

## The RAFT

### Crater Region Resilience Action Workshop

Thursday, February 16, 2023

1:00- 4:00 PM

#### Executive Summary

The Crater Region RAFT workshop was held virtually on February 16, 2023. A full recording can be found on The RAFT's [YouTube channel](#) and will be available shortly on the Crater page of The RAFT website. The workshop was hosted by The RAFT Core Team –University of Virginia's Institute for Engagement and Negotiation (IEN), William & Mary's Virginia Coastal Policy Center (VCPC), and Old Dominion University (ODU)'s Institute for Coastal Adaptation and Resilience (ICAR)– to orient participants to The RAFT process and goals, review the region's Scorecard results and qualitative assessment of opportunities for improving resilience, and support and guide participants through the process of developing a draft One-Year "Resilience Action Checklist" (RAC) for each locality. The RAC development process is designed to allow participants to elevate up to five specific actions to improve resilience over the next year. During the workshop, members of The RAFT Core Team provided context for The RAFT, shared Crater region resilience findings and opportunities surfaced through interviews and focus groups, and facilitated the development of draft resilience action checklists for each locality. Curt Smith from the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission also presented on the impact The RAFT has had in the Middle Peninsula. Additionally, members of the Core Team worked with PlanRVA localities to orient them to The RAFT [PREP Tool](#), a three-step process to support local governments in establishing a set of resilience priorities informed by level of risk, resilience efforts to date, and best practices in resilience planning. A full participant list and RAFT resources for each locality are included at the end of this summary.

#### **Welcome, Introductions, & Workshop Goals – Jessica Whitehead, ODU; Jay Ruffa, Crater PDC**

Jessica Whitehead welcomed participants and invited everyone to use the [central google doc](#) to sign in.

Jay Ruffa welcomed participants on behalf of the Crater Planning District Commission.

Jessica Whitehead reviewed the five goals of the workshop:

1. To refresh participants on The RAFT process

2. To briefly share Scorecard results and Opportunities to increase local resilience
3. To develop a One-Year Resilience Action Checklist
4. To begin to identify implementation team members who will be helpful for implementation.
5. To introduce PlanRVA localities to The RAFT PREP Tool

**RAFT Overview and Flash Presentations on Resilience Opportunities – Elizabeth Andrews, VCPC; Sierra Gladfelter, IEN**

Elizabeth Andrews provided an overview of The RAFT process:

- To help Virginia's coastal localities improve resilience to flooding and other coastal storm hazards while remaining economically and socially viable.
- ***The RAFT's 3 Step Process:***
  - 1. Scorecard: Resilience Assessment, Focus Groups & Interviews
    - Scorecard assesses:
      - Policy, Leadership and Collaboration
      - Risk Assessment and Emergency Management
      - Infrastructure Resilience
      - Planning for Resilience
      - Community Engagement, Health, and Wellbeing (localities usually score the lowest in this area)
  - 2. Resilience Action Workshop: Resilience Action Checklists (today's goal), Locality Implementation Teams
  - 3. Implementation: Ongoing Assistance for 1 year
- ***Key opportunities for improving locality leadership, policy and collaboration:***
  - Use adaptive management to update ordinances and plans based on scientific analyses, data, emerging strategies, lessons learned
  - Hold resiliency training for elected officials and community leaders
  - Engage stakeholders who will need emergency response and vulnerable populations in resiliency meetings
  - Research and consider participation in Community Rating Systems (CRS) Program
- ***Key opportunities for improving risk assessment and emergency management:***
  - Work with community groups to identify vulnerable groups who live or work in flood zones

- Update resident emergency plan to identify risks and needs
  - Task staff with engaging community leaders and community organizations about emergency preparedness
  - Provide programs for small business emergency preparation and business continuity post event
- **Key opportunities for improving infrastructure resilience:**
  - Increase water supply and/or stormwater infrastructure resilience
  - Enhance communication and coordination for water and wastewater stormwater resilience
  - Work with Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to identify and evaluate vulnerable transportation infrastructure
  - Offer fund-matching or tax incentive programs for homeowners to participate in nature-based landscaping projects.
- **Key opportunities for improving planning for resiliency:**
  - Ensure the comprehensive plan includes potential impact on critical infrastructure and services, especially regarding vulnerable populations
  - Identify funding to meet needs of vulnerable populations in case of emergencies
  - Modify flood zones designations to include areas outside FEMA designations that are still known to flood regularly
  - Hold community meetings to educate the public about the natural resource preservation plan
- **Key opportunities to improve community engagement, health and wellbeing:**
  - Engage the public in resilience planning
  - Develop resident leaders and volunteers and acknowledge their work in supporting and advancing resilience
  - Create a coastal resilience committee and assign staff roles
  - Partner with NGOs and community groups to identify needs of and community with vulnerable populations
- **Opportunities to support the vulnerable or underserved:**
  - Sierra Gladfelter reviewed opportunities to support vulnerable or underserved communities that were surfaced through interviews and focus groups with 44 individuals representing 38 organizations serving the Crater region including the Cities of Petersburg and Hopewell ([Regional Resilience Opportunities](#)).

