**Meeting Notes: M-DASH Task Force**

**City of Eastport**

**December 7, 2021 – 10a.m.-12noon**

Present: Paige Atkinson, Dale Basher, Larry Clifford, Kate Devonshire, Bobbi Harris, Jess Maurer, Jeanne Peacock, Effie Rorke, Lynn Rutledge, Emma Wendt

I. Welcome, Introductions, and Updates

II. Update: Home Repair + Weatherization Projects (Paige Atkinson, Island Fellow)

Paige provided a broad overview of the work that has been done to-date, including the inherent challenges (see slide deck, below). She reviewed the proposed workflow for implementing home repair/weatherization projects in Eastport, before discussing potential partnership opportunities for getting the work done. Paige then introduced the assessment tools and incentives being considered, along with a summary of the recommended data collection/evaluation process.



• Initial in-home assessments/energy audits…feedback needed on roles/process

It was decided that a hybrid model (combination of volunteers and paid contractors) would work best. Strong desire to adapt and replicate the approach used by Downeast Community Partners-Maine Seacoast Mission, with modifications.

Jess Maurer wanted to be sure that referrals are coming from other sources/agencies, as well; beyond Downeast Community Partners (DCP) and Maine Seacoast Mission (MSM). Effie Rorke inquired whether it’s possible to use area home health agencies to help identify older residents in need of home repairs/weatherization. (The answer is “yes”.)

Emma Wendt asked, “Which takes precedence: home repairs or weatherization?” The group indicated that home repairs needs to come first in most cases, in order for a home to be eligible for weatherization. Jess followed up, asking, “What about homes that are deemed unlivable?” Bobbi Harris indicated that those situations should be referred to DCP for follow-up services. Dale concurred. The list of potential disqualifiers is long (leaking roofs, mold, certain kinds of vented propane heaters, certain kinds of water heaters, whether the house was weatherized in the past 10 years, certain health and safety issues, etc. ). Each house needs a walk-through by an DCP auditor prior considering any of our programs. How can we make this happen!?!

Emma also wanted to be sure that the home visits/walk-throughs conducted by Paige are done in a COVID-compliant manner, to build trust and assure the safety of everyone involved.

• Incentives for residential energy audits/weatherization projects

Paige reviewed some of the incentives being offered by the State of Maine.

• Network of contractors/organizations for low-cost repairs (DCP, MSM, WCCC, etc.)

Bobbi wanted to make sure that assessments/audits are done in full compliance with U.S. Dept. of Energy guidelines. Dale also had recommendations re: the assessment/workflow process, including the players involved.

Larry indicated that Darin McGaw (Washington County Community College) expressed strong interest in having students and instructors from WCCC being involved with M-DASH in exchange for modest stipends and work that can be applied to their licensing requirements. They’ve done similar work with community organizations in the past, but they need to be careful that they're not taking work away from tradespeople/alumni in the area. (Darin feels as though that's highly unlikely in this case, given the nonprofit/grant-funded nature of the project.) He would like to pair-up an instructor with 1-2 students in each case, although there could be situations where a full class of 18 students could learn from a particular project. There may even be a chance to assign a four-week intern, if there is a very large project that needs that level of effort. Larry assured Darin that we’d give him plenty of lead-time, so the project can be worked into the student’s curriculum (6-8 weeks, preferably). Darin would like to get a couple of his plumbing/heating instructors involved in the next discussion. He also recommended St. Croix Technical Center (Stan Sluzenski) if we need a partner with home construction experience.

• Potential partnerships/funding opportunities (Maine CDC, Efficiency Maine, etc.)

During the ETIPP call on December 1, Suzanne McDonald mentioned two agencies that would probably be interested in supporting the M-DASH project in Eastport:

* Maine CDC, which supports home assessments that might turn up issues affecting a resident’s health status. They have grant dollars available. Suzanne will reach out to Rebecca Lincoln at Maine CDC.
* Efficiency Maine, which also has access to substantial federal funds that should result in energy improvement rebates for poor/underserved Maine residents. They also have strong links to the contractor community. Suzanne volunteered to contact their director, Michael Stoddard.

Paige and Kate Devonshire also hosted a community listening session on Tuesday night, December 7, so Eastport residents can learn more about M-DASH and ETIPP (below), pose questions, and provide feedback on the upcoming efforts around home repairs, weatherization projects, and alternative energy. Attendance was robust, and interest was high.

III. Update: ETIPP Project (Emma Wendt, Island Institute)

Emma provided a general overview of ETIPP (Energy Transitions Initiative Partnership Project), including all the players involved and the areas of overlap with M-DASH. See attached fact sheet. Phase I (scoping process for the tidal power microgrid) wrapped up in September. The full scope of work has been finalized. Phase II is to focus on data collection and will run through March 2022. The project partners will then move on to public outreach/education efforts.



IV. Dashboard Update (Effie Rorke)

Effie provided an overview of highlights from Eastport’s data dashboard (below), which is updated annually. No questions form the group.



V. Other Business

• MaineHousing Community Solutions Grant (Larry)

Larry described meeting between MaineHousing and select M-DASH partners re: Community Solutions Grant program – a matching grant for municipalities and their partners, designed to create and preserve affordable housing (including home repairs). Up to $500,000 available for broad partnerships that include tribes, local housing authorities, Community Action Programs, etc. (Note: DCP is the currently the recipient of a MaineHousing Community Aging in Place Grant.) Preference will be given to projects that leverage local/county ARPA funding (American Rescue Plan Act). Applications are reviewed as they are received. Eastport expressed interest in a hybrid (volunteer/paid volunteer) model that would allow for a DCP technician to inspect the homes that Paige identifies as potentially eligible for home repairs/weatherization. That person will then provide ongoing technical assistance to the volunteers/contractors re: appropriate, low-cost home repairs/modifications and weatherization work.

It was recommended that M-DASH take advantage of qualified retirees in the Eastport area (former carpenters/tradespeople with home repair experience) for following through on grant-supported activities/deliverables. The goal is to blend retirees and MSM contractors/volunteers with students and instructors from WCCC. (Question: who will provide overall supervision?)

In terms of disqualified homes, Dale stated that transitional housing might be an option for those residents. He still intends to talk to Rebecca Palmer (Executive Director at Downeast Community Partners) about DCP’s level of involvement with M-DASH.

• Request for proposals: 2022 M-DASH Pilot Sites

M-DASH is preparing to send out a second request for proposals for Municipal Data Across Sectors for Health (M-DASH Year 2), through the Maine Municipalities Association. The RFP should go out shortly after the first of the year. The goal is to recruit four new pilot sites for the data dashboard piece, with the hopes that two of those communities will go on to the action-planning stage.

VI. Next Steps

1. Paige to firm up the home repairs/ weatherization process and workflow (on paper), based on feedback received from Dale Basher and others involved with the DCP/MSM model. This will be critical for the project timeline/implementation, *and* for our pending grant applications.

2. Kate to continue dialog with DCP, MSM, and other partners re: aforementioned Community Solutions Grant from MaineHousing. Larry and Jess to assist, as-needed.

• Next Meeting: January 4, 2022, 10a.m.-12noon