

Islesboro Select Board  
Regular Meeting  
Town Office Meeting Room & via Zoom  
Wednesday, December 18, 2024 @ 5:30 PM

APPROVED  
1/2/25

MINUTES

**Members Present:**

Chair Shey Conover, Vice Chair Lauren Bruce, Melissa Burns, and Peter Anderson

**Members Absent:** Stephen Pendleton

**Others Present:**

Town Manager Janet Anderson, Fred Porter, Gil Rivera, Michael Clayton, Elizabeth Hayden, Peter Willcox, Jordy Watson, Dick DeGrasse, Scott DeGrasse, Nita Villarreal, Owen Howell

**Others Present via Zoom:**

Janis Petzel, Cressica Brazier, Maggy Willcox, Jennifer West, Dan Tutor (6:05)

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. Motion passed, 4 yes, 0 no.**

**VISITOR COMMENTS/PETITIONS**

Fred Porter challenged the Select Board to take action on the ferry situation. He stated he has worked with the state on the hospital boat proposal, and is not convinced it will happen. The proposed changes to ferry operations are going to hurt the Town in a lot of different ways.

- There are a lot of folks who are getting older, who are retired here or want to retire here. Many will decide not to retire here, because we will have no options to get them off the island when they're sick.
- There's a working population here that's growing. We're trying to do something about housing, and we need to be able to provide them with assistance, too, by being able to run that boat from Islesboro, and run it at night when needed.
- We have a school that holds events, and sometimes they need to use the boat at night to transport kids. We need the boat to be based on Islesboro to be able to do that.
- Fred's biggest fear is not being able to get somebody out of here when we need to, and worse, taking somebody down that incline with strong winds in a blizzard.
- Fred thinks that the Town needs to challenge the State on a legal level. We need to hire an attorney that deals with public transportation. This needs to be done soon.

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- The State has drawn a line in the sand. The State being the people who sit somewhere else making decisions for the people of Islesboro. We need to take them on, and hit them in waves. We need a multi-pronged approach that will get results.
- We all stand to lose in this. What is the difference between the ferry and the turnpike? What if the State shut down I-295 going through Portland every night? The City of Portland would not tolerate that.
- People on this island are fed up. It's time we take the bull by the horn and go after them. A few years ago, when we got stuck with higher ferry rates, there was a lead Select Board member who solicited donations for funds for an attorney to fight the rates. Then this community fought for something together. Let's go fight.
- We have an epidemic of gun violence and fires. We need to be able to get mutual aid for fires or a mass casualty event. How are we going to get those people? We need our ambulance crews to stand by and take care of the mass casualty. If the ferry goes away, we're not going to have some of the tools we need to do this.
- What do we have to lose by challenging the State? You've got to get out and get your hands dirty. This is the time.
- Fred is willing to help any way, even by going to Augusta to talk with the Governor.

S. Conover replied that taking a multi-pronged, organized approach is key. She asked Janet to schedule a meeting with our Town attorney, Kristin Collins. When we interviewed her, we talked specifically about concerns with the ferry service, and likely needing some assistance in the future. We could start a conversation with her to try to develop a series of recommendations. There are a number of conversations we need to start at different levels of government, and then PR campaign things.

Jordy Watson added that EMS and the Public Safety Director have made many concessions when it comes to the ferry, by not running emergency runs after the scheduled time, unless absolutely necessary. We can't call on them until we've exhausted all other resources. Now they're willing to take it away completely. We've been able to make it work, but this would be leaving the Town with nothing—no contingency plan after LifeFlight, and they only have two helicopters and a plane. If they're busy, or if the weather's bad, they can't fly. If we can't get a private boat, it's an hour at minimum for the Coast Guard to get here from Rockland.

Fred stated that most likely, the Health Center is going to end up having the patient for the night. Hopefully, the Health Center will be staffed enough for this. If not, we'll have to have EMS members there, and lose people off the ambulance. We've done this multiple times in the past. It has a huge effect. Jordy is right, but in the 34 years Fred has been working for the town, he's never seen the Coast Guard come to take a patient.

