

**\*\*All notes are summaries of remarks with some sentences being transcripts if notable.\*\***

## New London and Groton Community Climate Solutions Virtual Workshop

### Moderators:

- Sharmaine “Sharms” Gregor, New London Resident
- Stephanye Clarke, The Community Foundation
- Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, DEEP

### Speakers:

- Cierra Patrick, City of Groton
- Joe Lanzafame, New London Public Utilities
- Ronna Stuller, New London Green Town Committee
- Jennifer Muggeo, LedgeLight Health District
- Danica Doroski, Urban Forestry, DEEP
- Kaitlyn Cyr, Bureau of Energy, Technology, and Policy, DEEP
- Nicole Lugli, Planning Division, DEEP

## Community Climate Solutions

*Sharms: Tell us about yourself and how your work connects to climate change?*

- o Cierra: Economic Development specialist for the city of Groton
- o Groton in the process of creating a community resilience plan
- o Plan comprehensively detailing, vulnerabilities, risks, and costs
- o Joe: Director of Public Utilities for City of New London
- o Dealing with wastewater and storm water for 12 years
- o Deals with mitigating the effects of climate change especially as it pertains to storm water

*Sharms: How do you see your work creating climate solutions in our area?*

- o Joe: City of new London has a dedicated stormwater utility. Working on a macro and micro level and dealing with increased rainfall this summer
- o Promoting localized mitigation solutions like rain gardens
- o Working with local organizations and community groups to work on smart water management systems
- o Focusing on continuing to improve the system
- o Dealing with converting impervious cover
- o Cierra: Understanding the roles of different departments and working on collaborations to develop a course of action to build community resilience
- o Each department is looking at resilience differently
- o Emergency management looking at increasing response times as an example

*Sharms: How will river runoff and bioaccumulation affect Southeast CT waterways and stormwater system?*

- o Improving water quality through MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) requirements

- Working on a site by site basis because water quantity affects water quality
- Education of the localized water system
- Constantly improving the system

*Sharms: How it would look if city of Groton did not have a separate sewer and storm water system?*

- Joe: End up dumping diluted wastewater in waterways due to increase in water volume

*Sharms: What are Groton's resiliency efforts focused on?*

- Cierra: The plan is going to highlight different initiatives each department is doing.
- We've been working with the business community on continuity planning and help them to fully assess all of their assets and connections to ensure they have the tools to face natural or man-made disasters
- Working with South eastern Connecticut Economic Region, the Small Business Development Center, and the Women's Business Development Council to develop these plans and help businesses assess their vulnerabilities

*Sharms: What do you think about the need for hyper local resilience planning? What do you think the state can do better to facilitate this?*

- Cierra: We've had good community turnout and engagement. Any support the state can give on creating these discussions
- Joe: Engaging with local groups and understanding the needs of the community. The state has done good with MS4 program for example. Working with local interest groups is important.

### Climate Change and Health Panel

*Stephanye: Explanation of Social Determinants of Health and introduce speakers*

- They are the conditions in which we are born, live, grow, age, learn, work, play, and/or worship and the World Health Organization says that the circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power, and resources at a global, national, and local level.

*Stephanye: How have you seen health and climate change intersect in your community, including environmental justice and social determinants of health?*

Ronna: Defender of open space and advocate for universal healthcare. It is important to note that climate change is exacerbating a lot of health inequities and environmental injustices. This is a continuation of a conversation stemming from pollution in communities of color. We see populations exposed to things that are potentially dangerous for them. Also, what communities have access to is another problem. Access to healthy foods as an example.

Jennifer: We know that there are things being exacerbated by climate change such as the increased risk of vector borne diseases, asthma outcomes associated with air quality as well. Thinking about all the people that have already been made vulnerable by our systems and deliberate policy choices with regard to housing and transportation and food access.

Additionally access to healthcare and the oppression from that increases with the same communities when it comes to climate change. Can also see similar dynamics play out when looking at the aftermaths of storms such as Hurricane Ida in Louisiana.

