

Emergency Ferry Service Task Force  
Regular Meeting  
Town Office Meeting Room & via Zoom  
Wednesday, January 8, 2025 @ 4:30 PM

APPROVED

1/22/25

MINUTES

**Members Present:**

Shey Conover, Earl MacKenzie, Fred Porter, Peter Willcox

**Members Present via Zoom:**

John King, Gabriel Pendleton

**Others Present:**

Scott DeGrasse, Frank Start, Sonya Leach, Dick DeGrasse, Dylan Purington, Jennifer Whitlow, Joan Lillie, Melissa Burns, Peter Rothschild, Jennifer West, Terry Cowan, Kara Masters Siekman, Murt Durkee, Michael Giardino, Laura Staines Giardino, Jen McFarland, Nancy Alexander, Mike Clayton, Bill Boardman.

**Others Present via Zoom:**

Christine Robb, Linda & Arch Gillies, Judy Gardner, Tim Fallon, Elizabeth Hayden, Doug Welldon, Patricia Goodspeed, Apple Bartlett, Terry Sanderson, Ollie Venezia, Myra Rolerson, Dan Tutor, Sandy, Sally, Joseph Connaughton, Carlisle Knowlton, John Rex-Waller, Philo Hutcheson, Ken Smith, Sara Oliver, Marjorie Stratton, Jordy Watson, Amy Mulnix, Anne Bertulli, Becky, Craig Olson, Cindy Satchfield, Dorea Engstrom, Harriet Bering, Johnna, Linda, Michael, Peter Anderson, Rachel Rolerson Smith, Susan West, Sharon Hall, Tobias Conover, Bib, Elizabeth Napier, Hilary Giles, Janet Anderson, Jill ChaCha, Kate Misenheimer, Kathleen & Michael Kerr, Kizzi Barton, Lauren Bruce, Robert Kochan, Jon Emerson, Resident, resident.

Call to Order: Shey Conover called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM, and a quorum was established.

**COMMITTEE PURPOSE**

Shey Conover introduced the members. This is the first meeting of the Emergency Ferry Task Force, which the Select Board formed last Wednesday. We've recognized that this issue is of critical concern to the community. The purpose of this committee is to provide advice to the Select Board on the strategy development, communication, and community response to the DOT's proposal to move the ferry to berth in Lincolnville overnight, and to discontinue emergency runs. The Select Board wants to make sure we are giving as strong a response as possible. In order to do so, we're going to need all hands on deck, from a community perspective, in making sure our voices are heard, as loud and as unified as possible.

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**ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

**Motion by S. Conover, seconded by E. MacKenzie, to nominate Gabe Pendleton as Chair. G. Pendleton accepted the nomination. Roll Call. Motion passed, 6 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.**

Carrie Reed agreed to serve as Secretary to the Committee. If there's a meeting she can't attend, we can find a way to make sure our work discussion is covered.

**SUMMARY OF ISSUE & WORK TO-DATE**

They stated that this issue started to come to light last fall. It escalated quickly at the end of November. In early December, the North Haven Select Board sent a letter to MDOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note. Islesboro sent our own letter to the commissioner in early December. The issue was covered in the newspaper a couple of times. In response, Commissioner Van Note scheduled a meeting with coastal legislators, inviting town managers and select board chairs to hear his proposals. That meeting was held last Tuesday in Rockland and via Zoom. The only concrete piece of information that Van Note provided was that he has made the decision to berth island ferries on the mainland, and he is looking to implement this plan in the next two-three years. For Islesboro, that might be closer to the three-year timeline, to coincide with the arrival of the new ferry. All of this is subject to change.

The primary reason cited was the crew. They've had difficulty getting crew, and they feel that having the boats crewed on the mainland would allow them to do a better job recruiting and keeping a full workforce. They presented a lot of information about the crew shortage. They've provided absolutely no information or analysis about the impact of this decision on our communities, such as the costs associated, and any changes in the schedule. There were no details about how we would get from his making the decision to having the boats moved. There is a lot of work and planning they need to do if they decide to implement this. We have a lot of work to do to make sure our boat remains on Islesboro and that we keep access to emergency services.

