

Islesboro Housing Committee
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, May 21, 2024
In-Person Meeting at 4:30 PM, Town Office

APPROVED
6/20/24

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Chair Mike Nelson called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

2. Establishment of a Quorum

Quorum was established with over 3 members present

Members Present: Mike Nelson, Tom Tutor, Cate Blackford, and Melissa Burns, Ex Officio.

Members Absent: Ginnie Hess,

Others Present via Zoom: Cressica Brazier, Barbara Talamo, Laura Staines Giardino.

3. Approval of minutes of March 26, 2024

Motion: To approve Minutes of March 26, 2024, as written, T. Tutor, seconded by C. Blackford. Motion passed, 3 yes, 0 no, Unanimous.

4. Up-Island Town Center – final review for June Town Meeting.

- Tom thanked Mike for presenting the proposed Up-Island Town Center at the Planning Board Public Hearing on April 22nd
- Mike reported that the Public Hearing went well. No one expressed dissent against the idea. Bill Boardman spoke about when the first Town Centers were adopted, and said he supports it. There was another couple here who live in the proposed Town Center. They asked some questions and were for the idea. A fair amount of people were on Zoom; most of them had questions about the Planning Board articles for LD 2003—mostly about ADUs.
- Mike, Tom, and Melissa will be at Town Meeting on June 15th. Tom will present an overview of the plan for the proposed Up-Island Town Center.
- Cate suggested that if there is time at Town Meeting, the Housing Committee might present general info about what we're working on. Discussion about Town Meeting items.
- Maps of Town Centers will be on display at Town Meeting. The Planning Board will choose which map of the Post Office Town Center to use.
- Melissa suggested having handouts of the maps at Town Meeting.

5. MCOG Housing Working Group – update on initial meeting

- Mike reported that he attended the first Maine Council of Governments (MCOG) Working Group meeting at the beginning of May. This one was for just Waldo County.
- Waldo County was represented by a very diverse cross section, such as real estate people, Select Board members, Belfast Chamber of Commerce people, etc. It was mostly introductions, and a lot of anecdotal information.

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- The realtors reported that about 80% of real estate sales are cash sales now. People are buying up property but not necessarily moving in. This takes the \$40,000- \$100,000/year families out of the picture. They can't compete.
- There's also a dichotomy of pricing East of Route 1 vs. West of Route 1.
- They requested from all the attendees to think about goals and outcomes that they expect from the working group. Mike talked about some of the things we discussed with them previously, and asked them for specific data:
 - Their data needs to be done by community and not as a whole for Waldo County.
 - Current and projected population growth, and the housing demand they expect going along with that. He also stressed that supporting data driving the demand would be critical.
 - Housing costs, range of prices, average vs. median. The median would be more interesting.
 - What is the income range in the community and how does that match with housing costs?
 - Going back to the projected growth in housing, what's the demand for the workforce population segment?
 - The economic forecast that will impact housing.
- Melissa suggested also looking into data for the type of work that's associated with each community.
- Mike has heard that a lot of the real estate activity on the island has been some of the wealthy homeowners buying houses for staff. It's not year-round, but for staff that travels with them. This means our year-round housing stock is declining rather than expanding.
- Cate stated MIT has a Cost-of-Living calculator that goes down to the county level. She looked into this in researching rental prices, based on Waldo County averages. She wondered if incomes and costs on Islesboro may be more similar to Knox County. Mike stated that there was an IAP study of Islesboro's average income, for registered voting Islesboro residents, and it was within \$1500 of the Waldo County average.
- Cate stated that the Waldo County Cost-of-Living calculator and the Income calculator could be interesting tools as we're trying to get some of that data, in terms of price points and workforce. Having information on primary types of employment would also be helpful. Discussion about employers on the island.
- Melissa knows of three island residents whose landlords have given notice to vacate because they plan to sell. One of them is a long-term, elderly person who has been in her home for 20 years, and she has no place to go.
- Tom referred to an article in the most recent Working Waterfront, which discusses having ordinances to stem the exodus of year-round housing to short-term rentals (VRBO, Airbnb). People are buying houses strictly to rent them on the short-term rental market. Some communities are enacting ordinances to have people register their short-term rentals, and sometimes even pay a fee. It doesn't seem pertinent to Islesboro yet, but the data would be interesting. MCOG has some regional data.
- Mike reported that MCOG is a state-mandated organization.
- Tom stated that the third Town Center is a nudge in the right direction, but to have that be effective, we have to have some private landowner build some affordable housing, and the only thing the municipality can do is give them some kind of tax break to encourage affordable housing.
- Mike would like the committee to develop a presentation for the Select Board. There has to be an incentive for affordable housing. This starts with taxes.

