

MINUTES

**Members Present:**

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

**Others Present:**

Town Manager Janet Anderson, John King, and Jennifer West

Via Zoom: Janis Petzel, Cressica Brazier, Maggy Willcox, Peter Willcox

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

**MOTION BY P. Seymour, seconded by M. Burns, to approve the minutes of July 19, 2023 Regular Meeting, as written. No discussion. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no.**

**VISITOR COMMENTS/PETITIONS**

None

**FERRY SERVICE UPDATE**

John King reported on all MSFS updates, including the Memo of 7/24 he had sent to the Select Board regarding the Tariff Review.

- At the last Advisory Board meeting on July 20, Bill Pulver, COO of DOT, gave a presentation regarding tariffs. They are reviewing the current tariff, adopted in 2019, and inviting comment. They intend to implement changes this October if possible. However, they need to publish the proposed rates and allow time for a response.
- The proposed necessary funds are about \$1.3M, which represents an increase of about 18% of farebox revenue (tickets, reservations, parking, etc.). The increased needs are primarily in personnel costs (especially the Unfunded Retirement Liability for the State, which has not been funded properly for years and they are now playing catch-up), fuel costs, and repair costs. The repair costs will go down as we replace an aging fleet.
- John stated he presented the Advisory Board with a copy of the minutes from the meeting in which the Select Board recommended the name "George Mitchell" for our next vessel, and gave it to Bill Pulver, who is giving it to Bruce Van Note, the Commissioner of the DOT. The Advisory Board voted unanimously to recommend that name as well.
- The DOT doesn't usually invite us to participate on the Tariffs, but this time they are, which allows us to think about some ways to minimize the impact.

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- Some ideas which have come up are:
  - Allocate as much of the increase as possible to the 4-month peak season when demand is high. This would help those who live here year-round. This idea has been received favorably. The problem is we don't have the data of revenue from any of the islands for peak vs. off-peak. Bill Pulver is going to try to run some numbers.
  - Increase reservation costs. Our reservations cost \$20, and other islands' reservations cost \$12. John ran some rough numbers. In the 13 months that RocketRez has been used, we've had 12,050 vehicle reservations and 3,745 truck reservations. We could increase reservation costs peak season or all year. John did a ballpark estimate of peak season reservations of about 1500 per month. At \$20/vehicle, that's \$30,000. If we increase to \$30/vehicle, that goes up to \$45,000, and at \$50, it's \$75,000/month. Increasing the other islands would show a more dramatic difference. John recommends increasing the reservation cost to be in the \$30 range, across the board with all islands. This represents a potential increase in the summer of about \$400,000.
  - A true Island Resident rate. In the past, Commissioner Bruce Van Note did not like the island-origin rate system (half price) because he perceived it as being "gamed." Some people would buy multiple tickets and send them to relatives to use when they visited. John suggested to do it in a way that is controllable, perhaps by limiting it to those who have an Islesboro driver's license, or having an approved list from the Town Office. Those who abuse their privileges would lose them.
  - John stated he advocated for a more friendly commuter rate, and a reduced senior citizen rate. This wouldn't help with the revenue situation, but would enhance consumer perception of the MSFS. Most other ferry services in the country have a senior citizen discount option.
  - Someone suggested a vehicle system based on length of vehicle, but John thinks that would be an "administrative nightmare."
  - Another option would be to sell one-way tickets instead of round-trip.
  - John's thought is to allocate as much as possible to the peak season, and look at reservations. Discussion about how the other islands do reservations differently.
  - Discussion about options. High reservation prices would hurt businesses. John suggested maybe having a two-tier system for reservation rates: one for Maine commercial plates and one for all others. Probably \$30 across the board is better, though.
  - Discussion about how to implement a resident rate system. Licenses, voter list, stickers on windshields, resident cards, etc. How do other ferry services do this?
  - M. Burns suggested a rate for medical appointments. Discussion about how they already have a system in place for medical treatment travel, but it's not for regular appointments.

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- Timeline and next steps: At the Board meeting, John asked for about a month, through the end of August, to get back to the MSFS with recommendations. The next Advisory Board meeting is in late September, but by then, we will most likely have a proposed Tariff.
- The Ferry Service Update is on the agenda for the Summer Info meeting. John will speak briefly about it. There won't be much time for discussion, but we can encourage offline conversation.
- The EMS issue seems to be okay at the moment. The idea of building a boat and having Maine Maritime Academy (MMA) operate it is on hold. John is trying to get a meeting scheduled between DOT, MSFS, MMA, and himself.
- Discussion about the Unfunded Retirement Liability, which is a line item on the DOT budget, but is for the entire state.

### **SEA LEVEL RISE**

S. Conover reported that the next meeting is tomorrow, August 3, at 5:30. The committee has had two small group discussions so far to start to understand the questions and concerns that will inform planning for the Narrows adaptation. Both were well attended and had thoughtful discussion. Hopefully we will start the engineering RFQ process by the end of this month.

### **MUNICIPAL BUILDING PROJECT**

L. Bruce reported that this coming Monday will be the meeting with the Planning Board, and the committee is hopeful that the Islesboro Health Center application will be approved. This Friday is the site review for the Health Center building. We still need to have a site review for the Up-Island Public Safety Garage due to changes in the site plan. Hopefully by the end of August we will have all site requirements through the Planning Board process.

