

Islesboro Housing Committee  
Regular Meeting  
Tuesday, February 4, 2026  
In-Person Meeting at 5:00 PM, Town Office

APPROVED

3/5/26

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Chair Michael 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 Michael Nelson, Tom Tutor, Susan West, Lindsey Govoni, Peter Rothschild, Ex Officio

Members Present via Zoom: Ginnie Hess (5:07), Cate Blackford (5:25)

Members Absent: Jennifer Selendy

Others Present: Daniel Frohling, Amy Mulnix, Ted Pendleton, Secretary Carrie Reed

Others Present via Zoom: None

3. Approval of minutes of January 6, 2026

**Motion: To approve Minutes of January 6, 2026, as written, T. Tutor, seconded by L. Govoni. No discussion.**

**Roll Call. Motion passed, 3 yes, 0 no. S. West abstained.**

Michael stated he had an update to the agenda. Skip #5.

4. Housing Survey Update

- Susan reported that Raymond, who works at Boardman Cottage, is happy to distribute copies of the Off-Island Survey at the ferry landing, as he commutes each day.
- Susan hasn't yet gone out to meet the Quicksilver, but plans to. She went to PYY and gave them a bunch. She will go back in the next couple of days to pick up any responses.
- Peter suggested going to the Island Market for their off-island employees. Also, many off-island workers go there for lunch. The contractors on the island, such as Clayton Brothers, IME, Andy Staples, and Peter Mills, all employ off-island workers. Susan will reach out to them.
- Tom stated he sent Michael a Washington Post article this afternoon. It was talking about the national housing shortage and how to measure it. It's difficult to quantify the need on any scale. Various sources for the article estimated the country needs between two million and twenty million new homes. They went through the ways they could compute those different numbers. For us, it's difficult to know how many homes local residents need and how many homes we could fill from people moving from the mainland. We all agree there's a need, and we should just go on that assumption.
- Peter stated there is a metric for the school. They have projected need housing for at least 3 – 4 faculty. They are also trying to attract a certain number of magnet students. If the school is utilizing their own consultant to attract magnet students, that should be coupled with the distribution of the survey. That's another potential audience.
- Susan stated that the wrong survey (Off-Island version) went out with the Town mailer. We want to send the On-Island survey again with the March mailer. It behooves us to do another round. An electronic version of the On-Island survey went out a couple weeks ago.
- Lindsey suggested adding a QR code to the printed survey. When scanned, it will bring you to the Google form. Younger people would be more inclined to fill out the survey this way. Lindsey will get the code to Susan.

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- Susan stated that she received 14 completed surveys after the first round.
5. Status of plan for “Marketing the Island”
- Skip this item.
6. Policy Discussion
- a. Sub-committee formation
- Mike stated the subgroup that includes members from the School Board, IESC, IAP, and the Housing Committee has been created. The group has met twice.
- b. Objectives
- The agreement is to use that group to push forward a housing policy to present to the Select Board, with achievable recommendations for how to raise money that would be targeted to build workforce housing. We have lost, through retirement and moving away, a number of tradespeople. The school has already projected that three teachers will be retiring soon. There’s concern about where replacements would live.
  - At an IAP Board meeting last week, members expressed concerns. They are an independent organization, not linked to the Town. They want to make sure that independence is not impeded upon. If we’re going to recommend a public/private approach, will the Town and IAP be going after the same donors? This is a significant concern. They have plans to build more, and that means raising more money. We want to make sure we’re not asking people to give twice for the same thing.
  - Peter stated he doesn’t see why that should be a problem. You give an amount of money that is specifically earmarked for housing, to either organization.
  - Mike replied that it can be done, but needs to be coordinated. There are ways to address it. When you’re raising public money, the determination of how that money is spent is critical. Once money is donated to IAP, it leaves the public domain and enters into the private domain. It would take agreement on how that money flows.
  - Peter stated the question is about the most efficient way of raising money to build housing and getting the public sector to contribute to that effort.
  - Mike pointed to the Health Center and Municipal Building Project funding model. They created a fundraising committee, and they gathered donations that exceeded 50% of the overall cost. That was a little different in that the money raised went into the public domain. There are many ways municipalities can raise funds, including bonds. That has to be explored. IAP isn’t going to do municipal fundraising.
  - The committee has to present a proposal to the Select Board, one that articulates specifically what the request is.
  - Tom stated that in order to do fundraising or go to the Town for a bond issue, you need a site, a design, and a plan.
  - Peter asked about the plan for the next phase of the IAP project. Mike replied that they are still working on a design. It could be a duplex or four-plex, or they could decide to renovate existing housing. There’s a lot of work that goes into the planning process.
  - Mike stated that Tom had suggested looking at rentals for the school, as an interim solution to the problem. There has to be a strategic, long-term plan, looking at what the townspeople

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want. We need to put things in place that lead from where we are to where we want to go. That's what this committee's responsibility is. There's no easy answer to put on the table.

