

Islesboro Select Board  
Regular Meeting  
Town Office Meeting Room & via Zoom  
Wednesday, December 3, 2025 @ 5:30 PM

☒ APPROVED

12/17/25

**MINUTES**

**Members Present:**

Chair Shey Conover, Vice Chair Peter Anderson (5:32), Melissa Burns, Peter Rothschild (5:53), Stephen Pendleton (Zoom)

**Others Present:**

Town Manager Janet Anderson, John King, Peter Willcox, Daniel Frohling, Fred Porter

**Others Present via Zoom:**

Dan Tutor, Donna Leone, Josh Leach, Amy Mulnix, Laura Staines Giardino, Elizabeth Hayden

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

**Minutes of November 19, 2025, Regular Meeting.**

**MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by S. Pendleton, to approve the minutes of November 19, 2025 Regular Meeting, as written. No discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 3 yes, 0 no.**

**VISITOR COMMENTS/PETITIONS**

Daniel Frohling reported that he talked with Mike Nelson from the Housing Committee about the proposal he's been working on. Mike authorized Daniel to say that they are on the same page. Daniel has discovered that his thinking is a voice in the chorus of leading people in the community, such as Tom Tutor, Jennifer Selendy, and others who have a similar outlook.

**FERRY SERVICE UPDATE**

Peter Willcox reported that there was a Ferry Service Advisory Board (FSAB) meeting last week. DOT presented three different potential designs for the new ferry. DOT Acting Commissioner Dale Doughty was present, and he seemed open. When Peter suggested that we didn't have enough information to have an opinion on the White Paper, Dale was in complete agreement. Two of the other islands said the same thing. It was a constructive meeting.

S. Conover asked if the acting commissioner is planning to attend the public meeting for the ferry designs on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Peter doesn't know.

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John King stated he attended the meeting and got the distinct impression that Dale Doughty was not grinding an ax on the White Paper issue.

S. Conover stated that there are lots of things that need to be addressed with the Ferry Service, but the more we can develop rapport with the new commissioner, the further along that will get us in the long run.

John King added that he had a nice chat with Bill Geary, who is now the director of multi-modal operations. The DOT is still doing business with Gilbert & Associates for the design of the ferry.

Peter Willcox said he has some problems with the potential designs. They are suggesting a hybrid, which is disappointing.

Discussion about hybrid vs. electric. John King stated that DOT may still have the \$28M grant. No one has given us any information on the price differential between electric and hybrid. Electric is more expensive to build, but less expensive to operate. In Europe, they have found that the ferries start paying for themselves between four and eight years. Peter stated that we need to make our best efforts toward stopping ocean acidification. The best way to do that is with an electric ferry. In general, a hybrid uses about 10% less fuel than a straight diesel boat.

S. Pendleton stated that it would be good to get a fuel/hybrid/electric comparison, from purchase price to 10-year return on investment. S. Conover added that it would be fair to ask for that kind of cost comparison at the public meeting. S. Pendleton added that it would be nice to have the numbers for the cost to continue to maintain the Margaret Chase Smith over a three- to five-year period.

J. King stated that there were three things we asked for in the design after the last survey a few years ago: an alternative means of propulsion, a double-ender, and an open deck so people could get out of their cars. Bill Geary said that none of the new designs are for a double-ender. The reason for that is a double-ender of that length cannot be hauled out by Rockland Marine. The closest yard that could work on the boat would probably be in Fall River, MA, and it would have to be towed there. For Rockland Marine to get a new travel lift that could accommodate a double-ender, it would cost around \$12M.

#### **SEA LEVEL RISE UPDATE**

S. Conover had no update. The next meeting will be December 11<sup>th</sup> at 4:30, and we anticipate getting the 60% final design from the engineers.

#### **MUNICIPAL BUILDING PROJECT: UP-ISLAND PUBLIC SAFETY GARAGE, & PUBLIC SAFETY RENOVATION UPDATE**

Up-Island Public Safety Garage: S. Pendleton reported that we received a new quote for the 30kW diesel generator, at \$39,000 plus installation, half the price of the other quote.

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P. Anderson asked if the generator is the same brand as the one at the Health Center. With our facilities manager, it might be wise. S. Pendleton will check into it.

Public Safety Renovation: S. Pendleton reported that there's a meeting scheduled next Tuesday of the renovation committee to go over how much money is available, as the majority of the invoices have been submitted. Based on that, we will meet with Michael and Laura Staines Giardino to discuss additional work that can be done, whether the new kitchen or the expanded training room.

