

Islesboro Housing Committee

Agenda

May 5, 2026

5:00 PM

Town Office & Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86950225412?pwd=g5sbdMiPcC1CzIpQwoCJSmNt9Edr85.1>

Meeting ID: 869 5022 5412

Passcode: 174117

1. Call the meeting to order.
2. Establish a Quorum
3. Approval of the minutes from April Committee Meeting
4. Housing Survey – any update or new data?
5. Island Institute Housing Coalition Activity
6. Off Season / School Term Rental Opportunities
7. Planning Update
8. Comments from visitors.
9. Set next meeting date.
10. Adjourn.

Islesboro Housing Committee
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, April 9, 2026
In-Person Meeting at 5:00 PM, Town Office

DRAFT MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Chair Michael Nelson called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM.

2. Establishment of a Quorum

Quorum was established with over 3 members present

Members Present: Chair Michael Nelson, Tom Tutor, Cate Blackford

Members Present via Zoom: Lindsey Govoni, Peter Rothschild, Ex Officio

Members Absent: Ginnie Hess, Susan West, Jennifer Selendy

Others Present: Secretary Carrie Reed, Daniel Frohling

3. Approval of minutes of March 5, 2026

Motion: To approve Minutes of March 5, 2026, as written, T. Tutor, seconded by C. Blackford. No discussion.

Roll Call. Motion passed, 4 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

4. Housing Survey Update

- Cate reported that she has updated the data online for all of the survey outcomes, and also has the hardcopies from Susan. There were 23 responses for the on-island survey.
 - It's about 50-50 between people who want to rent and people who want to buy a home.
 - Most folks stated they preferred 2 or 3 bedrooms vs. 1 or 2.
 - Most were couples or single people.
 - The range of employment was broad. A few retired folks, property managers, teachers, landscaping, Tarratine Club, administrative, and community work. Many carpenters and gardeners.
 - Most who have housing felt like it's affordable, but there are some folks who are paying more than they can afford.
 - What people are paying for housing ranges between \$580/month (just property taxes), up to \$2,500/month, with most in the \$1,000 - \$1,200 range.
 - Some people have support from employers for their housing.
 - If people felt their home wasn't affordable, they answered that between \$800 and \$1,000 would be affordable.
 - The range of how much of their income people are paying for housing really varies. There are a few folks paying over 40% of their income for housing. Most are paying 20 – 30%, and many paying 30 – 40%.
 - Fortunately, almost everyone who responded said they have adequate heat. Only one person said they don't have enough heat, and they live in a seasonal place that does not work.
 - Many of the retired folks said that if they didn't own their home outright, they wouldn't be able to afford the taxes plus a mortgage.
 - There were a couple people who said they would like to be in smaller homes and downsize.
 - Some people would like to be in something bigger so their family can grow.
 - There wasn't as much interest in very small homes as we thought there might have been.
 - Not everyone who responded was looking to move or change their housing.
 - A fair amount of people shared their contact information for the ferry ticket drawing.

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- Most preferred a house, a decent number said either house or apartment, and one person said they preferred an apartment.
- We have a wide range of incomes represented in this survey. It would be worth digging into, even though it's a very small sample.
- Lindsey added that there were zero responses for the online off-island survey.
- Cate stated that there were four responses to the paper off-island survey. She will create a summary.
 - In response to the question, what appeals to you about living on Islesboro, one person "Nothing. I work at the boatyard; I don't need anything."
 - One person said that being close to work would be appealing. Living and working on Islesboro for a couple of years is more appealing than permanently moving. They pay \$1,000/mo for a 3-bedroom on the mainland for five people and think that cost is too high. For the reasons not to move here, they circled all the options: housing, taxes, ferry inconvenience, and lack of theaters, restaurants, bars, shopping.
 - Another response stated the appeal would be living close to work at PYY. They pay \$600/mo, which they think is affordable. They circled almost all the reasons they would not live here.
 - One response for the appeal to living here would be the community and how friendly it is. They would like to retire here. Their current housing is \$1,100/mo, and they find that affordable. They do healthcare work and their partner does banking. The inconvenience of the ferry, lack of restaurants, and lack of shopping would be preventing them.
- There were other attempts to get people to respond to the survey, and people didn't even want to do that, so this may actually be representative of the people who work out here, in that they don't want to live here. Cate will write up a summary and send it to the group.
- Tom asked if a survey went to the school staff. Cate replied that a couple teachers responded to the survey, but there wasn't a school-only effort.
- Peter added that there will soon be several openings for teachers and a principal. Most of these people will need housing. These people were not part of the survey, but that doesn't mean there's no demand.
- Michael stated he will ask Susan if the school was offered the opportunity to give the survey to potential applicants. But we don't know exactly how they'd do that.
- Lindsey added that there is a family moving here from Spain. They have no ties to the island, they just like the islands and they're moving across the world to live here. She's interested in talking with them once they arrive to see what was their draw. They have two school-aged children. Lindsey will connect with the mother, and perhaps find out where they will be living, which might provide some insight.
- Michael stated he will reach out to Jennifer and ask if we can talk to the school about how they're reaching potential candidates and if they'd be willing to answer questions relative to the housing issue.
- Cate stated that the potential need for housing for new teachers feels important. She doesn't know what we can do in the very short term about it. The survey was an attempt to get information on overall trends. The school going through a hiring expansion is a one-time thing as opposed to something that we need to be planning for in general. The information from prospective teachers is great to have, but may not be essential in terms of long-term trends.
- Peter stated there's an equally important and critical matter to attract more students to the school and young families to the island. There's a demand based on the sustainability of Islesboro to create a situation that is attractive to potential new residents. We need to aggressively try to attract people.
- Michael stated that Tom had given Jennifer some ideas relative to school term housing.
- Tom stated that, in the past, when a new teacher comes to town, his wife Sue has helped do some detective work and find a house that has never been rented and is underutilized. With some personal connections, one can create a new rental. There are many houses that are unoccupied most of the year.