Scott DeGrasse added that we've got access to documents that the State provided. Peter has some documents relative to the layout of the pens and the ferry. The documents show that they're planning the recharging station in Lincolnville, not here. This is "fait accompli" as far as the ferry service is concerned.

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Peter Willcox stated that Commissioner Bruce Van Note sat in front of the Ferry Service Advisory Board and said, “Don’t fight me on this or I’ll come after you and you’ll end up paying the whole thing.” Peter was extremely insulted by this—it seemed to be a threat.

Scott DeGrasse continued. To see it in writing and to see the bids being pushed out already. The whole electric-hybrid doesn’t make any sense. They didn’t consult with Norway. Some of the best electric ferries in the world they’ve been running for 15, 20 years, and we’re going to do a hybrid for clean energy.

Mike Clayton asked if they have proper engineers who can run a hybrid ferry. Could we get them from Maine Maritime? If we don’t have crew quarters on the mainland, how are we going to corral the crew? We’ve got to have crew handy. Mike questioned the need for an electric boat. Others explained the governor’s initiative to be all electric by ~2035.

Jordy stated the State has gotten the grant to be able to put the charging station in and change the dock. They have a timeframe in which they have to use that \$16M. Scott added that 900 days is the build schedule for the ferry.

Fred stated that we built our own broadband system. What would it take to build an electrical system that would benefit the boat to be left in Islesboro? Peter Willcox answered that we now have two phases going to the ferry terminal, and it would need three, so we’re talking about one wire. The whole theory behind electric boats is you put a battery bank on the shore, and charge that slowly, and when the boat’s in the pen, you dump it in there. From one battery bank to another, you can do that in minutes. That’s the way all the ferries in Europe operate. They have not planned on using a battery bank here, which is why they want to have a charging station in Lincolnville.

Peter Anderson clarified that the plan is not to exclusively have a charging station in Lincolnville, according to the DOT. All the information we’ve been given is that they would have a trickle charger on Islesboro, because that’s what our infrastructure can support. They indicated they would have both a trickle charger and a fast charger in Lincolnville, so that they can charge between runs on that side and the boat would still be able to be stored on this side. If that has changed, that’s something they are not telling us. Diesel-electric engines have been used in heavy industry for a very long time in America. I don’t think it’s worth spending time tonight bickering about the efficacy of a hybrid electric system.

Scott DeGrasse stated that he has the plans that were submitted for bid for the terminals. He can send it to everybody. There is no mention of any charging stations on Islesboro. Peter Anderson stated that if that’s true, they’ve spoken out of both sides of their mouth.

Scott DeGrasse added that the federal grant monies that were awarded for this contract were based on the fact that we were in the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile for aged population, and part of the grant application by the State to the federal government indicated that, and that we

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needed it for medical services. It's mentioned in the grant application. This was mentioned in the article in the Island News. But now they're designing it out.

L. Bruce thanked everyone for all the comments. We have lots of very good arguments, and Fred's point is well taken, that we work with the attorney and find out what we can do on the legal end. At the same time, maybe we need to think about other forms of protest and making our voice heard. Scott stated that we need to get our representatives, senators, and the governor involved. This is running in the wrong direction rapidly.

Fred Porter stated that this is the most important issue on the Town's agenda. He thinks this exceeds the Narrows, the infrastructure at the ferry dock, and rocks falling down the bank. Without addressing this issue, a lot of this island is going to change. We're dealing with the reality of what would happen if that hospital boat doesn't happen.

Dick DeGrasse stated that there is nothing on the agenda that would prohibit us from putting in a charging station here, including the cable under water. We know about the size, the three-phase need, the transformers, batteries, and all the details. These all need to be above the high-water mark. Grindle Point is the perfect location.

S. Conover stated that this gives us a lot to work with, and she could commit to having a conversation with our attorney to see if we can lay out some plans. There are a number of conversations that need to take place. We have several advocates, and it's a matter of finding out who is going to be most helpful in pulling the strings.

Scott DeGrasse suggested that the Select Board assemble a ferry committee that has Fred, Peter, Dick, and anybody else who can help draft strategy, because this is multi-pronged.

S. Conover replied that this is a good suggestion. She'd like to start by talking with the attorney, and then maybe we can form a subcommittee at our next meeting.

## **FERRY SERVICE UPDATE**

Peter Willcox stated that North Haven is more affected by the ferry proposal than we are. They and Vinalhaven have both come out with letters to Bruce Van Note, asking him to reconsider this. He expects Swansboro and Frenchboro to do the same thing.

S. Conover reported that she reached out to Nick Batista, Island Institute Policy Director, to let him know this issue is boiling rapidly, and that we would appreciate his helping us think through strategy. She hasn't heard back from him, but will make another call.

Peter added that he's got to check this, but Maggy says that it's part of the Tariffs that we have a medical boat on the island.

L. Bruce stated that we can pull all the points from the minutes of tonight, in addition to the letter that John King wrote, and the report that Dan Tutor wrote for the newspaper. We can put all of these arguments into a format that will help us articulate our position in an orderly fashion.

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### SEA LEVEL RISE

S. Conover reported that the SLR Committee submitted another Community Action Grant on Monday. This grant will allow us to continue planning efforts. We hope to find out about the grant in February. Next committee meeting will be January 11.

### MUNICIPAL BUILDING PROJECT

L. Bruce reported that Rod Norberg at Northport Builders is close to giving us a price, sort of a guaranteed maximum price, for the Up-Island Public Safety Garage (UIPSG). We've instructed him that it has to be at or under \$400,000. He's waiting for an electrical quote.

Scott DeGrasse asked about the budget and whether or not it includes plumbing or a well. L. Bruce replied that we have to make sure we can build a heated building. All the connections and infrastructure for plumbing and septic will be in place. We don't know if we'll have the additional funds, so we're making sure we can build into the design.

Jordy Watson asked where the committee expects the firefighters to decontaminate themselves after an event, if the Narrows are shut down and there's no plumbing in the UIPSG. L. Bruce suggested people's homes, or maybe the Sporting Club. We can work on that angle. Until we have the funding, we can't promise that we're going to have that in place. We want to make sure we put up a building as soon as possible. However, this is a valid concern.

### UPCOMING MEETINGS AND SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- Planning Board: January 6<sup>th</sup>, 5:00pm.
- Housing Committee: December 19<sup>th</sup>, 5:00pm.
- Select Board: January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5:30pm.

### TOWN MANAGER REPORT

- Packet included Agenda for 12/18/24 and Minutes of 12/4/24 Select Board Regular Meeting.
- Vehicles & Traffic, Chapter 248 Ordinance Amendments
- Committee Minutes
  - 9/18 Minutes from IMB Committee Meeting
  - 11/19 Minutes from ALP Library Trustee Meeting
  - 11/12 Minutes from Energy Committee Meeting
  - 11/19 Notes from Committee Chairs Meeting
  - 11/21 Minutes from Lighthouse Committee Meeting
- Correspondence
  - 12/4 Letter from Islesboro Select Board to Commissioner Bruce Van Note on behalf of the Select Board of North Haven re: proposed changes to MSFS emergency services.

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- 12/5 Letter from Town of Vinalhaven Chair Pamela Alley to Commissioner Bruce Van Note re: emergency services and docking ferries on the mainland at night.
- 12/10 Director Update from William Geary, Director MSFS.
- Manager
  - .
- Warrant FY25 #13

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Addressed in Town Manager Report.

