

Islesboro Select Board
Regular Meeting
Town Office Meeting Room & via Zoom
Wednesday, October 8, 2025 @ 6:00 PM

☒ APPROVED

10/22/25

MINUTES

Members Present:

Chair Shey Conover, Vice Chair Peter Anderson, Melissa Burns, Peter Rothschild, Stephen Pendleton (Zoom)(6:02)

Others Present:

Town Manager Janet Anderson, Ronan Donohoe, John King, Peter Willcox, Daniel Frohling, Michael Clayton

Others Present via Zoom:

Dan Tutor, Fred Porter, Laura Staines Giardino, Josh Leach, Jennifer West

Call to Order: Chair Shey Conover called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM, and a quorum was established.

Minutes of September 24, 2025, Regular Meeting.

MOTION BY P. Rothschild, seconded by P. Anderson, to approve the minutes of September 24, 2025 Regular Meeting, as written. No discussion. Motion passed, 4 yes, 0 no.

VISITOR COMMENTS/PETITIONS

None.

PUBLIC HEARING

Annual Adoption of Revised General Assistance Ordinance, Appendices A-H

MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by P. Rothschild, to enter into Public Hearing. No discussion. Motion passed, 4 yes, 0 no.

J. Anderson explained that the revisions are in Appendices A, B, and C, set by Waldo County. The rest of them are set by the State. The only one that J. Anderson altered is Appendix C, Housing Maximums. The numbers are specific for Waldo County.

S. Conover asked if the numbers have changed significantly from last year. J. Anderson stated she would have to find last year's numbers. M. Burns stated it seems on par with the Federal Reduced Lunches.

Exit Public Hearing at 6:04pm.

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MOTION BY P. Rothschild, seconded by M. Burns, to accept the Revised General Assistance Ordinance as presented. No further discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

FERRY SERVICE UPDATE

John King presented his proposal for how the Town could adopt and manage a system for Islesboro residents to buy peak-season ferry tickets at the off-season rate from the Town.

John sits in on the Ferry Service Advisory Board (FSAB) Finance Subcommittee. They most recently met on September 12th by Zoom.

Tariff 10 went into effect in 2024, with an 18.4% increase. It also created the peak and off-season rates. We had another increase of 13.5% in 2025. At a recent meeting, the Finance Committee next year's budget. It anticipates another general raise of 15.8%. About 8.5% of that is in personnel costs. All other expenses have a dramatic raise of 34.7%. The US inflation rate is about 2.7%. John suspects there's a high repair rate due to an aging fleet. We still don't know when we are getting a replacement for the MCS.

People have been complaining about the current rates, particularly during peak season. A round trip for a family of four (two adults and two kids) costs \$83.50. We're not going to be able to attract young families. It needs to be reasonable to go to the mainland to get services we don't have here, such as pet services, dental, and specialty medical services.

John stated that when he was on the FSAB, he advocated in favor of a resident rate, a senior citizen rate, and a legitimate commuter rate. The then Commissioner of the DOT, Bruce Van Note, described those as an "equity tariff" and sought instead for some contributions from the towns to get the tariff rates down. None of the served communities wanted to just write a check to the MSFS. Van Note stated he would not be averse to having the towns buy tickets and sell them at whatever discount they desired.

John's suggestion is to establish a resident rate for the peak season. The Town would buy the tickets at the peak season rate so the MSFS would not suffer any diminution in revenue, and then resell them to residents at the off-season rate. He went over some of his calculations of cost projections.

John suggested issuing resident cards at Town Office, after the residents have signed some sort of agreement about not abusing the system. He provided a draft template. It would be limited to residents.

S. Conover stated that we should discuss this conceptually first. If it's something we want to move forward with, we could have a couple people at the Town Office figure out the administrative logistics.

John presented a preliminary budget worksheet, estimating how much this would cost the Town, based on 75% of the residents, about 452 people. If we limit the amount of use to six uses, that would cost the Town about \$70,000 for the first year, assuming the tariff doesn't change.

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P. Rothschild stated that this would not cover commuters. It would only accommodate a certain proportion of the demand. He asked about data to support how many people would want this. J. King stated it is only anecdotal.