P. Seymour asked if the project is fully funded. L. Bruce answered that this will come up at the Summer Information meeting. We don't have the final numbers from the Construction Manager yet. At this point, we are operating under the assumption that everything is covered under the original \$3.5 M. There are still a lot of unknowns that are not yet resolved. The Construction Manager is coming to the Summer Info meeting, and we have asked for a timetable. They are planning to start construction October 1, going through the end of May. We've asked for a cost estimate. Janet will sign a contract with the Construction Manager within the next month and a half. The plan is to start both buildings at the same time.

### **SUMMER INFORMATION MEETING 8/10/23**

Flyers were sent out via Constant Contact. S. Conover and L. Bruce have been outlining how everything will fit within an hour. Janet will welcome everyone, and we will spend about 20 minutes on the Municipal Building Project, about 25 minutes on Sea Level Rise,

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9 minutes for the Ferry Service Update, and end with the EMS video and Energy Committee \$100,000 Prize video. Michael Hutcherson is doing the media. Cressica will send the video link to the Select Board members and to Michael Hutcherson.

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

- Planning Board: August 7<sup>th</sup> – 5pm

### **TOWN MANAGER REPORT**

- Packet included Agenda for 8/2/23 and Minutes of 7/19/23 Regular Meeting
- Maine Community Foundation Endowment Fund statement of 1/1/23 – 6/30/23, \$1,516,935.53
- Summer Info Meeting Flyer—finalize agenda.
- Minutes of the 7/13 Lighthouse Restoration Committee meeting.
- Minutes of the 6/13 Energy Committee meeting.
- Emails from Sen. King and Sen. Collins offices supporting the \$845,000 request to help construct and equip a new health center. Final determination will be in Dec. 2023. We won't get the money until May or June. We are waiting on budget negotiations.
- Old Business: Carole Nichter not attending tonight.
- New Business: 7/24 Memo from John King re: the MSFS Tariff Review.
- FY23 Sewer Bills.
- Property Tax Stabilization Program (LD 290) has ended effective 4/1/24. Letters explaining the ending of the program will go out to the 76 homeowners who applied.
- Letters to all taxpayers have been sent out by RJD Appraisal, giving the new valuations and tentative tax amount. Rob has set the mil rate for \$11 per \$1000 assessed value. Hearings begin 8/14 – 8/17. Appointments are needed to discuss valuations. Vern Ziegler has said that during a reval, one third of properties go up, one third remain the same, one third may go down.
  - S. Conover suggested that RJD Appraisal give a presentation to the Select Board after those meetings to give a big picture summary of the trends and feedback from the community.
- Warrant FY24 #3

### **CORRESPONDENCE**

7/27/23 Senator Susan Collins, Senate Appropriations Update.

7/28/23 Senator Angus King, Congressionally Directed Spending Update.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

1. Recognition of Carole Nichter for Years Served on Cemetery Committee.
  - Carole couldn't be here; move to next meeting so we can thank her in person.

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**NEW BUSINESS**

1. Memo from John King on Maine State Ferry Service Tarriff
  - Covered in the Ferry Service Update.
2. Authorize for Collection of FY23 Sewer Taxes.
  - The sewer bills total \$21,852.75. The click-rate this year was 11 cents per click, up from 9 cents last year. The base rate remained the same at \$400. Expenses were lower this year, around \$14,000. What's leftover will be put back in the capital reserve.
  - The volume was down this year.
  - Some of the meters don't work consistently. In the case of three that are not working, Janet gauged the use on the previous year and spoke with the homeowners about it.
  - The Lincolnville facility uses a different system with no meters, because everyone has a private well. Maybe that's something that will work for us.
  - Mike Harris, our new operator for the system, is coming tomorrow. Janet will speak with him about options.

**MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by L. Bruce, to authorize the collection of FY23 Sewer Taxes as presented. No discussion. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no.**

**OTHER BUSINESS**

1. P. Anderson stated he would like to resign from the Islesboro Economic Sustainability Committee. L. Bruce stated she would be interested in the position.

**APPROVE WARRANTS: FY23 #26-4 Accounts Payable and FY24 #3**

**MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by P. Seymour, to approve Warrants FY23 #26-4 and FY24 #3. No discussion. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no.**

**APPOINTMENTS:**

Planning Board Alternate: Anne Bertulli

**MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by L. Bruce, to appoint Anne Bertulli as Alternate Member of the Planning Board. No discussion. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no.**

**CHAIR COMMENTS**

S. Conover had no comment.

**VICE-CHAIR COMMENTS**

L. Bruce had no comment.

**INDIVIDUAL SELECT BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

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P. Seymour had no comment.

M. Burns stated school starts August 31<sup>st</sup>. Be careful of busses, traffic, and students.

P. Anderson had no comment.

**MOTION BY M. Burns, seconded by P. Seymour, to Adjourn Meeting at 7:06 PM. No Discussion. Motion passed, 5 yes, 0 no.**

Respectfully Submitted,



Carrie Reed  
Secretary