

Islesboro Select Board
Regular Meeting
Town Office Meeting Room & via Zoom
Wednesday, July 2, 2025 @ 6:00 PM

☒ APPROVED
7/16/25

MINUTES

Members Present:

Chair Shey Conover, Vice Chair Peter Anderson, Melissa Burns, Stephen Pendleton,
Peter Rothschild

Others Present:

Town Manager Janet Anderson, Peter Willcox, Harriet Bering

Others Present via Zoom:

Donna Leone, J. Leach

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

Minutes of June 18, 2025, Regular Meeting.

MOTION BY P. Rothschild, seconded by M. Burns, to approve the minutes of June 18, 2025 Regular Meeting, as written. No discussion. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no.

Minutes of June 20, 2025, Special Meeting.

MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by P. Anderson, to approve the minutes of June 20, 2025 Special Meeting, as written. No discussion. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no.

VISITOR COMMENTS/PETITIONS

Harriet Bering reported on the Energy Technology Innovation Partnership Project (ETIPP) application. The Energy Committee would like to apply again for this grant from the Department of Energy (DOE). We did the first round about three years ago, and it involved a study of the island's total energy needs. The organization made some recommendations around things the island could do to improve energy efficiency and self-reliance, including the idea of creating microgrids. The next steps involve getting experts to do detailed engineering plans, identify sites, etc. In order to get the next level of funding, we need to get that technical expertise. This next round would supply an in-depth study to create a detailed plan, which we hope will help us get funding for actual implementation. In the meantime, we would be presenting to the community about what's being proposed. As part of another grant application we did last summer, we identified as many as 14 property owners who are willing to put solar arrays on their land to be a part of this. That grant didn't come through. The committee is looking for a letter of support from the Select Board, which we will help draft. The application is due July 25th.

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P. Rothschild asked if there is a Town match requirement. Harriet answered that there is no matching fund on this one. It provides technical assistance from the DOE National Laboratory as well as \$50,000 for spending in the community. That will have to be outlined in the grant. They require us to identify what we're going to accomplish.

S. Conover stated that the next Select Board meeting is two weeks from now, before the deadline for the application. It would make sense to have a draft ahead of time that we can sign.

Harriet will draft a letter for the next Select Board meeting, July 16th.

FERRY SERVICE UPDATE

Peter Willcox reported on the Ferry Service Advisory Board meeting of July 2nd. He considered it a good meeting. No threats or anger—just a group of people trying to get along and doing a good job. There is an annual report due in mid-August. Peter will need input for that.

A question the Financial Sub-Committee had was about the health insurance. It was noted that this agreement is set by the State, and the Ferry Service does not contract for it.

The Financial Sub-Committee was also asking for a breakdown of expenses for Seaward, the company that supplied us with additional crew to operate the boats last summer and fall when we were experiencing crew shortages. How much did we spend for flights and accommodations? Bill Geary said he would give us the breakdown. The thought was mentioned that to judge Seaward, we should look at the cancellation costs of not running a ferry, instead of just the extra expenses. We stopped using Seaward last December, but they are on contract to be available if we need them again. According to Geary, we spend nothing for this, unless we need more crew. Dan Tutor of the Islesboro Island News (IIN) did some research and found two payments to Seaward in January and February, totaling \$500,000. Peter believes those were for services rendered in the past. He has put that question to Bill Geary today.

Peter stated there was an error in his story in the last Islesboro Island News. In it, it was said that MSF had contracted with Seaward to provide needed crew for five years for \$1 million. This is not true. It is Peter's understanding that Seaward has been contracted, at no expense to the MSF. He expects confirmation of this soon.

[As you know we have not used Seaward since December 9, 2024 and do not pay anything to them for services not used. The 500k you are referring to is for services rendered. -Bill Geary email 7/3/25]

The fiscal year closes on July 15th.

P. Rothschild asked for clarification. They are not using this labor source anymore? P. Willcox answered that it was confirmed by Bill Geary at the recent meeting that we stopped using Seaward on December 9th. The MSFS has hired extra people so they can guarantee the ferry service will run.

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P. Rothschild asked if the new hires are mostly domiciled on the island. P. Willcox answered that anybody on the island that wants to work there can probably get a job. Many people don't want to do the drug test, required by the Coast Guard. It's going to take a monumental effort to get that changed.

The issue of taller vehicles riding the ferry has come up a couple times. There was a rumor going around that the policy had changed. When Peter mentioned this to Geary, he was stunned, because he'd had negotiations with John King and Gabe Pendleton. They weren't going to change this policy unless they discuss it with the islands. It was not discussed and he did not change the policy. This is being discussed by Vinalhaven mostly, but our shore crew is in favor of changing this. Nothing will change right away, but it's being discussed. If two tall vehicles go down first, it throws off the truck situation. The tall vehicles pay as cars, not trucks.

