

Shelburne MVP Planning Grant Update

The Community Resilience Building Workshop took place on Wednesday 13 September 2023 at Fellowship Hall. Twenty-five stakeholders attended, representing Shelburne town officials, non-governmental organizations, Buckland town officials, MTRSD, business, and the farming and faith communities. At least four participants left early for other engagements and did not participate in the voting. Three staff from Weston & Sampson, Inc., the consultants hired for the MVP Planning Grant, led the workshop.

Attendees

Representatives from these Shelburne town boards, committees, or divisions participated:

- Planning Board
- Emergency Management
- Fire (Shelburne Center and Shelburne Falls)
- Agricultural Commission
- Board of Health
- Finance
- Recreation

Non-governmental organizations present included:

- Environmental groups (Mass Audubon, Deerfield River Watershed Association, Trout Unlimited, Franklin County Land Trust)
- Health and well-being organizations (Medical Reserve Corps, Council on Aging)
- Education-oriented non-profits (Mary Lyon Foundation, Library)

The diversity of the group at the meeting served as a model of resilience planning and allowed for the vital exchange of ideas and perspectives necessary to understand the complex network of systems impacted by the climate emergency.

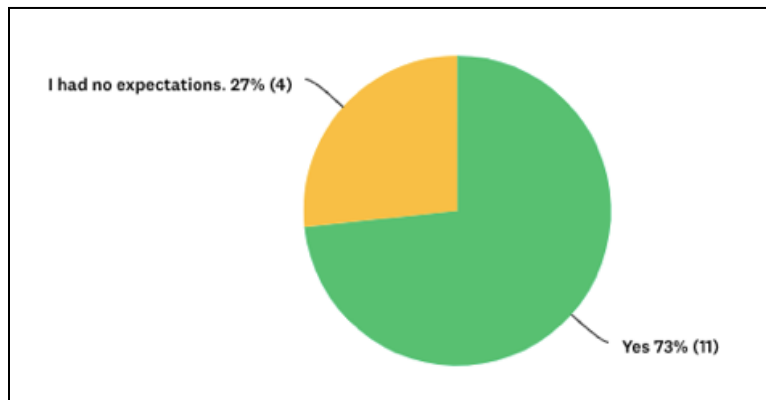
Workshop format

The workshop followed the Nature Conservancy's Community Resilience Building matrix which provides a structured format to sort through and prioritize the town's infrastructural, societal, and environmental strengths and vulnerabilities. The last part of the all-day meeting culminated in

the prioritization of items voted to be the most critical for action. The long list ranged from the sizing of culverts and integrity of dams, to concerns about incomplete communications networks and loss of evacuation routes, to the presence of detrimental invasive species in our forests and along our riversides, to the area's overall energy resilience and the vulnerability of older structures housing our elders.

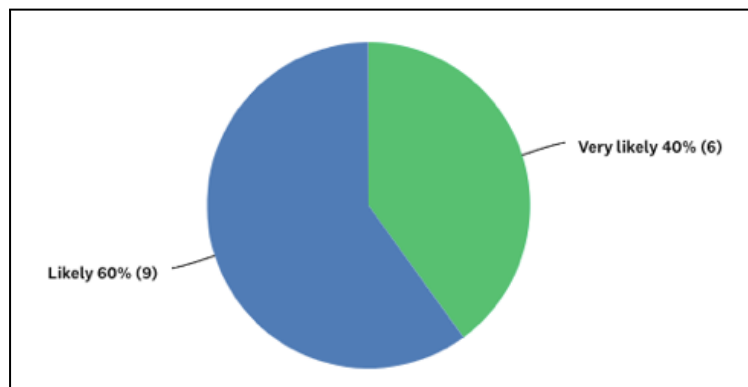
Post-workshop survey

After the workshop, participants received a link to a 9-question survey about their experience and impressions. Fifteen people completed the survey. The results were overwhelmingly positive. When asked if the **workshop met their expectations**, four people said they had no expectations for the workshop. The remaining 11 (73%) said their expectations were met:

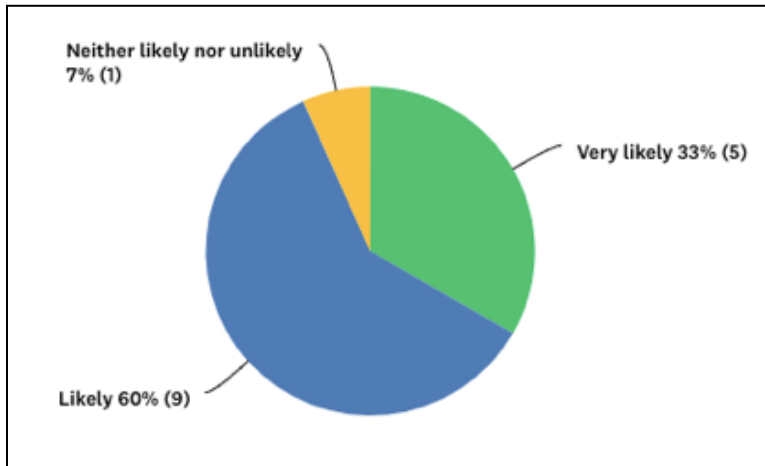


All 15 respondents (100%) agreed that the workshop provided them with **valuable information about climate and community resilience**.

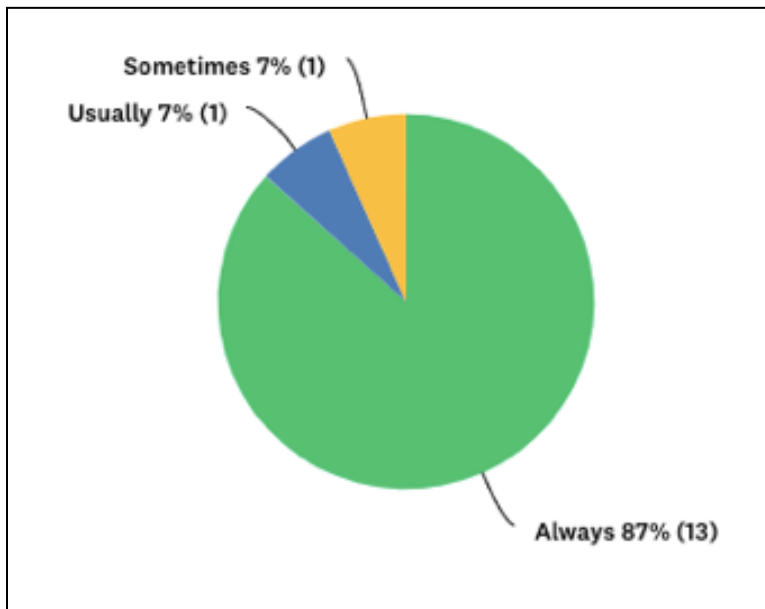
All 15 indicated that they were **likely** (9) or **very likely** (6) to use information from the **workshop** in their own committee or organization:



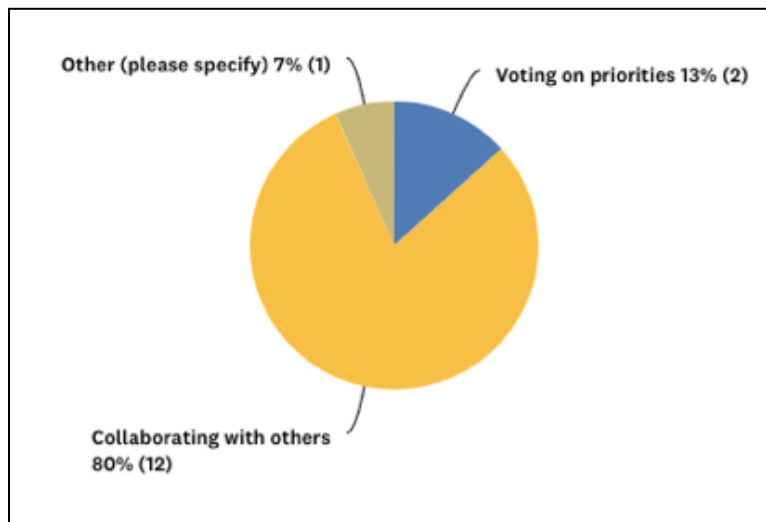
Similarly, 14 of the 15 people who completed the survey said they were **likely** (9) or **very likely** (5) to become involved in future resilience-building efforts in the community. One said they were neither likely nor unlikely to do so:



While most participants (13) felt their opinions were always **valued and respected by others** at the workshop, one said their opinions were usually valued and respected and another said theirs were sometimes valued and respected:



The vast majority (12) said that **collaborating with others was the MOST valuable aspect** of the meeting, while two said *voting on priorities* was of most value to them, and one chose the option for *Other* to report having a tie between *collaborating with others* and *presentations*:



Opinions about **what was of LEAST value** varied greatly among the participants, with the most (5) choosing the option for *None of the above*, followed by *Food* (4) and three choosing *Other*, which allowed them to make suggestions for improvements, such as:

- Calling this ‘community resilience,’ doesn’t really address the work that we did - municipal vulnerability preparedness is much more meaningful.
- It would have been good to have some kind of physical/mental break (other than more snacks) a couple of times during the day. ... The presentations were too full of info. Editing the slides down to a few of the most important points and shortening the time we had to spend looking at them would be, for me, better.
- Might have been able to accomplish the goals in 4 hours rather than 6?

The survey asked **what things participants would change for future workshops**. About half (8) said they wouldn’t change anything about the workshop. The other seven comments broke almost evenly into these groups:

- Two suggested improvements for the speakers: Speak more slowly; repeat for everyone the questions that are asked.
- Two shared that they would have preferred to better understand the ‘process’ or ‘intent’ of the workshop ahead of time.

- Two suggested having more participants who were ‘municipal officials’ or ‘at-large community members.’
- One hoped that the consultants would provide solutions that are based on “the many great MVP plans already out there” rather than one “based on our small group’s limited views.”

Finally, the attendees had an opportunity to provide **open-ended feedback** about the workshop. Ten people provided comments and five people had none. The ten responses fall broadly in these categories.

- The workshop was well run.
 - Presenters and materials were great/Great presenters
 - Happy with how well you kept to the agenda and time.
 - Great workshop/day
 - Good food
- Some parts of the workshop fell short.
 - More explanation on grant opportunities and partnering with other agencies would be very useful.
 - (A reason) people don’t evacuate from weather events...(is) care of their animals. We did not talk about animals at all.
 - The voting categories got muddy, especially towards the end.
 - Vulnerable populations...are already suffering now due to climate change ...and their plight is foreign to (the participants).
- Specific areas for improvement were noted.
 - Have the slides with all the stats available on the table to refer to.
 - Label the brooks and streams on the map.
 - Maybe put a bigger map ... on a wall so we could stand around it instead of hunching over the table.
- Six of the ten respondents specifically mentioned something about the group’s composition.
 - Wide spectrum of people with influence.
 - Good mix of attendees.
 - I enjoyed meeting everyone.
 - Really good to sit in the room with so many engaged people.

- Having a selectperson there would have been very good ... (and) also glad that Mary Lyon Foundation was there.
- I am a bit uncomfortable that...town officials might have resistance to the process and the plans put forth. Hopefully the listening session ... (and) future educational opportunities will have a positive impact on buy-in.

What's next

In the coming weeks, Weston & Sampson, Inc., will prepare a summary of the workshop to present at a public listening session and receive input from the community. We will be advertising the event broadly, and welcome your support in getting the word out. The community's feedback will be incorporated into the plan for submission to the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs as the final step in the MVP Planning Grant. The consultants are keeping the project on track so Shelburne will be able to submit letters of interest and applications for MVP Action Grants in the coming cycle.

Photos

Here are a few photos from the event, courtesy of Weston & Sampson, Inc.:



Shelburne Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary
Tricia Yacovone-Biagi, MS Town of Shelburne MVP Liaison



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