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SPORTS FINAL
THE LONG ISLAND NEWSPAPER

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CHANCE OF SHOWERS

\$96M MISSION TO PROTECT LI

- 25 projects pushed by local communities
- Critics say LI will still be vulnerable

A2-3 | DATABASE OF THE PROJECTS AT NEWSDAY.COM



2 YEARS AFTER



Napeague Meadow
Road, Amagansett,
just after Sandy hit
two years ago today.

GORDON M. GRANT

HEMPSTEAD TOURÉ WINS HEATED REVOTE **A5**

Residents wade through flood-water dumped by superstorm Sandy on Oct. 29, 2012, on Shore Road in Lindenhurst.

INFRASTRUCTURE

BID TO PROTECT LI

\$96M plan for 25 local projects to prep for next big storm



JAMES CARBONE

BY JO NAPOLITANO / jo.napolitano@newsday.com

The state will push ahead with 25 local projects aimed at making some Long Island communities better prepared for a major weather event two years after superstorm Sandy caused \$8.4 billion in damages to the region.

These plans, which officials have outlined to Newsday, sprang from the New York Rising Community Reconstruction Program and will cost \$96 million, officials said.

Critics say these projects — which include bulkheads in Long Beach and drainage improvements in other communities — won't keep water out of Nassau and Suffolk counties, as many had hoped.

And it's unclear when they will begin.

"If you are really planning to

protect the South Shore of Long Island, you need to be able to close off the inlets," said John D. Cameron Jr., chairman of the Long Island Regional Planning Council.

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo said in a statement the selected plans will help the area.

"These projects are all about building a more resilient Long Island from the ground up," he said. "We launched the NY Rising program last year to help empower local communities . . . to build back better than



DOUG KUNTZ

ever before."

His office declined to make a representative available to answer follow-up questions.

Islandwide, several multimillion-dollar infrastructure projects are underway — dune replenishment on the East End and the strengthening of electrical and rail systems among them.

On a more local level, vulnerable communities were given

an opportunity through New York Rising last year to develop plans that would better protect them.

The 25 approved projects come from a list of more than 600 ideas proposed by 21 New York Rising groups across Long Island, mostly along the South Shore. A 22nd group, Bay Shore, is drafting its plans.

Each was made up of volunteers who met repeatedly with

state planning experts; elected officials were barred from the process.

A Newsday analysis found that only about 100 of the 229 highest priority projects as selected by the groups could eventually keep water out of Island communities, or better protect homes, businesses and roads once floods occur.

Roughly 30 of the 100 plans would fund only studies — mostly of drainage and shoreline stabilization — meaning that about 70 could bring more immediate relief.

Members of these groups said the priority projects they chose addressed their most immediate concerns, though they are not enough to prevent the type of damage brought by superstorm Sandy.

Erik Mahler, who helped craft the Baldwin/Baldwin Harbor group's plan, said the region needs to build more costly

Where major projects stand

Aside from NY Rising's program, here is the status of other major infrastructure projects on Long Island:

LIRR

MTA Long Island Rail Road has awarded \$56 million in contracts to date for superstorm Sandy-related repairs. Restoration of the Long Beach Branch, the Long Island City Yard and the West Side Yard is in various stages of design and construction with completion dates ranging from 2015 to 2019. The restoration projects, which focus on "fixing what Sandy broke," according to a spokesman, are fully funded by the Federal Transit Administration within the MTA LIRR's 2010-2014 Capital Plan. They include repairs to the Long Beach branch for \$125 million, improvements to the Long Island City rail yard for \$32.7 million and plans for the West Side Yard for \$43.3 million. Work on the East River tunnels, which the LIRR had estimated would cost \$68.6 million, is on hold, pending further discussions between the LIRR and Amtrak, which owns the tunnels. The LIRR has not yet been awarded funding for longer-term resiliency projects, including flood barriers and drainage improvements in some New York City locations.

LIPA

PSEG Long Island, which operates the Long Island Power Authority's transmission and distribution system, started elevating 12 substations — five were lifted earlier this year — raising them above the 500-year flood level established by FEMA, according to a PSEG spokesman. The remaining substations will be raised by 2016 to 2017. The company has also hardened its distribution and transmission lines, using taller, stronger and bigger poles, and improved the quality of the lines as well, a spokesman said. PSEG has also improved its outage management system with a \$30.6 million computer upgrade that moved LIPA away from paper maps to a high-tech system to better pinpoint and fix problems. The utility has greatly stepped up its tree trimming efforts.



