

Islesboro Select Board  
Regular Meeting  
Town Office Meeting Room & via Zoom  
Wednesday, January 2, 2025 @ 5:30 PM

APPROVED  
1/15/25

**MINUTES**

**Members Present:**

Chair Shey Conover, Vice Chair Lauren Bruce, Melissa Burns, Peter Anderson, and Stephen Pendleton (Zoom)

**Others Present:**

Fred Porter, Kara Masters Siekman, Dick DeGrasse, Scott DeGrasse, Murt Durkee, Michael Giardino, Laura Staines Giardino, Arthur Govoni, Dorie Henning (6:00) Jordy Watson,

**Others Present via Zoom:**

Dan Tutor, Maggy Willcox, Elizabeth Hayden, Nita Villarreal, Jennifer West, Peter Willcox, Lindsey, iPad(98)

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

**Minutes of December 18, 2024, Regular Meeting.**

**MOTION BY P. Anderson, seconded by M. Burns, to approve the minutes of December 18, 2024 Regular Meeting, as written. No discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no.**

**VISITOR COMMENTS/PETITIONS**

Elizabeth (Impy) Hayden asked if there's been any follow-up regarding Steve's idea for the Town to help with the cost of ferry tickets. S. Pendleton answered that he found there are many services on the island that offer discounted tickets, but will look into it further. Janet is not going to be able to monitor that, so we need to figure out how to set it up.

**FERRY SERVICE UPDATE**

S. Conover thanked L. Bruce for the FAQ document that outlines our concerns with the issue of the ferry service. This is a nice piece to share with legislators and the media. We can update it as we learn more about the issue.

S. Conover reported that she, L. Bruce, and Janet Anderson had a conversation with Town Attorney Kristin Collins on Tuesday. She encouraged us to work on a Public Relations campaign. Her firm has a PR arm, and Kristin will reach out to her colleague to start the process. She also indicated it would be helpful, as we hear concerns from our citizens, to ask people to send letters to the Town via Janet, to have an account of concerns. It can help us make sure we have stories for the PR campaign, and give us numbers as we build our case. She doesn't see anything for legal action at this point, but

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we need to pay attention to the decision-making process. There may be a time when legal action makes sense. She suggested we request the grant language and the formal grant agreement for the awards that were made to help fund the new ferry. Emergency services were mentioned a number of times. Janet was going to reach out and request those documents. We will have another meeting with Kristen early next week.

Today, the DOT held a meeting with legislators, town managers, and select board representatives from islands impacted. S. Conover went in person, and J. Anderson participated online. Our representative, Mike Ray, was there, and although they weren't invited, reporters from the Midcoast Villager and the Bangor Daily News were in attendance, which was encouraging. Beyond that, it was very disappointing. Commissioner Van Note presented statistics on ferry cancellations and compensation that had been presented to the Ferry Service Advisory Board. Commissioner Van Note said, basically, "This is a decision we are working to implement. We don't expect the islands to like it." The legislators were there to get information. The deadline for submitting bills in this legislative session is January 10<sup>th</sup>. This is an avenue that we need to pursue quickly. Mike Ray wants to meet next week, but he specifically said that, as a freshman in the legislature, he's not willing to put in a bill to try to stop this. S. Conover stated she has reached out to Chip Curry, and will follow up by phone. He might be willing to go to bat for us.

Fred Porter stated that he hates to be a conspiracy theorist, but he feels this is coming from another area of the state, because the DOT is not the only agency doing this kind of hard-charging and not listening. He sees it at the EMS level, too. They're just doing what they want to do. Fred has no trust in legislators. We might need to go to another level. There's an empowerment thing going on with these departments, and they're not listening to anybody.

S. Conover stated that was the frustrating thing today. She stated we are going to get loud. We are going to enact the Emergency Ferry Service Task Force, and hoping the first meeting will be next Wednesday at 4:30 or 5:00. This will be a public meeting, and we'll need voices. We are happy to have people come and help us in this effort.

Scott asked if there was any discussion with the attorney about a town petition to submit to the governor and legislators. L. Bruce stated that did come up in the conversation and that's one of the options. Letter-writing is even more important so we can hear the specific harm that's done. After the committee meets, we will coordinate these things, and also coordinate with all islands for a petition. We'll have a basis for legal action.

S. Pendleton stated that if we don't get islands together and hire a lobbyist to take this to the governor's office and legislature, along with the PR, we're not going to get any reaction. Unless you shine a spotlight on individuals in the government, they would prefer not to make a decision than to make a bad decision. If we appropriate \$30,000 per island, we can retain a good lobbyist. We need to coordinate letter-writing, but it takes a lobbyist to get a change in direction at this point. S. Pendleton stated he could ask

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companies. S. Conover agreed that it would be good to start having conversations with contacts, and also stated she would like to keep the attorney in the loop.