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- Cate asked Tom if this might be a project for the Housing Committee to work on with the school, once they have interested candidates. Tom replied that he hadn't thought of that, but that is something we might take on. He will try to get Sue to make up a list of underutilized homes. It takes some work.
- Michael suggested we can talk about this and possibly make an action plan at the next meeting.

5. Island Institute Housing Activity

- Leap Grant:
 - Michael reported that he and Emily McCarthy from the Island Institute spent three weeks gathering data to apply for a LEAP grant to do housing planning. However, the grant application didn't fly. The grant is intended for municipal infrastructure, and the grantors did not deem housing to qualify for that definition. She Conover might chase after it for some other project.
 - Michael stated that he and Peter were successful in getting a line item for housing added into the Town budget. The original \$15,000 got trimmed to \$10,000 in budget discussions.
 - Cate asked if the Housing Committee should prepare a plan for speaking at Town Meeting in case this comes up for discussion. Michael replied that he will rely on the budget presenters to let him know if they would like him to do anything. The description that Jennifer put together would be good to use.
- Island Institute Housing Meeting.
 - Michael reported that he had a couple of meetings with the Housing Coalition, as well as their Maine Islands Coalition, and pushed discussion relative to what they can do to lobby the state for money. The only thing they have at this time is a program through the Maine Housing Authority, the Maine Rural Rental Program, which is geared toward larger units. Their money is targeted toward 5 - 15 units, and we don't have anything that will meet that volume criteria. As it stands, there is no money to go after from the state. Island Institute will keep us up-to-date on what they find out.
 - The Island Institute's housing guru resigned last month, so their policy director has stepped in.
 - Emily McCarthy is looking through options on projects that they are currently working on. One is community engagement. Michael will discuss this with her to see if it's something we can bring to what we'd like to do.

6. Planning Update

- Michael reported that he will be meeting with some members of the Islesboro Affordable Properties (IAP) Board tomorrow. They are getting ready to kick off the campaign on the next housing proposals.
- Michael spent time at the site on Reeby Road, which is just over 6 acres. Based on the walkthrough, the group feels they could put five more duplexes there, but more land work is needed. The section they are looking at needs a perc test. The land on the back side of the property slopes down, so is probably not buildable, as it gets a lot of run-off.
- The location of the next duplex has been laid out. There's room for four more. A circular road would go in and back out again. The proposed duplexes will be 2-bedroom, 1-bath units. A quadruplex has been ruled out due to issues discussed at the last meeting.
- IAP has asked the Island Institute to lobby the state regarding insurance, relative to island regulations. It's expensive to insure here. Additionally, insurance gets caught up if a building meets local codes but not state codes.

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- IAP thinks the new duplexes can be done less expensively than the first one, and is working with the builder on costs. He has his equipment here, and they'd like to engage him before he takes it off island.
- Cate asked about the Rural Rental Program and if the units all have to be within one building. Michael replied that Nick Batista from Island Institute has clarified that they don't need to be in the same unit, but they need to be on the same plot of land, and all developed together within a certain time frame. IAP cannot afford to do 6 units at once. The rentals would also have to meet the criteria for low-income housing. IAP found with the last round of housing that there were a number of applicants that did not have the documented income to afford the housing.
- Peter asked Michael when we might see a plan of the prospective units and a rendering or something that we could use to fundraise and promote the idea. Michael stated he has something that wasn't professionally done. Since this won't be the final plan, he doesn't want to spend money on a professional drawing. For internal purposes, the raw plan and outline will be fine. If we get the go-ahead on that, we'll spend the money and lay it out in a builder's spec. Michael would like to lay out the road with the goal that the Town take over the road, rather than it being a private road that IAP is responsible for, because that is a big issue currently. It would need culverts, etc.
- Carrie will ask Dave who did the Town Center maps.
- Peter stated a drawing would be helpful in terms of marketing the development. It doesn't need to be contractor specs.
- Michael reiterated that he has a meeting tomorrow with the people who are responsible for the fundraising, and he's not going to let the Housing Committee tell an independent organization how they should do their work.
- Peter stated he feels confident that there are many people on Islesboro that would be delighted to make charitable contributions if they had some idea of what they were contributing to, with a picture.

7. Visitor Comments

- Peter Rothschild stated he has arranged for a Sunday in August, probably the 9th, to be devoted to affordable housing at the Islesboro Forum Lecture Series, for a panel of people, possibly representatives of IAP or this committee, to make a presentation to the community. He is soliciting input and suggestions in how to organize this to acquaint others, especially people who are only here seasonally, on the issue of housing and how important that is to the sustainable future of Islesboro.

8. Next Housing Committee meeting date

- Regular meeting: Tuesday, May 5th, 5:00 PM.

9. Adjourn

Motion by T. Tutor, seconded by C. Blackford, to adjourn at 5:55 PM. Motion passed, 4 yes, 0 no, Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carrie Reed, Secretary