Homes on Soundview Drive on Montauk Point get bashed on Oct. 29, 2012. ■ Video: newsday.com/sandy

Gas

More than half of all gas stations in New York City, Long Island, Westchester and Rockland counties now are required to have backup power in an emergency. Stations within a half-mile of a highway exit or hurricane evacuation route downstate had until April to be wired with a transfer switch, which makes it possible to hook up to a generator. Those stations must also have the ability to deploy and install a generator within 24 hours of losing power in an emergency, according to the new regulations.

Coastal improvements

According to Sen. Charles Schumer, the Army Corps of Engineers is expected to spend close to \$2 billion on dune, levee and seawall projects on Fire Island, Long Beach, Rockaway, Coney Island, Montauk Point, Staten Island, Bayville, Asharoken and Hashamomuck Cove in coming years. To date, he said, the corps awarded a \$48 million contract, the first of three, for an emergency dune on Fire Island. Fire Island's dune project, stalled by an Audubon New York court battle regarding endangered species, is supposed to restart now that the lawsuit has been dismissed. Work could begin this winter in parklands on the barrier island.

Suffolk has already begun surveying properties for the project, including 41 oceanfront homes selected for buyouts. It also calls for 400 easements in populated areas. In Montauk, the Army Corps plans to spend \$6 million to bury 14,000 sand-filled bags on the beach using 45,000 cubic yards of sand. The emergency project is expected to begin this winter. In addition, the agency is restoring beaches and dunes west of Shinnecock Inlet and rebuilding four miles of Westhampton dunes. In Oyster Bay, one section of seawall that collapsed during Sandy has been repaired and another section is being rebuilt.

Sewers

The Bay Park Sewage Treatment Plant, which serves 550,000 Nassau residents, has been an active construction site since the days immediately after superstorm Sandy. About \$830 million has been secured for its overhaul. Work continues on improving the plant's power — it's running on generators — and Nassau County is building a berm around the site, said a spokesman for Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano. That project will be completed in 2016 and will protect the plant from storm surge to the standard of a 500-year flood. Suffolk will receive \$383 million to help expand its sewer system.

barriers, like gates.

"All of these little projects . . . will help out during the [Tropical Storm] Irenes," he said. "The flood gates are the only things that will help alleviate the Sandys."

Superstorm Sandy stuck on Oct. 29, 2012, and devastated much of the South Shore, particularly in Nassau County. To help with the recovery, Congress approved \$60 billion in relief funding for the states affected by the storm.

Money flowed to the Island through several federal channels, including the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

New York Rising was established to help distribute all of the

HUD aid, which is being spent on housing, small business recovery, community reconstruction and infrastructure.

The Island's \$250 million infrastructure allocation represents a sliver of the \$4.4 billion in NY Rising funding and was earmarked not only for resiliency measures but also to bolster communities' economic growth.

New York City got a separate allocation.

Cuomo launched the New York Rising Community Reconstruction Program in July 2013.

But the state didn't get enough of a financial commitment from the federal government to fund

See SANDY on A12

2 YEARS AFTER

SANDY

TODAY: New York State will fund 25 local infrastructure projects, but there is too little money to adequately protect Long Island's coastal communities.

TOMORROW: Some of the local grassroots men and women who sprang into action in the wake of the storm.

FRIDAY: The pace of home buyouts along the South Shore has increased.

SUNDAY: Small power stations, developed by a local company and a Stony Brook professor, supply continuous energy to home medical devices.



Liers waiting for help.
Questions still waiting
for answers.

**Superstorm Sandy:
The Long Road Back.**
All this week.

**ONLY ON NEWS12
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**SUPERSTORM SANDY
THE LONG ROAD BACK**

MILLIONS FOR LOCAL PROJECTS

SANDY from A3

the large-scale infrastructure improvements that local communities need to prevent the type of devastation brought by Sandy, experts and officials said.

So the groups said they decided to address other, smaller issues, in many cases.

A representative of the governor's office said the projects were selected because they had community support and the backing of the local municipality in charge of carrying out the work.

The groups divided their plans into three categories: "proposed," "featured" and "additional resiliency."

Newsday's analysis focuses on only the "proposed" plans because they are more likely than the rest to receive funding, officials said. The projects in that category for the 21 New York Rising groups cost \$381 million to \$427 million.

The 25 projects announced by Cuomo's office this week could be implemented soonest — another reason why they were selected, an official said.

The costliest plan, at about \$20 million, will fund storm water infrastructure upgrades in Cedarhurst, Hewlett, Hewlett Harbor, Hewlett Neck, Inwood, Lawrence and Woodmere.