S. Conover added that Commissioner Van Note stated today that he imagines this change happening within 2-3 years. It may be 3 years to coincide with the new ferry. S. Conover emailed Mackenzie Kersbergen, the project manager for the terminal rebuild, and she clarified that the new ferry would be able to stay overnight on the island with the trickle charger, under the current plan.

Laura Staines Giardino asked if anyone from the DOT has commented on the ferry schedule. If the boat were to stay on the mainland, who's going first? Are we adding another run, or deleting a run? S. Conover replied that she asked that question, and it sounds like that's one of the things they will talk about in the next two years.

Fred Porter asked if there's a chance to put a legal fund together. People would be donating whether it's two bucks or a thousand bucks. This would ensure that money doesn't have to come from taxes to fight this. Carrie could put the call out for donations in a Constant Contact. Can we do this, or not until the board makes a motion to have a legal fund? S. Conover answered that she'd like to ask Janet about it. Maybe we can bring this to the new committee. L. Bruce added that we need to do a little more work to make sure there's a legal basis before we ask people to donate funds for a legal challenge. S. Conover stated that people may also be interested in helping pay for a lobbyist. We need to put together an action plan.

Fred Porter suggested putting a question in the Bangor Daily News and the Portland Press Herald, asking people how they would feel if the Maine Turnpike got shut down after 5:00pm. This is about our right to a highway and public transport.

Kara Masters Siekman stated she found a document in the Emergency Operations Plan: the Emergency Support Function document dated July 8, 2016. It cites ferries in our statewide emergency plan. It's already in place. The State of Maine is backing our ferry. S. Conover asked her to email the link. Kristin Collins says it's not defined in state statute, so if we can find other areas where it's defined, that helps build our case.

Michael Giardino stated the funding for the ferry, \$16.5M, is from the Federal Department of Transportation. We should be directing some comments to Pete Buttigieg, Secretary of Transportation. He was recently on a TV program bragging about the Islesboro ferry. We should write a petition, and hold this thing up in front of a TV camera and say it's going to the federal government. If the application says emergency medical services are provided by part of this grant, we need to ask publicly what happened. Are we talking to the state representatives to the federal government? S. Conover answered that there was a staff member from Jared Golden's office at the meeting today.

Dick DeGrasse stated he has the electrical system documents for the ferry. He would like to continue to talk with the people involved with the electrical plans to be certain there are no impediments to Islesboro doing the charging of the batteries. He's been talking

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with CMP and ABB, which is the management company for this whole operation. S. Conover stated that all the investigation we can do is great, and she would just ask Dick to stay in close contact with Peter Willcox, our Advisory Board representative. They provide him with a lot of information.

Arthur Govoni asked if any of the grant money has been applied to any future firefighting applications or equipment, for a potential battery fire, either shoreside or on the boat. S. Conover answered that that's one of the reasons we want to get the grant application and grant award language so we can see exactly what they promised and what the strings are. Scott DeGrasse added that one of the hidden things the DOT could fall back on, part of their rationale for keeping the boat in Lincolnville could be better firefighting options.

Michael Giardino asked if there is a central data point that we can create. S. Conover answered that the committee will be the central hub for the plan. We can create something online.

Laura Staines Giardino asked about the other emergency boat that's being proposed. S. Conover answered that the DOT said they have nothing to do with the Emergency boat proposal that is going to be based in Carver's Harbor. They did allude to an interest in buying an emergency boat, but it wasn't clear if they would do that for each island, but it was clear they'd consider writing a check to make it someone else's problem. It was very vague plan that will allow them to save money and recruit more people. The legislators were pushing back on this point, saying we need to see more of what they are anticipating for cost savings. Commissioner Van Note seemed to feel the municipality doesn't have enough skin in the game moneywise for EMS transportation. It was a vague statement. We need to look at our spending and have that be another data point.

Impy Hayden stated the Governor Brann ferry boat was owned and operated by the Town. Is there any documentation for the changeover to the state, insisting the boat stay berthed on Islesboro? Is there anything archived? S. Conover stated it's worth investigating. Van Note did say that he's open to other ideas, such as the structure of Casco Bay Lines. We need to define what we want.

Fred Porter suggested we have two boats like Vinalhaven does. We can keep the Maggie when the new boat arrives, and one of them stays on Islesboro. We are the big generator of revenue.

Michael Giardino asked about how emergency runs work and how it's handled financially. Who pays? S. Conover answered that it's on a per run basis, at \$1250 per run. The Town pays. Fred explained the procedure. We've had 7 this past year.

Dorie Henning thanked the Board for their work on this important issue. It's getting harder to recruit qualified healthcare providers. Without the ferry docked here on the island, increasing the time it may take to transport a patient to the mainland, is going to be a major detractor to recruiting. She got an email today from a Midcoast Villager reporter. She would like some suggestions on who should meet with this reporter. She added that having a boat on this side is a great idea, even if it's a small boat that could

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accommodate the ambulance. We could also help the ferry service save money by providing the housing for the crew. We could actively recruit on-island people to work on the ferry. Make it more practical, less expensive, for a crew to be on the island. S. Conover replied that a representative from Swan's Island said if the state would help with a training program, he could have six people who would be willing to sign up as relief crew and get certified on Swan's Island. The other islands would probably be willing to do the same thing.

