

Somerville Climate Forward

Health and Wellbeing Working Group Meeting #2

December 14, 2017

Attendees

- Mary Mangan
- Erin Wnorowski
- Rachel Weil
- Lisa Robinson, City of Somerville
- Lisa Brukilacchio
- Jennifer Lawrence
- Terry Green, JSI (consultant team)
- Doug Kress, City of Somerville
- Jess Bloomer
- Hannah Payne, City of Somerville

Solutions group is most interested in seeing implemented

- Expand tree canopy
- Improve emergency plans
- Outreach to vulnerable populations
- Climate training program for medical reserve corps
- Community preparedness coalitions
- Green workforce development
- Active & sustainable transportation solutions

Discussion of priorities

- Focus on emergency preparedness or healthy, sustainable behavior change?
 - Not exactly sure of how things will change with climate change so we should be nimble.
 - Many of the solutions are about reaction, should be balanced with proactive solutions.
 - There should be a focus on planning with vulnerable populations instead of for vulnerable populations: “In-reach.”
 - Emergency preparedness is short term and local. Healthy climate action is more about healthy behavioral change. Both are very important. City has plans in place for emergencies that can be updated. Opportunity here to focus on the longer term behavior change.
- Emergency preparedness

- For longer heat waves or flooding situations - emergency plans need to be tweaked but plans are largely in place. City already has heat wave plans.
- Could better address how we reach vulnerable populations, where are people in the city who need extra help during a black out? What do we do with pets in cooling centers? Emergency pet shelter training – need for small animal room.
- If having more extreme heat, will heaving of asphalts during heat affect transportation?
- Important to think about how to build the base of a strong and empowered community. Build core of people that feel empowered to take action and help neighbors.
- This topic in particular – the impacts are larger in other parts of the world. There are different experiences that we can learn from and build on from other parts of the world. But it is also important to be aware of impacts elsewhere that may affect people in Somerville due to their ties to other parts of the world.
- Resilience: Draw on all of the knowledge bases that we already have here.
- Education is an important part of this. If people can learn about emergency preparedness plans before an emergency they might be more comfortable knowing that there are plans in place and this might make them more able to find pro-active opportunities to take action.
- We cannot miss some basic emergency planning items. For example, knowing where vulnerable populations are in the city (where are people on dialysis?). We have to be relentless in language diversity with outreach.

Individual Feedback on specific solutions

- Erin: community preparedness coalition. Draw on local climate groups and other community groups. What would the message be? Establish annual goal: each community group can take a different piece of it, so it wouldn't detract from the work and goals they already have in place. Benefit of uniting groups around a project and common goal.
 - Climate groups are working together now under the Climate Coalition of Somerville.
- Rachel: Reducing consumption and waste – thinking about food waste and recovery. Food recovery addresses emergency preparedness and a longer resilience picture. Real life window into a resilience issue occurred when a microburst shut off power at the food pantry and the fridge/freezer at the pantry went offline. Had to scramble to find storage space for food. Would be good to understand where there is storage space for food that can be leveraged as needed. The first step in implementation could be to map out where storage facilities are sited.
- Lisa R.: Focus on prevention. Health touches many aspects of the plan, similar to health in all policies.
 - Active sustainable transportation – many aspects are the MBTA's responsibility but some could be easier to implement than others. Bus rapid transit (tier 1 or tier 2) is great for improving transit and reducing individual car use, this would be good for food access too if you can get to grocery stores faster and more reliably.
 - Green workforce development – seems like a potentially easy thing to achieve given vocational school and it would be beneficial. Opportunity to look at what's already happening and build on it.

