



# HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

## Resilient Nantucket

2 Fairgrounds Road  
Nantucket, Massachusetts 02554

[www.nantucket-ma.gov](http://www.nantucket-ma.gov)

**Commissioners:** Raymond Pohl (Chair), Diane Coombs (Vice-chair), John McLaughlin, Abigail Camp, Vallorie Oliver,  
**Associate Commissioners:** Stephen Welch, Jessie Dutra, Carrie Thornewill

~~ MINUTES ~~

Friday, February 26, 2021

*This meeting was held via remote participation using ZOOM and YouTube,  
Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Regarding Open Meeting Law*

Called to order at 11:02 a.m. and announcements by Ms. Coombs.

Staff in attendance: Cathy Flynn, HDC Compliance Coordinator; Holly Backus, Preservation Planner; Terry Norton, Town Minutes Taker

Attending Members: Coombs, McLaughlin, Camp, Oliver, Welch

Absent Members: Pohl, Dutra, Thornewill

Late Arrivals: Camp, 11:09 a.m.

Early Departures: Camp, 12:32 p.m.

### I. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

### II. REVIEW & POSSIBLE ADOPTION

**Documentation** Draft *Building with Nantucket in Mind* (BWNIM) Resilient Nantucket: Flooding Adaptation & Building Elevation Design Guidelines

**Consultants** Phil Thomason, Thomason & Associates, consultant  
Kimberly Rose, The Craig Group  
Vince Murphy, Coastal Resiliency Coordinator

**Public Speakers** None

**Discussion** **Thomason** – Had several guidelines design charrettes in December for this to update BWNIM to meet coastal resiliency needs. If members see typographical or wording or spelling errors, asked those be sent to him in an email. Wants to know if the document is going in the direction HDC would like and that it has sufficient information.

**Welch** – Suggested that the title is confusing; it would be beneficial that the guidelines themselves, with respect to architectural elements, be broken down to follow the structural format of BWNIM. Another suggestion is that those guidelines could be pulled from the bigger body of this document, and we would adopt the whole packet, with the working set being the sections pulled and formatted in terms of their structure to mimic BWNIM, and reference the larger body, with respect to things like FEMA and the concept behind flood resilience and retreat, etc. Architects and designers could access the information easily with no incongruence between these guidelines and BWNIM.

**Oliver** – She went page by page and will send her notes to Mr. Thomason. Asked Mr. Welch if the section that pertains to the design guidelines should be an addendum to BWNIM.

**Welch** – That would be a good goal. The Organizational Focus Committee (OFC) has been going through the guidelines and pulling out and bring forth to the commission areas that need revision and focus enhancements. Doing that makes it easier for a volunteer group to work with and is easier to refer back to BWNIM guidelines and policies. This would be the working set from this would be more like what's being done in the OFC, and the large document would be accessible and used for reference and discussion. Suggested not working on creating the working set now; stay with what we have and fill in with enhancements anything that is relevant. Later on, we will develop a shorter-condensed version for adoption. The OFC has been working on clearing up areas of application or new technology and creating policy. Mr. Thomason is helping us focus those policies.

**Thomason** – He's not sure he's following Mr. Welch but willing to work to ensure the information is consistent and useful.

**Backus** – We have a set scope and parameters dictated by the MVP grant. Right now, we should focus on what Mr. Thomason is delivering. It was intended this would be an addendum, but we also have to focus on the actual specifics.

**Welch** – One of the comments was how the HDC would use this. This needs to be adopted by the HDC. He thinks using this as a document to drive rewriting the guidelines is another discussion. To adopt the whole body as an addendum isn't functional. We need to focus on pages 90 to 95 which is the effect of elevations.

**Oliver** – It comes down to the idea the name should be changed because it's confusing. The whole document isn't pertinent to the HDC. We had a discussion regarding material that should be used and how those materials should be pervious. Asked how that would come into play with hardscaping for accessibility.

