

Islesboro Select Board
Regular Meeting
Town Office Meeting Room & via Zoom
Wednesday, April 8, 2026 @ 6:30 PM

APPROVED

4/22/26

MINUTES

Members Present:

Chair Shey Conover, Vice Chair Peter Anderson, Melissa Burns, Stephen Pendleton, Peter Rothschild (Zoom, 5:31)

Others Present:

Town Manager Janet Anderson, Murt Durkee, Peter Willcox

Others Present via Zoom:

Sally Whitten, Josh Leach, Donna Leone, Kate Misenheimer

Call to Order: Chair Shey Conover called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM, and a quorum was established.

Minutes of March 25, 2026, Regular Meeting.

MOTION BY P. Anderson, seconded by M. Burns, to approve the minutes of March 25, 2026 Regular Meeting, as written. No discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 4 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

VISITOR COMMENTS/PETITIONS

None.

FERRY SERVICE UPDATE

Peter Willcox reported that the next Ferry Service Advisory Board meeting will be June 21st, and there are two questions to consider. It was proposed by the Maine State Ferry Service (MSFS) at the last meeting that the Financial Subcommittee be eliminated. The committee has been Peter Willcox, Gabe Pendleton, and Jon Emerson. John King has also been helping out. Jon Emerson retired, so at the moment it's only on Islesboro. Jon did catch a \$1M error that the MSFS had made, but that's unusual. However, Peter can see good reason for having the subcommittee. We're spending \$370,000 on having the ferries sleep on the islands in overtime for the crews. That has gone under a heading of Transportation in State, and about \$15,000 of it is in transportation costs, and the other \$370,000 is in the cost of the boats to sleep on the islands. All the ferry crews get about \$8/hour or a set rate of about \$68 or \$70 for spending a night on the island at crew quarters. That's their overtime bonus. Peter is a proponent of keeping the financial subcommittee. He learns a lot about how the service is operating by being a part of it.

The other question is that they will want to know what Islesboro prefers in regards to crew safety meetings, which are all-day seminars. There are two options: 1. Only have

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the first and last runs of the day of the meeting, and the crew goes off to attend the seminar in between. 2. Have the crew come in on their day off and receive overtime for that. This option will be more expensive, but we have to consider that against losing the ferry for most of the day. Peter has asked the MSFS to come up with a number of what it would cost us. They need to do this training once a year.

P. Anderson asked if we would have to foot that bill, or if it will be an expense to the MSFS. P. Willcox replied that the MSFS would pay it, but we're looking at a 12 or 15% rise in ticket prices next year, so this is something we will have to take some responsibility for. However, we need to know what it will cost to have the crews go to the Training on their day off.

P. Rothschild asked about what happens to the \$370,000 to have the crew sleep on the island if we didn't do that. There's no guarantee that they'd reduce the fares. Is the state responsible for the ferry, or is it a collaboration? P. Willcox explained that the state pays 50% and relies on ticket fares to pay the other 50%, so at some point, it would affect the cost of the fares. The annual budget is about \$15M/year, so \$370,000 is not a lot, but it's something we should be aware of. If a crew member lives on the island, they do not get the overtime for sleeping on the island. Islesboro has a bigger percentage of local crews than the other islands do.

S. Conover clarified that it sounds like one of the benefits of having the Financial Subcommittee is having additional transparency into the MSFS budget. It gives us more information to be able to assess how it's running and why costs are as they are.

M. Burns asked about how many times we would lose the ferry for a day if we opted for the first scenario. P. Willcox explained that it would be twice, once for each crew.

J. Anderson asked how they handle safety meetings now. P. Willcox replied that he has never been to one. They have a new manager, EJ Dupont, who's getting this in order.

S. Conover stated it seems that asking community members is a way of trying to get a straw poll of how we might want to balance cost vs. service interruption. In some cases, it's safety meetings. In the past, they've asked about decreasing staffing costs and sacrificing reliability. It seems they're constantly poking that to see what the tolerance is.

Peter Willcox will get us a number for the cost, so that the Board can debate it more sensibly. In terms of the Financial Subcommittee, it might make sense to contact other Select Boards and see how they feel about it.

P. Anderson stated he is hung up on the concept of the MSFS asking our opinion of the financial impact of their training program. It seems like a soft opening for how they're going to raise ticket prices next. If we choose one way, they will blame us for the expense being higher. The MSFS needs to do required safety training the way they want to. It doesn't make sense that we have to decide if our ticket prices go up as a result, or if we lose ferry runs for a day as a result. He doesn't feel the need to wait on learning the finances of this; it feels like we're going to get screwed one way or another.