Since that meeting, there have been a number of conversations with legislators, and with select boards and leaders from other communities. Marjorie Stratton, Town Manager for Vinalhaven is joining us via Zoom tonight. Jon Emerson, currently the Chair of the Ferry Service Advisory Board and representative from North Haven, also plans to join us this evening.

There are a number of ways that we can fight this issue. Some of the ideas are laid out in the draft strategy document. They hopes to discuss this document in detail this evening and come up with some concrete action steps. One of the most immediate things is the cloture deadline for bills to be submitted to the state legislature, which is tomorrow. It was clear at the DOT meeting that Bruce Van Note anticipated the potential for bills to be submitted that would challenge his decision. They has heard that there may be a couple of different bills that legislators will submit. Some of them have softer language around

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recruitment strategy and working with Maine Maritime Academy, and some are around asking for an independent study and analysis, recognizing that there's not much information in how the proposal will be implemented. Hopefully, there will be at least one or two that will be direct challenges, mandating the ferries stay on the islands and/or require them to be available for emergency runs. Coastal legislators have a separate meeting scheduled amongst themselves for early next week to workshop their language and add details.

They had a conversation with Nick Batista, the policy director at the Island Institute. From that discussion, he drafted the Legislative Options document that was circulated with tonight's agenda. This memo has also been circulated to all our coastal legislators, and was designed to try to make it as easy as possible to get some language into bill form for our representatives.

### **STRATEGY DISCUSSION & SUMMARIZE ACTION STEPS**

Earl MacKenzie stated that there are a lot of technical reasons berthing the ferry in Lincolnville won't work. Bruce Van Note and Bill Pulver are both Central Maine engineers with a lot of experience in bridges and roads, but they don't have much of a background in the maritime side. It's highly impractical to keep the ferry on the mainland for a variety of reasons. In any kind of SE to NE winds, an 800-ton vessel will be like a big battering ram, damaging the pen and potentially the vessel. If they build breakwaters, they'll have to do it on two sides, and that still wouldn't stop the wave surge. A wave attenuator won't stop all of the surge. Our boat is the only one with open roadstead. Vinalhaven and North Haven's boats have more protection in Rockland Harbor. Bass Harbor (for Swan's Island) is also more protected than Lincolnville. It would be a bad idea to keep a vessel there. Maybe it would be good to get a maritime engineer to write something to that effect, and do a study in the practicality of it.

Peter Willcox agreed that Lincolnville needs a breakwater, and stated that Bill Pulver told him that they have comments from engineers that the wave attenuator they're planning will be sufficient for the boat. Peter thinks that's incorrect. When Peter stated at a meeting that you can't put a boat in there unless you put a breakwater on the south side, Bruce Van Note said, "All right, I'll build a \$10 million breakwater, I don't care."

Gabe Pendleton stated he doesn't want to get too far into the nuts and bolts of these things. For strategy, there are legislative angles, in terms of who we might pressure, from the MDOT to the governor to the advisory board to our state legislators. There are other options that are laid out in this document, including legal, which is probably further down the road. There's also the content of those communications and what we're trying to say. Within all of that, we're looking at a situation where other islands are directly affected, and so getting on the same page with the other island communities will be a powerful thing. We need to focus on exactly what we're going to do, and part of that is the content of our communications. Earl brings up some good points about the impracticality of that. Maybe Peter and Earl can sit down and brainstorm some of those impracticalities because

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that ought to be part of the conversation. This isn't one issue. There's the emergency response, there's the impracticality and the safety of the boat living in Lincolnville, there's the reality of the crew coming from Islesboro to Lincolnville and how responsive a crew can be that's already over here. Fleshing that out is something we're going to have to do as part of this strategy. Maybe task a few people to put together some bullet points about all the things that are concerning. The next step is where do we think we can achieve the most success pressuring either our legislators, the advisory board, MDOT, the governor's office, or the federal delegation. Whether we might delve into grant applications for federal funding that were based on representations about certain aspects of the service. We need to coordinate and communicate with the other islands about exactly what we think makes sense, to approach this with one voice.

