

Warren Times-Gazette

WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 2024

eastbayri.com

VOL 157, NO. 19

\$2.00

What to do when your evacuation route floods?

With parts of Rt. 114 flooding regularly, state partners with three East Bay towns to seek solutions

BY ETHAN HARTLEY
ehartley@eastbaymedia.com

Multiple state entities and three local municipalities on the frontlines of rising tides are teaming up to address an issue you may have noticed has become much more common in recent years — the regular flooding of portions of Route 114.

"Resilient Route 114" is a climate resiliency plan created in partnership between the Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning, the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA), and the Towns of Barrington, Warren, and Bristol.

"Even temporary disruptions to the use of this state-owned collector road can result in dramatic community impacts, ranging from disconnected neighborhoods for emergency services to the loss of economic production and damage to critical infrastructure," reads the outline of the plan on the Statewide Planning website.

The plan specifically looks to target seven areas that have become a reoccurring problem for coastal flooding events — where the



RICHARD W. DIONNE JR.

South Main Street in Warren during a bout of flooding following a storm in 2018.

See ROUTE 114 Page 9

Mother Nature: local sports' most formidable rivalry

Extreme weather events put local sports in the crosshairs of climate change

BY LYDELL DYER

While research has shown that Rhode Island's climate is getting hotter, it has also been revealed to be getting wetter, windier and more unpredictable. And as our climate undergoes these changes, local sports teams across the region are caught in the crossfire.

Rhode Island has never been known for predictable weather throughout the year. It is part of the prevailing westerlies, a belt of air movement that influences precipitation and impacts wind strength. For residents, this means that there is a "roughly twice-weekly alternation from fair to cloudy or stormy weather, usually attended by abrupt changes in temperature, moisture, sunshine, wind

direction and speed," as the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management reports in its climate overview of the state.

Recently, however, data from experts and the anecdotal experiences of locals seem to indicate that incidents of severe weather are becoming more common, and the effects are becoming apparent in much more tangible ways.

"Last summer, it rained so much," Director of the Warren Parks and Recreation Department, Tara Thibaudeau, lamented, "I felt like we were going to build an ark. But the summer before, there was a drought. We had no rain, and everything was dry."

A severe combination of water and wind

For local sports teams, the effects of climate change have been salient; more than just a concept in a scientific study — it's been some-



RICHARD W. DIONNE JR.

A puddle at the outskirts of the field at Kickemuit Middle School as observed on Monday.

See CLIMATE Page 8

*****CNR-RT LOT#C007
762 12/11/2024
WARREN TOWN HALL
514 B-111 31
ATTN: CLIMATE LITICE
WARREN, RI 02886-4265
00000301



Help Warren bloom!
Blue pots that beautify downtown
need a green infusion this spring

PAGE 2



ROUTE 114: Municipal budgets reportedly will not be on the hook for future work

From Page 1

road is inundated with water not because of freak storm incidents, but rather from a combination of normal conditions like high tides, high winds, or consistent, normal rain.

The plan identifies seven AOVs ("areas of vulnerabilities" as they are called in the plan), which stretch from the Congregational Church in Barrington all the way south to the area near the Lobster Pot in Bristol, with the area near the beginning of the Warren Bridge (near the so-called Warren Gateway) the lone AOV being investigated in Warren.

The project began in earnest last autumn, with a renewed focus on analyzing existing conditions and modeling what these areas will look like in the future as sea level rise and the frequency of extreme weather conditions continue to accelerate.

"If the effects of climate change on this major thoroughfare go unaddressed, rising waters and associated issues could sever a critical connection between Aquidneck Island and Providence as well as within the Towns of Bristol, Warren, and Barrington," the project outline continues. "Bristol County residents rely heavily on Route 114 as one of their main routes to Providence and Kent Counties for commuting purposes. With its size and capacity as a State route, Route 114 is part of the Rhode Island Emergency Route Network, critical for maintaining the safety of residents before and during extreme weather events."

What are the seven vulnerable areas?

AOV 1 lies at the intersection of Federal Road and Massasoit Avenue in Barrington near the Congregational Church.

AOV 2 is south of the first area where the creek from Prince Pond cuts behind the Presbyterian Church.

AOV 3 is downtown Barrington itself, which faces threats from the Barrington River to the east and flooding from Brickyard Pond in the west during severe flooding events.

AOVs 4 and 5 focus on the low-lying areas near the Warren and Barrington Bridges, one on either side in Barrington and one near the Warren Gateway in Warren.

AOV 6 is near the Sip N' Dip in Bristol, at the intersection of Hope and Washington Streets, where Silver Creek now regularly spills over and causes major traffic disruptions during rain events.



RICHARD W. DIONNE JR.