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S. Conover stated that ultimately, it is the MSFS's decision, but it doesn't hurt to have more financial information, so that maybe we can recommend them doing the training during a slower time. If they're asking our opinion, we should have a genuine response.

S. Pendleton stated that another approach would be to say to them that they have to determine what works best for the employees as well as the communities they serve. It seems reasonable to do it in an off-peak season, and we look forward to hearing what their thoughts are on it. Throw it back to them and let them come back to us with a plan.

SEA LEVEL RISE UPDATE

S. Conover reported that the Committee will meet tomorrow and discuss the good news that the FEMA BRIC grant has been reinstated. There may be funding available.

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

Public Safety Renovation: S. Pendleton reported that there was a meeting today with Ron Gallant, Pete Anderson, Murt Durkee, Fred Porter, and Laura Staines Giardino. Ron wants to start demolition work on Phase II after next week on rainy days. Today was a good meeting to get everything clear on what needs to be done. The Select Board has approved expenditure for Phase II.

Murt added that the work plan is only addressing the meeting room area, increasing its size by removing a few walls, and to prep the new kitchen.

Up-Island Public Safety Garage: Murt reported that it's still quiet at the site. There was a hiccup with the CMP hookup, but we hope to get that resolved and get power established there when the contractor returns. He has been out of town for a while.

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- Planning Board: April 13th, 5:00pm.
- Town Offices closed April 20th, for Patriot's Day
- Ferry Ticket Committee Public Information Meeting: April 14th, 6:00

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

- Packet included Agenda for 4/8/26 and Minutes of 3/25/26 Select Board Regular Meeting.
- Committee Minutes
 - 3/26/26 Lighthouse Committee minutes
- Correspondence
 - None.
- Handouts:

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- 4/6/26 IMB Fiber maintenance work going on this week by GWI / Hawk Eye Fiber Optics.
- 3/31/26 Bar Harbor Wealth Management sub-accounting / CAP RES
- 4/2/26 Waldo County Budget Committee 2026 tax bill \$1,195,163.07
- Manager:
 - 4/8/26 Outstanding Broadband accounts: 15 accounts = \$5,858
- Warrant #21
- M. Burns asked if we've received a reply regarding the litigation with the assessor to challenge our valuation. J. Anderson replied that he was here today and said there's a deadline, which was last November 15th, a certain number of days after the state issues it. He said it would be very difficult to do challenge the state, and he doesn't know of any town that's done it successfully. M. Burns stated he was notified in November that our valuation was jumping. She asked if we knew that. J. Anderson replied that she probably gave a copy to everyone.
- S. Conover stated that, based on a brief email from Vern, the methodology is a challenge, based on sales. Where we may have a leg to stand on is understanding the difference between our town assessed value and the state assessed value, and how that relates to other Towns in Waldo County. If they're not similarly inflated, then there's some disparity that impacts our taxes. The state assessment is significantly higher than the town assessment. J. Anderson replied that it's based on sales. They audit the sales.
- S. Conover suggested flagging this for next November, so that when there's an opportunity to appeal, at least there can be a discussion at the Board level.

CORRESPONDENCE

1. Emails from Bill Thomas re: Energy
 - 3/23/26 Fire Station Heating System
 - 3/23/26 Library Solar Array
 - 3/23/26 Town Office Array and Snow Coverage
 - 3/24/26 Generator Room Project

S. Conover stated that she appreciates the Energy Committee doing so much work.

P. Anderson asked about the question in the last email of whether the committee has fulfilled its obligation to seek island contractors and if they have authorization to proceed with the information at hand. J. Anderson replied that she told them they do.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Review FY27 Budget
 - J. Anderson stated that we just received the school's budget amount, which has been added to the summary. She gave this to Ed today for him to try to give us an estimate for a potential mil rate. He hasn't done his assessments yet for this year, so hopefully this is a little bit high. Based on this and adding

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in a \$64,855 overlay (we usually have \$75,000 to \$100,000), the mil rate came to 13.76.