S. Conover stated that currently, they are paying as trucks. That is the issue. There are some operational differences. Peter replied that he spoke with the line crew today, and they said the policy hasn't changed. If a truck is under 20' and has four wheels, it's a car.

P. Willcox stated that if this policy is to be changed, the leadership has to come from the Select Board and the MSFS.

S. Conover stated that she is concerned about the way it's been handled. They tried to handle it in Tariff 10 (We're on Tariff 11 now). In the final publishing of the tariff, they had changed the definitions in a way that was not published in Public Comments, so there was no time to prepare. At that time, she and Gabe Pendleton had a conversation with Bill Geary, and they recognized that they had not followed statutory process, and they removed the language. In Tariff 11, they made a different language change, but it had the same effect in terms of how it was interpreted by people in the ticket booth. They were trying to get answers from the front office. Something doesn't add up. She understands the reason behind changing the definition, but stands by the fact that it needs to be published ahead of time and needs to follow the decision-making process.

P. Willcox reiterated that according to Geary, the policy hasn't changed. Vinalhaven is at the point where they don't want to accept reservations for tall vehicles because they'll lose a couple of trucks. They suggested that if it has to go down the center, it should be considered a truck. This board has to discuss it and come up with a recommendation.

P. Rothschild asked why the policy shouldn't change. P. Willcox replied that it needs to go through a review and be agreed upon by everyone involved.

S. Conover looked it up. The language that was added this time was: *"Vehicle" includes automobiles, station wagons, vans, media vans, pickup trucks, golf carts, forklifts, riding lawnmowers, small garden tractors, and all-terrain vehicles... four tires or less with an overall length of 20' or less, excluding motorcycles. Vehicles with four wheels or less and are not one of the vehicle types listed above will be assessed the appropriate per-foot charge for their length.* This is causing confusion.

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S. Conover added that the first time they did this, unsuccessfully, they said the center aisle is premium parking. In the summertime, there would be a lot of people who would be willing to pay for premium parking to not have to go down the side lanes. This would be a very dangerous precedent and slippery slope.

To be discussed at a future meeting.

EMERGENCY FERRY TASK FORCE UPDATE

Maine Legislature:

- LD 841: Resolve to study Emergency Services to the Unabridged Islands. Passed and signed.
- LD 1231: A bill requiring the MSFS to get legislative approval before moving the ferry from their overnight berths on the island. Passed and signed, and enacted on June 12th.
- LD 1731: A bill to increase the influence of the Advisory Board on the MSFS. Passed. Vetoed on June 20th.

S. Conover stated that there was a letter that accompanied Gov. Mills' veto. Basically, she said that the Advisory Board was by definition advisory only, and didn't want to incur additional responsibilities.

There were other bills passes and vetoed that had no direct effect on Islesboro.

P. Rothschild asked if there is a Plan B for replacing the Margaret Chase Smith. P. Willcox stated that there is not. The funds have probably dried up at this point.

MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by P. Anderson, to take the Agenda out of order. No discussion. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Discuss Increased Ferry Tariff Rates

- S. Conover stated that at the last meeting, M. Burns brought this to us to see what could be done to alleviate the pain that the increased rates are having on year-round residents. We had asked Janet about having a list of some local programs.
- J. Anderson replied that the Town has General Assistance, and the money we put away for emergency trips. There's also the Community Fund.
- J. Anderson stated she emailed Marjorie Stratton from Vinalhaven and Rebecca Carmichael Austin from North Haven to ask them if their people had come to them about this issue. Neither of them had. Rebecca said they were going to bring it up at the next Select Board meeting.
- S. Conover stated the question is, would the Town like to create a pilot program for subsidizing a small number of rates?

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- M. Burns stated she talked with a former Select Board member who recommended going to the Waldo County Commissioners and asking for a break in what we pay them, and have a conversation with them to see if they would do any kind of relief or assistance. M. Burns is willing to reach out to them. They have more programs that we may qualify for.
- J. Anderson asked M. Burns if she would like to be on the Waldo County Budget Committee. M. Burns will consider it. J. Anderson will call the clerk and find out if we can get someone on.
- S. Conover stated that she would prefer to explore this option before creating our own program. It would take a long time to implement thoughtfully.
- S. Pendleton referred to the Islesboro Looking Ahead document. The ferry situation has been ongoing. How do we offset costs? The Islesboro Health Center is expanding services. If they expand services for medications, etc., it reduces need for going off island. Perhaps we need to be exploring some of the many reasons people need to go off island. We have to put a stake in the ground and say what are the options that are viable. Let's try to get one of them implemented and use it as a test case.
- P. Rothschild stated we should look at the demography of the people who are actually using it most. He suggested congestion pricing for the first and last runs. Why aren't we charging more for people from off island who are coming here to work?
- M. Burns added that Waldo Community Action Partners (WCAP) would like to help in some way.
- P. Anderson feels that the proper direction would be to compile, publicize, and make accessible the resources that we have at hand, not related to us administering any kind of discount to people from our own pockets. If the Town tries to set up a fund, it would be a madhouse trying to determine who's eligible. The money that could possibly be saved from Waldo County could be used on our own roads, waterfront services, or Health Center services to keep people from going off island. Pete is opposed to us getting financially involved.