Dan Tutor asked about the \$1250 charge for emergency runs. Is it part of a 50/50 match with the state, or does that \$1250 cover the entire cost? Fred explained that a lot of that is labor. The crew gets paid for six hours overtime. They get a lump sum that makes it somewhat enticing. The state bills the time for the cost.

Dick DeGrasse stated a vessel's homeport needs to be named with the Coast Guard before a certificate of operation will be allowed. He will find out about the new ferry.

L. Bruce thanked everyone for their comments and recommendations.

#### **SEA LEVEL RISE**

S. Conover reported that the next SLR Committee meeting will be January 9<sup>th</sup>.

#### **MUNICIPAL BUILDING PROJECT**

S. Pendleton reported that they had discussions about the Up-Island Public Safety Garage. There's some talk about being able to bring in the electrical at less cost. We had a meeting with the architect. There hasn't been any substantive movement. We should have some concrete advancement after the next couple of meetings.

L. Bruce added that the electrical bid is outstanding. The contractor is working on that. One of the questions we have is can we have a placeholder on that and move forward.

P. Anderson asked if they had thought or follow-up regarding the plumbing questions. S. Pendleton replied that they had a conversation with Murt about the plumbing requirements. He made clear what's needed, and Steve wrote a report. From a plumbing perspective, we're in good shape, other than finding out the cost of water tank from J.T. Zlotkowski. The architect is putting in additional depth for the slab. P. Anderson stated Jordy asked about decontamination showers. There was a suggestion that it could be done at a private residence or other facility. S. Pendleton stated that showers are not in the design, but we can add later. The plumbing is coming in.

M. Burns asked for clarification if there will be running water in phase 1. L. Bruce answered that there won't be running water (no showers or toilet). There is going to be a tank, and all the plumbing will be ready to go. We know where the well and septic will be, and it's all permitted. We just need to make sure we have the money.

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Arthur Govoni asked if there are places in the slab for future plumbing. L. Bruce stated that the plumbing infrastructure will in place, and the radiant heating will be ready to go.

Murt clarified that the purpose of the 1500-gallon tank is to refill the trucks if we don't have running water initially. It will be a used tank that was in someone's residence. It's meant to store water that won't be drinkable. When we do get running water, this tank can be automatically refilled for filling the trucks. We need to get a price from J.T. Maybe it can come out of the regular Fire Department budget. Murt will ask J.T.

#### **UPCOMING MEETINGS AND SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

- Planning Board: January 6<sup>th</sup>, 5:00pm.
- Emergency Ferry Service Task Force: January 8<sup>th</sup>, 4:30pm.
- Energy Committee: January 14<sup>th</sup>, 5:15pm.
- Housing Committee: January 16<sup>th</sup>, 5:00pm.
- Harbor Committee: January 16<sup>th</sup>, 5:00pm.

#### **TOWN MANAGER REPORT**

- Packet included Agenda for 1/2/25 and Minutes of 12/18/24 Select Board Regular Meeting.
- Committee Minutes
  - 10/10 Minutes from Housing Committee Meeting
  - 12/17 Minutes from IMB Committee Meeting
- Correspondence
  - None.
- Manager
  - No report.
- Warrant FY25 #14

#### **CORRESPONDENCE**

None.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

1. None.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

1. None.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

1. None.

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**APPROVE WARRANT: FY25 #14**

**MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by P. Anderson, to approve Warrant FY25 #14. No discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.**

**APPOINTMENTS:**

Emergency Ferry Task Force: Peter Willcox, Fred Porter, Shey Conover, Gabe Pendleton, Earl MacKenzie, and John King.

**MOTION BY P. Anderson, seconded by M. Burns, to approve the slate of members to the Emergency Ferry Task Force. Discussion about how these are the best people on the island to coordinate the plan and pull in others with connections. Roll Call. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.**

**CHAIR COMMENTS**

S. Conover: Thank you everyone for coming and having thoughtful discussion.

**VICE-CHAIR COMMENTS**

L. Bruce: Ditto. I appreciate everyone here.

**INDIVIDUAL SELECT BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

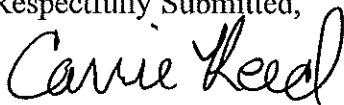
P. Anderson: Triple ditto. I wish it was under better circumstances, and that we had this kind of involvement all the time.

M. Burns: No comments

S. Pendleton: Thanks to the Burns family for having the best lighting and Christmas decorations.

**Motion by M. Burns, seconded by L. Bruce, to adjourn meeting at 6:35 PM. No discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.**

Respectfully Submitted,



Carrie Reed  
Secretary