**OLD BUSINESS**

1. None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. Renew Constellation Energy Contract
  - S. Conover stated that last year we signed up for a one-year contract, with pricing through Constellation Energy. It's time to consider whether or not to re-up, and if so, for how long. She asked Dick DeGrasse how we fared over the last year and what he would recommend this year.
  - Dick DeGrasse reminded everyone that an individual's electric bill is in two parts: the supply side standard offer, which is unregulated by the Utility Commission (about 60% of the bill), and the CMP portion for delivery, which is regulated by the Utility Commission (about 40% of the bill).
  - Right now, the supply side of the municipality's bill is provided by Constellation, which was cheaper by a fraction of a cent last year when we signed on. It's about the same right now. We're talking about a \$2,243 bill, but a lot of the money is coming back to the Town because of the solar panels on the roof of this building. The solar is paying off very well. They're taking the excess power, called net metering, and paying the Town for it.
  - Maine Power Options, the agent for Constellation Energy in this state, has told us that they can provide power for the next year at 10.35 cents. Standard offer is 10.63 cents. Keeping Maine Power Options is a little bit cheaper.
  - Dick recommends keeping Maine Power Options, because he can talk with them and discuss the rate structure.
  - S. Conover stated it looks like this is quoted for 11 months, 23 months, and 35 months, fixed rate, with the lowest being 11 months. She asked Dick if he recommends the 11-month contract. Dick replied that he does recommend the 11-month contract, because things can change.

**MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by L. Bruce, to renew the Constellation Energy Contract for 11 months. No discussion. Motion passed, 4 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.**

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J. Anderson asked if they will send her a contract. She hasn't seen it.

Cressica Brazier stated she has a statement from the Energy Committee as a whole. She didn't get the opportunity to provide it before the vote. At the last Energy Committee meeting, the members decided not to make a recommendation without seeing the contract that would be presented today, and we were not provided with that price, so we could not make a recommendation. We also had a consensus that we agreed with Kay Mann from Maine Power Options and Michael Cloutier from Constellation that we should wait until March to renegotiate contract, because the pricing might come down at that time. Given that it's such a small fraction of a difference between the standard offer and the price that they've quoted recently, we think it would be a good option to wait until March. Also, we would like to take it up as a full committee in order to make a recommendation.

P. Anderson expressed frustration that the Board just voted to approve something that we did not have all the available information for.

M. Burns stated that last year we did have the contracts and information, and so she was thinking it would just be rolling into a new year. She asked Dick if there have been any major changes to the contract. He stated he will get a contract to Janet.

P. Anderson stated that the Energy Committee was not going to offer a recommendation until we got ahold of a contract, and we did not know that was something that was hanging in the balance. Going forward, it would be very important that if we have people acting on our behalf, they need to share this information.

**In light of new information, MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by L. Bruce, to revoke the vote for approval of renewing the contract. No further discussion. Motion passed, 4 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.**

S. Conover summarized her understanding: While there's a small savings right now, there's a potential for greater savings if we hold off on entering into an annual contract. Also clarifying that it's the intent of the Select Board to have the recommendation for signing come through the Energy Committee when it is deemed the appropriate time to look at that contract. Let's revisit this issue in February or March. The Energy Committee is to bring this up when it's most advantageous.

Dick DeGrasse asked if we are going to have a contract with Maine Power Options. P. Anderson clarified that he is happy to sign a contract, but doesn't feel right about being pushed in one direction and voting that way, and then finding out the committee that's in charge of making a recommendation is recommending that we wait. We would like all the facts before we vote.

Cressica added that Maine Power Options and Constellation give the opportunity for us to fall back on the standard offer rates, which have already been announced, and they are effectively as low as the potential contract rate right now. If we signed up now vs. later, it's a difference of about \$20 in savings, so not a substantial number. We might as well

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wait. Though that was our consensus, we did not make a full committee recommendation.

Dick added that if we have a relationship with Maine Power Options and Constellation, and the ferry problem becomes acute, we have someone to talk directly to.

Jordy stated that it behooves the Select Board to have that contract in front of them, for the sake of transparency.