A Bristol Police officer surveys the intersection of Hope Street (Rt. 114) and Washington Street near the Sip N' Dip earlier this year, where flooding regularly occurs and requires traffic diversion. This spot is one of the areas targeted by the state resiliency project targeting Route 114.

AOV 7 is further south in Bristol, near the intersection of Hope and High Streets where The Lobster Pot sits.

So what's the plan?

The project is now shifting from its information gathering phase into a public awareness phase. Two public meetings are scheduled for early June (one at Bristol Town Hall on Tuesday, June 4 and one at Barrington Town Hall on Thursday, June 6, times TBD, to be held both in person and virtually).

"The public's input is welcomed now and through January 2025, when the last of several public meetings/forums is scheduled," said Warren Town Planner Herb Durfee through email. "While there will be public forums in each of the three communities, the ones in Warren will be held in October 2024 and January 2025."

Durfee said that members of all three communities are welcome to attend any of the forums.

Arnold Robinson, Regional Planning Director for Fuss & O'Neill, the civil and environmental engineering firm and consultant team for the project, said that getting input from the people actually dealing with coastal flooding was an essential first step before trying to move towards any possible solutions.

"We don't want to jump to a technical solution yet until we share with

stakeholders in these communities about what are the realities of future flooding, what are the potential range of solutions that are out there, and what are their relative costs, and what is the cost-benefit analysis of those solutions?" he said in an interview on Monday. "It's too easy to do climate planning at your desk looking at a model. You have to get out there and engage with stakeholders who own properties, who live in those areas, who own buildings and businesses and travel those roadways every day."

As to what solutions could potentially be proposed, Robinson said it could vary depending on the location.

"I won't say we know what the answers are yet. We know what some national best practices are, and we know what a range of some possible solutions are," he said. "In some communities, there has been really well-systematized rerouting of traffic for big storm events...For some communities where they have low-lying roadways, they're elevating those roadways, building higher

bridges, elevating roadways a couple of feet and staying out of those more frequent flooding events."

Towns not on the financial hook

Robinson said that federal dollars will likely be available through Statewide Planning to implement the eventual solutions that are agreed upon, and he confirmed that individual municipalities are not on the hook to provide a cash match, and are instead providing help in other ways.

"Municipalities are donating in-kind services to do all of the promotion for the public engagement... They're briefing their town councils and their planning boards on this because it's really going to be critical if we're going to have recommendations for implementation that stick, we need to have everybody engaged in the formulation of those recommendations," he said. "This can't come out of left field as a, 'Hey, here's the answer, you weren't involved in the process.'"

Robinson said that he believes the public at large has begun to take the issues posed by climate change and rising tides more seriously, whether it's the EMT driver who can't get to a call on time because the road is flooded again, or the parent who is 20 minutes late to daycare to pick their child up for the same reason.

"I also don't think that you can underestimate that there is a project management team which is composed of all three communities plus Statewide Planning, plus RIDOT, plus RIPTA," he added. "It is not often that we get all of those entities in the same room for a common purpose related to resilience."

DO YOU NEED A NEW ROOF?

If So, I Bet The Last Thing You Want To Do **RIGHT NOW** Is Spend \$15,000-\$25,000 or More On A New Roof!

Call the **Roof Assistance Hotline** at 401-954-9012 to learn how you may qualify to replace your old roof for \$5,000-\$8,000 of your own personal funds, regardless of roof size.

This is not a loan or a grant so there is no application to fill out and no home appraisal required. Qualifying is strictly based on a free assessment of your current roof.

Who this program is for:

- Homeowners with medium, large or extra-large roofs
- This program is not based on financial hardship. In fact, many homeowners that we assist are considered somewhat affluent
- Homeowners with a roof that is between 10-35 years old are ideal

Who this program is NOT for:

- Homeowners with smaller than average roofs
- Homeowners that have replaced sections of their roof over the years, piece by piece
- Homeowners with roofs that are less than 10 years old
- Homeowners that have a roof in absolutely terrible condition that probably needed to be replaced many, many years ago

Call the Hotline at

401-954-9012

for your free roof assessment or go to

www.roofassistancehotline.com

Reg#11374

To Submit Community News

BY E-MAIL (PREFERRED): irego@eastbaymediagroup.com

BY MAIL: Warren Times, Community News, P.O. Box 90, Bristol, RI 02809

BY FAX: 253-6055

FOR MORE INFORMATION: 253-6000, ext. 107

Or stop by our office at 1 Bradford St, Bristol.

Photos are encouraged. Email us a high-resolution jpg or tif and send it as an attachment.

Milestone events, such as births, weddings, engagements, etc., must be submitted within the year following the event.

DEADLINE: Noon on Mondays