

Resilient Roundtable Final Report

Norton, Massachusetts



Submitted:
July 12, 2016

Prepared by:
Resilient Taunton Watershed Network (RTWN)
in response to roundtable meeting held on March 2, 2016

What is a resilient community?

“A resilient community has the ability to withstand, respond and adapt to challenges. Challenges can include anything that makes a community vulnerable – from natural disasters to economic, social, and political upheaval. A resilient community thinks long term and is able to reorganize and renew itself, ideally in ways that put it in a stronger position than before the shock. People are key to a resilient community, because the social connections built during stable times boost a community’s ability to respond more effectively and efficiently when challenges arise. “

- Taken from the VT Resilient Communities Scorecard

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Michael Yunits, Norton Town Manager, and Jenifer Carlino, Conservation Agent for the Town of Norton for being willing to be the “first” Resilience Roundtable as a pilot for the Resilient Taunton Watershed Network.



Background

The Resilient Taunton Watershed Network was formed in 2014. It is a collaboration of local, non-profit, regional organizations, and state and federal government representatives who care about the future health and resilience of the Taunton River Watershed. In an effort to reach out to communities in the watershed the concept of “Municipal Roundtables” was developed and is being tested as a “pilot” effort of the Network. The concept behind the Roundtable was to go to an interested community and encourage a cross departmental conversation about resilience. We hope to “meet communities where they are” get a better understanding of what their needs are and match up any potential resources the network is aware of.

We put out a call for interested communities, and Jenifer Carlino, Conservation Agent for the Town of Norton expressed interest. In this case the Town was already having cross- departmental staff meetings on a regular basis, so RTWN members were invited to participate in an existing staff meeting on March 2, 2016.

Four members of the Resilient Taunton Watershed Network: Bill Napolitano from Southeast Regional Planning and Development, Cathy Bozek from The Nature Conservancy, Stefanie Covino from Mass Audubon and Trish Garrigan from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, met with Managers and staff of the Town of Norton at a monthly scheduled staff meeting. This report presents a summary of that meeting as well as a list of recommended resources for the town.

Norton Roundtable Report

March 2, 2016 10:00 -11:00 AM

Norton Town Hall

Present:

Paul J. Schleicher, Fire Chief
Beth A. Wierling, Director Planning and Economic
Development Jon Goodwin, Police Sergeant
Michael Yunits, Town Manager
Jenn Carlino, Conservation Agent
Chris Zahner Health Agent,
Joel S. Reed, Building Dept
Bernie Marshall, Water/Sewer Superintendent

Ray Cord, Deputy Director Emergency Management
Bill Napolitano, SRPEDD bnap@srpedd.org
Stefanie Covino, Mass Audubon
scovino@massaudubon.org
Trish Garrigan, EPA garrigan.trish@epa.gov
Cathy Bozek, TNC cbozek@tnc.org

Four members of the Resilient Taunton Watershed Network: Bill Napolitano from Southeast Regional Planning and Development, Cathy Bozek from The Nature Conservancy, Stefanie Covino from Mass Audubon and Trish Garrigan from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, met with members of the Town of Norton staff at a monthly scheduled staff meeting. Bill Napolitano explained that the Resilient Taunton Watershed Network (RTWN) is currently made up of 18 groups (non-governmental organizations, state and federal agencies, planning commissions, etc.) who care about the Taunton River watershed's natural and human communities, and want to help communities learn about resources that might be available to them to increase resilience. He explained that as members of the Network we were in Norton to learn about what issues Norton is dealing with, encourage a cross-department dialogue on the issue of resilience, and do this so that we can match available resources of the Network with town needs.

Trish Garrigan reviewed concepts around the term "resilience" and showed some slides of what resilience looks like. She collected feedback on a flip chart from the town on what issues they are interested in and what would help make Norton more resilient. See notes captured below.

Making Norton Resilient – what is needed, issues?

- Water recharge is important – for wells, streamflow
- Runoff is a problem
- Communicating to developers and engineers about different ways of doing things is not easy
- Communication across departments is needed
- Bylaw review needed
- Need to make sure bylaws allow LID practices
- Culverts – are they adequate size?
- Need information to prioritize culverts (flooding, habitat protection) – already know some of the key problem spots, like Walker St. and training on how to assess culverts in the future
- Landscaping along road may not work here- maintenance and plowing issues
- Need to do hazard mitigation planning – have no hazard mitigation plan
- Norton does regularly clean culverts and catch basins, don't have parks department to maintain green infrastructure – need alternative option for low/no maintenance and community understanding & acceptance
- Consider taking down old dams- Barrows St.?
- Flooding an issue (almost everyone raised this issue)
- Work with universities, have tried and it didn't take
- Norton wants to become a Green Community

Stefanie Covino described the concepts behind low impact development (LID) and sustainable land use practices. She also went over the need to review bylaws to make sure they work together and encourage better development. Cathy Bozek went over issues related to stormwater, green infrastructure, and habitat and restoration issues, giving examples of potential projects Norton could consider.

The group had open discussion and several points were raised.

- Various departments have their own language and perspectives
- An issue was raised about the state requiring sidewalks and bike lanes – how can towns reduce impervious cover and still achieve Complete Street goals and acquire funding with these requirements?
- A question was raised about potential issues if there was a spill on porous asphalt. That could create a contamination problem for sole source aquifer. Catch basins are an easier way to contain spills.
- Staff expressed the need to deal with old dams, and asked about how they might do dam removals.
- A question came up that developers need to know they could save money using LID
- It was noted it can take years for the state to get things done
- Standard engineering standards can be an issue
- Need to get planning board members involved with Master Plan, and get other board members involved in resiliency issues so they take the lead and have ownership when issues get to Town Meeting
- Need to receive assistance/take time to review current bylaws and regulations to allow for LID and encourage local smart growth
- Need to get general public engaged and involved.

