

**Verona Island Community Resilience Committee  
Community Workshop – Saturday August 17, 2024  
Summary**

The Community Workshop was held on Saturday August 17, 2024, from 9:00-10:45 p.m. at the Verona Island Town Hall. Nineteen members of the community, in addition to the members of the Community Resilience Committee and the Service Provider Team, attended the workshop.

The workshop participants introduced themselves. Representing the Verona Island Community Resilience Committee were Travis Astbury, Susan Christinziano, Vincent Christinziano, Lionel Harvey, and Jennifer Riefler. Other Committee members who were unable to attend are Korey Ames, Todd Bridges, and Crystal DaCosta. First Selectman Glendon Bevan participated in the workshop, as did Town Clerk and Treasurer Lisa Sanborn Gray. Allen Kratz, Ainsley Morrison and Debbie Grimmig comprised the Service Provider Team.

Allen Kratz and Ainsley Morrison provided an overview of the Community Resilience Partnership Program. The CRP was established two years ago by the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. Through grants and direct support to municipal and tribal governments, the CRP Program helps communities reduce carbon emissions, transition to clean energy and become more resilient to more severe, frequent and longer duration storms, flooding and sea level rise.

By enrolling in the CRP Program, Verona Island will be positioned to obtain Community Action Grants. Grants in the amount of \$50,000 are available to municipalities and \$125,000 for collaborative grants involving two or more municipalities. There is no matching requirement from the State to be eligible for the grants for projects that advance any of the 72 strategies of *Maine Won't Wait – A Four Year Plan for Climate Action* drafted by the Maine Climate Council and approved by the Legislature.

The Community Action Grants may be used as matching funds for federal, non-profit and private foundation funding. Over 200 municipalities have enrolled in the Community Resilience Partnership Program thus far.

Allen Kratz's company Resilience Works, LLC has contracted with the State of Maine to help three communities -- Verona Island, Orland and Bucksport -- enroll in the Community Resilience Partnership Program. Previously he assisted the Towns of Blue Hill, Brooklin, Brooksville, Penobscot and Sedgwick enroll in the partnership Program.

The Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future recognizes that small communities have the will and desire to mitigate for climate change and build resilience, but do not have the staff capacity to search for grants and then apply for them. The Service Provider Team provides this support at no expense to the Town of Verona Island.

Allen Kratz provided examples of some of the projects funded in whole or partially through Community Action Grants. The Towns of Blue Hill and Brooksville received \$125,000 to conduct an infrastructure vulnerability study. The Town of Surry also received a \$50,000 grant to do a similar study. The three communities have combined their grants for a total of \$175,000 and hired an engineering consultant to do the study and report back on the specific needs of the three towns.

The Town of Deer Isle has applied for a grant to update their comprehensive plan. Brooklin has used the grant to hire an Island Institute Fellow for two years to staff the Neighbor-to-Neighbor Program. The Island Institute Fellow and the Climate Response Team assist residents and business identify opportunities for improving energy efficiencies using a home inspection checklist and providing information about energy programs.

Penobscot and Sedgwick have received grants to install heat pumps in municipal buildings that lower energy costs and provided warmth in winter and cooling in summer.

There are a wide variety of projects across the state. Verona Island has an opportunity for a project to meet the priorities of this community. There may also be opportunities for a joint project with Bucksport and/or Orland.

There are a few steps to the enrollment process:

1. Board of Selectmen appoints the Community Resilience Committee, which Verona Island has done.
2. The Verona Island Community Resilience Committee conducts the Community Resilience Self - Evaluation and reviews the 72 Climate Action Items. That, too, has been accomplished.
3. The Verona Island Community Resilience Committee holds a Community Workshop to gather input from the community about their priorities for mitigating the effects of climate change. That is today's event.
4. The Board of Selectmen adopts a resolution including 3-5 priorities. That is scheduled for Thursday evening, September 5, 2024.
5. The resolution is forwarded to the State and once approved, the Town is enrolled in the Community Resilience Program. The Service Provider Team will facilitate that process.
6. Town of Verona Island, with the assistance of the Service Provider Team, will be able to apply for a Community Action Grant. The next grant round is likely to open in October.