Earl added that we ought to look at what started this whole thing: basically money and crew. We should look at how the crews are incentivized to come to the islands and if there are ways to improve that to make it more desirable.

John King stated he agrees with Earl and Peter. He also saw some notes about possibly hiring an expert. Maybe Earl and Peter can address that. John also agrees with Gabe in terms of strategy. We ought to focus on the decision-making process. John watched the DOT meeting online. Van Note makes it sound like this decision was discussed with the Advisory Board and everyone was on board, which is not the case. There have been discussions, but it wasn't until this written strategic plan dated August of this year was published that this became public knowledge, and that wasn't given out until the Advisory Board October meeting. To make it sound as if this is some kind of broadly discussed and carefully considered proposition is simply not the case. This is coming out of the commissioner's office. In the context of doing that, we should also make a big point that the provision of emergency services is in the written tariff. He thinks the lawsuit involving Tariff 8 was "settled", and he thinks the DOT agreed to follow the administrative procedures. If that's the case, we should make a point that this tariff, as currently written, doesn't get changed without following the administrative procedures.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Frank Start suggested requesting information on who they've had for applicants for the open positions and their proximity to the ferry terminals. It seems hard to believe that they'd find people close enough to the mainland terminals to staff a boat and would be willing to make those trips every day. If they don't have people applying or are close, they don't have supporting documentation that by doing this they can staff the boats easier. If they have to use a staffing agency to fill those positions, they still have to house those people as part of the contract. Five crew members over two different crews live on the island. They potentially won't be able to work for the ferry service unless they pay their own way to get to the mainland to and from the boat each day. Some mainland workers live two hours away. They currently keep the job because they have housing on the island.

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Peter Willcox added that there's never been a survey of existing ferry workers to see who would continue working under a different system. There's never been a survey to see who they can get in the future. There's a status quo right now and changing it is going to be a huge upheaval that they haven't even begun to think about.

They stated that one of the data points for arguments is we could consider working with the Maine State Ferry Service Union to do some kind of questionnaire to understand their concerns about this impact. I think we need to be careful about how it's worded and exactly what we want to learn, but there's no real information or communication that has happened and I think there are a lot of assumptions being made about this decision being seen positively rather than negatively.

Fred stated that he's had about 20 or 30 freedom of access requests in the last week for stuff that other people have already requested. One of the first things we ought to do is put out an information sheet to the residents of the community to let them know where they can write letters, where they can voice their concerns, where they can get accurate information, and how we're going to do that. Maybe even assign an information person to oversee that. People want to help. We need to be organized and work as a team.

They replied that the answer is going to be a little different for each stage. Our attorney has said that it will be helpful for us to collate a list of questions and concerns from citizens. Everyone who is concerned should send an email to Janet, or bring a letter to the town office, so that we have the number of people who are concerned about this, and any stories or questions or specific concerns, so as we start to build and tell our story that we have information from as many people as possible. Right now, with the cloture deadline happening, one area to push is on the legislative process. Reaching out to our representatives, Michael Ray and Senator Chip Curry, is always a good thing. They know that this is an issue. They have a lot on their plates, and so we need to be loudly respectful at this stage with them and say thank you for your consideration and support for bills that will address the DOT's proposal to move the ferry. Then I think we need to figure out what is the right level of communication and do some work with other islands. They got a message today from the select board members on North Haven and Swans Island. They are chomping at the bit to get a multi-island petition underway. We can take a lead in drafting that, and that has real power. I'd rather take a little bit of time and make sure that we articulate the problem and that we articulate exactly what the specific request is to each leader, because the request is going to be a little different, and the more specific we can be about what we're asking them to do, the more effective we will be. Then we'll need all the voices, once we have crafted that. It's going to take a small group working together to make sure that we make that request as clear as possible.

Fred asked if the town will put something out that informs people of the avenues, whether to send information to the Town of Islesboro, or the other options of legislators. He's not concerned about overwhelming them. They need to help us. That's why we vote them in, and it's time to hold them accountable.