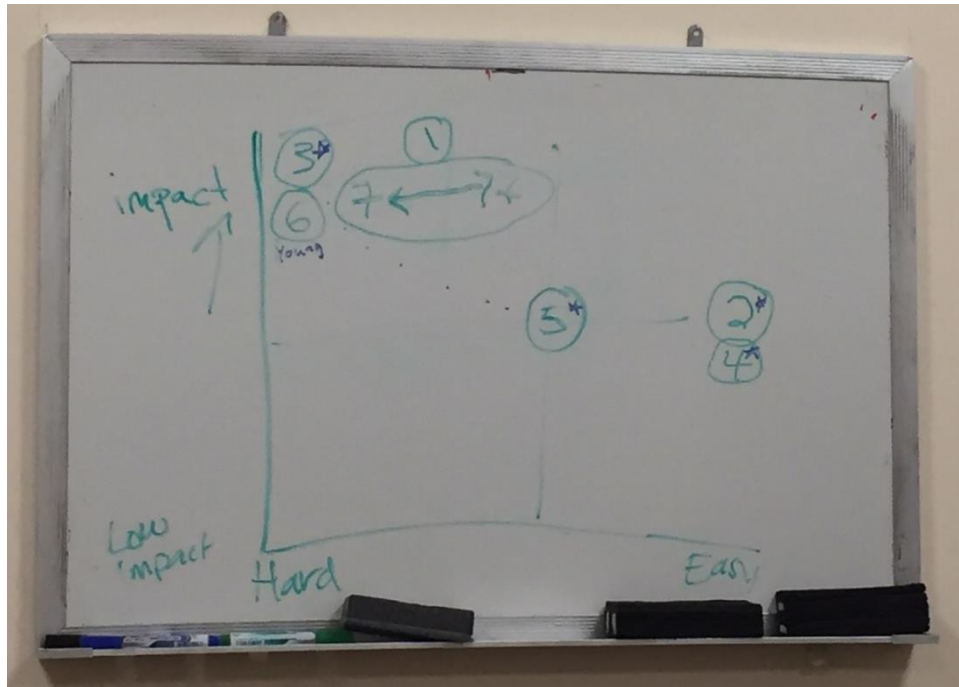
- Jennifer: Engaging vulnerable populations—need to bring diverse group of people to the table. Important to bring the young people in – they talk to their parents.
- Doug: Emergency preparedness – need information on power sources, alternative sites, what to do with animals. How will power outages impact ability to use certain buildings as shelters? What are the alternative spaces that have backup power? Do we need to have MOUs in place ahead of time so we aren't scrambling if power goes out – for use of fridges, A/C, etc. Multi-lingual staffing of shelters: High school has a lot of diversity—can we draw on the diverse language skills of high school students to assist with outreach and communication? Duplication of communication strategies is important for increasing who we are reaching.
 - Should be looking at the policies that are impacted by climate action solutions. What are the resources that are out there already? What can they bring to the table?
- Mary: Active transport has to be active all year round – winter walkability is critical. Can we plow sidewalk routes?
 - Climate douglas: person who will get trained in the neighborhood and share information to neighbors.
 - Mobilize solar households as resilience shelters: get them batteries and then they can serve as a shelter/resource for community members without power.
- Jess: Wanted a list of the critical concerns for each category. What are the main things we are trying to solve for? Need to know what we are solving for before we can evaluate the solutions. Health ideas feel too broad. General ideas/ concerns: Do we have a community that cares? How do stress and emotions impact people? What are the health issues that are incorporated in this?
 - Big issue: Anti-displacement needs to be part of the plan. If only wealthy people are able to remain in Somerville and benefit from these actions, then we will have failed at resilience. Vulnerable populations need to be able to live in Somerville into the future.

Discussion

(See photos of solution sorting exercise below text)

- Build the links between planning processes across the city. Need to build the links to other issues in the city so they are clear to everyone not just the planners. There is a lot of involvement from community members in different initiatives. Don't need to replicate it every time, but need to acknowledge the priorities of other efforts and identify the connections between them.
 - Language about affordable housing needs to be in the plan: solutions won't be effective if we don't have a solution to affordable housing.
 - Identify where there are gaps and reduce silos.
- Focus on basic human needs: accessing food, water, emergency health care, safe decent affordable housing.
- What are the key health concerns from climate change?
- Create a comprehensive list of climate change health impacts. Build off of vulnerability assessment – what do we need to be concerned about? Organize into categories and identify who potential partners are and who is willing to take things on.

- A lot has to be regional or at the state level but some things can be addressed at the local level. What is being worked on and where? What isn't covered locally?
- Vector borne diseases might be something that the city doesn't need to focus on specifically because state/region approach is more effective.
- What is the city already handling and where are the gaps? Do resource and policy inventory within the city. Review community/ working group feedback with city staff. Don't just fill gaps of climate knowledge but pull from other planning efforts (Somervision, etc.).
- Good to identify priorities that non-profits and community groups can help with (i.e. expanding tree canopy). Are there opportunities for other players to take action to support goals?
- Outreach is connected to everything. Coalitions are linked to outreach. Community preparedness coalitions are about activating the community and sharing information.
- Emergency plans and training for MRC are easier and should be in plan because they won't be covered elsewhere.
- Green workforce development: workforce development can have a big impact if focused on young people. Employ young people to implement climate actions (i.e. tree planting). This tackles education and outreach and creates opportunities for underemployed segment of community. Young adults are in a vulnerable transitional age—providing more employment opportunities to this group builds resilience.
- Transportation: make health connections in transportation solutions.
- Tree planting: look at New Haven model. Education about how and where to plant is important.
- Top priorities
 - Providing for basic needs.
 - Community cohesion – preparedness coalitions.
 - Address easy emergency preparedness climate add-ons.
 - Focus on connection between initiatives and goals.



- Solutions group is most interested in seeing implemented:
- ① Expand tree canopy
 - ② Emergency plans
 - ③ Outreach to vulnerable populations
 - ④ Training program for MRC
 - ⑤ Community preparedness coalitions
 - ⑥ Green workforce development
 - ⑦ Active/sustainable transportation

- Expand Tree Canopy: High impact, medium-hard to implement
- Incorporate climate projections into emergency plans: Medium impact, easy to implement
- Outreach to vulnerable populations: High impact, hard to implement
- Training program for medical reserve corps: Medium impact, easy to implement
- Community preparedness coalitions: Medium impact, medium difficulty to implement
- Green workforce development: High impact, difficult to implement
- Active/sustainable transportation: high impact, medium-hard to implement