Fred Porter stated he heard that there's about \$140K in leftover funds from the Health Center. J. Anderson replied that we don't know yet how much is left from the Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) grant. They're not completely finished. We are holding back some funds for the ground solar array.

S. Conover asked about the timeline for wrapping up the CDS grant. J. Anderson has not heard about a deadline. S. Pendleton would like to have the numbers for the meeting.

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

- Planning Board: December 15<sup>th</sup>, 5:00pm.
- Sea Level Rise: December 11<sup>th</sup>, 4:30pm.
- MDOT Presentation at GHK on new Ferry: December 16<sup>th</sup>, 6:00pm.

#### **TOWN MANAGER REPORT**

- Packet included Agenda for 12/3/25 and Minutes of 11/19/25 Select Board Regular Meeting.
- Correspondence
  - 11/21 email from Janis Petzel re: Energy Committee report from Maine Island Coalition meeting.
  - 11/30 email from Steve Pendleton suggesting the Town investigate purchasing used tree trimmer equipment to address the ongoing need for cutting back trees from the roads.
  - 12/1 email from Michael Nelson re: housing
- Old Business
  - 11/30 email from John King re: Initial Ferry Tariff Survey
- Handouts:
  - Bar Harbor Wealth Management November sub-accounting statement
- Manager:
  - MDOT formal notice in-person public meeting Dec. 16, 6pm at GHK on the design of the MCS replacement ferry.
  - 11/26: posted notice about the end of Billy Shore Drive closing for stabilization project to begin. JPA is starting early.
  - 11/29: received Local Road Assistance funds \$40,492 (budgeted \$35,000)

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- 11/28: seven 2023 tax accounts foreclosed due to lack of payment, totaling \$12,296.63. Waiting to hear back from attorney on how to proceed.
- 12/1: received word from our cleaner Robin Hughes that she will work through 12/20; they are moving back to Alaska. Reposted the position.
- 12/2: received the final Municipal Building Project's \$5,000 pledge. Since 9/2022, we took in \$1,909,927.47
- Warrant #12

## CORRESPONDENCE

S. Conover reported on the email from Michael Nelson. She had a follow-up phone call with him. The Housing Committee is working towards a plan, hoping to get it to us in February. Because there are so many discussions and interested organizations and individuals, the Housing Committee is happy to help coordinate that and make sure that feedback is incorporated into the recommendations they bring in February ahead of budget discussions. There is a vacancy on the committee. It might be worth reaching out to the School Committee to see if one of them would like to be a representative.

Fred Porter asked what the Housing Committee does in relation to IAP. He knows that IAP is a private group, and the Housing Committee is looking at ways to do housing on Islesboro. Is there a mission statement for that group?

S. Conover replied that IAP is doing work on affordable housing, with income guidelines that guide the work of that nonprofit organization. There are representatives affiliated with IAP that are part of the town Housing Committee. There's recognition that housing is a broad problem, and that in order to make sure we remain a place that is affordable for all income levels, there may be other ways to support workforce housing. The idea is to be as complementary as possible with other organizations, not trying to duplicate, but trying to see some other bottlenecks that can be addressed. For example, they helped coordinate updating the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance.

M. Burns added that when the Committee started a few years ago, the goal was that it would be a background influencer. They did the Town Centers and other things to help bring forth more options for people looking to buy. The Housing Committee can help provide guidance in navigating funding and the various organizations that exist.

P. Rothschild, new ex officio to the Housing Committee, stated that there are three aspects to this he would like to see addressed. IAP is charitably supported and somewhat supported by the state, but so far, the Town has not weighed in financially to help create affordable housing. Peter would like the Town to devise a way to create a partnership between IAP and Islesboro to husband our resources to support affordable housing. The School Committee has identified affordable housing as one of the key issues in supporting the school population. In addition, is there a possibility for building a greater

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diversity of housing? There are a lot of models out there. We're at the edge of coming up with a much more creative idea of how to support housing. It's a national problem.