- **General opportunities to support vulnerable or underserved communities:**
  - Leverage city parks and green spaces to reduce urban heat and improve access to outdoor recreation opportunities
  - Provide access to healthy food options, including local fresh produce
  - Invest in affordable housing options
  - Improve transportation for low-income residents to access jobs, parks, etc.
  - Support small, local businesses to improve job opportunities for residents
  - Address infrastructure challenges including water and sewer
- **Specific opportunities to support vulnerable and underserved communities:**
  - Increase and manage existing city open space for recreation to improve community health outcomes and mitigate urban heat effect
  - Redevelop and revitalize urban brownfields into productive green spaces
  - Use local ordinances and Comprehensive Plans to make urban communities more walkable and bikeable and attract people because of their cities' livability
  - Develop additional shelters as well as cooling and heating stations for homeless residents
  - Partner with local farmers and farmers of color to provide healthy, fresh food options to residents, by working with existing nonprofits, partnerships, and food banks
  - Address affordable housing issues through community partnership and planning
  - Partner with libraries to increase wi-fi and internet accessibility
  - Develop more bi-lingual education resources and programming in Spanish

### **Specific Examples from the Middle Peninsula RAFT Efforts – Curt Smith, MPPDC**

Curt Smith from the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission (MPPDC) presented on specific actions Middle Peninsula localities were able to achieve through The RAFT, both on a community and regional scale. Curt also introduced participants to the MPPDC's [Fight the Flood Program](#).

### **Developing Resilience Action Checklists – Jessica Whitehead, ODU**

Jessica Whitehead provided a brief overview of the goal for small group work in localities, sharing that each group will identify up to 5 top priority actions for increasing resilience for that particular locality, and that these actions will be implemented over the next year. These actions should be something that will make a difference, have a long-term impact, are NOT already being done by someone, and are doable, in that they can either be completed over the year or have significant progress made. Additionally, these priorities should be things participants are willing to work on or have a way of supporting, and that will increase the resilience for all members of the community, including those who may not be represented.

- Examples of effective resilience actions and tools The RAFT can assist with:
  - Making connections to broader and bigger picture efforts or through policy changes
  - Facilitating connections for expertise or resources
  - Pursuing demonstration projects or proof of concept
  - Obtaining support from state agencies
  - Update comprehensive plan to specifically incorporate resilience
  - Planning for green infrastructure through an inventory of green infrastructure possibilities
  - Emergency management and working with vulnerable populations (emergency risk communication planning)
  - Assess the vulnerable communities and address their specific needs

### **Developing Your Community One-Year Resilience Action Checklist – Sierra Gladfelter, IEN**

Sierra Gladfelter reviewed the process of developing the community one-year resilience action checklist, sharing that each locality discussion room will have a Google Doc worksheet, facilitators, and noted that of the five action items identified one should increase the resilience for vulnerable and underserved populations in the community to increase equity. She reminded participants that it is also important to remember that these priorities can shift, continue to evolve and become more focused over the one year of implementation.

PlanRVA locality members were oriented to their special breakout room, which would cover [The RAFT PREP Tool](#) and how it could be used to identify specific resilience actions or inform resilience planning. PlanRVA participants were invited to attend the remainder of the workshop after their breakout session concluded if they were interested in hearing about the other localities' RAC development.

Participants were invited to join breakout rooms according to their locality.

**Facilitated Resilience Action Checklist Brainstorming in Small Groups by Locality and PREP**

**Tool Introduction** – *City of Petersburg (IEN), City of Hopewell (ODU), PlanRVA Localities (VCPC & ODU)*

Participants and facilitators in the Hopewell and Petersburg groups spent 1 hour and 15 minutes in breakout rooms brainstorming resilience action items using locality Google Doc worksheets. Facilitators led 20 minutes of brainstorming, 20 minutes of discussing and prioritizing ideas, 20 minutes of selecting final priorities, and 5 minutes of reflection on implementation team/potential leads for RAC items.