*Stephanye: Health disparities and inequities contribute to communities being unable to prepare for the impacts of climate change. Do you see opportunities to address these health disparities as well as increase resilience to impacts of climate change?*

Jennifer: There's a difference between health disparities and inequities. Disparities are the numerical differences and inequities are the how which includes systems of oppression like systemic racism. Examples like asthma affected by air quality due to where housing is located. Opportunities lie with dismantling policies.

Ronna: Our healthcare system in this country doesn't serve those left out of it as well those who have bought into it. Money overspent on health care can be used for so many other projects and resources

*Stephanye: What has the COVID-19 pandemic revealed about challenges in our community that could help us prepare you for public health impacts of climate change? Do you see any intersections here?*

Jennifer: There is a lot of intersection, but we have to be careful about saying that COVID revealed things when many of these issues already existed. The public health focus has been on individual choices and behaviors when we should have taught people more and we have not. These issues with structural inequalities are not unique to COVID.

Ronna: The way COVID testing and vaccination is being disseminated in the community gives a small glimpse of what universal healthcare could look like in a small way. Hopefully that experience can help experience a level of trust in the healthcare system.

*[Question from Chat] Explain the intersection of heat and climate and how is the response at the local government level when there are extreme heat events.*

Jennifer: We work with people in the community and connect people with resources to buy air conditioning. Additionally, the importance of cooling centers. I've see projects in different parts of the country where they are mapping tree cover in different neighborhoods and overlaying that information with the addresses of folks who go to the emergency department for heat related illness and inequities that existed between different neighborhoods for all the other things showed up there too. Green space and trees and development all connects to public health.

Ronna: Going back to the GC3 and state level planning we have to think of the fact that the US military is a big polluter and a big contributor to climate change. We have to think of ways to diversify our economy.

DEEP Panel (See slides for more details)

Danica Doroski, Urban Forestry Coordinator, DEEP:

- Urban and Community Forestry Objectives in Connecticut like increasing canopy cover and reducing the effects of climate change
- Three grant programs with deadlines in November and December:
  - o Urban Forestry Climate Change Grant Program
  - o Urban Forestry Equity through Capacity Building Grant Program
  - o America the Beautiful Grant Program
- There are different match requirements for each grant

Kaitlyn Cyr, Bureau of Energy and Technology Policy, DEEP:

- BETP manages local, state, and regional energy policy issues and implements energy efficiency programs among other responsibilities
- Although not run by BETP the newly launched Community Partnership for Energy Efficiency Engagement Program, an initiative for utilities to work closely with community outreach groups to improve outreach efforts to residents and businesses on energy efficiency programs
- Three main energy assistance programs:
  - o Connecticut Energy Assistance Program
  - o Home Energy Solutions, Income-Eligible Program
  - o Weatherization Assistance Program
- BETP works on transportation electrification:
  - o Wide-scale EV deployment
  - o CHEAPR program
  - o PURA EV charging program

Nicole Lugli, Planning Division, DEEP

- Open Space Opportunities
- Assistance in permit applications
- Online forums as well
- Competitive Open Space and Watershed Acquisition (OSWA) program to acquire open space
  - o Stronger emphasis on climate change and public access recently
- Urban Green and Community Gardens (UGCG) grant
  - o To enhance existing urban space
- Deadlines are the end of October
- STEPs for Solar Development (Sustainable, Transparent and Efficient Practices for siting and permitting of solar projects. An opportunity through listening sessions to hear what people have to say about this topic.

Q&A

- *[From chat] Do we have any programs about time location approvals for gas stations to include EV charging stations on site?*
- Kaitlyn (DEEP): There aren't any current proposals, but that is a great suggestion.