## OLD BUSINESS

### 1. Review Ferry Survey Results.

- S. Conover thanked John King for compiling the results of his recent survey. There were some responses that were adamantly against the proposed program for the Town to subsidize peak season tickets, and others that were extremely positive. The devil is in the details in how this would be administered, and whether or not this is something we'd want to move forward with.
- John King presented a spreadsheet. The vast majority of respondents (almost 90% of the 88) were in favor of the idea. It seems the demand would be high.
- John did basic estimations based on 75% of residents using the program five – eight times, and it would cost between \$55,000 and \$10,000. He would want to sit down with Brian Bohanon to try to come up with something more solid for a budget.
- If we decide to go forward with the program, we will probably need a committee to make some recommendations.
- John talked with Tina Pendleton and Dave Dyer about some administration ideas. Defining residency and who's going to approve will be challenging.
- Would we want to do this by warrant at Town Meeting?
- Most of the people who are either on the fence or against it are concerned about the potential impact on their taxes.
- S. Conover stated that affordability is an issue on the island. Is this the most cost-effective way to provide relief? If we have a proposal, she would want it to go to the Town in the form of a warrant, so this Board could consider that price tag during the budget development process. It should be approved by the Town at Town Meeting because it's a new kind of expense.
- P. Anderson asked how many taxpayers are in the Town. J. Anderson replied that there are about 1,200 parcels. P. Anderson stated that if we go with \$100,000 to do this, that's about \$80 a person. S. Conover clarified that it goes into the mil rate, which is based on the total, so the \$80 is divided differently based on the value of your property. Having a small group to work on this to figure out the impact would help inform those kinds of questions.
- P. Anderson stated he's wondering if the savings in tickets is going to be washed away by the potential increase in the individuals' tax.
- M. Burns stated there are homeowners who avoid going off the island during peak season, but they would still be paying more in taxes.
- P. Anderson asked about determining who is a resident that can qualify for the subsidized tickets, and if it's legal do that. Would that be discrimination on municipal services? We'd take money from everyone, but the summer residents wouldn't be able to use the program. J. King compared it to other

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towns that differentiate between residents and non-residents for some services, such as tags for the transfer station or admission fees to parks.

- J. Anderson stated we can ask the attorney.
- P. Rothschild asked about the old system of on-island rates vs. off-island rates. J. King explained that there was a perception by DOT commissioners that the process was being abused. However, it was DOT's policy, and until they needed more money fast, they didn't complain that anyone was abusing it, and they never had any rules against it. When they proposed Tariff 8, their initial proposal was that a Maine state resident would pay X for a round-trip ticket, and anybody who lived out of state would pay 2X. It was the islands that said that wouldn't be fair.
- J. King stated he raised this idea as a trial and a stop-gap measure, because he's been pushing for resident rates from DOT for years. Bruce Van Note was determined that it wouldn't happen. There are other ferry systems in other states that differentiate between residents and non-residents.
- P. Rothschild requested that the proposed subcommittee address two issues:  
1. If the goal is to support the residents who are financially challenged by the seasonal rates, how to focus on those individuals? 2. It seems wrong that the only way to address this problem is for the municipal budget to support it, when the residents used to be afforded a lower rate by the Ferry Service. If it was abused, let's eliminate the abuses. It sounds like the White Paper suggesting the Town ought to take over the Ferry Service and pay for it.
- P. Willcox stated that the last suggestions by the Commission, since the White Paper, have been that the rate stays the same, so that 50% comes from the state, and 50% comes from the revenue. J. King clarified that the White Paper proposal for operating expenses was 45% from the fare box, 45% from the highway fund, and 10% from the islands, but it had no suggestion as to how the islands would divide that. They have since backtracked.
- John King stated that his proposed program is not a solution; it's a band-aid. The reason he proposed this is because for four months of the year, a family with two children pays \$83.50 for a round trip. His concern is that we're not going to have young families on this island, and if we don't have families, we don't have a school, and we don't have a community. This would be a trial.
- S. Conover stated that the ultimate solution is to have a tariff structure that codifies this, but since we don't determine the tariff structure, and have not been successful in advocating for that structure, does it make sense to start with a question to the attorney to see if it's possible to do, and if so, would this board want a small committee to come up with a structure to propose?
- P. Anderson stated that he loves the thought behind it, but doesn't love the idea of its execution. He is concerned about the financial impact for the future when a program like this gets stuck in place, and we're going to keep relying on it. The Ferry Service is going to take this as their free pass to raise the price to whatever they want, because the town will subsidize it.

