

## 2024 Islesboro Looking Ahead

**Islesboro Looking Ahead** is a statement, prepared by the Select Board about the Town of Islesboro, first adopted by the Select Board on January 3, 2012, and it is intended to be used as a general plan for the Town as well as a catalyst for discussion of Islesboro's future by Town committees, private organizations, businesses, and individuals.

The recommendations in **Islesboro Looking Ahead** have been formulated from three related perspectives: **reflecting on the past, considering current priorities, and planning for the future**. Copies are available at the Town Office, the Alice Pendleton Library, and the Islesboro Central School. They are also posted on the Town's website.

**Islesboro Looking Ahead** draws on research first gathered in the years 2007-2011 by a Town Comprehensive Plan Committee in preparation for a State-mandated Comprehensive Plan. That work was up-dated in the years 2015-2018 by the Islesboro Select Board with the assistance of a working committee. A final document was reviewed and approved by the State of Maine and was adopted by the Townspeople at a Special Town Meeting called for that purpose on August 16, 2018.

### **Building on the History of Islesboro** (reflecting on the past)

Throughout the island's long and changing history, Islesboro has established a strong base upon which to plan for the future.

- 1) Over many years the people who live on Islesboro – both year-round and seasonal - have cooperated to foster careful community growth and mutual support for neighbors. Town government, school, privately funded institutions, businesses and individuals have worked together to establish traditions of progress and caring.

*The future of Islesboro will be built on continued cooperation and goodwill, its residents, both year-round and seasonal, with conscious fostering of the dignity and worth of all.*

- 2) For over three hundred years, Islesboro has responded and adapted to changes on the mainland and in the world. In the 1930's, for instance, the advent of a regular ferry service for cars and commuters changed Islesboro irrevocably. In recent decades, new technologies have brought changed circumstances and possibilities for Islesboro residents, families, local businesses, and civic activities.

In the spring of 2018, the State of Maine suddenly imposed an 118% increase in key ferry rates, which challenged all aspects of life on the island. The Town of Islesboro protested publicly and legally challenged the increases, eventually prevailing and negotiating modest reductions in the rates.

*The town's future prosperity will, in part, depend on thoughtfully managing new connections through and beyond Penobscot Bay.*

3) Public and private institutions, businesses and individuals who volunteer their time, energies and resources have responded creatively to economic, technological, and social changes on the island. The list of initiatives that have contributed positively to island life is long. Here are some, and there are many others that could be listed:

- A renovated and improved Islesboro Central School - maintaining a unique K-12 school experience and it's connection to the year-round viability and future of the island community.
- Big Tree Beach
- The Boardman Cottage
- A bigger and better Islesboro Sporting Club
- A new Community Center
- Preservation of a number of sensitive land and shore areas
- Sixteen new affordable houses
- Improvements to the Historical Society, the Library, the Up-Island Church, the Lighthouse, and the Sewing Circle
- Physical improvements to the three active churches
- Re-built ferry and public dock facilities
- Up-graded water and sewerage systems
- Expanded health services
- Establishment of Health Center Endowment Fund
- Public Safety and Emergency Services enhanced
- Transfer Station renovations
- Establishment of municipally-owned 1000 mega-bit Broadband service
- Building and staffing of a year-round Islesboro Preschool for children from three months old to age 5
- Significant expansions of boatyards and markets
- New small businesses such as a café and bakery, farmer's markets, physical therapy and others.
- The founding of Islesboro Economic Sustainability Corporation by a Town Meeting on November 20, 2019 – A non-profit, tax-exempt organization to strengthen and enhance Islesboro's ability to grow and become more self-sufficient.
- Funding for the design and construction of an improved Health Center, Up-Island Public Safety Building and Renovation of the Municipal Building.

*Sustainable growth requires fiscal responsibility in the present and sound investments for the future. This means:*

- 1) good management of present resources;*
- 2) careful planning and prudent budgeting; and*
- 3) well-constructed initiatives that will add jobs, commerce, and maintain a fiscally-sound tax base to ensure long-term affordability for residents.*

*Islesboro must also continue a close monitoring of the Waldo County annual budget, to which the Town makes a substantial tax contribution, and pay attention to regional and state issues that will affect the Town.*

## **Protecting and Updating What Islesboro Has Now** (considering current priorities)

The people of Islesboro should give priority to four primary assets that are central to life on the island – its natural resources, our residents, organizations that provide key services, and the functioning of Town Government.