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She clarified that we have a group of advocates. She wants to make sure that we're doing this in a way that brings them along with us rather than turns them off. Our letter to Bruce Van Note certainly put him on his heels. She wants to build a strategy where we bring our advocates with us to Bruce on his heels and have that decision changed.

She stated we can certainly send out information, and include contact information in the FAQ. Today, we want this group to be able to focus on designing the strongest strategy so that we can speak with one voice about what people should do.

Earl suggested getting a uniform petition from all the islands, which would have a lot of clout, with a lot of names. That would be very effective. She replied that a petition should be directed to Bruce Van Note and copied to the governor and all our legislators. However, we don't know about the specific request of the petition, if it is to reject his original proposal and work with the advisory board to find other avenues to address crew shortages, or if it makes sense to wait a week, when we know about a specific bill for which we're trying to have a unified voice. Timing wise, we don't want to delay, but we want to make sure that we're hitting it with the most people at the right moment.

Laura Staines Giardino stated that it sounds like we're all fighting against something. It's important for us to recognize why they are doing this and perhaps put ourselves in a position with all the other islands of assisting them in finding additional crew. How can we reinforce the need for additional crew on the ferries over the long haul, how do we educate people, how do we encourage them to come? Can we participate in that process? Rather than fighting the dog, can we help feed the dog, and get the dog to be on our side? It does not need to be adversarial. Let's not lose sight of the fact that inducing crew members to come to work for the ferry is to our benefit as well.

They agreed. We share the same goal with the DOT. We are interested in making sure the ferry runs as reliably as possible, is fully staffed, and does so as cost effectively as possible. How we got to such an adversarial position so quickly seems very strange since we'd shared that goal. Jason Joyce from Swan's Island suggested that each community try to come up with six people who would be willing to sign on as temporary, fill-in crew, in the same way that Peter has, rather than them having to use an out-of-state staffing company. If we as a community can pursue those kinds of things and show that there are people who are stepping up and applying, then that puts us in a position of strength and support rather than a position of being adversarial.

Bill Boardman stated that he heard in that meeting that Bill Pulver said that they put a call out to island communities to supply help for the ferries, but no one has stepped up. Maybe we can recruit from the community in a post, for anyone with a captain's license, or has hours on the water. Maybe some people want to take a class to be an AB.

Peter Willcox stated that he spoke with someone from the island who works on the ferry. This person suggested that 70% of island people who might be interested in working on

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the boat are not willing to take the drug test. That is a problem, and changing that is a huge issue.

Gabe Pendleton stated that we're dealing with a historic crew shortage that everybody is aware of, but it's not necessarily clear that this is going to be a forever problem. It was not a problem in the past, and it's possible that right now we have historically low unemployment. The solution shouldn't be building a \$10 million breakwater in Lincolnville. This may just be a short-term problem in terms of the status of the country as it is right now. This may not be a long-term problem.

She suggested as an action item that we draft some language. She asked Peter if he would be willing to talk to people, to be somebody that people will reach out to, who could discuss what working for the ferry entails and how that temp experience is, and help people who might be interested in doing that, so that we can also track that. Peter agreed and is willing to do that. He has already talked to almost everybody that works on our ferry run. Most of them wouldn't operate under the ferry being on the mainland and having to commute every day or come from the island and commute every day. A survey of all the ferry crews needs to be done to see what this means to them. She clarified that her question was more about advertising to the general public that this crew shortage is a reality, and helping to point people to the open positions on the ferry, and how to get involved as a crew member. Peter stated he could do that, and probably write an article for the local newspaper.

Scott DeGrasse stated we need to anticipate other areas where they could come back and say, "This is a primary reason why we want it on Lincolnville side." It's not just a breakwater, it's not just staffing, it's also the charging. He believes they will come back firmly to say that Islesboro does not have the capacity to charge the boat. We believe that that's not true. We need to look at all of the aspects of this ferry and make sure that we have a challenge to anything they may come back to us with.

Michael Giardino stated that the first level of attack should be the funding issue. What was put forward in the federal grant applications is not what is being put forward in the planning. There's a disconnect; one might even call it a bait and switch. If it's not right, it needs to be corrected. This is a point for talking to your senators, at the federal level.

