

Islesboro Select Board
Regular Meeting
Town Office Meeting Room & via Zoom
Wednesday, January 15, 2025 @ 5:30 PM

APPROVED
1/29/25

MINUTES

Members Present:

Chair Shey Conover, Melissa Burns, Peter Anderson

Members Present via Zoom: Vice Chair Lauren Bruce, Stephen Pendleton

Others Present:

Town Manager Janet Anderson, Peter Willcox, Mike Clayton

Others Present via Zoom:

Dick De Grasse, Linda, Elizabeth Hayden, Maggy Willcox, Scott De Grasse, Fred Porter, Dylan Purington, Doug Welldon, Laura Staines Giardino, Murt Durkee, Nita Villarreal

Call to Order: Chair Shey Conover called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM, and a quorum was established.

Minutes of January 2, 2025, Regular Meeting.

MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by P. Anderson, to approve the minutes of January 2, 2025 Regular Meeting, as written. No discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no.

VISITOR COMMENTS/PETITIONS

None.

FERRY SERVICE UPDATE

Peter Willcox reported that the next Ferry Service Advisory Board meeting will be January 23rd. Today, Peter attended an online meeting called by Marjorie Stratton of Vinalhaven, who got together as many islanders as she could. All the islands agreed that sleeping the ferries on the mainland is a poor idea. That was universal. Peter provided a graph done by a ferry service union representative, that shows some data from a ferry service employee survey, about how the crews perceive switching the ferries to the mainland. 75% thought it a bad idea. 48.5% said they would not follow if the plan was put into action. Many crew members live far away, and cannot make the trip every day. There would be a large turnover in staff if this were to go into effect. Peter's feeling is that DOT has not researched this issue thoroughly. They have not done a real survey, and have not seen the potential for what would happen if we switched crews. The schedules also have not been addressed. Someone needs to research what is the possible effect on the existing ferry crews, and will we really get more people. There are three bills before the legislature now having to do with the ferries, but we don't yet know which ones are

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going to affect sleeping on shore. The multi-island Emergency Ferry Task Force (separate from the Islesboro Emergency Ferry Task Force) is keeping an eye on this. The multi-island Task Force today decided not to hire a lobbyist. The survey from the union representative has only been answered by about 2/3 of the existing crew, so the percentages are not final, but it does indicate how they feel about the issue.

Janet Anderson added that she attended the meeting today. They think a lobbyist is a good idea, but they want to wait and see what the legislators propose.

EMERGENCY FERRY TASK FORCE UPDATE

S. Conover reported that we received a letter from DOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note in response to our letter. He is now calling it a long-term conceptual plan rather than a decision he has made, recognizing that there is a lot of work to do before a decision is finalized. We need to keep our foot on the gas, but Shey was pleasantly surprised by the tone of the letter.

Doug Welldon asked if we know the legislative bill numbers, so we can look at them online. S. Conover stated that her understanding is they have been submitted and they're now going through the process to get uploaded. As of yesterday, they had not been uploaded yet. Once we know the LD numbers, we can put them out for people to look at.

Doug also asked if our school has chimed in with a position on this. If the ferry keeps the same schedule but starts from Lincolnville, it will really disrupt the school schedule and the magnet program. Peter Willcox stated he hasn't heard anything from them yet. S. Conover stated we can raise this with the School Board and the Administration to encourage them to make a statement about their feared impacts.

S. Pendleton reported that he did a review of lobbyists. He looked for those who take multiple clients, and found that the governor had previously worked at our town attorney's law firm, Preti Flaherty. They have many organizations that they're lobbying for. They have an ear to the governor's office. We had a meeting this morning. Genevieve McDonald used to be in the legislature. She knows the issues well. We asked them to give us a proposal on the strategies and the approach to create greater public awareness to put pressure on, as well as support the legislative process with the bills we have coming out, and visibility at the governor's office. We received a proposal that outlined what they would do for us for a total of \$20,000, which is inexpensive for that type of service. Waiting is a killer in what we're trying to achieve.

S. Conover added that she was pleasantly surprised when Town Attorney Kristin Collins suggested Genevieve. She is a known entity around the state. She was the representative for North Haven, Vinalhaven, Swans Island, and Isle au Haut. She represented almost every island except for Islesboro in the legislature. She left the legislature to work at Preti Flaherty. She is tuned in to who the players are, to what the politics are of the transportation committee, and what the fears have been in pushing for additional ferry issues in past sessions. She would be a great person to work with to tackle this issue. We received this proposal a couple hours ago. In an ideal world, we would take this to our

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Emergency Ferry Task Force for a recommendation, but we may not want to wait for two weeks to move forward on this. Gabe Pendleton, as chair of that committee, agreed that it would be a good thing to do. We have some work to do to figure out how to go about funding this body of work. They would bill us monthly. We can engage them and have some time to figure it out. She proposes moving forward with conceptual approval of this proposal and requesting for Janet to work with them to outline our terms, so we could potentially have Genevieve attend the Islesboro Emergency Ferry Task Force meeting next week.