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- Mike stated that land trusts didn't come up in the MCOG meeting. It was more of a meet & greet. The presentation was kind of rushed.
- Discussion about property valuation.
- Tom stated that it seems that the Town can write Ordinance that states if you put your property into affordable housing, then the property's tax burden will be reduced.
- Cate added that if we were to create some kind of land trust or housing trust, maybe it could state that a property owner cedes rights to the land for resale, so they could sell the house, and lease the land. Mike stated IAP originally was based on that model, but it was fraught with issues.
- Melissa stated that a corporation could possibly do it without as many issues. Islesboro would only tax on the building, which would be an incentive.
- Discussion on defining "workforce housing" in relation to seasonal employment.
- Cate stated that there are some things that have been set up at the State recently to encourage alternative development models. There were legal clarifications around co-ops, full-equity co-ops to limited-equity co-ops, to a third category where all of the equity is held by the non-profit or the corporation. Those models just got additional recognition at the state level so they can use Maine Housing funding and other government money. Perhaps there are additional incentives at the municipal level. We could work in collaboration with the Planning Board around zoning incentives, perhaps a co-op structure for rentals. Lewiston has a tenant co-op, with a board of tenants that oversee the management of the housing. The security deposit is the buy-in to the co-op. All the equity goes back into maintaining the building, and the rents are kept low. The original funding is from government funding, grant, and municipal funding.
- Mike stated we need to get to a point where we come up with a thrust to present to the Select Board. At the Public Hearing, he focused on sustainability of the community.
- Tom reiterated that we don't want to compete with Islesboro Affordable Properties. How can we encourage landowners to develop units, with incentives?
- Cate outlined the different lanes to housing: municipal, MCOG, county, IAP, private landowners. It would be good to identify the opportunities that different entities have because of the role that they play. What incentives might be right for co-ops?
- We also have to address getting housing built. Barry Wherren built his house with an interesting model, like a kit, using Structurally Insulated Panels (SIP), manufactured components. GoLogic is a local source.
- Cate wondered about using a Habitat model, with sweat equity. Regional Habitats may be a good source for information. That could be a good fit here, culturally.
- Mike stated we need to put together options that the Town can either endorse or decline.
- Tom suggested a flow chart: to stimulate workforce housing, things IAP can do, the municipality can do, a private landowner can do, etc. Property tax incentives.
- Mike stated there would have to be an entity to which the private landowner can effectively donate their property. If the property owner wants to maintain ownership of the property but put some kind of easement on it that limits development to only workforce housing, how can that person get a tax break?
- Melissa stated that Hancock County Housing has verbiage for a housing program. They have the MIT calculator and one of the people who helps enter the data working for them. They have written their ordinances for housing. You can't charge extra taxes for housing, but you can charge fees for registering

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short-term rentals. Accessed through mainehousing.org. Melissa will send link and info from Island Institute meeting. The next meeting is May 30th at 10:00am.

- Mike will send a couple more items to Adi Philson at MCOG for goals, outcomes, and data we'd like to see.
- Cate will research opportunities by lane.
- Mike will ask what other regions are doing collectively—development authority, regional housing plan, resource sharing, etc.
- Melissa stated North Haven recently rewrote Ordinances for workforce housing. She will send link.

6. Comments from visitors

- None.

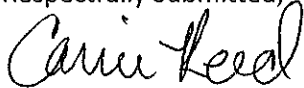
7. Next meeting date

- Next meeting Thurs, June 20, 5:00 PM.

8. Adjourn

Motion by T. Tutor, seconded by C. Blackford, to adjourn at 6:18 PM. Motion passed, 3 yes, 0 no, Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,



Carrie Reed, Secretary