- S. Conover asked if he bases his calculations exclusively off the spreadsheet. As discussed last time, there is a discrepancy between spreadsheets for FY 25.
- Discussion about the numbers that seem to be off.
- S. Conover stated that this feels like an important question to get clarity on, to understand our total expenses year over year. There's a \$100,000 difference.
- J. Anderson will go over her notebooks and look into it.
- S. Conover stated that she is not comfortable finalizing the budget until we have an answer. We will need to have a special meeting to address this before the next regular meeting.
- S. Conover stated that for FY27, the Select Board recommended budget request is \$5,278,984.59 before adding in the ferry ticket request. But that was assuming that was a 4.9% increase. It would be a 6.9% if the other number is the actual total. J. Anderson will verify the 5.032 number.
- Regarding the Ferry Tickets: J. Anderson stated that she had asked Attorney Collins about the wording that John King had come up with for a warrant article. She said she thinks it looks good. J. Anderson would like to know if the Board wants to put something beneath that article.
- Discussion about adding "The Select Board takes no position" vs. "The Select Board does not recommend this proposal."
- P. Anderson stated he is concerned that the wording of the article question is too broad. He suggested adding "a limited number of tickets" to the text.
- S. Conover suggested adding "per pilot program guidelines" so that it points people to the details.
- M. Burns pointed out that this program runs July through September for \$53,000. If we do it next year, it would be more because it would be June through September.
- S. Pendleton stated that the Board voted this down in budget discussions for financial reasons. He asked why we are doing this now. S. Conover replied that the subcommittee requested that we put it to the voters. The Board discussed it at length, and it was a painful discussion. There is not a lot of excitement for the program within the Select Board, but there is also recognition that the community can decide. We can tell the community that the Select Board recommends the \$5.2M budget.
- S. Pendleton asked how people will get the information that details the whole picture. S. Conover replied that the subcommittee will have public information meetings starting on the 14th. John will also have detailed information for the Town Report. S. Pendleton suggested putting information on the website, so people can be educated about what they're voting on.
- P. Rothschild summarized, saying that the Select Board did a massive amount of work considering every item in the budget, and this is out of context. There is no suggestion that this was in competition with anything else.

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- S. Conover stated that the simplest way to handle this is to write on the warrant article that the Select Board does not recommend the passage of this. It's not part of the budget we proposed. But the community can decide.
- P. Anderson asked if there is any way for the Board to require that financial proposals get submitted before the budget completion. S. Conover replied that this committee provided the numbers to us ahead of the budget process. We cut it out of the budget we recommend. They asked us to put it in front of the taxpayers again, and our response is that we don't recommend its passage.

MOTION BY P. Anderson, seconded by M. Burns, state that the Select Board doesn't recommend the passage of the ferry ticket proposal. No further discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

S. Conover stated she is happy to draft a statement for Town Meeting.

J. Anderson asked where this should be on the warrant agenda for Town Meeting.

M. Burns suggested changing the order of Town Meeting to do the warrants before the elections, so citizens will be more of a part of the public process.

MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by P. Anderson, to change the order of Town Meeting so the Warrants are presented first and elections are last. Discussion as below. Roll Call. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

S. Conover stated she would want the Ferry Ticket warrant article after the Town Budget is approved, so we can discuss what the Select Board recommends.

S. Pendleton stated that this sets a precedent that he doesn't like. We voted something down and we let someone bring it back in. Our people voted us in to do this job.

2. Assess Current Planning Board Fees

- S. Conover stated we have a memo and proposed fee schedule from CEO Dave Dyer.
- S. Conover stated she likes the idea of increasing the fees. It would be helpful to have more context as far as why these numbers were chosen.
- J. Anderson explained that she gave Dave about four towns to look at to compare. The fees vary quite a bit.
- P. Anderson noted that the fee for starting work before a permit is issued has tripled, when other fees are only going up by \$10. He's curious about why.
- M. Burns suggested it keeps people honest, and encourages them to get their permits. A \$100 fine doesn't affect people as much.
- P. Anderson stated that if it gets us more in line with the standards of other towns, he supports it.
- S. Conover asked if the Board is comfortable approving this tonight, or should we table it and have Dave come to the next meeting to answer questions.
- P. Anderson stated he's comfortable approving it, but would like additional information at some point. Otherwise, it seems reasonable.

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- S. Conover stated the fees haven't changed since 2009.

MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by S. Pendleton, to approve the Land Use and Development Review fee schedules. No further discussion. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

NEW BUSINESS

1. None

OTHER BUSINESS

1. None.

APPROVE WARRANT: FY26 #21

MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by P. Anderson, to approve Warrant FY26 #21. No discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

APPOINTMENTS:

1. None

CHAIR COMMENTS

S. Conover: No comments.

VICE-CHAIR COMMENTS

P. Anderson: No comments.

INDIVIDUAL SELECT BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

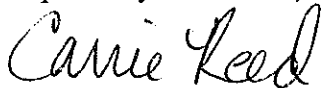
S. Pendleton: No comments.

M. Burns: No comments.

P. Rothschild: No comments.

Motion by M. Burns, seconded by P. Rothschild, to adjourn meeting at 6:34 PM. No discussion. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,



Carrie Reed
Secretary