She agrees that we need a strategy around sharing that with our federal delegation. Jared Golden had a staff member who was the only federal delegation represented at the DOT meeting. It is incredibly powerful testimony, for the press and when it comes time to testify for bills in front of the legislature, to state that those are not our words. Those are their words that they are backing down on.

Scott added that there has been no mention in any of the strategies relative to the economic impact to the island. The businesses that have to get off island first thing in the morning in order to start their truck runs and bring materials them back to the island. There's no there's no mention of any impact on real estate valuations. We are currently

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the number three contributor to Waldo County. If people don't have medical services, they don't feel comfortable retiring here. Can we count on getting over to the other side when needed?

Scott stated that while a petition embracing all of the islands is important, Islesboro has nuances, such as the berthing facility, that do not apply to Vinalhaven and North Haven because of the fact that Rockland is sheltered. Our joint petitions need to call out those types of nuances.

Jordy Watson stated they are saying that in order to entice more crew, they want to tie up the boat on the mainland side. They have stated that they do not have the financial means to make a salary more appealing to staff, but they seemingly have an unlimited budget to spend to make the boats go to the mainland. That doesn't make sense. They need to show their math on whether or not this idea makes financial sense. We have to hit them in the pocketbook. We have to hit them with the taxpayers, for the whole state of Maine, and if this is federally funded, we've got to hit him with the taxpayers from the entire US. There is no basis that their plan is going to attract people to work on the ferry. What's going to attract people to work on the ferry is making a presentable salary option.

They replied that they presented on the changes to the salary structure that they have implemented over the past year. Chip Curry has said his bill would be something about asking for an independent study to understand the economic impact. Hopefully it will get to that point that there is really no meat behind any of the statements. It's not acceptable to taxpayers of the state of Maine to be making these kinds of major decisions around uncertain statements. Mike Ray has been appointed to the transportation committee. He will have access to a lot more information as a member of that committee than others.

Melissa Burns recommended that we create a dedicated email address that we can use strictly for this, for letters to the senators, or if someone has points to share. This will be a collective source. Melissa is willing to take on monitoring the email. When we compile these letters, petitions, and information, there is a quick access point that all of the committee members would be able to access. Michael Giardino added that there could be a portal where all of this data and a list of contacts could be placed, and it could be a page on the Islesboro website. Jennifer Whitlow added that we need sample and template letters for all of our legislators. Make it as easy as possible, with forms that self-populate. It's a letter writing campaign, and the more often they get letters from residents, the more they have to pay attention.

She stated that she will take this as an action item. We need an information portal, and it needs to live on the town website, and we also need someone who is willing to draft template letters to go to legislators. This would be particularly important when we get to testifying for specific bills and when bills will be heard before the legislature.

Mike Clayton asked if there's ever been talk of backing out of having an electric boat, and building a regular boat. Eventually we're going to need something better, but for the



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moment, just have a regular ferry. She replied that it's two separate issues. Swan's Island has a traditional diesel ferry and they're moving theirs to the mainland too. Islesboro has the unique challenge that these two changes are happening at the exact same time, but they're not really linked in Van Note's decision-making process.

Kara Masters-Siekman stated that she spoke to representative Mike Ray this week. He said that population is a major factor in where grants go. The \$21 million that's slated in the Lincolnville column may be a population error at the federal level, not realizing the situation of a specific place and how ferries are more critical to the island than that point. We should look into how that federal decision was made to put the \$21 million in the Lincolnville column and the \$2.5 million on the Islesboro side. Mike Ray has written bills before and he's been involved in transportation. We need to ask him to write for us. He will with pressure. Kara also feels we're not looking fully at the range of how we came to be in this position. Looking at the maine.gov website and hierarchy, the MSFS does not appear in our state's priorities until you get to the maintenance and operations bureau. It's way down in the hierarchy, and we need to kick the MSFS up to the executive branch of the government. On Islesboro, I feel like we've messed up with our emergency medical systems because, in our language we have LifeFlight and then we have the ferry as our backup of LifeFlight. It should be the other way around.