S. Conover stated that process-wise, it's helpful to have a conceptual conversation about how great the need is. She suggested forming a small group to define the parameters, figure out the administration, and work out the details. If we implement this, we would have to build the recommendations into next year's budget.

M. Burns stated she's been reaching out to the community assistance programs in Hancock County, Waldo County, and Knox County. None of them provide transportation or this kind of assistance unless the individual is on Medicare or Medicaid. Waldo County suggested doing this as a general assistance fund. They feel that their hands are tied, because everything has to be done on an income basis to redistribute tax funds. Waldo County Action Partners (WCAP) said that the biggest obstacle they have is no one wants to fill out forms and provide documentation for requesting assistance.

J. King clarified that he designed something that wouldn't have anything to do with general assistance or need. Everyone gets X amount of tickets, just buy them with the understanding that it's going to cost the Town some money.

S. Pendleton stated that this is the reason we should re-engage our lobbyist, and have her lobby on behalf of a zero increase. We can't sustain. DOT is preparing their budget. Now is the time to get in there and make sure we're addressing this. J. King replied that the revenue has not kept up with expenses.

S. Conover stated that there is a governor's race coming up. She is hesitant to push anything related to reducing the amount of tariff or changing the current tariff structure at this time. We would have the very real potential of losing more than we gain.

J. King stated that the MSFS 2026 budget is set, and there is no plan to increase the tariff. We have some breathing room.

P. Rothschild suggested getting data on how many people would be enthusiastic about this. John offered to create a survey.

P. Anderson expressed concern about bowing to the DOT and giving them what they want, which is continuing to pay full price for tickets. The Town selling them at a reduced rate is subsidized by our taxes. Our taxes already support the ferry. In order to make it cheaper on ourselves, our taxes are going to go up to pay for this. When the data gets collected, he'd like to know how we foresee this being divvied up across taxpayers. If we agree to this, are we setting ourselves up for years of subsidizing these tickets? He disagrees with the concept of playing softball with DOT. What will this actually cost the individual? It wouldn't be the worst thing to have income restrictions on this project if we move forward. This will require a lot more thought.

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M. Burns asked if we could access individual islands' expenses per boat. Peter Willcox stated that the MSFS claims they don't break that down. John King stated he tried to break it down himself, but it's hard because of the nature of the system.

S. Conover stated that we need to recognize what we've heard from the community, which is that people are struggling. There may be multiple avenues we need to pursue because we don't have complete control of what happens with the MSFS. We've heard some enthusiasm, some concerns, a lot of questions about how this could move forward.

J. King will work on a survey with a couple members of the Select Board. It could be ready for Election Day. M. Burns and P. Rothschild volunteered to help with the draft.

Daniel Frohling stated a survey wouldn't take into account the people we want to move here. It's a widespread concern. There was an article in the last issue of the Islesboro Island News about how median income on the island has been flat for the last five years. People aren't doing as well as they used to. He would ask that options are considered as to what's done and how it's financed, whether by taxes or surcharges on construction equipment coming over. Perhaps a larger look at the issue and our goals.

John King stated he is just dipping a toe in the water to see what the response is. If it's successful, we can build off of it.

S. Conover added that the data can be used to present to the DOT as a pilot program for a resident rate.

SEA LEVEL RISE UPDATE

S. Conover had no update.

UP-ISLAND PUBLIC SAFETY GARAGE UPDATE & PUBLIC SAFETY RENOVATION UPDATE

S. Pendleton had no update since the afternoon's meeting. (See Committee Chair Workshop notes.)

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- Planning Board: October 20th, 5:00pm.
- Public Hearing on Draft Grindle Point Parking Ordinance: October 29th, 5:00pm.
- Energy Committee: October 14th, 5:15pm
- Shellfish Committee: October 15th, 4:00pm
- Harbor Committee: October 16th (rescheduled to October 23rd).

