

NEWTOK PLANNING GROUP MEETING NOTES DECEMBER 5, 2014

IN ATTENDANCE:

- **Newtok Village Council (NVC):** Paul Charles, Romy Cadiente, Louie Andy, George Carl, Katherine Charles, Simeon Fairbanks, Jr.,
- **Newtok Native Corporation (NNC):** Jimmy Charles, Marla Fairbanks
- **Alaska Division of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA):** Sally Russell Cox, Nathaniel Betz, Taunnie Boothby, Jimmy Smith
- **Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM):** Ann Gravier, Scott Nelson, Brent Nichols, Michelle Torres,
- **Alaska Energy Authority (AEA):** Jed Drolet, Sandra Moller
- **Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) Regional Housing Authority:** Allen Joseph
- **Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Transportation:** Julie Stoneking
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:** Lorraine Cordova
- **U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD):** Colleen Bickford
- **AECOM + URS:** Scott Simmons
- **Bechtol Planning and Development:** Eileen Bechtol
- **E.Consult:** Elstun Lauesen
- **Gazewood & Weiner PC:** Mike Walleri (*attorney to NVC*)
- **Law Office of Glen Price:** Glen Price (*attorney to NNC*)

BY TELEPHONE:

- **Village Safe Water Program (VSW):** Greg Magee
- **US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):** Tami Fordham
- **Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC):** Brian Lefferts

The meeting was facilitated by Sally Russell Cox.

1. RELOCATION PROJECT UPDATES

- a. **UPDATES FROM THE COMMUNITY:** Romy Cadiente reported that he was recently hired as a Community Coordinator by the NVC to serve as a liaison between the tribe and State and federal agencies with special focus on the relocation effort. He reported that all five of the new water storage tanks have been connected by VSW.

Paul Charles, NVC president, thanked the state and federal agencies for the assistance they've been providing to Newtok.

Mike Walleri, attorney to the NVC, provided an update on activities regarding the lifting of the stay placed on Newtok's BIA funds due to an internal tribal conflict. The NVC now has access to its BIA funds and has been focused on getting the new tribal government up and running as a functional tribal government.

The majority of BIA funding for 2014 is carry-over funding and will provide resources for the tribe to coordinate the relocation effort. A compact agreement was recently solidified between AVCP and NVC; AVCP will take over Newtok's basic BIA 638 contracts for FY15. This will free up the NVC's time to focus on the relocation effort. The main issue the NVC is focusing on is the BIA Roads Program, specifically planning for community road location at Mertarvik. Funding is available to begin surveying the new roads. There are some concerns about the environmental and archeological review so that BIA will know if State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) compliance has been received.

Sally responded that some of these studies were performed during the development of the barge landing and staging area project funded by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) and by Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No significant Impact (FONSI) prepared by the Corps of Engineers for the Mertarvik Evacuation Shelter and access road. *(The Corps of Engineers EA and FONSI document is available on the Newtok Planning Group Website at http://commerce.state.ak.us/dnn/Portals/4/pub/2008_Newtok_Evacuation_Center_EA_&_FONSI.pdf)*

- b. HOME RELOCATION/BUYOUT:** Ann Gravier (Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM)) reported that Newtok reported damages during a federally-declared disaster that took place in November 2013 (DR-4162). Whenever there is a federally-declared disaster in the State of Alaska, the State can request 15% of the total cost of disaster damages in mitigation dollars from FEMA. Typically, those dollars are offered competitively statewide to local jurisdictions that have FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plans and have submitted applications for mitigation projects. Newtok is among many communities who are eligible statewide to apply for these dollars. Recognizing the relocation issues in Newtok, the DHSEM hired contractors to help develop the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) application. Based on the structural survey conducted by DHSEM, the NVC ranked which homes in Newtok would be a priority for buyout or relocation and helped collect the Voluntary Information Forms signed by individual homeowners volunteering to have their home relocated or bought-out.