Participants and facilitators with PlanRVA localities spent 45 minutes in a breakout room where they were introduced to the PREP Tool and walked through how they could complete the tool. Participants and facilitators discussed next steps and a timeline for participants to complete the Tool.

**Sharing Locality Priority Actions** – *Jessica Whitehead, ODU*

Each locality shared their top priorities in the chat and participants reflected on regional commonalities in a facilitated discussion. The following items reflect what was shared by facilitators in the chat or reported out verbally during the large group discussions. These items will be further refined and streamlined in the draft Resilience Action Checklists and during the initial implementation team meetings to guide further implementation. If you are interested in being part of the implementation process to advance these resilience priorities please contact RAFT Project Manager, Sierra Gladfelter, at [sg6us@virginia.edu](mailto:sg6us@virginia.edu) to get connected with the appropriate Implementation Team.

***City of Hopewell (ODU facilitated)***

1. Address food desert issue for underserved population.
2. Homeless Shelter for all (single men, women, families); Provide an affordable housing study for the region, particularly in Hopewell, highlighting the most vulnerable populations.
3. Utilize school buildings and their physical landscapes as exemplars on stormwater management and green/environmental practices (rain gardens, rain barrels, etc.) with education/info. Signage to help students and the community learn about best practices. Provide sustainable educational opportunities for students (field experts, field trips, etc.) to be in tune with their environment and how their actions impact our local, regional, and global concerns. These types of opportunities can help plant the seed of change and inspiration to make a difference in their community or maybe as a career one day.

4. Expand outreach efforts of various services and resources located and accessible to the citizens of Hopewell that are underserved – for example but not limited to: non-English speakers, LGBTQ+ population, African American families. Hold community training sessions to educate the public on resiliency strategies. Educate the public and service providers.
5. Redevelop the marina to be more accessible to all and a waterfront destination for the community.
6. Ensure Comprehensive Plan includes community input on coastal resilience (i.e. storm surge, sea level rise, and riverine flooding). Request money in budget to hire a full-time grant writer in addition to the consultant.

#### ***City of Petersburg (IEN facilitated)***

1. **Incorporate all residents of the City of Petersburg into resilience planning:** Be intentional about incorporating all neighborhoods and residents in the City of Petersburg into an engaged resilience and comprehensive planning process that improves community health and well-being. Participation should include individuals from across diverse income and education backgrounds and also leverage perspectives from local businesses, university faculty, as well as regional experts.
2. **Develop landscape plans and standards to protect and expand urban green spaces while mitigating the water quality, air quality, and heat impacts of development:** This effort will include initiatives to protect, manage, and expand green spaces throughout the City of Petersburg, including but not limited to areas along the Appomattox River or in large parks. Specific activities to achieve change might include developing new zoning codes or development standards that prioritize resilience for new or updated properties. Additionally, green infrastructure and stormwater management projects, greenfield development initiatives, and easements along tributaries will be explored as creative incentives to guide appropriate development.
3. **Diversify the economic base for the Petersburg community with multiple industries so that the workforce and tax base for the community remains stable as the larger global economy changes.** This might include expanding outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities, redeveloping old warehouses for small businesses, and/or expanding telework options through broadband.
4. **Connect people to goods and services, as well as critical infrastructure through transit and broadband:** Plan for pedestrian movement within the City of Petersburg to connect people to businesses, employment opportunities, recreation, and services downtown. This effort will also consider regional transportation planning and ways to foster greater connections between the City of Petersburg and nearby counties through regional transportation. Additionally, broadband connectivity and internet access for residents, government offices, schools, health care providers, and others will be considered as its own form of



critical infrastructure providing connectivity. This checklist item is expected to be tied closely to the checklist item “Diversify the Economic Base for the Community.”

**5. Incentivize Capital Improvements for public infrastructure, including Petersburg City Public Schools and Public Safety Facilities**

***PlanRVA Localities (VCPC and ODU facilitated):***

1. Henrico has an existing DCR approved Resilience Plan but it could be supplemented by the PREP Tool. Wie Yusuf will assist Henrico as they go through this process, with a completion target date of end of May 2023.
2. Charles City County is hoping to work through the PREP Tool by the end of April 2023 with the assistance of Elizabeth Andrews.
3. PlanRVA will also be assisting both localities as they work through the PREP Tool.