It might include the use of pervious pavement, which allows water to move more easily from the roadway to the ground, and landscaping to help remove pollutants from the water, in addition to targeted drainage improvements.

Members of that group did not respond to calls for comment.

In Long Beach, the state chose to fund a \$12.45 million project that would replace and install bulkheads along its bay side. Officials said the plan is the most shovel-ready of all the proposals.

City Manager Jack Schnirman said the project will replace sporadic bulkheading of varying heights with a contiguous wall of protection at least 9 feet high.

While he doesn't know if it would be enough to protect the region from another superstorm, he said it would be a good first step.

"There is no such thing as storm prevention," he said. "Only mitigation. You cannot prevent Mother Nature from foiling even the best plans."

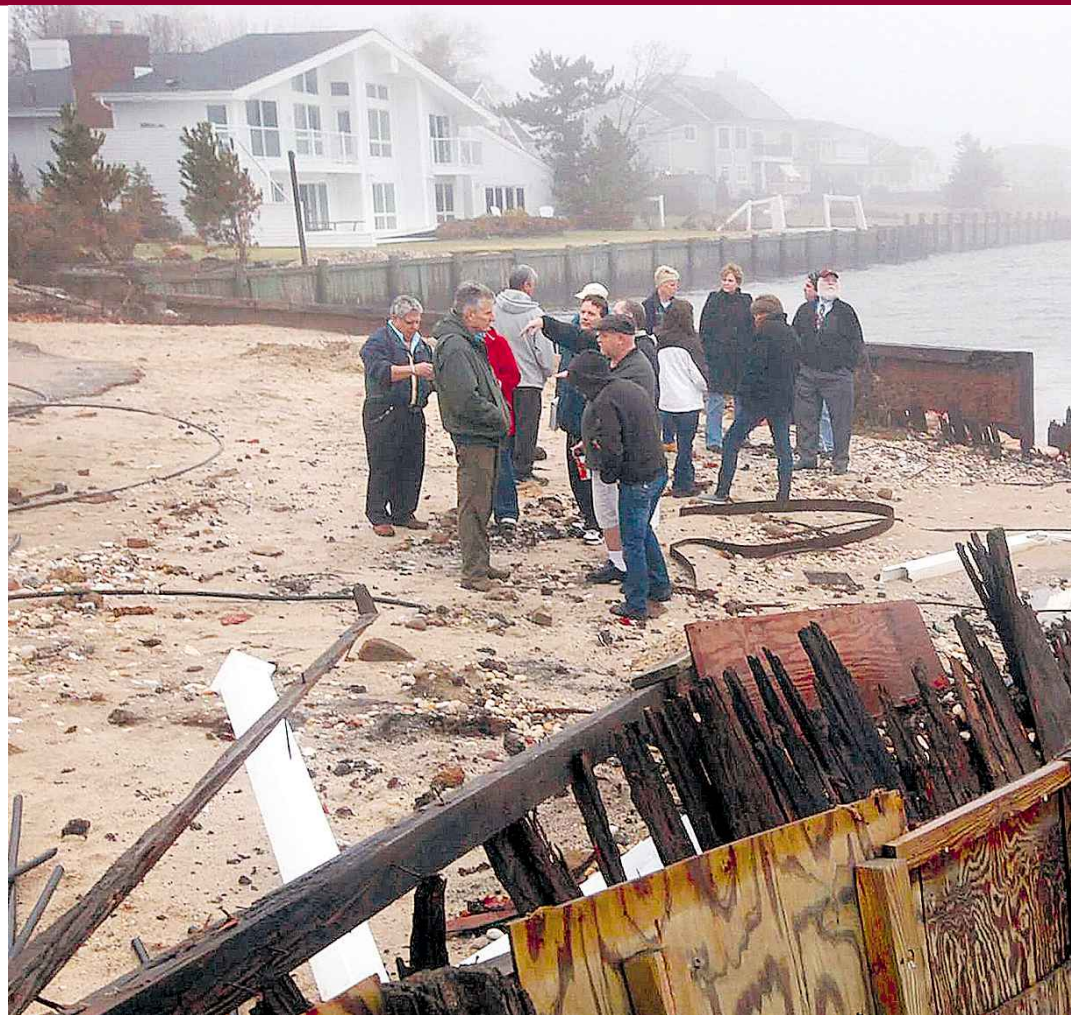
Oceanside is slated to get \$10.32 million to do an analysis and then improve its storm water drainage system. Likewise, Barnum Island/Island Park/Harbor Isle will see \$9.9 million in drainage improvements, the state said.