Newtok's HMGP project application was completed and submitted by the application deadline, October 1, 2014. DHSEM is now taking all the HMGP project applications submitted under DR-4162 and providing them to the interagency State Hazard Mitigation Advisory Committee (SHMAC) for prioritization. Recognizing the relocation issues Newtok is faced with as well as the significant investment of dollars and time into Newtok's application process; DHSEM will try to make the case to the SHMAC to prioritize Newtok's application for recommendation to the Governor's Disaster Policy Cabinet (DPC) for funding through FEMA. The SHMAC will probably meet within the next two weeks (approximately December 19, 2014), and the recommendation will then go to the DPC (approximately late December or early January). The application includes the relocation of 12 homes for \$2.8 million and the acquisition of 5 homes for \$1.24 million. It's less expensive to relocate homes than it is to buyout and demolish structures and fund the construction of new homes. The combined cost reflects what DHSEM anticipates in available mitigation dollars from this disaster (DR-4162).

If the DPC recommends Newtok's HMGP project application for FEMA funding, the application will be submitted to FEMA by the end of January. FEMA will take 60 to 90 days to review the application; and award would take place in late spring or early summer of 2015.

Ann reported that if the HMGP project application isn't funded by FEMA, there is another funding source, Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) funding, that we could consider. If the HMGP project application is funded, the PDM funding could provide for the relocation/buyout of additional homes beyond the initial 17.

The question was asked if the four homes closest to the Ninglick River could be moved away from the Ninglick River with these funds. Ann clarified that this application was to move homes from Newtok to Mertarvik, and the funds couldn't be used to move homes within the current village. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was contacted about moving the homes away from the river but NRCS determined the homes didn't meet the imminent threat criteria of their program.

There was additional discussion about whether the homes closest to the river were among those prioritized to be moved, because there was at least one elder living in one of the homes and she would not be able to move to Mertarvik before support services such as a clinic and airport were available. Ann will send Sally the list of prioritized structures and the home owners to provide to the group.

Ann also reported that DHSEM has emergency generators that could be used to power the homes relocated or built at Mertarvik.

- c. **PAPER PLAT:** Greg Magee (Department of Environmental Conservation, Village Safe Water Program (VSW)) explained that in preparation for relocating homes, we will need to bridge the gap between the conceptual community layout plan developed for the Mertarvik village site in 2011 (see http://commerce.state.ak.us/dnn/Portals/4/pub/Newtok_CLP_Update_Final.pdf) and work the USACE will do to complete a survey, subdivision design and recorded plat. VSW has resources that can be combined with funding from DHSEM to advance the community layout to a paper plat stage where land is subdivided and the location of community infrastructure and facilities is identified, such as the school, power plant, water and sewer, communication and housing. Preparation of a paper plat will be critical to the siting of the 17 homes that will be relocated or built at Mertarvik. Once the paper plat is completed, it can be handed over to the USACE for the survey, subdivision design and recorded plat. Ann Gravier and Brent Nichols clarified that it would be important to have the paper plat completed by the end of January, so that it can accompany the project application for home relocation/buyout submitted to FEMA. Greg plans to conduct a design charrette as part of the paper plat process. Sally can help with the planning portion of the design charrette through the work she does under her FEMA Risk MAP grant. Mike Walleri noted that the NVC has a planning obligation under the BIA IRR roads program and asked if the design charrette could include the community roads to fulfill this obligation. He asked if this could be coordinated by Sally with the Newtok Planning Group (NPG), as well as with Nelson Island villages. Sally agreed that she could do this and would coordinate with Romy.
- d. **MERTARVIK SURVEY AND SUBDIVISION DESIGN:** Lorraine Cordova (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)) attended the meeting on behalf of Dave Williams, who would not be back in state until January 15th. Lorraine said that she would relay any questions the NPG had to Dave.

Mike Walleri stated that the NVC was looking forward to getting the new cooperative agreement in place with the USACE. The old agreement with the Newtok Traditional Council had been terminated. As soon as the draft agreement and certification forms are ready, he would like to receive them.