L. Bruce asked if there's an option of having other islands, in part, support that \$20,000. Other than the question of where we get the funding, she is in agreement that we move forward quickly. S. Pendleton stated that they did discuss the option of bringing in the other islands. The document says we can bring in a coalition if it works, but we're going to lead with Islesboro. She added that we can start making decisions, and if we come up with a solid plan and strategy that we can bring to the multi-island group, that will help us collectively move forward.

P. Anderson asked if there would be any concern with bringing other islands in at this stage, and risking muddying our message, or is the idea that we are all fighting for the exact same thing? He is inclined to get the ball rolling for ourselves, figure out what Preti Flaherty has to offer and what they're planning, and then approach the other islands with our plan and ask them if they would like to help. S. Conover agreed. If we try to create a strategy with a multi-island committee, it has the danger of slowing the process down. There are many areas where we are unique, and many areas where we have shared concerns. We need to map that out and be as strong as possible where it makes sense to be unified.

P. Willcox stated he thought there was good agreement at the meeting today. All the islands were opposed to Van Note's idea. The fact that Mantinicus and Frenchboro agreed and they don't have a boat sleeping on their islands, was a good sign. He thinks we should go to the group and let them know we're thinking about hiring a lobbyist. That might be the only impetus they need. They were very close to doing it, but they weren't ready to pull the trigger.

J. Anderson added they are all familiar with Genevieve and like her.

M. Burns is in agreement with P. Anderson and S. Conover. The other islands are worried that it's too early to get a lobbyist; they want to do it later, after seeing what the bills before the legislature will be. She thinks it will be in our best interest to have someone in place who knows when those bills are going through. This \$20,000 is only for the first session. They will restart in August, and we may need to come up with another \$20,000. At that time, we can let the other islands know that we have already put our skin in the game.

S. Conover added that we can begin engagement and make it clear to the other islands that we're working out our funding strategy, too. We don't have \$20,000 set aside for lobbying. If it's \$3200 a month, we figure out where the first payment comes from and

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get started. Then we have time to bring other communities along if they'd like to join us. We can be a unified voice without them sharing this lobbyist. Genevieve will be pulling information and feedback from those communities to make our case stronger.

S. Pendleton stated that lobbying with the bills is only one tactic of their strategy. We want to get the visibility, both within the legislative group and the governor's office, as well as in the public sector. These are complementary strategies to supporting legislative action. Next week, if we can get consensus on this, we would set up an initial strategy meeting with Preti Flaherty.

Scott De Grasse asked if there are restrictions on Preti Flaherty's proposal, and if it's strictly representing Islesboro. S. Conover answered that the proposal was prepared for the Town of Islesboro. Genevieve asked specifically about any current existence of a coalition. She was going to have a conversation with a lawmaker who had indicated she would be working with a coalition of legislators. They are open and recognize the multi-community facet of this, but we decided to focus on developing a strategy for Islesboro. S. Pendleton added that Preti Flaherty says the second component of what they're offering is to "organize support through targeted stakeholder outreach and coalition building, within the Legislature, the Administration, and the public. We will seek to bring each community served by the MSFS onboard with these legislative solutions (North Haven, Vinalhaven, Swans Island, Frenchboro, Matinicus), while prioritizing Islesboro throughout the process."

Scott added that he thinks it would be wise to understand what the costs would be to bring on the other islands. Additional funding may be required.

Fred Porter stated he would tighten the screws, and do everything possible to move this forward and not worry about anyone else. We need to prioritize Islesboro, we need to get somebody helping us at the state level, and we need to start now.

MOTION BY L. Bruce, seconded by M. Burns, to authorize Janet Anderson to work with Preti Strategies to finalize the proposal they prepared for us today. Discussion as below. Roll Call. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

P. Anderson requested a breakdown of how far the \$20,000 gets us. S. Pendleton stated it's a flat fee for the 6-month period. P. Anderson asked if adding another town going to take time away from our lobbyist who is fighting for us. S. Pendleton offered to take the lead on that question.

S. Conover, S. Pendleton, and J. Anderson will figure out next steps. We will ask Genevieve McDonald to attend the I. Emergency Ferry Task Force next week. This is meant to be the strategy group.

Islesboro Emergency Ferry Task Force meeting January 22nd at 4:30.