Ainsley Morrison facilitated the warm-up exercise "What do we value in our community?" Ainsley Morrison is life-long resident of Maine, is currently a student at Bowdoin College and is the Youth Representative on the Community Resilience Working Group of the Maine Climate Council. The group paired off, with each person sharing what is special – a natural place, cultural, social, architectural, historical – about Verona Island. The group's responses were:

Things we value/like/want to maintain:

- Ruralness
- Wildlife
- Minimal changes
- Slower pace of life
- Waste management/improvements
- Updates to Town Hall – community gathering place during emergencies; a place of refuge; needs better ADA access to be available to everyone
- No big developments
- Boat ramp for fishing, recreational use, waterfront access. Some opportunities are in the works with cooperation with the Town of Bucksport
- Verona Park offers an opportunity for economic development/strong history and sense of place
- Cooperative relationship with the State of Maine
- Most bang for our money

#### Concerns:

- Flooding, specifically Verona Park
- Shoreline erosion
- Violent winter storms,
- Vulnerability to winds--stronger, longer duration and coming out of the south; microbursts across the river causing damage to Verona Park
- Need for stormwater management to protect infrastructure of culverts and bridges
- Social vulnerability; everyone helps everyone else, but people can become isolated from fallen trees, flooding, lack of communications
- ADA accessibility; use of Community Action Grants for Town Hall upgrades will free up municipal money for other priorities
- Upgrades are needed for Town Hall to be fully accessible during an emergency
- Weatherization at Town Hall
- Permitting process
- State owned land to be developed for public use – camping, picnic tables, boat launch

The Verona Island Community Resilience Committee shared their work on the Self Evaluation and the 72 Climate-related Action Items and their thoughts for priorities. Workshop participants were invited to respond to (endorse, challenge, change) these priorities. Ainsley Morrison and Allen Kratz highlighted that the priorities must align with the 72 Action Items included within the 8 strategies identified by the Maine Climate Action in order to be successful for no-match funding through the Community Action Grants. The Strategies and list of 72 Action Items were distributed to the participants. The document is also posted on the Community Resilience Partnership website.

#### Discussion included:

- The Town Hall needs upgrading to be fully accessible for normal governmental purposes such as voting, as well as a place of refuge during emergencies. New door, handicapped parking spaces in front of building. There is a ramp, but it is a long way from the parking lot.
- Debris removal (trees) after a storm is a problem. Need a plan for debris and a location for material. Who is responsible for removing trees from State-Aid roads; or if tree from private homeowner falls on power lines or in the road? There is an educational opportunity to let people know who to call regarding trees, flooding, etc. during weather events/emergencies.
- Wastewater management. There is a lot of flooding around the wetlands. The roads are all State- roads (the responsibility of Maine DOT, rather than the Town).
- Flooded culverts can be a safety/emergency response issue.
- Waste management, or material management, as it now is called, is recognized as an important issue all around the state. A project involving materials management may be well positioned for funding from the Community Action Grants and/or other sources.
- Debris management is a public safety issue. Fallen trees may prevent people from getting off Verona Island, delay emergency response.
- Bulk purchasing for solar panels, heat pumps will save money for home owners/businesses. Solar panels on homes will provide enough power for cell phones, LED lights during power outages.
- Potential for conducting a table-top exercise to help identify the socially vulnerable people in the community and ensure that they receive vital resources, both during an emergency and 6 months after the event during the recovery period.

- NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) has awarded the State \$69M to focus on nature-based solutions, strengthening working waterfronts and to prepare and respond to climate change impacts. Verona Island projects may be eligible for NOAA funding in addition to Community Action Grants.
- Concerns about protecting the environment, shoreline erosion and flooding.
- Need to prepare people for emergencies.

Following the discussion, the priorities are:

B1 – Energy efficiency and weatherization for Town Hall

F2 – Hazard mitigation/emergency management

F4 – Storm debris management

G5 – Culvert and bridge infrastructure

H7 – Bulk purchasing of heat pumps, solar panels, weatherization for residents and businesses

Timeline for Enrollment process:

**Thursday September 5, 2024** – Board of Selectmen adopts Resolution for enrolling in the Community Partnership Program and Verona Island’s priorities

**October/November 2024** – Next round for submission of Community Action Grant applications.

Allen Kratz thanked the Verona Island Community Resilience Committee for all the work they have done in such a short amount of time. He thanked the members of the community for attending the workshop and sharing their thoughts for what they value about Verona Island and how they might preserve and protect it.

Notes prepared by Debbie Grimmig, Service Provider Team