At the end of the meeting we collected an initial list (from the flipchart) of what the town needs going forward

What is needed in the way of being more resilient?

- Need help testing the waterways (outfalls, etc.) for MS4 permit requirements
- Seed money for colleges to get involved – consider Watershed Access Lab at Bridgewater State
- Funding for Walker Street (for engineering, permitting, and design, as well as implementation)
- Information – can share culvert evaluation information and plans for getting certified to assess culverts locally
- We are addressing problem spots, but not addressing planning and bylaw issues; Need to make time to “Plan” and find money and not just be reactive, so that new problems aren’t created.
- Dept. heads are now looking at bylaws and reporting back to Town Manager
- How to get the public engaged?

Next Steps RTWN members reported back to the larger RTWN network about the issues Norton was concerned with and discussed any potential resources and/or recommendations to bring back to the town. These are reflected in the attached Resources and Recommendations table.

Also attached is a list of 5 actions a community can take to be more resilient, a copy of the powerpoint presentation used at the meeting, and a RTWN brochure.

Resources and Recommendations Table

Issue/concern	Resources/Recommendations/ Short Term Follow up Actions	RTWN Contact	When
<p>Culverts</p> <p>Are they adequate size?</p> <p>Where to get trained on assessment?</p> <p>Help with Prioritization</p>	<p>Share information on culvert inventory results, and any potential funding sources, prioritizing culverts</p> <p>Subwatershed Map from culvert report</p> <p>Share information on culvert assessment training</p>	<p>Bill Napolitano, SRPEDD and Heidi Ricci, MA Audubon</p> <p>Anne Kuhn, EPA</p> <p>Stefanie Covino, Mass Audubon</p>	<p>By July 30</p> <p>underway</p> <p>Done</p>
Water Recharge	<p>SWMI requirements</p> <p>Share information about MAPC pilot on enhanced recharge from Neponset Watershed.</p>	<p>Beth Lambert, DER</p> <p>Julie Conroy, MAPC</p>	TBD
Planning Integration	<p>Examples of community self- assessments and checklists.</p> <p>List of 5 actions the community can take to be more resilient is attached</p>	Trish Garrigan, EPA	Sent by Email on July 12, 2016 to Jen Carlino and Beth Wierling
Flooding	Flood Resilience checklist	Trish Garrigan, EPA	Sent by Email to Jen Carlino and Beth Wierling
<p>Bylaw review</p> <p>Are Bylaws LID friendly?</p>	<p>Share the framework/template for bylaw evaluation currently used in Blackstone watershed communities receiving technical assistance</p> <p>Towns is having Department heads report back on bylaw changes needed</p>	Stefanie Covino, Mass Audubon	Sent via email to Beth Wierling
Dams and dam removal	Share information on DER Priority Projects, state/federal funding available	Cathy Bozek, TNC	Sent via email
Additional Possible Follow Up Actions			
Hazard Mitigation plan	<p>Norton has funding to work with consultant on plan.</p> <p>RTWN can send them consultant contacts and example plans from neighboring towns.</p>	Bill Napolitano, SRPEDD	TBD
Coordinate with Universities	Consider Watershed Access lab at Bridgewater state	Bill Napolitano	TBD
Communicating with Developers and engineers about different ways of doing things	<p>Potential peer review of developments, like was done by Horsley Witten</p> <p>Share previous presentations and resources on Green infrastructure (GI) overview, costs, etc.</p> <p>Share examples of green infrastructure- low maintenance options</p>	<p>Check with Horsley Witten</p> <p>Stefanie, others</p> <p>Trish Garrigan, EPA</p>	TBD

Community Resilience

Where do I start? How do I get there?

Five Simple Actions That Improve Resilience

1. Take Advantage of Nature

Nature offers numerous free ecosystem services such as air and water quality improvements that communities can take advantage of.

- Protect existing natural areas, especially along streams to reduce erosion, flooding, and improve water quality
- Protect floodplain areas that absorb flood waters
- Plant diverse species of native trees that improve air quality
- Maintain natural hydrology and try to direct stormwater back into the ground to improve groundwater supply and reduce flooding

2. Be Smart with Regulations and Bylaws

Review your regulations and bylaws to make sure they work together and encourage the type of development that you want to see in your community.

- Allow open space residential design of subdivisions by right (vs. by special permit)
- Make sure your bylaws allow for and encourage low impact development, including zoning and subdivision
- Update precipitation amounts for design standards using recent data (NOAA Atlas 14)
- Go on a road diet – reduce width and length of roads, and reduce parking requirements

3. Think Ahead and Plan

Taking time to make a plan is hard to fit into our busy schedules, however plans can help your community get funding for projects and to be ready for action when needed.

- Hazard Mitigation Plan includes increasing culvert size upon replacement if needed
- Know what risks you face and where vulnerable populations are
- Create a master plan for your community and stick to it – identify what your priorities are for such topics as growth and conservation

4. Be Opportunistic

Take advantage of a variety of perspectives and opportunities when they arise – work together and get more done.

- When already doing work, think about ways to reduce impervious surfaces, improve culverts, or plant trees
- Look for “multiple benefits” from LID type practices
- Look for partners, don’t reinvent the wheel
- Have multidisciplinary staff meetings – learn together and share resources

5. Look Around

Keep an eye out for these easy fixes and be proactive instead of reactive.

- Remove old or abandoned tires (prime mosquito habitat)
- Trim vulnerable trees near powerlines; control invasive vines that can pull lines down.
- Get to know your emergency response folks and plans, be ready
- Learn about the resources available to you and take advantage of them (like RTWN!)