

Information on the Town Meeting Islesboro Pre-School Article

Q. What is being proposed?

A. The proposal is to fund the operating expenses of the Islesboro Pre-School (IPS) through the Town. Operating Expenses are primarily compensation for teachers, assistants, and management of IPS.

Q. Why is Pre-School important to Islesboro?

A. A quality early learning environment provides benefits to children, parents and the community at large. Children have a greater chance of success in formal school and life beyond. With the expansion of the summer program, dual income parents will have the flexibility to pursue their many jobs knowing their children are in a safe and nurturing environment. And Islesboro will become a more attractive place for families to live and raise a family, improving island vitality while enhancing the tax base.

Q. What is the financial impact of the proposal?

A. Current funding comes from tuition, fund raising, and as of last year, a \$12,000 payment from the Town. The Town also provides the IPS facility on the second floor of Town Hall, rent free. Tuition is as high as can be afforded by most island families yet only covers a small portion of the operating expenses. While the town payment was a great help, the school still must rely primarily on fund raising to continue to operate. Island residents and homeowners have been generous but IPS must continually “go back to the well”, competing with many other worthwhile island endeavors. This means that available funding is less than ideal to operate the pre-school and the amount of funding is uncertain year to year. Having the Town pay the operating expenses will allow IPS to have more certainty of funding, will reduce the need to run major fund-raising campaigns, and will allow tuition to stay sufficiently low so that every island child can attend.

Q. What will it cost the Town?

A. It will cost the Town \$65,000 for the coming year, an increase over last year of \$53,000.

Q. What does that mean for residents?

A. The annual cost to the taxpayer of the proposed increase to secure a stable, year-round Preschool/Summer Program is \$12 for each \$100,000 of assessed property value. For example that would mean an increase of \$36 a year on a property that is assessed at \$300,000. Keep in mind that all costs of running IPS are already being borne by island residents and tax payers through their contributions and/or tuition. This shifts the costs to the entire island and its summer residents, not just those who generously contribute or have young children enrolled in the school.

Q. Are there any financial benefits the Town would receive?

A. Yes. While hard to quantify, over time there will be financial offsets to the costs. Here are some examples:

1. Children exposed to a quality pre-school environment do better in formal school. Therefore, it is expected that over time there would be less "intervention program" costs. Further, the likelihood of a student graduating on time increases, which further reduces educational costs to the Town associated with repeating a grade.

2. Earlier identification of special needs means that potential learning problems can be addressed earlier and at lower total cost.

3. A strong early learning program creates the conditions under which families will move to or stay on Islesboro to raise their families. If island population goes up, the costs of paying town infrastructure gets spread across a larger tax base. Further, if island population goes up, demand for housing goes up, particularly at entry level prices, improving home values. Last, an increase in island population means more spending with island businesses. A strong pre-school, coupled with the strong program we have with ICS, ensures Islesboro truly is committed to "Educational Excellence" and will be increasingly attractive to young families.

Islesboro Preschool Committee

April 27, 2015