- Islesboro is an island – just 14 square miles – and over the past twenty years or more great attention has been paid to respecting and protecting our shorelines and beaches, the sea around us and the land itself, especially wetlands and other sensitive areas. The purity of our drinking water, coming as it does from a sole source aquifer, is of particular concern. Islesboro residents love the beauty and character of our island and believe that new man-made developments must continue to respect those fragile aspects of our surroundings. Islesboro must also monitor and be alert to changes in the nation and the world, and be prepared for the effects of such things as climate change and events good or bad beyond our control.

*Islesboro's townspeople and their government should continue to safeguard the natural benefits and resources of Islesboro, 700 Acre Island, the fifteen smaller islands within the Town's jurisdiction, and the waters of the Penobscot Bay.*

*Town officials, private organizations, and residents must be concerned with and plan for rising sea levels and increasingly severe storms, which are threatening shore-lines and vulnerable areas. The Sea Level Rise Committee is actively working to develop and fund adaptation plans at the Narrows, and work with state DOT officials at Grindle Point, and begin planning for other areas of vulnerability for the town. The increasing frequency and severity of storms is highlighting a need to invest in our town's roads and culverts to ensure safe transportation before, during and after storm events.*

*Proposed developments in Penobscot Bay – particularly in the channels leading to Searsport Harbor and Sears Island should be continually monitored to protect the natural environment and to safeguard fishing and recreational economies.*

- Islesboro is a multi-faceted community with a good mix of summer and year-round residents that includes retirees and working people. In order to remain a well-rounded community, Islesboro wishes to be attractive to all who live, work and visit here. A priority is to retain young residents and to add new working families to the community. To this end, the community recognizes the importance in investing in high quality local education and affordable health care through the Islesboro Health Center.

*Individuals, families, and organizations on Islesboro should continue the island tradition of welcoming and helping each other and, as appropriate, should make special efforts, including reviewing housing and commercial innovations, to attract new business, social and cultural amenities to the island.*

Islesboro offers nearly a full range of services and opportunities to its residents through local organizations both public and private. Looking ahead, all of these organizations will

require ongoing program adjustments and physical maintenance in order to keep pace with the island's needs and expectations.

The Town's list of capital improvements and maintenance projects necessary for the good functioning of Islesboro's public infrastructure includes:

- The island's roads
- Harbor Facilities at Grindle Point and Seal Harbor and greater influence on and involvement with facilities in Lincolnville by the ferry landing.
- Health Center
- Emergency, Communication, and Safety Services
- Alice L. Pendleton Library
- Town Beach, Pendleton Point
- Maddy Dodge field improvement
- Public rights of way to water
- Town-supported Broadband Internet on Islesboro
- Monitor the spread of and protect residents from contagious and non-contagious disease (tick-borne, flu, zika and others)
- Reduction of fire hazards through clearing of blow-downs
- Repair and good maintenance of Town and private graveyards
- Expansion of the use of renewable energy in public and private facilities, and encouraging energy efficiency projects
- Waste water treatment

There is always room for improvement in the functioning of any Town Government. Priorities for Islesboro include:

- Continuing up-dating and additions to the Town's website, including new census information as it becomes available. In addition, research prepared for the newly-approved Comprehensive Plan on employment patterns, housing stock and population should be updated periodically.
- Systematic review of Islesboro's "Capital Improvement and Maintenance Plan," adopted by the Town in 2010 by the Select Board and at the annual Town Meeting.
- Improved communications between the Town and residents through a variety of media, print, and electronic means including Town of Islesboro Facebook, Constant Contact and Twitter, especially during weather emergencies.
- Increased opportunities for professional development of Town employees.
- Planning for a long-term shift to a "paperless" government, including medical records where appropriate to facilitate telemedicine.
- Town support for recruiting, training, and effective management of Fire Department and Ambulance Service personnel.
- Regular review of the Town committee system by the Select Board to ensure that individual committees are functioning well and that there is good communication between the committees, the Select Board, and the Town Manager. In 2024, the Select Board is developing a committee code of conduct to create consistent expectations between volunteer committees.

- Consideration of changes to current Town procedures for election to the Select Board and to the School Board to enable the Townspeople to have a greater knowledge of the interests and capabilities of candidates.

*The Select Board, working in cooperation with the Town committees, should review the Town's procedures and practices and should make adjustments as appropriate.*

**Considering New Activities for the Future** (planning for the future)

The following have emerged as priorities to be considered by the Town, the non-profit sector, the business community and individuals:

1) *Maintain and add jobs to the Islesboro economy while paying close attention to the enterprises and activities that currently underpin the economic life of the community*

- Availability of up-to-date information on Town statistics, existing enterprises, and plans for the future.
- Skilled personnel for island businesses through training island residents and recruiting working families from the mainland. Build housing for employees of island business.

