

MY TURN

Shelburne embarking on careful road to climate resilience

By **TRICIA YACOVONE-BIAGI**

In the same week that Leominster flooded and a September hurricane threatened Cape Cod, more than two dozen people, including elected and appointed officials and members of local environmental, social, and educational organizations, gathered at Shelburne's Fellowship Hall to pore over maps and climate data, and identify ways to improve the town's climate resilience.

The meeting was the major step in developing a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Plan through a grant from the Department of Energy and Environmental Affairs. Upon completion of the plan, Shelburne will join more than 300 other municipalities in the state designated as MVP Communities (resilient.mass.gov/mvp/) and will be eligible to apply for MVP action and other grants.

Participants at the invitation-only event 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.

The questions raised about housing perfectly illustrate the depth and breadth of the impacts from climate change in our community and tap into the three core areas of infrastructure, society, and the environment the matrix covers:

How do we make existing housing more climate-resilient and energy-resilient in the face of increasing storm intensity, rain volume, and extreme temperatures? How do we help mitigate roof runoff from these storms so that they don't flood basements and promote the growth of health-impacting mold? What can we plant to help absorb more precipitation into the ground? How do we make housing more energy-resilient and affordable so residents aren't adversely

affected by the extreme heat and cold? How can we protect our seniors from scammers who provide less than adequate solutions to this increasingly prevalent problem?

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, so necessary to solve the complex network of systems impacted by the climate emergency. Only through collective efforts such as this will we build a community resilient enough to withstand the worst of our changing climate.

That's why in the coming weeks, Shelburne will be hosting a public listening session to unveil the plan and seek input from the community. We will be advertising the event broadly, and welcome anyone with an interest in or questions about community resilience, our changing climate, or how to help. In the meantime, please send any questions, comments, or ideas about the MVP process or Shelburne's plan to shelburnemassmvp@gmail.com, and stay tuned for updates.

Tricia Yacovone-Biagi is the MVP grand liaison for the town of Shelburne.