Jon Emerson from North Haven stated that this is a good discussion. Regarding the letter-writing campaign, having our representatives and senators coordinate at the state level would be good. It's really important for each community to reach out to their representative and their senator, and there are more than one now. That's good in a way because it means we'll have more voices speaking on our behalf, but it's harder because you have to get them all up to speed on the issue and get a coordinated effort that uses similar language, and maybe the same letter, that hits the same points. One of the key points on the emergency medical evacuation is that the alternative methods that they have offered can't take the ambulance, and there are times when a patient needs to remain in the ambulance from the time they're picked up, and it's not safe or a good idea to go down a steep ramp with them to get on an emergency evacuation vessel, an ambulance boat. That's a point that people should be making, because the ferry is the only one that can do that and has been doing it for decades, successfully. On North Haven, we don't mind if we miss the morning boat if there's been an emergency in the night and the crew needs to get some more rest. That's okay with us. We understand, and we could be the next ambulance call. That is not a valid argument on the state's part to say that it interferes with the schedule. It does, but not nearly as much as them berthing the boats on the mainland is going to upend our schedules. And that will be essentially ruinous for a lot of businesses to have much reduced access to the mainland. At the Ferry Advisory Board meeting on the 23rd, this will be a topic. Jon has been pushing to have the islands coordinated.

Terry Cowan suggested that since we are building a new Health Care facility on the island, we put in more higher-level equipment, and people with more training for

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emergencies. We could increase our self-sufficiency and ability to stabilize medical emergencies, and treat definitively what would have caused a ferry run. This ought to be considered. Let's make what we can do here better. Every time we can treat an emergency here that's one less emergency run to the mainland.

She replied that we are on a two- to three-year planning effort. This is this is an emergency issue, but it is going to be a marathon fight, not a sprint. Let's make sure that we're hammering everything that we can to keep the ferry where it is, but also let's make sure that we're being responsible and doing the planning efforts that we need to make sure that we can take care of our citizens. We need to be as prepared as possible.

She added that, at the select board level, we will likely be interviewing a lobbyist to spend time in Augusta, making sure that they're tracking the bills as they go through the legislative process, and making sure that we know when people need to show up and testify. That will move forward. Another idea that Fred has raised a couple of times is, how much how much money is this going to cost us and do we need to ask people to contribute? We haven't included a lobbyist in our town budget. We would like to talk with Janet and Brian about if and how much we have left in the last legal fight fund, and have part of that action item be a call for people who can and are willing to contribute, to consider doing so. However, we need to have a sense of the scale that we're talking about before we put out a call.

Earl asked about the Island Institute's role in all this. She replied that she is on the Island Institute Board. She has been in contact with Nick Batista, who's their policy person. He drafted the Legislative Options document. They were circling internally this week to figure out exactly what their next steps will be to help. Transportation is one of the major issues they recognize that our communities are facing. Their phone is ringing on it and they they're working internally to figure out their best response.

Earl asked about Maine Maritime Academy. Is there any kind of program where they could help occasionally with crewing? Peter replied that they run a couple different programs. One is a small boat program and it's possible we could get one of their students to do his co-op. He'll have to check into it. John King added that the problem is continuity there, because of the training cruise they take annually. MMA has signed a contract with the ferry service for training deckhands. One of the obstacles to hiring right now is a perception amongst a lot of the personnel that if you're deck, there's nowhere to go, which is not absolutely true. The idea is to provide deckhands with additional training from MMA that would enhance their transferable skills. And so that has been done. The problem is the contract was fairly substantial, but it's limited by what the ferry service and DOT are willing to spend. But that is in the implementation stage.

She added that Chip Curry is resubmitting an act to improve ferry service reliability by providing scholarships at the Maine Maritime Academy.