There are suggestions included that don't work for Nantucket. Jersey barriers were shown as an option for restricting water flow; we don't want those to proliferate and probably shouldn't be included. One example is a garage under the house; doesn't see that as a viable option on Nantucket and should be eliminated.

Page 89 refers to terracing; we love the idea of terracing to minimize walls, but it doesn't work for the Conservation Commission; the question is how to come to a meeting of minds on that. Questions moving houses and new foundations; sometimes that's not a good idea due to the historical significance of a structure.

**Thomason** – The garage under the house picture is noted as incompatible for Nantucket. Terracing can only work in the more rural parts of the Island where there's room for the terracing without impact neighbors; FEMA doesn't allow terracing within a historical downtown district.

**Murphy** – If you are going to terrace, you need a compensatory location to put the water. Jersey Barriers indicated are temporary for use in flood defense and then to be put away.

**Oliver** – Those temporary Jersey barriers have been used.

**Coombs** – Referenced the "Inquirer & Mirror" article regarding the Lily Pond. Where we have drainage issues and the land floods, she's not sure lifting the building will work. Asked if there would be a board of discussion where a proposal doesn't fit in with HDC guidelines. Lifting and moving a structure undercuts its historic value.

This document when complete should be printed and delivered to businesses for their use.

**Thomason** – These guidelines will be available on the Town website. There are a lot of options in terms of flood shields and hardening for vulnerable commercial buildings in the old historic district (OHD). These guidelines will give property owners and local commissions various approaches that work as best as possible.

**Backus** – This effort is happening at the right time; Mr. Murphy and his crew are working on the Coastal Resiliency Plan (CRP). Out of both projects, there will be a toolkit. Information will be provided to lead people to the guidelines on the website. She sees no issue with pulling out the architectural guidelines as Mr. Welch suggested, as long as it refers back to the main body document. Drainage and infrastructure ties into protection of historic structures.

**McLaughlin** – This is well-written document for all structures within the 100-foot water frame of Nantucket. The problems won't be easy to solve. Once finished and voted on, the document should become a permanent law locked in and sent to the government to avoid introduction of opinions. Representation of the photos are, in his opinion, the best part of the document showing what is approvable and what is not approvable.

**Camp** – An issue she has found the HDC has faced is fishing for back up on why people should be building more sensitively to the environment we live in. As things get worse, we can add to this. Concerns downtown are different from the rest of the Island. With groundwater and sea level rising, this addendum supports our argument against over-development of a lot. We have to get real on keeping our historic houses and reinforcing the old foundations in a way that doesn't take it off the historic registry.

**Oliver** – On one page it talks about the commercial core of a Town and shoring structure up for future flooding; HDC has to start considering materials that are not traditional in order to make the structures more resilient.

**Thomason** – There are ways to make the non-traditional material look like a traditional treatment. As you read through, he wants the commissioners' suggestions for more "recommend" and "not recommended" examples.

**Coombs** – One problem she has found is that something comes up as not appropriate, but zoning allows it; that ties our hands. If a person comes up with something outside the guidelines, we need to have the strength to say that can't be done.

**Thomason** – Asked HDC to come to concurrence on the language; he can revise that as he moves forward. With 20 years of experience, the updates often have language geared more toward the "shalls" making it clear the commission will use in that manner.

**McLaughlin** – Referenced the photo showing the Sea Street Pump Station, the bricks will hold the water back, but water-proof doors and windows are very important as well.

**Welch** – The easiest place for the does and don'ts is to indicate "these shall not be allowed where visible from a public way." The material should be of historic nature or reflect historic nature. Referenced several examples showing entry platforms - one step above the shingle courser and another one step down – where there isn't a covered porch or space for a landing, the platform should be one step below the shingle rail; that softens the overall height. Would like to see more examples where of how to hide the height increase from flood elevation and where the shingle sidewall hides the height increase.

