to date and the most significant vulnerabilities in Portland. The City has created a Resilience Working Group, an interdepartmental project focused on developing a common base of knowledge and beginning to think about public infrastructure projects holistically and collaboratively. The scope of the Resilience Working Group aims to identify and assess risks to city-owned infrastructure from climate-related hazards. This project will result in a risk-based asset management tool that will help decision-makers invest in resilient solutions based on a vulnerability matrix and overall costs.

Dr. Hannah Baranes, a Research Scientist at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, discussed updates from the Maine Climate Council Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the latest scientific projections on sea level rise and the threats of coastal flooding. Dr. Baranes covers the historical context of climate-related flooding risks, and projected sea level rise, and recent extreme flooding events. Maine's "Commit to Manage" targets are currently 1.5 ft in 2050, 4.0 ft in 2100, but with great levels of uncertainty as to acceleration. These targets are incorporated into our public law and will change as science progresses. Dr. Baranes notes that while sea level rise, rate, and impact is abstract to think about, thinking about the frequency of high flooding events is easier. Right now, we experience "sunny day" flooding events 2-10 times per year, by 2050 we anticipate experiencing "sunny day" flooding events every 1 in 4 days, and by 2100 we will experience it daily. Right now, we experience severe flooding events (e.g. the January 13, 2024) annually by the late 2060s and 1-2 times per month by the end of the century (2080-2090).

Kevin Deneault, GIS Mapping Specialist for the City, covered the work being done by the Maine Silver Jackets in developing a "hydrodynamic model" with future dynamic floodplain maps that

include sea level rise and storm surge. This laid the foundation for the Coastal Flood Resilience Overlay Zone, the basis for the new ReCode zoning and incorporated in the Maine Won't Wait model scenarios. Kevin Deneault mentions the work of the Resilience Working Group in creating a risk-based asset management tool that identifies and assesses all City-owned critical infrastructure (including the islands) based on climate/natural hazards. The tool will produce a risk score based on the infrastructure's overall risk and vulnerability as well as its parcel, land, and structural value. This tool is also key to how we identify strategies and actions we can take throughout the City's landscape. Some ongoing projects include a living shoreline on Little Diamond Island (nature-based solution), the combination of vegetation and riprap stabilizing parts of Back Cove (hybrid infrastructure), and retaining walls, revetments, or Portland's Waterfront seawall (gray infrastructure). The City is pursuing funding to assist in completing this risk-based asset management tool and then looks to develop a resilience plan.

Potential Outcomes of this resilience plan include:

- Coordinated capital budgeting to integrate sea level rise and resilience goals
- Improved interdepartmental collaboration on vulnerabilities
- Identified and mapped at-risk City-owned infrastructure to prioritize resilience measures
- A structured approach for securing funding and resources for resilience projects
- Addressed infrastructure vulnerabilities in conjunction with socioeconomic and equity concerns to ensure inclusive resilience efforts

Bill Needelman, Waterfront Coordinator, covered the ongoing city, regional, state, and national initiatives on the waterfront related to climate resilience. The City is a member and actively contributes to the Maine Climate Council Marine and Coastal Work Group, maintains a partnership in the Maine Regional Resilience Challenge grant, sponsors Maine Working Waterfront Resilience Grants to 4 Portland Pier owners, and is a member of the Maine Offshore Wind Roadmap and the Offshore Wind Research Consortium. We also provide leadership and content to Waterfront Alliance for Portland Harbor, partner with GMRI on multiple initiatives, and engage with pier and property owners through ad-hoc processes. For 37 years, Portland has preserved its working waterfront, providing our greatest success and clearest pathway toward resilience (these workers and property managers in Maine's Working Waterfront experience 9 to 12 feet of sea level rise twice daily).

Next steps and tentative future actions related to preparing the City for climate vulnerabilities include:

- Apply for the upcoming Community Resilience Partnership Grant to support RWG and Resilience Plan development
- Collaborate with Island Institute on grant application for resilience work with island neighborhoods
- Organize Waterfront Resilience Summit for waterfront stakeholders
- Ongoing engagement with Waterfront Alliance
- Ongoing community engagement and community resilience programming
- Intentional, ongoing cross-departmental collaboration in City government

Councilor Comments on the Update on the Presentation Addressing Climate Vulnerabilities in Portland

Councilor Bullett asks if there will be Portland Public Health staff participation in the Resilience Working Group? *Absolutely, so far we have been looking at hard, gray infrastructure but next steps are certainly including public health colleagues in these conversations.* Given that so many of our roads are owned by the DOT, how much time/energy are they contributing to this work? *They have been a collaborator on the Union Branch trail project (stormwater management), collaborate in conversations about the port, and are in regular conversations about infrastructure on the waterfront.*

Councilor Phillips asks if there may be concerns about federal funding as we look to the future ?

The Councilors thank staff for their efforts and look forward to seeing community engagement involved. *Too early to tell. Potential updates to come soon, but emergency preparedness should be a non-political issue.*

Councilors thank staff for cross-department collaboration and hard work.

2024 Sustainability and Transportation Committee Accomplishments / Sustainability Office Initiatives

Presented by Troy Moon and Katie Tims

The Sustainability and Transportation Committee took action on all of its goals this year and more. include:

- Goal: Establish a climate action fund to advance the implementation of One Climate Future. Action: The S&T Committee and the Finance Committee recommended passage. Council workshop held on Sept. 23. Council vote on November 18.
- Goal: Investigate resilience strategies. Action: Staff provided a presentation about the City's Climate Vulnerability Assessment during the January meeting, including elements about coastal flooding related to sea level rise. Further discussion is planned during the November meeting to include an update on staff efforts to develop a Resilience Plan for City infrastructure.
- Goal: Advance the conversion of State Street and High Street to two-way traffic. Action: Following staff presentations during two meetings, the Committee recommended the two-way conversion move forward. City Council voted to move forward with the conversion on October 7.
- Goal: Evaluate approaches to address public concern with the coal pile on Cassidy Point. Action: The Maine DEP attended the May meeting to share actions they have taken to alleviate the issue of dust leaving their site and impacting neighboring homes and businesses. Councilor Phillips has met with Corporation Counsel to investigate options. Corporation Counsel is reviewing.

- Goal: Review ongoing work on the Climate Resilience Overlay Zones. Action: Planning and Urban Development Director Christine Grimando and Nell Donaldson made a presentation about this. CROZs are incorporated into ReCode, which was adopted by the City Council on November 5.
- Goal: Work to advance the Franklin St. redesign project. Action: The Committee recommended that the Council fund the local match for a large planning grant.
- Goal: Examine opportunities to promote bike/ped/transit opportunities. Action: The Committee discussed bike/ped improvements in transportation as part of the State & High conversion.
- S&T Council Committee also accomplished
 - BirdSafe Ordinance
 - Monument Square Parking and Commercial Loading Plan
 - PACTS Rapid Transit Study
 - Downtown Worker Parking Program
 - Stormwater and LID Amendments

Major Sustainability Initiatives included creating the Resilience Working Group, outcomes of the Sustainable Neighborhoods Program including the garden rebuild project, deployment of EV charging stations, and more.

Councilor Comment on the Update on 2024 Sustainability and Transportation Committee Accomplishments / Sustainability Office Initiatives

All Councilors thank Sustainability Staff and City staff for their recent efforts.

Motion to Adjournment

The motion was moved by Councilor Pelletier, and seconded by Councilor Bullett
The motion was accepted unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned