

Islesboro Housing Committee
Regular Meeting
Thursday, January 16, 2025
In-Person Meeting at 5:00 PM, Town Office

 APPROVED

3/27/25

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Chair Mike Nelson called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

2. Establishment of a Quorum

Quorum was established with over 3 members present

Members Present: Chair Mike Nelson, Susan West, Tom Tutor, and Melissa Burns, Ex Officio (Zoom).

Members Absent: Cate Blackford and Ginnie Hess

Others Present: Donna Leone (Zoom)

3. Approval of minutes of December 19, 2024

Motion: To approve Minutes of December 19, 2024, as written, S. West, seconded by T. Tutor. No discussion.
Motion passed, 3 yes, 0 no, Unanimous.

4. Waste water and pre-treatment systems

- Tom shared some information about a Norweco Singulair® self-contained septic treatment system distributed by a NH company that serves Maine. It's a sewage pretreatment system that has a couple of tanks and an agitator. It allows one to install a system that is closer to the water table, and also helps to reduce the size of the leaching field by 75%.
- This means it is much easier to get population density when distance between well head and leaching field is an issue. The cost is about \$6,500.
- There is some annual maintenance involved. The brochure stated the first two years are free and subsequent years are \$175/year. This is very affordable and useful.
- Susan will share the information with Islesboro Affordable Properties (IAP). She is on the board.

5. Midcoast Council of Governments (MCOG) Activity.

- Mike reported that the MCOG Housing Working Group has been working with Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP), which is going more into housing than they have in the past. They're looking at creating an organization that will address both low- and mid-income households, which means they are going to go after workforce housing as well as low-income housing.
- Mike was at a meeting with them last week where CEO Donna Kelly presented this to their board.
- Their objective now is to start a housing operation. They will use housing trusts and land banks.
- MCOG was working with WCAP on the creation of this housing organization, and now is going to disband the MCOG Housing Group. Their last two meetings were sparsely attended, so this makes sense.
- WCAP is going to look at creating a countywide housing committee, as an advisory council. Mike will stay close to that to see exactly what they're going to do.
- They are looking at some sizable grant money. They're close enough to it that they feel it will be forthcoming. This will be the basis of the new organization.

Islesboro Housing Committee
Regular Meeting
Thursday, January 16, 2025
In-Person Meeting at 5:00 PM, Town Office

- Their goal of including middle income would be good for what we're looking at.
- Mike feels IAP would benefit from having a member on this committee. He will reach out to them.
- MCOG is still moving forward with their mobile home replacement program. This will also be funded by a sizeable grant. Should that come through, we would have some need for being included.
- Mike reported that Janet shared information with him about another group, the Maine Island & Coastal Affordable Housing Coalition. They sent Janet a note about a meeting on February 6th. Mike agreed to attend this meeting. They will discuss trends that are currently in motion at the state and national levels, affecting affordable housing, along with funding options, policy changes, and how the Maine islands can take advantage of any of those opportunities.
- Mike stated that he, Nancy Alexander, and Janis Petzel have been appointed by the Select Board to sit on the Maine Islands Coalition, which is for statewide islands. If there are people in this group looking at housing solutions and any monies that are out there, this will be a good connection.
- Maine Islands Coalition has focus on housing, transportation, and energy, and how to get decision-makers to pay more attention to the islands for those issues. There's been a lot of discussion of the ferry situation over the last couple of weeks.
- Melissa added that the Select Board decided at last night's meeting to go forward with hiring a lobbyist to help Islesboro with the ferry situation. DOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note's letter was concerning. Melissa thinks that when the other islands and coalitions find out that we are pursuing a lobbyist, they're going to be happy to have someone from Islesboro on their boards.
- Tom added that the one thing we might gain for Islesboro among those different groups is if we see a grant application that yields results, that would give us some sort of roadmap.
- Mike stated that the MCOG folks are really clued in to programs and money—where it is and how to go about taking advantage of opportunities. They've worked with groups like WCAP on fleshing out the grant applications. That's a service they provide. They refer to Genesis, which lends and manages funds.
- What Mike hasn't been able to find out is how to get developers involved and excited about building workforce housing.
- Tom agreed that that's a necessary element. If we want to build workforce housing here, we have to find someone to do it. While we would love for it to be a local contractor, there are some other developers and contractors who are queued in to the affordable and mid-income housing funds and procedures, and we would need someone like that.

6. Update on Grant Research

- Melissa reported that she got the Jenn Hayden report. She wasn't able to glean anything relevant to housing. We're lucky we have IAP. How do we bring IAP 2.0 without stepping on IAP? Jenn Hayden predicted in her report that there would be an issue with housing, transportation, and affordability on the island, but there's no path drawn out, or even any contacts listed. It just points out that the town should be sustainably planning for it. This is how the Housing Committee came to be. She provides data sets that can be used in grant applications, because it is a published and substantial report.
- Mike stated that the report reiterated the themes that he's seen in a number of the meetings he's attended. These issues are statewide. While there's tons of data to substantiate the concerns, there are no clear answers.

Islesboro Housing Committee
Regular Meeting
Thursday, January 16, 2025
In-Person Meeting at 5:00 PM, Town Office

- Mike read recently about the state budget and how all the money that came available four years ago was built into programs and spent, and that money is dried up. Yet, the budget is at that level and needs to come back down, or there needs to be another source of money.
- Melissa referred to two companies in Portland that were providing help for people to fix their credit and enter the housing market. These organizations are now out of business. It was nonprofits that were meant for that, and there's nothing to sustain them anymore.
- Mike stated that he thinks we have to put our heads together relative to this committee and IAP, and how that goes over the long term. This is a discussion for another time. This is something to think about, especially if IAP is going to expand to something other than low-income housing.
- Susan added that IAP's housing that's on tap to go is essentially workforce housing. If they have the grants, there's only so much income someone can make, which is the difficulty of getting plumbers and electricians here, for example, because they would go above the 20% on top of the median income for the state and for our area. These new units will be kept as rentals as opposed to rent-to-own. They've been able to raise money from the wealthier people who want to have more services.
- Susan stated she has not given up on the idea that if there is land with long-term back taxes, there could be teamwork between the town and IAP, and that could be ideal.
- Melissa mentioned the links she emailed for the Wake-Me-Up Wednesday meeting recordings by Maine Community Development Association. They are very informative. Melissa is looking forward to the funding strategies at the end of the month. It's an 8-week series for trainings for affordable housing.

7. Comments from Visitors

- None.

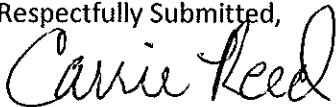
8. Next meeting date

- Next meeting Thurs, March 27, 5:00 PM.

9. Adjourn

Motion by T. Tutor, seconded by S. West, to adjourn at 5:33 PM. Roll Call. Motion passed, 3 yes, 0 no, Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,



Carrie Reed, Secretary