- Peter stated he is looking to the upcoming budgeting process in March to have something to present to the Select Board.
- Tom replied that a specific project is needed. IAP has a specific project, but as a municipality, we do not. Presently, there's been no municipal support of IAP, and Michael was saying earlier that IAP is not sure they want to have municipal support. They'd like to be independent.
- Cate reminded the group that they had discussed looking at the Town of Stonington model, and doing something like they did, which is creating a line item in the Town budget that supports housing. It goes into a fund and doesn't necessarily need to be used at the same amount every year. The fund could grow. It could also be used for infrastructure, or other needs to support housing, whether that's planning, or making a contribution in some way to IAP. It doesn't have a dedicated revenue stream. It was a small amount, like \$10,000 or \$15,000 a year, that then grew into a pool. There's a news article from 2023; they were discussing funds from tax-acquired properties, which is not something that Islesboro typically does. That may have been in addition to what they were doing before. Cate will follow up with the Stonington folks that she spoke with in the fall and report back.
- Amy Mulnix stated she Googled the most efficient way to get funds for affordable housing. There are several activities that municipalities can undertake. There is also money in the State of Maine for planning. Has the committee ever written a planning grant?
- Tom replied that typically for state or federal grants, our municipality is too small and doesn't meet the threshold. The model that works on Islesboro is a combination of raising private money and floating a bond. However, the Town has never wanted to be a landlord, and that's a big threshold to jump over.
- Ted Pendleton asked about the possibility of the Town facilitating the construction of homes, that are then purchased by the occupants. Is it that the costs are too high? He is concerned about the quality of public housing developments. It tends to build cultures that are not as independent or attractive for people, because you're building a substandard way of living. He is concerned about it moving in that direction. He'd like to preserve this kind of life.
- Susan replied that the problem with building affordable housing and letting people buy it is that you can't be allowed later to sell it for as much money as you can get, because it's then no longer affordable.
- Mike added that price has also been an issue. It's too high for the target market. Ted asked about a way to change that dynamic, so people can go back to owning their own homes.
- Mike replied to Amy and stated the Maine Housing Authority has no funding right now. There are other programs, and the Maine Islands Coalition is trying to figure out whether those are something we can qualify for.
- Susan asked about the retiring faculty, and whether they are selling their island homes. Lindsey believes that at least two of them are off-island teachers who commute here.
- Daniel Frohling asked about IAP possibly buying and renovating houses that are on the market, as they had discussed last fall. There are three homes on the market in a reasonable price range. Mike replied that he's looked at those homes, and they require extensive work to meet

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IAP standards. It wouldn't be cost-effective. IAP wants homes that can stay in the rental inventory for a significant period of time.

- Discussion about subsidizing homes for people to own, and what that would cost.
- Susan stated that IAP has discussed the possibility of tiny houses for singles or couples. From the survey responses that we've already collected, about a third would like to downsize from a 3-bedroom home to something smaller. That would free up larger homes for families. Not everyone on the IAP board is on board with the idea, but Susan will keep bringing it up. There's a company in Maine that makes them, and they look good. You just need a concrete slab.

c. Timeline

- Mike stated the subcommittee needs to come up with something for the Select Board. March is an aggressive timeline. Maybe we propose the line item in the budget, as Cate suggested.
- Tom stated that if we do something this year, it would be a minor line item in the budget. It would be a pledge that we are in this together.
- Mike stated that IAP is not going to wait for this subcommittee to come up with a plan. At the open house for the new cottages, there was a potential donor who said he was reticent to donate money until he sees a cooperative effort between IAP, IESC, the Housing Committee, and the Town. It's going to take an approach that's a little bit different. If you want to keep them in the affordable range, they have to be rentals and not sales, because the sale will be marked up over time.
- Mike added that Maine's population has aged significantly. The percentage of houses that are selling for cash is higher than ever. We need something that gets us out of that cycle.
- Ted stated that laws can be passed that change that behavior, such as a higher tax rate for second homes. Peter replied that there are some legal encumbrances in Maine.
- Peter will bring up the line-item idea to the Select Board, with help on wording.
- Mike will speak with Brian Bohanon, who may have some insight into how to approach this.

7. Comments from visitors

- No further comments.

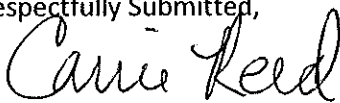
8. Next Housing Committee meeting date

- Regular meeting: Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 PM.
- Subcommittee meeting: Monday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 3:30 PM.

9. Adjourn

**Motion by S. West, seconded by L. Govoni, to adjourn at 6:10 PM. Motion passed, 6 yes, 0 no, Unanimous.**

Respectfully Submitted,



Carrie Reed, Secretary