

Newtok Planning Group*

Meeting Notes for Friday, May 11, 2007

In attendance: Sally Russell Cox, Ruth St. Amour (Alaska Division of Community Advocacy); Greg Magee (Village Safe Water); Brenda Kerr (Corps of Engineers); David Vought –(HUD); Janet Hall (RurAL CAP/Denali Commission); Don Fancher (Alaska Dept. of Transportation & Public Facilities); Jamilya George (Denali Commission); Terry Smith (Coastal Villages Region Fund); Tami Fordham (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency); Robin Bronen (UAF Resilience and Adaptation Program).

Via teleconference: Stanley Tom (Newtok Traditional Council); Sam Kito (Alaska Dept. of Education & Early Development); Mark Charlie (AVCP Regional Housing Authority); Sylvia Kreel (Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources); Nick Tom (Newtok Relocation Fund); Shirley Kelly (U.S. Economic Development Administration); Jennifer Curtis, Mike Materno (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency); Tom John, George Carl (Newtok Native Corporation)

Sally Russell Cox facilitated the meeting. Sally noted that May 25 will be the one-year anniversary of the formation of the Newtok Planning Group.

NEPA Discussion

Tami Fordham, EPA Tribal Liaison for the Kuskokwim region, and Jennifer Curtis and Mike Materno, NEPA reviewers at EPA, commented on the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process. The tribe may call for agencies to convene for a discussion of NEPA requirements. The EPA does not yet have a role in Newtok, but will participate in discussions and review documents at the tribe's request.

- The Newtok Planning Group can develop a list of questions for submission to the EPA.
- Stanley Tom will request to have an item on the agenda at the next meeting of the Newtok Traditional Council, suggesting that the tribe submit the questions to the EPA.
- The NEPA requirements apply to the federal agency that is undertaking a project that triggers NEPA, and no agency has yet started a project for the relocation that requires NEPA review.
- An EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) can be prepared that covers more than one agency project.
- Some projects will require a consistency review under the Alaska Coastal Management Program.
- There is a need to identify all of the required permits as early possible.

New Funding Possibilities

- Sally Russell Cox shared an e-mail she received from Chris Graeff, an Oregon architect, regarding a proposal to apply for funding for village relocation for Newtok, Shishmaref, Kivalina and Koyukuk. Mr. Graeff plans to be in Anchorage during the week of May 21. Jamilya George suggested inviting him to visit with staff at the Denali

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Commission. Robin Bronen requested that Heather Kendall Miller of the Native American Rights Fund be included in the meeting.

- Tami Fordham advised the group that EPA is accepting applications for Alaska Tribal Multi-Media Projects, and that the proposal for a Strategic Management Plan developed by Greg Magee would be an eligible project.
- Greg Magee agreed to work on an application for an Alaska Tribal Multi-Media Projects grant for the Strategic Management Plan. The application will be submitted by either the Newtok Traditional Council or Newtok Relocation Fund. The application with original signatures must be received at the Anchorage EPA office by May 16.
- Brenda Kerr suggested including a design charrette in the proposal.

Update on 2007 Field Activities at Mertarvik

- Greg Magee reported that Stanley Tom participated in the review of proposals for Village Safe Water's field work. Stanley Tom reported that CRW was selected as the contractor for geophysical work.
- Sally Russell Cox reported that while work will begin on the Mertarvik barge facility project this construction season, it will probably not be completed until summer 2008.
- Don Fancher reported that DOT is willing to provide technical assistance to the Alaska Dept. of Commerce on the barge project. DOT recognizes the need for more barge landings in the Kuskokwim region; however they have not done many such projects. It was also noted that the site for the barge landing may need additional study.
- Don Fancher also reported that DOT is doing wind studies for the airport relocation project, and will be seeking additional FAA funding.
- Brenda Kerr reported that the Corps has prepared a scope of work and cost estimate for the geotechnical work for the road to the new barge landing. The Corps has concerns about bird nesting, which is likely to delay the field work. They would like to have Estrella Campellone conduct a bird survey, accompanied by a local resident, during the first week of June.
- The Corps plans to visit Newtok the week of May 14. Brenda also noted that SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) requirements will need to be addressed.

Sub-Committee Reports and Agency Updates

- David Vought reported on behalf of the Housing Sub-Committee. He, Stanley Tom, and Mark Charlie plan to meet in early June. The tribe is working with RurAL CAP on an ICDBG application for housing.
- Nick Tom has been hired as project manager for the Newtok Relocation Fund, a non-profit corporation set up by the Newtok Native Corporation to acquire funds for the relocation.
- Jamilya George reported that Senator Stevens' staff would like to visit Newtok and Mertarvik this summer.
- Tami Fordham noted that she will be in Washington, D.C. and offered to act on behalf of the Newtok Planning Group.
- Brenda Kerr reported that an application has been submitted for a hazard mitigation grant for Newtok.
- Sam Kito reported that the estimated cost for a new school is \$22.9 million.

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- Jamilia George expressed enthusiasm for the possibility for geothermal power at Mertarvik.
- Don Fancher emphasized the need for broad consensus on the site for the airport in Mertarvik, as so much else must be designed around it.
- Sally Russell Cox reported that she and DCA Director Mike Black have briefed Emil Notti, the new Commissioner for Dept. of Commerce, Community & Economic Development, on the relocation of Newtok. At the Commissioner's request, she prepared a briefing paper for the Commissioner to provide to Governor Palin. A version of the information in the briefing paper is online on the Newtok Planning Group's web page, or Sally can provide full copies on CD if members of the NPG would like to provide a similar briefing to their agencies. Jamilia George will take copies to Washington, D.C.
- Sally Russell Cox also reported that Mike Black made a presentation on the Newtok relocation efforts to SAME, the Society of American Military Engineers. Sally shared an email from a SAME member to Mike regarding possible assistance from UAA engineering students on the Newtok relocation. Each year UAA's senior civil engineering students are required to take a capstone course in which a professor acts as a principal of an engineering firm and the students break out into discipline groups to tackle a project. To help with the project and show the students how an engineering firm works, mentors from various agencies and firms provide lectures and assistance to the students. At the end of the year the students present their plan, cost estimates, designs, etc. to the mentors and agency that provided the project. If the NPG is interested in having the Newtok relocation be the subject of this class, contacts for the appropriate people at UAA could be provided.
- David Vought mentioned a HUD program for universities (Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian Institutions Assisting Communities) that might provide funding part of this effort by engineering student.
- Brenda Kerr reported that the Corps would like to use Duramat to prevent degradation of the vegetation on the roadway at Mertarvik while work is being done this field season. Tami Fordham suggested working with Ryan Maroney at USDA-NRCS' Bethel office on that effort.

*http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/planning/Newtok_Planning_Group_Webpage.htm