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

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- Packet included Agenda for 10/8/25 and Minutes of 9/24/25 Select Board Regular Meeting.
- Minutes of 9/11/25 Housing Committee meeting.
- Minutes of 8/10/25 Groundwater Protection Committee meeting.
- Minutes of 8/28/25 Lighthouse Committee meeting.
- Correspondence
 - 9/26 Revised Scope of Work for Billy Shore Stabilization project—removing toe stones and leaving out road work at this time, reducing the project by \$91,406.40, to \$252,080. This was Tom Fowler's suggestion, and John was fine with that.
 - 9/29 School memo encouraging residents to attend public School Board meeting on Monday, October 20th at the GHK Center. The main topic will be the sustainability and future of our school.
- Handouts:
 - 9/30 Bar Harbor Wealth Management Capital Reserves sub-accounting
 - FY26 Budget Pie Chart
 - Sample State of Maine Ballot for the Referendum Election on Nov. 4.
 - Flu Shot clinics Thursdays, 10/9, 16, 23, and 30, 1:30-3pm.
 - Title 30-A: Authority of municipal officers to enact traffic ordinances.
- Warrant #8

CORRESPONDENCE

Covered in Town Manager's report.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Discuss Town-owned Roads in Vulnerable Areas.
 - J. Anderson provided a spreadsheet of vulnerable areas, compiled from a list done by Fred.
 - S. Conover stated that Alcina Brenenstuhl and Shri Verrill have been in contact about the Hazard Mitigation plan.
 - J. Anderson added that Alcina asked for a list of Town properties and their assessment, which she sent.
 - S. Conover suggested having a broader discussion once the mitigation plan is finalized.
 - P. Anderson asked why Billy Shore Drive isn't on the list. S. Conover answered that this list is for future investments.
 - S. Conover added that when Shri came out to provide more data points to the list, she cross-referenced a map that Shey gave her. Projects that were done or already in the works were marked with a different color.

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2. Energy Committee Recommendation for Renewable Energy Credits (RECs), Sale and Purchase Agreement with Knollwood Energy of MA, LLC.
 - The Energy Committee voted by email to recommend Knollwood.
 - J. Anderson stated she has already signed the paperwork for the Town Office building. We can't do the Salt Shed array because we technically don't own it yet.
3. Health Center Facilities Manager
 - J. Anderson reported that she has signed on Tom Michaud from Public Works for this position. We are waiting for training to be arranged from the heat and generator person.
 - The generator currently runs a test every Sunday, and Janet is hoping this can be changed to another day. We don't want Tom to deal with it on Sunday.
 - M. Burns stated that we put money aside for the Facilities Manager position. Will Tom now divide his time from his Public Works position? Will he be able to make up hours in his full-time job? J. Anderson replied that he's only going to work 40 hours per week between the two positions.
 - S. Conover stated it will be helpful to know what is not getting done for Public Works, and what we need in an ongoing way if we are falling behind on Public Works items, particularly while we're short-handed.
 - S. Pendleton stated that he's not sure this is what we anticipated. There are concerns around what's getting done. Now we're taking someone who's supposed to have 40 hours and we're decreasing that. That's not what he understood we voted on. We were looking for a position that was in addition to that. He doesn't think it's appropriate to take Tom away from what we need to have done. We need to keep trying to find someone.
 - P. Rothschild stated that this is a short-term solution, which is what we voted for. It's not inhibiting looking for a longer-term solution.
 - S. Conover stated that she imagines that in the long-term, we need someone from Public Works to be doing facilities work. While it's not an ideal solution to stretch ourselves thin, it's the Town Manager's job to manage the Town facilities and hire people to do that. We will need to understand what's not getting done and how much time it's truly going to take out of someone's day to do the work at the Health Center. Part of the work will be to create a good report back on what's needed for the future across all the facilities.
 - M. Burns asked if we've thought about expanding the seasonal position until the other full-time person comes back. J. Anderson stated that the summer person has moved away. We do have the option of hiring another part-time worker.
 - S. Conover stated that she appreciates that we have someone to address the immediate concerns and make sure we're not voiding any warranties.

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NEW BUSINESS

1. None.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. None.

APPROVE WARRANT: FY26 #8

MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by P. Rothschild, to approve Warrant FY26 #8. No discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

APPOINTMENTS:

None.

CHAIR COMMENTS

S. Conover: No comments.

VICE-CHAIR COMMENTS

P. Anderson: No comments.

INDIVIDUAL SELECT BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

M. Burns: Have a good night.

S. Pendleton: No comments.

P. Rothschild: No comments.

Motion by M. Burns, seconded by P. Rothschild, to adjourn meeting at 7:12 PM. No discussion. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,



Carrie Reed
Secretary

