

Islesboro Island News

January/February 2024

\$5.00



IESC: Supporting Island businesses

On a chilly January afternoon, a group of Islesboro entrepreneurs gathered at the Tutor/Hatch home to exchange thoughts and ideas about running a business on Islesboro. The blaze in the fireplace warmed the room as folks settled in with hot beverages and tasty snacks.

They were invited by the Islesboro Economic Sustainability Corporation board as recipients of IESC small business loans. Tom Tutor noted that \$390,000 has been loaned to nine individuals since the program's inception in July 2020. The loans can help island businesses startup or expand and create more sustainable island employment. The loan program offers 5-year loans with an interest rate as low as the IESC auditors will allow- currently 2% (.005 % when the program began). These loans are intended to be affordable funding for islanders who might not qualify for or afford commercial bank small business loans. (According to data from the Federal Reserve, current small business loan rates run between .589% and 12.23%).

The IESC was originally formed in November 2019 with the primary motivation of facilitating the sale of the crucial Island Market business and the property on which it is located. The business, owned by Shake and Loony Mahan, was housed in a building leased from Phil and Audrey Berry, who also owned the garage and the house sitting on either side of the market building. Both the business and the property were up for sale at same time, but the transactions



Bonnie Hughes, Leo Waltheri, Menlo Waltheri, Dylan Purington, Dustin Reidy, Tom Tutor

just weren't happening with the total price tag and the parties involved. Recognizing the importance of this key "downtown" property, IESC formed as a quasi-municipal economic development corporation to work with the Town to promote, finance and develop essential-to-Islesboro-sustainability services and businesses. IESC funding relies on private contributions rather than tax dollars. Initially the IESC set out to raise a \$1.5M working capital account that would fund its loan program and invest in island business infrastructure. The fundraising for the project was accomplished in 2020. IESC purchased the property and leased the building to the new business owners, Sky and Marianne Purdy.

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Questioning The New Normal: Reflections on January's storms.

By Liv Lenfestey

In the wake of the January 10th and 13th storms, the question heavy on many Islesboro and coastal residents' minds remains: "Is this just the new normal?". With back-to-back extreme storms causing flooding at various locations around the island, high winds gusting up to near 90 mph, and staggering erosion eating away our treasured coastline, the answer at hand may be unfavorable, if not too hard to face. As scientists continue to study and uncover the widespread impacts of our disrupted climate system, it is likely that these recent storms are prologue to the new kind of weather event that the coast of Maine needs to be prepared for.

In the morning hours of Wednesday, January 10th, flood maps turned to real threats as the high tide rose and winds kicked up, carrying 4 to 5 feet of storm surge on its back. And so the chaos began. Ferry Road flooded with water flowing out of West Bay and lapping under (and over) the tailpipes of parked cars. Forests of full-bodied driftwood and debris rammed against the shoreline as high seas washed out private piers and boathouses. The revetment at the Narrows held back water as best it could, while slightly further up the pavement washed out in layers under the pounding of heavy waves, leaving the North and South island disconnected.

The intensity of this weather event and the damage it ravaged left many of us shaken, chewing on the anxiety of what is to come. The promise of a second storm hitting just three days after the first, forced recovery efforts into high gear. Now, it seems, what we once called "the calm before the storm" no longer exists. We have less time than that. There is only a need to take advantage of the brief moments between the storms to buckle down and protect what we still have. Year-round islanders, public safety, caretakers, and earth workers, took on a heavy load for our community, working long hours to keep the island together and intact. During, between, and following the storms, the recovery efforts carried out on Islesboro were resolute. Islesboro proved once again to harbor immense community resilience and strength spurred by the deep roots, care, and



Fred Porter photo

collaborative efforts of its residents.

What these recent events point us to is clear: something has changed. With three storms hammering Maine in under a month, including the December 18th storm that devastated many inland communities, there is no denying that the frequency and intensity of storm events in the state has intensified. As of now, scientists don't have a concrete answer for why storms are coming out of the Southeast more frequently, as opposed to the Northeast as they have historically. However, the weather that these new beasts roll in is particularly punishing to the Coast of Maine and we need to be prepared.

With 2023 being the hottest year on record due to excessive global CO2 emissions, thermal expansion and melt water contributions from receding glaciers will continue to raise sea levels and oceans temperatures alike. We must be thinking toward implementing adaptations, making energy transitions, and working for a carbon neutral future. On Islesboro, much of this good work is already underway with both the Sea Level Rise and Energy Committees taking big strides toward making the island more sustainable and resilient to future storms, but there remains much more to be done.

By now, most media outlets have moved on from this story, for the effects we are seeing in Maine are by no means the crux of this crisis. What we are left with is work to do and repairs to make. This lived experience and documentation of the damage we endured will become our local data that inform future planning and adaptation decisions. As we address these past storm events, and brace for what may be the new normal, amplifying community voices and engaging in frequent dialogue about how we prepare for the future is essential. At the root of Islesboro's resilience is its people.



Preparation for construction of the Islesboro Health Center and the Up-Island Public Safety Garage

are ongoing. By the end of January, Stephen Blatt Architects and construction manager Ledgewood Construction had completed refining the designs for the new Islesboro Health Center building and the Up-island Public Safety Garage with a view to making them as cost-effective as possible. The revised plans were submitted to the Planning Board and to the State Fire Marshall for approval, and bid documents were prepared and distributed to subcontractors for both buildings. Bids have now been received, and interviews are underway. It is expected that by early March a Guaranteed Minimum Price will have been approved by the Municipal Building Project Committee and the Select Board. In the following weeks the local/state permitting will be completed, the contracts will be awarded, the subcontractors will submit detailed drawings, and the two sites will be prepared for construction activities. As of now, construction is due to begin in early April.

Submitted by the Municipal Building Project Committee

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