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SEA LEVEL RISE UPDATE

S. Conover reported that the SLR Committee met last week on January 9th. In light of all the work going into ferry, we talked about how to prioritize Phase I vs. Phase II. Phase I would be raising the road and redoing the revetments, and Phase II would involve a bridge. We have decided to focus on Phase I, and get that built to get us secured as quickly as possible. Then we will pursue Phase II.

MUNICIPAL BUILDING PROJECT UPDATE

L. Bruce stated that the walls are up and mudded. They will start painting in the next couple of weeks.

UP-ISLAND PUBLIC SAFETY GARAGE UPDATE

S. Pendleton reported that we should have a final quote tomorrow for electrical, and a final quote for the project. Murt has been in discussions with the architect, and we do have some clarifications that we have to pull together in the next few days, to make sure the quote aligns with the original requests and requirements, as well as a couple of things that have been brought to our attention by Murt since then.

Scott De Grasse pointed out that the recent fires in California have a lot of people concerned about what can happen when there's an inadequate water supply. Do we know how much it would cost if we wanted to include the plumbing all at one time, and could we raise the funds, or could a contractor donate time? S. Pendleton answered that trying to bring that up again at this point would be detrimental to the project. We have a very tight budget. Lauren and the team did an incredible job of determining what we really need for Phase I. We're getting a good facility based on that. It's a good idea, but we've had that conversation multiple times, and we need to lock this down.

Scott asked if there is a Phase I/Phase II budget that is accessible. Lauren answered that this discussion goes back far and is so convoluted that it can't be answered simply. We've had five bidding phases, where we tried to get the price to a reasonable amount, then went through the Select Board to try a different approach, which was hiring our own construction manager, Northport Builders. They're about to bring us a bid that will get us close to what our community said we wanted to budget.

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- Planning Board: January 27th, 5:00pm.
- Emergency Ferry Service Task Force: January 22nd, 4:30pm.
- Housing Committee: January 16th, 5:00pm.
- Harbor Committee: January 16th, 5:00pm.
- Lighthouse Committee: January 30th

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TOWN MANAGER REPORT

- Packet included Agenda for 1/15/25 and Minutes of 1/2/25 Select Board Regular Meeting.
- Committee Minutes
 - None.
- Correspondence
 - 1/2/25 copy of letter sent to East Shore Drive residents regarding upcoming stabilization project at Loranus Cove. This includes Maple Grove Cemetery's expectations.
 - On Town website: new Emergency Ferry Task Force page: <https://townofislesboro.com/committees/emergency-ferry-task-force/>
 - Ferry Concerns email: ferryconcerns@townofislesboro.com
 - S. Conover thanked Page for such a quick turnaround on this!
 - 1/15/25 email from DOT Commissioner Bruce Van Note replying to the letter the Select Board sent regarding his proposal to berth the ferry overnight on the mainland.
- Manager
 - YTD Exp & Rev reports.
 - Handout: re: lobbyist Genevieve McDonald, PretiSTRATEGIES.
 - J. Anderson would propose to pay for this by transferring back to Ferry Defense Fund \$19,868.89 out of Capital Reserve Sea Level Rise. We put it there 6/22/22. This will need a Town Meeting vote.
 - S. Conover stated that as long as we have what we need for the first month, she would like to talk with the Task Force about funding strategy. We could bring this back to the SB in two weeks.
 - School Superintendent Connie Brown wants to book a joint FY26 budget workshop on March 12 at 5pm prior to the SB meeting.
 - In March, we can move SB meetings back to 6:00.
 - S. Conover would prefer to do it on a different day, possibly on the 19th.
- Warrant FY25 #15

CORRESPONDENCE

Addressed in Emergency Ferry Task Force Update and Town Manager report.

OLD BUSINESS

1. None.

NEW BUSINESS

1. None.

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OTHER BUSINESS

1. None.

APPROVE WARRANT: FY25 #15

MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by P. Anderson, to approve Warrant FY25 #15. No discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

APPOINTMENTS:

None.

CHAIR COMMENTS

S. Conover: No comments.

VICE-CHAIR COMMENTS

L. Bruce: No comments.

INDIVIDUAL SELECT BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

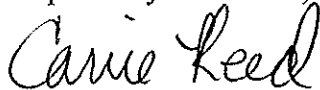
P. Anderson: Congrats to our basketball teams. Home game Saturday, Junior concessions.

M. Burns: No comments

S. Pendleton: Excited about the lobbyist action. This is a huge step. We could end up with a more collaborative approach with DOT.

Motion by M. Burns, seconded by L. Bruce, to adjourn meeting at 6:22 PM. No discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,



Carrie Reed
Secretary