- e. **SANITATION MASTER PLAN:** Greg Magee reported that the Mertarvik Evacuation Center (MEC) currently has a septic system and drain field in place which will accommodate the wastewater/sewer needs of the additional 17 families at Mertarvik. There is also a water well drilled at the MEC site that can be used as a watering point for the 17 homes.

At Greg's request, Brian Lefferts, YKHC, explained that it would make sense for the community to decide what type of water-sewer systems they would like to have now. Once the systems have been decided, we can strategically place homes so the desired systems can be connected in the future.

Greg explained that the community layout was based on a gravity-fed piped system which was based on 5-foot topographic contours, but now we have 2-foot contours that provide more refined information on which to develop the paper plat. VSW has an obligation through the sanitation planning process to look at alternative water-sewer system but without going through further evaluation, including the design charrette process, we don't know what that system will be. VSW will be applying for more study money to look in depth at these alternatives. The money won't be available until after July 1, 2015.

An objective for the paper plat would be to avoid laying out the homes in a way that would eliminate any option for water and sewer. The design charrette process would help the community reach consensus on the type of water/sewer system before the paper plat was completed.

- f. **AIRPORT STATUS:** Don Fancher (Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT/PF)) reported that in June 2014 DOT/PF received FAA-approval of the Newtok Airport Layout Plan (ALP). *(The ALP is available on the Newtok Planning Group website at http://commerce.state.ak.us/dnn/Portals/4/pub/Newtok-Mertarvik_ALP.pdf).* The FAA placed a condition on this approval that the proposed landfill and sewage lagoon maintain a minimum separation requirement of 5,000 from the airport. Getting to this stage on the Newtok airport (at Mertarvik) took about 7.5 years and \$1 million.

A few years ago, the military Innovative Readiness Training Program (IRT) laid out a temporary road leading up to the materials site at "Hill 460". This road was intended to follow the ridgeline, which was the most direct route from the barge landing area; however the road alignment now intrudes into the approved runway safety zone, so the road will need to be moved. *(This should not be a problem because the road has not yet been engineered. Durabase mat has been placed directly on the tundra along the temporary alignment, however this can be moved.)* Sheet 11 of 11 of the ALP shows the recommended alignment of the road.

An airport relocation report was completed in 2008 (see http://commerce.state.ak.us/dnn/Portals/4/pub/2008_Newtok_Recon_Report.pdf).

Once the ALP was approved by FAA, DOT/PF went before the statewide Aviation Project Evaluation Board (APEB) to request that the Newtok airport be included in a statewide competition with other airport projects to be included on FAA's Airport Improvement Program (AIP). This program provides grants to public agencies for the planning and development of public-use airports that are included in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems. The Newtok airport project is now included on this list.

The Sherpa/Short SD 330 was selected as the design aircraft with a recommended design runway length of 4,000 feet. Approximately 200 acres of land will be needed for the project. The estimate for the 4,000 runway is about \$25 million. A cross-wind runway would cost approximately \$20 million more.

In order for the FAA to fund the final design and construction of the Newtok airport, the agency would like to see some form of power generation developed at Mertarvik to provide runway lighting, in addition to assurance that the sewage lagoon and landfill will be sited outside the 5,000 foot airport safety zone.

The timeline for the project can be expedited if conditions change (such as 15-17 families moving to Mertarvik). The NVC should contact Don once we learn that FEMA has approved the award for the home relocation/buyout project. The Newtok airport project would need to be re-ranked in the AIP.

Don also recommended that the NVC and NNC address land status issues such as completing the survey of the village site, getting agreements in place, making a commitment to DOT/PF that the land will be made available for the airport, and recording the plat.

In the best case scenario, if the FEMA application was approved and the airport project was elevated on the AIP, the airport could potentially be completed in 3 years.