**Comments and Discussion:**

- A participant observed that the Petersburg group developed broader strategies for resilience that could have 3 or 4 objectives or initiatives come out of those strategies, while the Hopewell group developed more specific objectives.
- A participant mentioned that a mix of broad strategies and specific objectives are very useful.
- A participant mentioned that Hopewell was focused on identifying things that have been known as issues for a while because they are ready to take action on specific issues.
- A participant commented that identifying specific tasks would be useful for planning and that Hopewell could combine RAC item 6 into the marina and education RAC items. The resilience pieces could connect with each other.
- Jessica Whitehead noted that incorporating the connectivity RAC item identified by Petersburg would be useful in accomplishing the food desert RAC item identified by Hopewell.
- Sierra Gladfelter noted that Petersburg talked about connectivity on a number of different levels (i.e. walkability within Petersburg, but also regional transit linkages to connect residents to jobs outside of Petersburg).
- Jessica Whitehead asked the group what resources the RAFT Core Team could provide to each locality to be successful in accomplishing their RAC items. The group identified the below:
  - Assistance with navigating the systems necessary to make change happen would be helpful.



- Assistance with helping different sectors communicate and work with each other.
- Providing case studies, model programs, and model ordinance language that have been adopted in other communities to implement some of the identified priorities.
- Providing examples of regional efforts would be helpful in addressing issues such as food deserts and homelessness because these are issues facing multiple jurisdictions within the region.
- Assistance with facilitation and finding funds to implement existing ideas around some of these RAC items. A key piece of this would be coordinating efforts in order to break down existing silos.
- Assistance with developing specific targets so that we can see incremental process.
- Leveraging university partners' faculty and students in classes to accomplish RAC items.

#### **Preview of Implementation Phase and Teams – Nicole Hutton, ODU**

Nicole Hutton provided an overview of how implementation will work:

- Each priority action will have one or two people serving as “Team Leads” for the effort, with other people recruited to support the “Team” effort.
- Teams can involve community members, as broad participation is encouraged (Locality staff, state agencies, community organizations, nonprofits, businesses, etc.)
- Monthly or bimonthly calls, as needed, for Team Leads and any who want to join for networking purposes, facilitated by RAFT Core Team members
- Each Implementation meeting will focus on individual checklist items and rotate topics as needed with brief updates on other items.
- The RAFT Core team and locality Implementation Teams will use Google drive/docs to track what is happening between meetings.
- Bi-weekly check-ins with Team Leads and members via email or MS Teams channel (to be determined at first implementation meeting).
- RAFT Core Team will support each priority action in different ways, depending on the skills and support needed.

If you are interested in being part of the implementation process to advance the resilience priorities outlined above, please contact RAFT Project Manager, Sierra Gladfelter, at [sg6us@virginia.edu](mailto:sg6us@virginia.edu) to get connected with the appropriate Locality Implementation Team.



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### **Next Steps and Evaluation – Elizabeth Andrews, VCPC**

Elizabeth Andrews reviewed the next steps and a tentative timeline, sharing that Draft Action Checklists will be distributed at the end of February or early March. The first organizational kick-off meetings with RAFT liaisons and all who want to work on one or more of the locality's action items will take place in March or April. Elizabeth thanked the Crater PDC, PlanRVA, funders, and all participants, and shared a link to an [evaluation](#) in the chat for participants to provide feedback on the workshop.

### **Group Photo & Adjourn**

The VCPC facilitation team took screenshots of everyone on Zoom and the workshop was adjourned.

### **Links to Locality Google Drive Folders and Resources:**

- **Regional Resilience Opportunities:**
  - [Building Resilience in Virginia's Crater Region: Community Perspectives from Hopewell and Petersburg on Challenges and Opportunities](#)
- **Locality Google Drive folders:**
  - [City of Hopewell](#)
  - [City of Petersburg](#)
- **Locality RAFT Scorecards:**
  - [City of Hopewell Scorecard](#)
  - [City of Petersburg Scorecard](#)
- **Locality Scorecard Opportunity Lists:**
  - [City of Hopewell Opportunity List](#)
  - [City of Petersburg Opportunity List](#)