But not all 25 plans would mitigate flooding or strengthen the communities' infrastructure.

Fire Island, the Village of Babylon and the Massapequas will get generators, for example.

The Baldwin/Baldwin Harbor group is receiving \$800,000 to plan for a resiliency study of long-term future of its commercial corridors.

Mahler said he's disappointed in the selection because it won't keep water out of the area.



Blue Point residents view the damage to a bulkhead on Bergen Avenue in December 2012. ■ Photos,

And it means "real work" could be years off, he said.

'Huge waste of money'

"It's a huge waste of money," Mahler said. "Studies go nowhere. They take years and then people sit around a table and talk about it rather than doing something."

He wanted a retractable dam at Silver Lake Park and improvements to the sewer system.

A majority — 125 of 229 — of the priority projects proposed by the community groups would do nothing to strengthen infrastructure or resiliency.

For example, the Atlantic Beach/East Atlantic Beach group asked for \$2 million to create a community assistance center; Babylon and West Babylon sought nearly \$1 million in emergency equipment; Lindenhurst asked for a quarter-million dollars to upgrade its website to make it more nimble in an emergency; Mastic Beach asked for \$231,000 to start a 3.5-mile bike path.

Yet in the 400 "additional"

or "featured" requests, there are scores of measures that would provide mitigation.

Freeport, for instance, included a program to regularly maintain and protect flood valves, the identification of roads that need to be raised, and a study on how to protect the Nautical Mile from storm surge, sea level rise and coastal flooding in the "additional" category.

Oakdale and West Sayville listed the possible raising of bulkheads in this same category with no cost associated.

Baldwin and Baldwin Harbor listed the installation of 25 tidal valves and the identification of long-term retreat and resilience options for residents and businesses as "featured" items.

South Valley Stream did the same, placing bulkhead repairs in that same grouping. The cost would be \$5.5 million for two such projects. That group also listed the study of floodgates and flood protection alternatives at Hook Creek and Motts Creek and the elevation of Rockaway Turnpike and Nassau Express-

way as "additional" measures with a \$920,000 price tag.

South Valley Stream is getting \$1.7 million to restore the natural shoreline along a greenway walking path along Valley Stream at the end of Cloverfield Road North, planting trees, creating more open space and installing other green infrastructure. It was one of the New York Rising group's top projects.

Freeport, in an effort to better protect its electrical infrastructure and prevent power outages, will get a "proposed" request of \$3 million to replace and extend the buried portion of key electric distribution cables beyond its boatyard to protect the lines from freed boats and debris during storm surges.

A representative of the Freeport group could not be reached. Though some hail such plans, others wonder if projects like this will protect the area in a major storm.

"It will help, but is it going to prevent a flood? No," said Freeport Mayor Robert Kennedy. "It may provide a safer environ-

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ing our lives and property. Our community has taken the position that these things are fundamental to the safety of our residents and that's why they are the first couple of projects in order of priority."

In West Islip, the state announced plans for a \$1.3 million capital improvement study — mostly focused on drainage.

Some improvements would be made from its recommendations.

Larry Donahue, who helped craft the group's plan, was looking for something more extensive and concrete two years after the storm.

"I guess that's a good step," he said, but he thought the document his group came up with was already a study and that it clearly outlined what is needed. "I don't mean to rain on this parade, but when does the community get to see something? I can't say I'm overjoyed with it. I can't help wondering after the election is over, is anybody going to remember any of this stuff? Will there be any follow-through on it?"

Resiliency questioned

None of the projects will dramatically improve Long Island's resilience and for that, experts say, it's worth examining infrastructure projects in other parts of the country and the world.

Dunes in the Netherlands stand 30 feet high in some places; highways are built upon them and vegetation holds them in place, said Malcolm Bowman, a world-renowned oceanography expert.

Long Island might want to consider a similar plan, though it's unfathomable to some residents, said Bowman, a professor of physical oceanography at Stony Brook University.

"The downside is that they cannot see the ocean from their front windows," Bowman said, adding that Long Islanders can't have it both ways. "That is a bugaboo here. Nobody wants to lose the view."

Jay Tanski, New York Sea Grant Coastal Processes and Facilities Specialist, said the state is skipping a crucial step: New York must first study its shores to have a better understanding of how they've changed in the

past 50 years.

Right now, he said, such studies are scattershot.

"We don't have enough information about the shoreline," he said. "Some of this money could be spent to develop a program to truly understand what is happening on the coast."