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Frank Start suggested as an action item to get the information of who's applying, who's licensed in the area, how many are willing or close enough by to have it on the mainland. If there's any information that can be documented as to why the point that they're making in our opinion doesn't work, it will help our fight. There's no supporting documentation that they're going to do any better this way. In fact, they will lose jobs on the island. The crew members that stay in crews' quarters get a per diem. That per diem will probably go away if the boat stays in Lincolnville. Some of them use that per diem as part of what makes it beneficial for them to work for the state. Do the DOT's arguments have any validity? If they're saying that they can get crew by putting a boat on the mainland, or that they can keep the crew that they have, let's see the evidence. If they don't have the evidence to support that, then that is one less point that they have.

Laura Staines Giardino added that she also had a conversation with Mike Ray. He's a neophyte in his current position and he candidly, during the conversation, tended to lean towards the DOT's point of view. His comment was, "You could consider getting your own boat and just training people on the island so that the EMS personnel can run a boat." However, if they can run a boat, why don't they just work on the ferry as fill-ins, for example, to compliment what Frank was saying? We could find out who on the islands have the capacity to fill in the gaps, periodically when other crew members are not available, and I'm not encouraging or trying to suggest that the EMS personnel do that. There are other individuals on the island who have maritime training, and it probably would not take that much more effort to get them the skills to fill in in an emergency situation.

She replied that this is the perspective that we are fighting, and it is across the state. We need to be aware that it's a popular opinion. To Frank's point, it was noted by a number of people in the room that there was no information to back up what the decision was, and that information was needed in order to make an informed decision. We need to figure out who has access to that information and who gets it, but that's actually where our legislators can be really helpful to us, because they saw that lack of information, too.

She stated that tomorrow's deadline in the legislature is also for placeholders. They don't need to have the details of those bills fleshed out, so it's going to be a couple of weeks while they do that work. It's important for us to understand what is the language that our legislators agree on. We need to stay vigilant in understanding how that evolves over the next couple of weeks. During that time, we need to be hiring a lobbyist so that when bills start to become heard that we have somebody who is tracking the specific legislation as it goes through the process and letting us know exactly when to show up and when to write letters, who are the advocates, who are the people pushing, and who are the people that need to have more people contacting them.

Kara asked if Midcoast Council of Governments (MCOG) could be our integrated island coordinator. Melissa Burns replied that MCOG represents all coastal communities, not just islands. She's waiting to hear back from them, because we've reached out a couple

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times to different people in that group to ask what they are available to do and what services they can provide.

Shey added that our island select boards are in regular communication. The Island Institute could be a good hub because they also have strong policy expertise. Shey is happy to see if we could have a small meeting with select board members and the Island Institute to help flesh out what the right petition language could be and what the right timing of that should be. Happy to take that on as an action item.

Shey is also open to suggestions about the best way that we can communicate to make sure that people are aware of this issue, what's being done and what needs to be done, and ask people for their support. We have a little bit of homework to do to figure out exactly what we need before we put out a huge call for help, but know that the year-round and the seasonal community have resources and connections that could help us make sure that we are finding the right person who can be as influential as possible in tracking this.

Sonya Leach asked where we can find the Ferry Service Advisory Board recordings or minutes. Peter replied that both can be found on the website. Sonya asked if it would be helpful to have more islanders go to the Advisory Board meetings. Peter replied that the next meeting is on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, at 10:00 am. It's at the ferry office in Rockland. Parking is a problem, and it's in a room about this big, so not many additional people can fit into it. It is on Zoom. Peter will share the link in the papers and on the website.

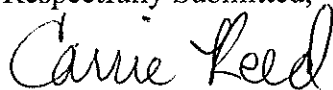
An anonymous resident commented in the Zoom chat that it's unreasonable to rely on a restricted Facebook page to conduct town and public business. Shey agreed that Facebook is a great tool, but it should not be the official tool to put out information. If you haven't already, please sign up for Constant Contact, because that's where the town sends information out most rapidly. It's the best way to get information straight from the source. Hard copies of information can be available at the Town Office.

#### **NEXT MEETING DATE**

Frequency: every two weeks. Next meeting Wednesday, January 22, at 4:30.

**Motion by E. MacKenzie, seconded by P. Willcox, to adjourn meeting at 6:03 PM. No discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 6 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.**

Respectfully Submitted,



Carrie Reed  
Secretary