

Machias Revitalization Committee July 8th, 7:00 A.M. at Bluebird Restaurant

Present: Christine Therrien, Sandi Malagara, Angela Fochesato, Dan Gardner, Bill Kitchen, Tora Johnson, Lisa Schaefer, Jennifer Denton, and Gail Peters

The meeting was devoted to a presentation by Tora Johnson from the GIS lab at UMM and committee discussion:

A study including detailed maps was requested by the Washington County Council of Governments and the federal government. The study focuses on the analysis of the sea level rise in our area. Machias has the greatest vulnerability of the towns in Washington County. The study is available at www.gro-wa.org This will allow you to quick link to on-line GIS, storm surge and scenarios in Washington County.

Tora's summary of the study follows:

Originally, we could have expected a 3' sea level rise in 100 years. We now anticipate that rise in 50 years. What had previously been considered a 100-year storm is now occurring on average as a 20-year storm. These storms flood the downtown, impact the water treatment plant and overrun the dike. This increase in frequency is due to sea level rise and does not take into account any rainfall.

The town of Machias has recently received new flood level maps from the federal government. The maps come from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The public is invited to view these maps due to the effect on flood insurance. Even with insurance, if enough damage is done to a building due to flooding, the building will not be allowed to be restored.

Tora has found that the maps from FEMA are consistent with the maps in her study. This will effect insurance rates. The economy of the area will be effected. This is true for the entire Maine coastline.

The replacement of the flapper valves on the dike has the potential of being part of the equation regarding effects of sea level rise. The DOT has asked for studies regarding the dike which is being uncut. The dike could be swept away if conditions remain as they are. When the dike is in place, this diverts water to the downtown river area. The construction of the new rim bridge negated the use of the Machias River behind the downtown for shipping. Thus the river was no longer dredged and the piers and cribbing rotted and fell into the river.

If the dike were replaced with a bridge which is the less expense option, the water would have an additional place to go and would help ameliorate the flooding. A member of the committee suggested that the river area could also be dredged and a retaining wall be erected. As one example of the future of building, Helen's Restaurant was required to raise the height of their building to obtain flood insurance.

Damariscotta is currently building a wall to protect their downtown area. It is being funded by loans, bonds and some federal money. There is money available to respond to problems due to climate change.

In addition to the bridge being the less expensive option, it was noted that the flapper valves have caused sediment to build up over time. The study that looked at the dike's vulnerability also determined that the sediment would no longer build up but would be swept away in the natural flow of the water. Could The Army Corps of Engineers dredge this area to hasten this process?

There is opposition to a bridge being constructed where the dike is currently located. The DOT would be funding this project. A decision appears to be imminent because the dike will eventually fail. It would be in the area's best interest to be prepared when it does occur and/or have a plan to prevent this from happening. If the bridge is the option selected, it would be best to design it to least impact the area behind it, and keep the water flowing away from the downtown area.

It may be in the interest of the town of Machias to hire a firm which would recommend the best options for the location, be aware of the environment impacts and the legality of the project. The town is a member of the Washington County Council of Governments and could seek help from them in hiring a firm. The sea level rise report generated by the GIS lab is very pertinent information for the decision regarding the dike.

All were in agreement that is essential to do things in proper order to avoid duplication and a waste of money for the town, the area businesses and the Revitalization Committee.

Tentatively, there may be a meeting on Friday morning, July 15th to address the remainder of our agenda from today's meeting. Angela will send an e-mail to confirm this.

Respectfully,

Gail J. Peters for Sharon Mack