- *Rebecca (DEEP): Talk about solar incentives for multifamily and low income households*
- Kaitlyn (DEEP): Can forward that question to the right person who could help with that question.
- Cierra: Regarding EV charging stations in Groton, you can reach out to Groton Utilities and I know they have been working on installing EV charging stations
- Kaitlyn (DEEP): Incentives levels per site is pretty high for distressed communities like New London and Groton so that might be able to help move forward with some projects
- *[From chat] How much is physical accessibility in regards to varying ability levels prioritized in the establishment and maintenance of open spaces?*
- Nicole (DEEP): In the grant application we do ask about how accessibility for persons with disabilities will be included.
- *[From chat] I see a disconnect between DECD and the climate efforts from the GC3 and Connecticut is having an equitable jobs crisis which is something that needs to be addressed*
- Rebecca (DEEP): Congress has proposed a bill for a Civilian Climate Corp and it was mentioned to have a similar program from the GC3
- Danica (DEEP): When you look at the urban forestry grants the parameters for environmental justice include some of that conversation about working in the community as well as providing jobs for the community. URI program in New Haven is an example of a similar kind of program.
- James Albis (DEEP): We have been working on DECD with TCI and adding language to the bill that focuses on green jobs.

## **Workshop Adjourned**

### Groton In-Person Discussion Notes- 9/22/2021

Started with a round of introductions including attendees commenting on their interests and concerns

- Freeboard requirement- how high do you need to be to be protected from flooding
- Preparing for the storm and future storm response
- Town of Groton Sustainability Task Force passed their own climate change resolution
  - o Comments about the need for more public education to let the public know what's happening and understand concepts/terminology
  - o Comments on the costs of inaction/ action and using education as a way to combat being inactive/complacent
- Rain gardens
- Interest in undergrounding powerlines as adaptation as well as mitigating heat through increased tree cover after power lines are underground
- Comment about Connecticut consumers not wanting higher cost associated with undergrounding power lines
- Comment that Mystic lines are underground in one area and there are some concerns with flooding not necessarily due to the power lines but because of transformers and other electrical infrastructure

- Groton has it's own utility (Groton Utilities)
- Suggestion to start participating in PURA testimony to have input received.
- Comments about permitting and zoning for having buildings on all electric power

#### Regarding health:

- Comments on utilities taking trees down around powerlines which leads to increased healthcare costs due to asthma
- COVID as a test run for the potential health impacts of climate change

#### EV

- Municipal fleet electrification
- Some communities in Connecticut have done so already
- Needing electric charging stations and infrastructure to change to EV fleet
- Mayor of Groton emphasizing the funding needed for EV station charging
- Town of Groton legislature interest in the extension of Shoreline East

#### New London In-Person Discussion Notes- 9/23/2021

- New London taking advantage of TCI
- \*\*Transportation
- EJ/soil toxicity

#### TCI

- Getting rid of road / infill Redevelopment
- Transit Oriented Development and getting people out of cars
- Road/Ramp redundancies and cloverleafs getting rid of these structures
- DOT 1-95 E study developing environmental linkages
- City planning meeting to redistribute traffic
- Reducing Vehicles Miles Traveled
- New London Bus Ride Share Pilot October 15<sup>th</sup> for 6 months
  - o Microbus
- SECOG New London / Waterford Commons

#### EJ issues

- New London is officially listed as a distressed community in regard to grants
- Tree wells, NL Fresh, NL Trees & Storm Utilities -> matching funds
- Applications for Urban Forestry Grants
- Cutting into concrete for trees
- Possibly interact with to divert traffic, using bump outs to eliminate speed
- Locating areas to plant trees
- Getting community buy-in to steward trees and robust community engagement
- On-street parking is important
- State Roads
- New London Trees has mapped trees especially where children walk to school
- New London homes are largely renter-occupied
- Public Utilities-maintenance crews
- Power lines and utility companies as a hinderance to trees/ Utility companies cutting down trees
  - o Using legislation to possibly address this

- Public Works doesn't have the manpower to maintain trees
- Diverting Stormwater on properties MS4 permit to disconnect impervious cover
- Gutter -> rain gardens /pervious surfaces
- List of trees suitable for New London
- Open Space as a public health need
- Toxicity from lead & heavy metals
- Fenced off spaces
- Non protected bike lanes
- Many state routes, so hard to put bike lanes in city
- \*Bates Woods Park is underutilized
  - o NLHS
  - o Rerouting traffic to utilize space