- g. NEWTOK HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE:** Scott Nelson (DHSEM) introduced the contractors preparing the update to Newtok's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), Scott Simmons with AECOM +URS and Eileen Bechtol with Bechtol Planning & Development. Eileen prepared Newtok's current LHMP (*available at DCRA's Community Plans Library at http://commerce.state.ak.us/DNN/Portals/4/Repository/Plans/Newtok_HMP.pdf*).

Scott Nelson noted that in order to be eligible for the FEMA funding for home relocation/buyout, the community must have a FEMA-approved LHMP. Scott Simmons reported that he, Scott Nelson and Eileen met with the NVC that morning to go over the LHMP update, including information the NVC would need to provide and the forms the NVC would need to complete.

The purpose of the local hazard mitigation plan is to identify the community's policies and actions to reduce risk and future losses to hazards. LHMPs provide the framework for a community's long-term strategy to reduce disaster losses.

- h. OTHER AGENCY UPDATES/INFORMATION:** Sally reported that one of the federal grants she manages (the Newtok Environmental Site Inventory and Assessment) is being amended to include travel funding for the Newtok Village Council and the Newtok Native Corporation to make two trips to Anchorage over the next 18 months. She would like to coordinate these trips with NPG meetings to ensure the members of the NVC and NNC board have the opportunity to meet face-to-face with the agencies.

Jed Drolet (Alaska Energy Authority (AEA), Regional Energy Planning and Community Assistance Program) reported that in order for AEA to begin energy planning at Mertarvik, the NVC should send a letter to AEA requesting assistance. AEA will review their budget and project load to determine where assistance might begin. AEA is ready to help as best they can. There is a regional energy plan for the coastal region being developed by Municipal Light and Power (ML&P) through a direct appropriation. AEA is working closely with ML&P and they are using AEA's methods and procedures for the regional energy plan.

2. REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

- Ann Gravier will send Sally Russell Cox the list of prioritized structures and home owners to provide to the NPG.
- The NVC should send a letter to Alaska Energy Authority requesting assistance with energy planning at Mertarvik. This is especially important to keep the airport project moving along.
- Ann will let Sally know if the Governor's Disaster Policy Cabinet recommends the Newtok's HMGP project application for home relocation/buyout to FEMA. Sally will pass this information on to the NPG. If the project application isn't recommended, Sally will schedule an NPG meeting to discuss alternative approaches. FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation funding is another option.

- If the HMGP project application for home relocation/buyout is submitted to FEMA, Ann will let Sally know once award has been made and Sally will schedule the next NPG meeting to coordinate next steps. This will likely be in late spring or early summer.
- If FEMA approves/awards the home relocation/buyout project application, the NVC should contact Don Fancher to expedite the airport development process including having the project re-ranked in the AIP.
- The NPG needs to help Newtok come up with resources to move the 4 homes closest to the river further back into the village. The NVC needs to identify where these homes can be temporarily moved.
- The cooperative agreement between the USACE and the NVC should be executed as soon as possible.
- VSW will likely hold a design charrette in Newtok in January to support the paper plat being developed to support the home relocation/buyout project application to FEMA. The design charrette can include the location of community roads to fulfill the planning requirement of the BIA IRR Program.

Newtok Planning Group Meeting

Friday, December 5, 2015

NAME	AGENCY/ORGANIZATION	Do you want to be included in future NPG emailings?	PHONE	EMAIL
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Don Funder	AK DOT & PF	"	269-0514	donald.funder@alaska.gov
Jed Drolet	AEA	"	771-3985	jdrolet@aidea.org
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Louie Andy	Newtok Village Council	"	237-6018	None
Simeon Fairbanks Jr	Newtok Village Council	Yes	237 6292	aeromed82@yahoo.com
GEORGE CARL	NEWTOK Village Council	Yes	237-6360	None
Paul Charles	Newtok Village Council	Yes	237-6395	ayugug13
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RONY CHOIENTE	NEWTOK VILLAGE Council	YES	907-237-6015	ronchoi72@gmail.com

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