

Chefornak Planning Work Group Meeting

February 21, 2018

In Attendance:

Chefornak Traditional Council: Jonathan Lewis, Walter Lewis

City of Chefornak: Isadora Kilanak, Anna Abraham (also Naterkaq Light Plant)

Chefarnrmute Inc.: Dora Mathew, George Sam, Eric Tunuchuk

Naterkaq Light Plant: Jobe Abraham, Sr.

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) Environmentally Threatened Communities

Program: Max Neale, Melodie Fair

Alaska Region T/TA Center: Anthony Caole

Bureau of Indian Affairs: DeWayne Cooper, Jolene John, Sarah Walker

Denali Commission: Don Antrobus

E3 Alaska: Tami Schlies

Economic Development Administration: Shirley Kelly

Intelligent Energy Systems: Peter Banners, Dennis Meiners

PND Engineering: Sean Baginski, Torsten Mayrberger

State of Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, Division

of Community and Regional Affairs: Sally Russell Cox

Sustainable Futures/3rd Rock Consulting: Susan Wilson,

U.S. Housing and Urban Development: Colleen Bickford

Meeting Notes

Sean Baginski with PND Engineers provided an overview of Chefornak. The village is located on the south bank of the Kinia River about 98 air miles to the southwest of Bethel. Chefornak is experiencing river erosion along the south bank of the Kinia River.

The community is located in an area formed by past volcanic activity. A large part of the Chefornak is underlain by basalt and is not as susceptible to coastal and riverine erosion as the areas where there is no basalt. The community would benefit from a map showing the extent of basalt relative to community buildings and infrastructure. Recent LiDAR of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta acquired by a joint US Fish and Wildlife Service US Geological Survey effort could be used for this purpose.

A South Chefornak Subdivision containing more than 20 lots for housing has been developed to the south of the original townsite, near the road to the airport. Marilyn Billy, Chefornak land planner, should be contacted for more information.

THREATENED FACILITIES

Housing

Currently, the most at-risk structure, known to the community as “Dolly’s House”, is only about 12 feet from the Kinia River. There are nine people living in this house, which was built in the late 1960s as part of the State’s Bartlett Housing Program. Community leadership believes the home is too old and deteriorated to withstand moving and will need to be replaced. Other homes and structures are also located along the Kinia River in the area that is not underlain by basalt. They too will need to be moved or replaced. The community will need to develop a phased strategy for how these homes will be moved or replaced. A Naterkaq Light Plant Home Energy Study was conducted by the Cold Climate Housing Research Center and Alaska Housing finance Corporation.

Jetty

A jetty consisting of rock and gravel serves as Chefornak’s barge landing. The jetty recently lost 20 feet of material, exposing a number of large boulders. Protection of the jetty is the community’s second highest priority because it is a critical facility where fuel and other community supplies are delivered. A suggestion was made that the school, village corporation and businesses that use the jetty should demonstrate need and concern for protecting the jetty to provide justification for funders to assist the community.

Head Start Building

The Head Start building is in poor condition and experiencing subsidence. The building was constructed in an area where there is no basalt and has been subject to flooding. The building was originally funded by AVCP, Inc. however the Head Start teacher housing is owned by the Lower Kuskokwim School District.

Utility Poles

Several utility poles in the village have experienced subsidence. The poles were designed to be imbedded 6 feet underground, but many are shallower, leaning and experiencing rotting wood.

Tank Farms

There are two tank farms in the community, one for the school and other serving the community. There are many permafrost thawing issues with the community tank farm. The facility is located in an area that is not underlain by basalt. Many of the connections are bent and not expected to last long. A dam which has formed around the tank farm pushes flood water into village. A small creek has damaged the road leading to the tank farm. ANTHC plans to explore a prototype for geothermal placement cooling with solar vs heating.

Coastal Village Region Fund (CVRF) Fishery Support Center

The CVRF Fisheries Support Center was not built in the area underlain by basalt. The building is now being threatened by erosion.

RESOURCES

PND Engineers: PND Engineers has completed a draft engineering assessment of Chefornak which will be made available to the planning work group once it has been finalized.

ANTHC Environmentally Threatened Communities Program Grant Writing Team: Max Neale and Melody Fair with ANTHC's Environmentally Threatened Communities Grant Writing Team can help Chefornak with any of their grant-writing needs.

BIA Resources: Dewayne Cooper with BIA's Housing Program recommended that the Chefornak Traditional Council complete a Housing Improvement Program Tribal Annual Performance Report by December 31, 2018.

HUD Resources: Colleen Bickford discussed some of HUD's grant programs , including the Indian Community Development Block Grant Program (ICDBG) and the Imminent Threat (IT) funding available through the ICDBG program. Colleen said she would reach out to the Red Cross and Salvation Army to see what resources they might have for Chefornak. The City of Chefornak could also apply for funding through the Community development Block Grant Program administered by DCCED/DCRA.

State DCRA: Sally Russell Cox can provide community planning assistance to Chefornak.

Denali Commission: Don Antrobus suggested that Denali Commission funding could be used for some of the community projects if they were identified in the community's Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Alaska Region T/TA Center: Anthony Caole stated that his organization has funding that could cover some of the community's soft planning costs such as travel to participate in meetings.

EDA: The community could apply for funding for a feasibility study (approximately \$64,000) through EDA.

Congressional Delegation: Senator Sullivan plans to visit Chefornak when Congress is in recess.

NEXT STEPS/ACTION ITEMS

1. The community plans to meet with HUD soon to learn more about funding opportunities and which of the community's top priority projects could be funded. The ANTHC grant writers will be working with the community to develop grant applications.
2. PND Engineering will finish its engineering assessment soon, which will further identify project needs.
3. Dewayne Cooper with BIA Housing indicated that he will work with Chefornak to identify BIA funding for housing. The community needs to complete a Housing Improvement Program Tribal Annual Performance Report by December 31, 2018. The ANTHC Grant Writing Team can help the community with this.
4. Chefornak leadership should meeting in the very near future to discuss the community's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. As an annual update to the plan, the community can identify as mitigation projects home relocation, feasibility studies, and other project needed identified at today's meeting. These updates can be adopted by resolution and provided to support funding requests.
5. Successfully planning and implementing the migration effort will require close collaboration between the community, agencies, and subject matter experts. Other environmentally threatened communities have full-time coordinators and planning teams. Chefornak leadership will seek funding for a migration coordinator and/or funds to support leadership travel and participation in meetings.
6. Sally Russell Cox will work with the community to develop a community planning framework for addressing threatened buildings and infrastructure once the PND study has been completed. This will include a phased strategy for relocation of threatened homes and/or construction of new homes and a plan for where home occupants will stay while homes are being moved or constructed. Additional studies needed to inform the planning effort include:
 - a. A structural assessment of threatened homes along the riverbank, identifying suitability of each home for relocation and a prioritization of homes based on threat.
 - b. Geotechnical investigation of the land in South Chefornak Subdivision and surrounding area to ensure land is suitable for additional development.
7. The group plans to meet again in the near future; date and time TBD.

Chefornak Meeting

Wednesday, February 21, 2018

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