Back to Order of Agenda

SEA LEVEL RISE UPDATE

S. Conover reported that GZA Engineering is working on a 60% design, which we will have in August.

UP-ISLAND PUBLIC SAFETY GARAGE UPDATE

J. Anderson reported that some of the steel has arrived for the building.

PUBLIC SAFETY RENOVATION UPDATE

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S. Pendleton had no update.

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

- Planning Board: July 14th, 5:00pm.
- Energy Committee: July 8th, 5:15pm.
- Harbor Committee: July 17th, 6:30pm.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

- Packet included Agenda for 7/2/25, Minutes of 6/18/25 Select Board Regular Meeting, and Minutes of 6/20/25 Select Board Special Meeting.
- Minutes of 4/8/25 & 5/6/25 Energy Committee meetings.
- Correspondence
 - None
- Old Business
 - 2025 Fare Adjustment, 13.5% Rate Increase
- New Business
 - Invitation to bid Town Septic Field Replacement
- Handouts
 - ETIPP Community Technical Assistance Application
 - Constellation of Stars—people who contributed to the creation of the new Health Center Building
- Manager
 - 6/19 Health Center opening. Another Open House 7/12
- S. Pendleton asked about brush cutting on West Shore Drive. J. Anderson stated that the company who was going to do it bailed on short notice. She will talk with the Public Works department.
- S. Conover stated that probably the proper way for us to handle it is to put out a formal bid for the work if it's not something that Public Works feels comfortable doing.
- S. Pendleton stated that if something like this falls through, we should be proactive in addressing it.
- J. Anderson will put it out to bid.

CORRESPONDENCE

None.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Open Bids for "Town Septic Field Replacement"
 - Peter Coombs \$44,351
 - John Apelquist \$44,561

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MOTION BY S. Conover, seconded by M. Burns, to accept Peter Coombs' offer of \$44,351. Discussion as below. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

P. Rothschild asked about track records. M. Burns stated they've both done work for the Town. They are both very capable.

Both agreed to complete the work within the timeline.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. None.

APPROVE WARRANT: FY25 A/P #27 & FY26 #1

MOTION BY P. Anderson, seconded by M. Burns, to approve Warrant FY25 A/P #27 & FY26 #1. No discussion. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

APPOINTMENTS:

Larry Hoder to the Groundwater Protection Committee

MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by S. Conover, to appoint Larry Hoder to the Groundwater Protection Committee. No discussion. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

CHAIR COMMENTS

S. Conover: No comments.

VICE-CHAIR COMMENTS

P. Anderson: Thank you to everyone who celebrated the Siekman and Coombs families this past weekend. The memorials were well attended, and a great sight to see.

INDIVIDUAL SELECT BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

M. Burns: Thank you to the Lighthouse Committee. Sunday was the Grand Reopening of the Tower. People can now climb all the way up. The outside of the lighthouse looks beautiful. It made me proud to be part of Islesboro and to see all of the work they've put in. Congratulations on a wonderful opening!

S. Pendleton: No comments.

P. Rothschild: Would like to discuss the future of the ferry parking issues. What is administratively, legally, a way of establishing that people can utilize the ground that's within the right of way.

J. Anderson stated the Town attorney stated we could set up an ordinance.

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S. Conover stated it seems we need to come up with a proposal for what our ideal parking situation could be on Ferry Road.

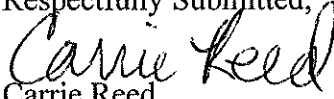
Discussion about the Town's rights and the State's right of way.

M. Burns recommended this be added as an agenda item at a future meeting.

S. Conover stated that the Town attorney answered clearly that we can establish an ordinance. We need to take the next step and possibly ask her to draft something. We need to have the area defined that is not just looking at the current parking, but is forward thinking.

J. Anderson stated it's time to get the Parking Committee together.

Motion by M. Burns, seconded by P. Rothschild, to adjourn meeting at 7:02 PM. No discussion. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carrie Reed
Secretary