## Meeting Attendees

1. **Aaron Wendt**, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Shoreline Erosion Advisory Service
2. **Angela Davis**, Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation Division of Dam Safety & Floodplain Management
3. **Audrey Smith**, The Gathering at Washington Street
4. **Carrie Wheeler**, Affiliation Unknown
5. **Charles Bennett**, Director of Economic Development and Tourism, City of Hopewell
6. **Cherry**, Affiliation Unknown
7. **Chris Ward**, Director of Development, City of Hopewell
8. **Curt Smith**, MPPDC
9. **Danielle Simms**, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality Office of Environmental Justice Program Manager/Acting Piedmont EJ Coordinator
10. **Darryl E. Walker**, City of Petersburg Stormwater Program Manager
11. **David Eagle**, Virginia Department of Emergency Management Region 1 Recovery & Mitigation
12. **Dr. Lafayette Jefferson**, Petersburg NAACP
13. **Genevieve Lohr**, Petersburg Police Bureau Social Worker
14. **Heather Barrar**, Friends of the Lower Appomattox River
15. **Jane Ferrara**, LISC Executive Director
16. **Jay Ruffa**, Crater PDC Director of Planning and GIS
17. **Jennifer Murphy-James**, One Hopewell
18. **Jessica Rich**, Virginia Tech Center for Coastal Studies
19. **John Michalek**, Petersburg Fire and Rescue EMS Division Chief
20. **Karen Weber**, Virginia Department of Quality Brownfields Coordinator
21. **Katrina Kirby**, Petersburg Virginia Cooperative Extension
22. **Keisha Pettaway**, Hopewell-Prince George Healthy Families
23. **Kristin Owen**, Henrico County Department of Public Works Floodplain and Dam Safety Manager
24. **Kim Lindblad**, BREC Academy Director
25. **Lee McKnight**, Virginia Department of Transportation Saluda Residency
26. **Lili Quinitana**, James House
27. **Luke Peters**, The Berkley Group/Crater PDC
28. **Matt Dalon**, VA Department of Conservation and Recreation Coastal Resilience Master Plan Program Manager
29. **Matt Whalen**, Virginia State University, Department of Biology
30. **Meade Anderson**, VA Department of Environmental Quality Brownfields & Voluntary Remediation Manager
31. **Nicole Keller**, PlanRVA
32. **Norris Stevenson**, Petersburg Department of Social Services
33. **Reggie Tabor**, City of Petersburg Planning Manager
34. **Reggie Lantz**, City of Petersburg public Works and Utilities
35. **Robert Noriega**, Petersburg Public Library Healthy Living and Learning Center
36. **Ron Svejkovsky**, Tri Cities MPO Director of Transportation



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- 37. **Rhonda Russell**, Charles City County  
Assistant County Administrator and  
Director of Community Development
- 38. **Robin Tyler**, Central Virginia Health  
Services
- 39. **Ryan Ponder**, Hopewell City Public  
Schools Educator
- 40. **Sarah Melissa Witiak**, Virginia State  
University
- 41. **Sarah Stewart**, PlanRVA Environment  
Planning Manager
- 42. **Stephen Edwards**, City of Hopewell  
Stormwater Program Manager
- 43. **Sherri Laffoon**, VA Department of  
Emergency Management Region 1  
Disaster Response & Recovery Officer
- 44. **Stacey Farinholt**, VA Department of  
Conservation and Recreation Division of  
Dam Safety & Floodplain Management
- 45. **Tiffany Cooke**, Hopewell City Public  
Schools Social Worker
- 46. **Tangela Innis**, City of Petersburg Deputy  
City Manager
- 47. **Thaddeus Huff**, City of Petersburg  
Director of Economic Development
- 48. **Will Isenberg**, Virginia Coastal Zone  
Management Program
- 49. **Wanda Stewart**, Communities in Schools  
Petersburg



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## **The RAFT Facilitation Team**

### ***VCPC at William & Mary***

- **Elizabeth Andrews**, Director, Virginia Coastal Policy Center (VCPC), William & Mary Law School
- **Jess Kraus**, Staff Attorney, VCPC, William & Mary Law School
- **Libby Cook**, Fiscal and Program Coordinator, VCPC, William & Mary Law School

### ***ICAR at Old Dominion University***

- **Jessica Whitehead**, Executive Director, ODU Institute for Coastal Adaptation & Resilience
- **Nicole Hutton**, Assistant Director of Engagement, ODU Institute for Coastal Adaptation & Resilience
- **Wie Yusuf**, ODU School of Public Service
- **Jesse Palma**, Old Dominion University

### ***IEN at University of Virginia***

- **Sierra Gladfelter**, RAFT Project Manager, UVA IEN
- **Maddy Duval**, Graduate Student Research Assistant, UVA IEN
- **Sophie Delzell**, Graduate Student Research Assistant, UVA IEN
- **Cliff Jenkins**, Graduate Student Research Assistant, UVA IEN

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Anonymous

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For more information visit The RAFT website: [raft.ien.virginia.edu](http://raft.ien.virginia.edu)

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