

**SUMMARY REPORT**

**CSGA Meeting for Learning**

**Friday, September 30, 2016 7 – 9 pm**

**Annapolis Friends Meetinghouse**

**351 Dubois Rd. Annapolis, MD**

**Film Screening & Panel Discussion:** Diogo Castro Freire, Filmmaker (see trailer: cclusa.org/trailer); Lisa Craig, Historic Preservation Chief, City of Annapolis; Betsy Singer, League of Women Voters of Maryland, Environment Board Member; Deron Lovaas, NRDC, Urban Solutions, Policy & Practice Director.

**Subject: *Facing the Surge***

**Synopsis:** Impact of our warming planet is showing up in many ways, one of which is increased flooding areas in parts of our country. Planning at the local level and taking individual responsibility need to begin now to avoid unnecessary losses and to slow down what are inevitable consequences.

**Film Summary:**

*Facing the Surge* is an exciting new short film that documents the tangible costs of 17.5 inches of sea level rise for the people of Norfolk, VA, home to the largest naval base in the country. Residents spoke of their waking up to ankle-high water in their bedrooms on clear sunny days, loss of infrastructure and significant economic hardship. Thousands of hard-working Americans are already struggling to adapt to rising tides and an uncertain future.

The film, however, is not one of loss and inaction. We heard stories of real people who are stepping forward to raise awareness and push their government and local entities to take notice and pursue real solutions.

The film touches on a solution of putting a fee on carbon at its source and returning those funds to households in the form of a dividend. This solution promises, both from experience of others and economic modeling, to provide a powerful market signal to move away from burning fossil fuels. Citizens are discovering that the solution requires their action and are encouraged to direct Congress to act and to mobilize local communities and governments.

**Panel Discussion:**

The moderator posed the question, ‘What is your personal motivation for making changes affecting climate change after watching the movie.’ The consensus was that the film brought home how real and devastating these changes are, having seen its consequences already occurring around the country, with special emphasis in Norfolk and Hampton Roads. It is, then, with urgency that we take action—both at individual and grass-roots local levels, where planning must begin in earnest and if started, continue.

A key message was how imperative it is for local involvement since our federal government acts too slowly, even when they finally do mobilize around an issue.

Once people are educated—and watching in this film the impact already being experienced—it is difficult to be uninformed or to stay in a comfortable state of denial. The result of which will, hopefully, strongly motivate action at both personal and at community levels.

Having that said, the audience was amazed at the filmmaker’s comment that the *majority* of people in the impacted Virginia neighborhoods where flooding has become common—even on sunny days when there is no rain—refused to make comments about the situation. Fear of devalued real estate? Realizing extraordinary increase costs or unavailability of flood insurance? Denial that increasingly flooded roads disallow movement of vehicles for several days at a time is not a sign of the deteriorating situation that needs immediate action? Reluctance to go on-record for fear of..?

One of the biggest challenges to be confronted is waking people up to the fact that change IS happening, having them acknowledge such, and to get involved—in whatever ways they can—to implement and prioritize the budgets and actions needed.

Another obstacle for getting people on board is that many don’t see themselves as ‘activists’ or ‘environmentalists’ or ‘greenies.’ How does one change someone’s self-image?

Long-term environmentalist activists have learned that the “C’ words (Climate change) tend to close peoples’ minds and eliminate the opportunity for discussion. Instead, using words such as ‘sea-level rise’ and ‘flooding’ can open the doors and ‘get people on the bus.’

Disease spread, mortality due to rising heat, drought, flooding: A brief list of consequences of the “C” words.

One way disease is spread during flooding is that septic systems overflow and toilets and sinks back up and overflow. Disease-carrying insects are showing up in different parts of the country, the lyme-infecting ticks are now prevalent in Maine, for example.

Certainly discussion and planning to resettle public and private properties away from the waterfront is very unsettling but the consequences to not do so only leads to chaos, at best, and great loss, at worst. England has already experienced many properties falling into the sea with some owners who refused to acknowledge the possibility and suffered unnecessary losses due to being unprepared. Miami is already experiencing water surging up into the land areas.

Maryland is one of the few states who have active plans in place. Ms. Craig explained that the water around Annapolis is expected, conservatively, to rise 6’ by the year 2100. This will flood the town of Annapolis, with predictions suggesting daily inundation of the downtown historic district by 2050. In view of such dire predictions, why should people act and what can they possibly do that will matter? Recognize it’s a reality. Plan to slow down the affects and offset the damage. Implement action.

A creative action facilitated at the end of the evening was a way to show MD legislators that their constituents give their full support for action. Individual photographs were taken with people holding grease boards on which they handwrote their endorsing messages. The next day they would be sent to MD legislators via Twitter (as it has been learned that legislators have hired people to view Twitter on a daily basis).

Timely action is critical. And it is realized effective steps will be tremendously expensive. But the result of inaction cannot be underestimated. Getting private and public and governmental entities involved is Now!

**If you missed seeing the film…**

The filmmaker will continue his coastal film tour in communities down the east coast, having started in Maine and ending in Florida. Once completed, he will make the film available for viewing on their site, in November. [www.cclusa.org](http://www.cclusa.org) So look for it!