If the HDC is being dissuaded from requiring terracing or berming as a successful strategy, a structure has to be lifted and must look incongruent to its historic setting in order to be successful. He doesn't feel educated enough to buy into that. If you're terracing an area that will only have trouble with water retention during a sea-level-rise flood, he thinks the issues of water displacement are a displaced concern; it is area-wide flooding. The image on page 84 is not going to create an issue with water that already exists on the site. The only time you'd obstruct water is during a major flooding event. He could see where we could use berming to help direct flood waters where we want it to go and thus keep a historic elevation intact; that discussion should be encouraged.

He understands FEMA is requiring that new structures under the building code be placed above the design flood elevation; he'd like to see a diagram of how a carve-out from a design flood elevation requirement by virtue of receiving a letter from HDC might look. He'd also like to see what our consultants say on the HDC's ability with historic structures where the historic foundation isn't an issue of falling apart and needing replacement, but it is a matter of raising it for a better view and cheaper insurance and is at the expense of the streetscape. He believes there are instances

where HDC would like to have a tool to prevent raising a structure; used the 3 Bricks as an example where HDC would not want to see a structure raised.

**Thomason** – Appreciates those comments and suggestions; he'll take a look at tweaking the drawings of landings and expanding the shingles.

**Coombs** – Asked if they had talked to any of the conservation groups regarding how they will handle drainage and water retention.

**Backus** – That is under the scope of the CRP. We want to ensure we are looking at not just the elevation but the streetscape and the water drainage. Asked that members review the CRP and provide Mr. Murphy feedback.

**Coombs** – The Netherlands has been dealing with flood issues for years; asked if our best option is to hold the water back. Cited flooding issues impacting the area of Fayette Street to Meader Street and Union Street to Washington Street. Sees no point in allowing someone to put in a building where it will sink due to water under it.

**Murphy** – He lived in Holland for several years; they are a terrific example, but the people pay a lot for the system. Pointed out locations in Town starting to suffer from the rising waters. The CRP is a whole-Island approach to resiliency using landscaping where possible.

**Camp** – Asked the timeline for making this an addendum.

**Backus** – This is through the MVP grant from the State of Massachusetts to create these design guidelines as well as priorities associated with the Hazard Mitigation Plan to provide tool kits to the community to react to flooding. We are required to complete the project by June 31, 2021, the end of the State fiscal cycle. If there are specific concerns down to minute details, send those to her and she will see Mr. Thomason gets those. This has to have a lot of information that the general public must have access to. Thinks pulling out the design toolkit would be helpful for HDC's revision of BWNIM.

**Thomason** – Over the next 3 to 4 weeks, get suggestions on strengthening or easing the language to him.

**McLaughlin** – Wants to hear what Ms. Rose has to say.

**Rose** – Strengthen the holistic approach to climate change – pervious materials, rain gardens, hedge shrubs, absorbing water, and moving water away from historic structures – helping to inform other plans and resources. A lot of this document explains why we care about materials and plantings; it is also supported by years of research.

**Backus** – These design guidelines are based off of the Secretary of Interior standards and laid out in an HDC perspective of what is and is not allowed and why. This document is already available on the Town website.

**Coombs** – Wants the members to have copies of the report.

**Oliver** – This is very difficult because we're having so many meetings and haven't been able to schedule an organizational Meeting. We need to have a full board discussion of this.

**Welch** – He put in a request to begin that discussion at the next organizational meeting and more cogently discuss questions as a commission.

**Coombs** – We need some time at least once a month when we don't have an agenda of applications to discuss this.

**Thomason** – Asked any suggestions be forwarded to Ms. Backus who will compile them and forward them to him.

**No action at this time.**

Motion

Roll-call Vote

N/A

Adjournment:

Motion

Roll-call Vote

**Motion to adjourn at 12:35 p.m. (McLaughlin)**

Carried 4-0//Oliver, Welch, McLaughlin, and Coombs-aye

Submitted by:

Terry L. Norton