2) *Develop specific public and private initiatives that would improve both the island economy and community life.*

- Continuing support of trained staff for the year-round Pre-School and Daycare Program, to encourage young families to stay on Islesboro and others to come to the island.
- Encourage local food production, on-island agriculture, and the development of aquaculture.
- Strengthen access to health care and social services including addiction treatment.
- Consider the addition of locally controlled financial institution such as a credit union to serve local businesses, families and individuals.

3) *Continue to encourage the development of areas that are natural centers for commercial and social activities on Islesboro. A Special Town Meeting on February 15, 2018 approved a new ordinance to further this important goal, a third town center is currently under review for decision at the 2024 Town Meeting.*

- The Post Office Center. This general location has the most traffic (car and foot) and the most year-round visits of any spot on the island. The area includes the Post Office, the Island Market, Linscott's Auto II Garage, Vinal Energy and the Second Baptist Church. Nearby are the Town Office, the Fire Department and Public Safety office, the Health Center, Boardman Cottage, and the Community Center. The Ruthie James community is within walking distance.

This area presents an opportunity for imaginative and thoughtful planning that could improve traffic and pedestrian safety and parking conditions, and encourage new businesses and housing activity.

- Dark Harbor Village. Historically, there have been both seasonal and year-round shops and offices in this down-island center. At present there are two office buildings, a rare book business, and five seasonal shops - a soda fountain/newspaper/gift shop, an antique shop, art gallery and two shops selling housewares and clothing.

Importantly, a large section of the Dark Harbor village has a public septic system that has unused capacity, allowing for the possibility of small lot-size development and/or multi-household dwellings.

- Up Island Town Center. A third town center is under review and will be considered at the 2024 Town Meeting. The area includes Durkees Store and is being put forward to complement housing ordinance changes proposed due to LD 2003.

#### *4) Immediate attention to Long-term challenges*

- Housing. Attention to policies that would encourage the up-keep and construction of houses for island residents and for employees of local businesses is a priority. At the 2024 Town Meeting we will be reviewing and voting on new ordinances to address LD 2003.
- Our Single Aquifer. All development proposals that may increase density must consider the protection of Islesboro's water supply, including the possibilities of increasing lot-size on lands in known re-charge areas. At the 2024 Town Meeting the planning board is putting forward new ordinances to protect our aquifer.
- Rising Sea Levels at the Narrows and Grindle Point. Scientific projections indicate strongly that Islesboro must complete engineering studies and prepare remedial construction plans to maintain access at these critical areas of the island. This work is in progress.
- Connections to the Mainland. The 2018 dispute with the Maine Department of Transportation over ferry fare rates, was concluded in the Fall of 2019, but the MSFS is reviewing a new tariff which would increase fees based on projected transportation budget over the next several years. The DOT is planning to build a new hybrid ferry to service Islesboro. We must remain engaged to ensure our long-term needs are considered as the DOT takes on this new infrastructure project.

*New activities for the future will require careful review of existing Town of Islesboro ordinances, policies, and practices. Possible changes and additions that are intended to encourage sustainable*

*growth in the future will be presented for open discussion to the Islesboro community in a variety of ways - and when fully reviewed -will be ultimately submitted to Town meeting for decision.*

## **Comments and Ideas are Welcome**

**Islesboro Looking Ahead** proposes that Islesboro’s future will be built on its past traditions, and that the island’s first priority is to maintain and update the very considerable resources that the island has now. The statement also proposes that by paying attention to economic, technological, and social changes, Islesboro will be able to consider appropriate new activities that can benefit the community and its residents.

The Select Board and the Town Manager are circulating **Islesboro Looking Ahead** and will welcome the comments and ideas of Islesboro residents – both through individual conversations, at regular meetings, and at winter, summer, annual, and special Town Forums and meetings.

**Islesboro Looking Ahead** will be up-dated annually by the Select Board based on those individual and group discussions.

Select Board  
Town of Islesboro  
January 3, 2012

Amended and Re-affirmed:

January 2, 2013  
January 15, 2014  
January 29, 2015  
January 13, 2016  
January 25, 2017  
February 7, 2018  
January 9, 2019  
February 5, 2020  
March 18, 2021  
March 3, 2022  
May 10, 2023  
**May 8, 2024**