This is particularly true of the North Shore, Tanski said, where far too little data has been collected. Without this knowledge, it would be difficult to develop a solid shoreline stabilization plan, he said. The North Shore did not suffer as much damage as the South Shore during Sandy. "Even the low-energy shorelines are changing," he said. "But we have no information on that process."

Catch basins, bulkheading and the restoration of wetlands could help, Cameron said — his engineering firm worked with some of the New York Rising groups in Suffolk County — but what the region really needs, in addition to dunes and sea gates, is major elevation of its critical infrastructure.

As for the sea gates, the cost is a deterrent, Cameron said.

"They are expensive today," he said. "But what if you knew within five years you would get another Sandy? Would you say it's too expensive? You probably could build a system on the South Shore of Long Island for less than the damage caused by Sandy 2. But that was not an option for the present level of funding."

Before any of the 25 projects approved by the state gets underway, the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery will pay for their environmental reviews. The state brought on Hunt, Guillot and Associates, a Louisiana-based project management and engineering services firm with a history of shaping large- and small-scale infrastructure projects, to make sure each plan is eligible for federal grants and to ensure the monies are spent according to federal requirements.

In addition, local municipalities must each draft agreements saying they will adhere to all federal guidelines. And they must file a 30- to 40-page application detailing their plans and related costs — all before a single shovel hits the ground.

NIFA threatens cut of \$31M in Nassau budget

BY CELESTE HADRICK

celeste.hadrick@newsday.com

Nassau's financial control board yesterday threatened to cut \$31 million from the county's 2015 budget if county lawmakers eliminate a 3.1 percent property tax increase proposed by County Executive Edward Mangano.

Jon Kaiman, chairman of the Nassau Interim Finance Authority, fired off the emailed warning to Presiding Officer Norma Gonsalves (R-East Meadow) and Minority Leader Kevan Abrahams (D-Freeport) at the close of business yesterday — a day before the Republican majority on the county legislature is expected to remove the tax hike and approve an amended \$2.98 billion budget for 2015.

"While it is not our intention to advise whether to increase taxes or to refrain from doing so, it is our intention to make sure that the county meets its financial obligations," Kaiman wrote. "Accordingly, NIFA will use its power to remove from the 2015 budget an equivalent of the revenue that is being cut by the county legislature."

Kaiman, who could not be reached yesterday, wrote NIFA will cut operations and likely apply an "across-the-board ban" on all capital projects, such as repaving roads, installing traffic signals and other long-term expenses paid with borrowed money.

The proposed tax increase

is projected to raise \$31 million.

Republican lawmakers, who won re-election with Mangano last year by touting their record of freezing taxes, have proposed replacing the tax hike by reducing the "outdated contracts" budget by \$12 million; recovering the value of bond premiums, for \$11 million; restructuring debt to save \$7 million, and more aggressively collecting fees and fines, for \$1.2 million.

Democratic lawmakers also want to eliminate the tax hike, primarily by dipping into the county's fund balance.

However, NIFA has said the county is not allowed to recover bond premiums, and several fixes are "one-shots." Also, fiscal experts have predicted multimillion-dollar "risks" next year and shortfalls this year.

"Cutting \$31 million from the budget that is stressed to begin with can only mean that the legislature has decided to defund the county operations in a manner that we have not seen before," Kaiman wrote. "... NIFA is continuing to explore all options available to meet our obligations relating to this and future budgets."

Said Abrahams: "While we agree with NIFA's concerns as stated in their letter, it's our job to protect taxpayers who have been burdened by Nassau's fiscal mess for too long."

A Mangano spokesman said the administration will review Kaiman's letter.



Jon Kaiman appears Monday at a news conference marking the second anniversary of superstorm Sandy.



NEWSDAY / JOHN PARASKEVAS

video: newsday.com/sandy

ment in the case of a flood, but in my opinion, providing some type of a gate at the inlets and building up the barrier island would better protect Nassau County."

Defending choices

Members of the New York Rising groups defended their choices.

Atlantic Beach and East Atlantic Beach will get \$720,000 to make the existing Water Reclamation Plant better able to resist future storms. Jonathan Kohan, co-chair of its New York Rising group, said the money will serve a critical need.

Without wastewater treatment, he said, residents would have to leave during a storm. Although saltwater poured into the plant during the storm, it still was able to operate during Sandy.

The second biggest priority, Kohan said, are health and safety issues, which is why the group would like solar-powered streetlights.

"We were in darkness for 10 days to two weeks," he said. "By doing this, we are protect-