2. Amendments to Chapter 248 “Vehicles & Traffic” Ordinance.

- S. Conover stated her understanding is that there are basic language changes, and the only substantive change is adding one additional reserve space for the MSFS crew, which was requested by the crew.
- J. Anderson explained the proposed changes to the Ordinance. The word “selectmen” has been changed to “Select Board.” The adjacent property owner has also been updated from Phillips to Swanson. The four previously reserved spaces are in there now, along with the additional requested one, to total five for the ferry crew. The new map reflects these changes.
- S. Conover explained to those present that Ordinance changes often require a Town Meeting vote, but this is not one of those. This Ordinance is overseen by the Select Board, so it only needs a Select Board vote to change it.

**MOTION BY L. Bruce, seconded by M. Burns, to approve Amendments to Chapter 248 “Vehicles & Traffic” Ordinance as presented. Discussion as outlined below. Motion passed, 3 yes, 1 no (P. Anderson).**

- P. Anderson stated he is not a fan. He’s skeptical. Can they carpool? We have a parking crunch for ourselves. This is why he did not want to second the motion.
- J. Anderson stated that last summer, there was a crew member who liked to park perpendicular to the others. At one point he parked on the other side of the grass by the flagpole. She sent Fred down there, but he didn’t know whose truck that was. We talked about them having some kind of decal showing they are an MSFS employee. Bill Geary said he would look into that, but we haven’t seen anything.
- S. Conover stated that she appreciates that we have a serious parking issue, but supports change at this point, largely because we’re fighting so many things on the ferry service front, and if there is a way we can support the crew, whom we rely on to make emergency runs, she would like to find ways to compromise.
- Jordy Watson stated that there’s no compromise with the DOT. The crew does an amazing job, but we’ve bent over backwards to deal with what the DOT is putting forth. We’re expected to make concessions regularly. We should stop making concessions until they start making some.
- S. Conover clarified that this is not a request from the DOT. It’s a request from the crew. Jordy replied that this could put pressure on the DOT via the crew. If they need spaces, show proof.



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- S. Conover clarified that she's not trying to play nice with DOT. This is about our friends and neighbors who run the boat on a daily basis. They asked for our help to be able to do their jobs. She supports this ordinance change.
- L. Bruce agreed. She does take the point about "enough is enough" with the DOT, but this particular line in the sand doesn't make sense.
- P. Anderson stated that it's worth looking back on conversations we've had about the behaviors we've noticed and reports that we've submitted about certain problems involving certain ferry crew members. Pete is less inclined to support giving them a fifth parking space.
- S. Conover asked if the Parking Committee voted to recommend these changes to the Select Board. J. Anderson answered that they did.
- M. Burns asked if the members had any other adjustments to recommend in order to maximize parking. J. Anderson answered that there really wasn't. They need to have another meeting to go over the Ordinance in general.
- M. Burns explained her hesitation on seconding the motion. She was hoping the committee would do more with trying to address the parking issue, and hoped the proposed changes would have a little more substance.
- S. Conover stated that we can encourage future meetings of the Parking Committee, recognizing that parking continues to be an issue.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

1. None.

**APPROVE WARRANT: FY25 #13**

**MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by P. Anderson, to approve Warrant FY25 #13. No discussion. Motion passed, 4 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.**

**APPOINTMENTS:**

None.

**CHAIR COMMENTS**

S. Conover: Thank you everyone for coming and providing feedback. More discussion coming.

**VICE-CHAIR COMMENTS**

L. Bruce: I appreciate everyone coming in and the comments we've heard tonight.

**INDIVIDUAL SELECT BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

P. Anderson: No comments.

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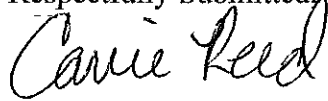
M. Burns: A member of the ferry service showed me a clip of the crew quarters video that was sent to the ferry service, where Commissioner Bruce Van Note made a statement: "I can't understand why such a small population is such a big pain in my ass."

Discussion about getting access to this video, for the public record.

S. Pendleton: Absent. No comments.

**Motion by M. Burns, seconded by L. Bruce, to adjourn meeting at 6:33 PM. No discussion.  
Motion passed, 4 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.**

Respectfully Submitted,



Carrie Reed  
Secretary