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- P. Rothschild agreed. He's afraid this is the thin end of the wedge, that this will not be a stop-gap measure, and it will increase. A small committee to continue this is the way to go. He wishes this proposal had a way to distinguish between the neediest and those who don't need this subsidy.
- Fred Porter suggested that we talk to counsel before creating a committee.
- Peter Willcox stated that the White Paper pointed out that 80% of island property is owned by non-residents. He added that there are many people on the island who are on the borderline of not being able to afford living here.
- M. Burns asked, of the seven properties that just got foreclosed on, how many were year-round residents? J. Anderson stated they are all residents.
- J. King stated that residency as eligibility is something where you're not making any judgement calls, other than based on objectively verifiable criteria. It would be difficult and hard to administer eligibility based on need.
- S. Conover reiterated that a first step would be to find out what's possible from the attorney, then we can determine whether to create a small committee.
- M. Burns stated that, if we proceed with something like this, she would like to see that it is not solely carried out by the increase in the tax base. Perhaps it could be subsidized with Grindle Point parking fees, as that's ferry-related. It could be about \$6,000. She also doesn't want us to be sitting on a pile of unsold tickets that we try to sell the next year. The Town is not a business—it should be net-zero. After guardrails and other expenses, the funds from the parking fees could be used if we were to run this program long-term.
- J. Anderson requested that if there is a committee, she would like Tina be on it. This could be unruly to manage in the summer months when it's really busy. Administration of this program could be complicated.
- Laura Staines Giardino stated that a major concern appears to be the young families, and how we can assist them in corralling some of these costs. Is there a way to focus some reduced-rate tickets for families of school children? Maybe we should look at an incremental introduction of some of the subsidies we're discussing. As soon as you have a tax in place, which is essentially what this is, it never goes away. If we look at something that will assist the families who have reasons to be on the mainland (appointments, sports events), that might be a good starting point. Then evaluate after a year, and maybe extend that. Additionally, it's hard to evaluate residency. Some people live here full time, but haven't changed their primary addresses. It's critically important to make this island affordable for young families, and for seniors, who seem to be looking to move elsewhere because of ferry issues.
- S. Conover stated that, should a committee be formed, they can look at all these items. This is a big issue with no easy answers. Trying to find ways to make Islesboro more affordable for its residents is why a lot of us join this board.
- J. King requested that, for an inquiry to the attorney, we include DOT's response to the comments made during the last fare increase. He is happy to

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help. DOT has stated the municipalities are free to do what they want in terms of helping with reduced rates, as long as they pay for it.

- S. Conover stated we should have an update at the next meeting.
- P. Rothschild thanked John King for all the efforts that went into this.

## NEW BUSINESS

1. Review 2026 Select Board Meeting Dates.

- S. Conover requested that we establish the date for Town Meeting soon. Hopefully we can get the Kinnicutt Center, and have the meeting as early as possible, May or even April.
- J. Anderson will work with the school to determine the Kinnicutt Center's availability, and work with Brian on a budget development timeline.
- J. Anderson pointed out that there's a Select Board meeting on New Year's Eve this year. It could be changed to the 30<sup>th</sup>. No members objected to the 31<sup>st</sup>.

2. Discuss Purchasing Roadside Trimming Equipment.

- S. Pendleton stated that for the past two years, the biggest issue he keeps hearing about is the need to do two things: cut back brush/tree limbs, and dig ditches to run more of the water off the roads. We have a hard time getting a company or individuals to do the cutting. We should ask Dave Dyer or someone knowledgeable to explore what used equipment would cost, to allow our team to effectively cut trees throughout the year. Then we can put it in the budget for the coming year.
- J. Anderson stated they looked at equipment last year, and new equipment was around \$80,000. She will ask Dave to look at used equipment options.
- S. Conover stated we should get a recommendation about the right size of equipment to truly deal with the issue, so that we're not just buying a cool piece of equipment that can't get the job done.
- P. Anderson suggested checking with Jack and Dustin.

## OTHER BUSINESS

1. S. Pendleton suggested soliciting from all the committees their needs and requests for budget planning.

- J. Anderson replied that the committees and departments go through their budgets and create requests ahead of the Select Board workshops.
- S. Conover stated that we typically have a Committee Chairs meeting in January, with the idea that committees can hear from each other about the things they might be thinking about to put in the budget, so they recognize all the other requests that are coming in and try to balance theirs appropriately before filling out the spreadsheets.
- M. Burns stated that she's been telling all her committees to start thinking about budget requests, and that this is not the year to ask for extra things. She



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emphasized that she is going to be fiscally responsible with the budget this year. She thinks we have done a very good job on our budgets in the past, and wants to continue that.

- J. Anderson replied that they've all been pretty good. Nobody has padded a budget in recent years. We've all been closely involved.
- Fred Porter stated that everyone knows the deck of cards that's on the table. Departments will probably come through with a flatline budget, for the survivability of our year-round community. The departments will do their due diligence.

**APPROVE WARRANT: FY26 #12**

**MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by P. Rothschild, to approve Warrant FY26 #12. 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**

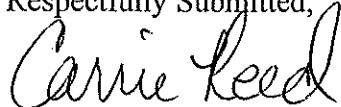
P. Rothschild: No comments.

M. Burns: Happy snow day yesterday!

S. Pendleton: Thank you. Good night!

**Meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM.**

Respectfully Submitted,



Carrie Reed  
Secretary

