Maine Islands Coalition

Meeting Minutes
January 23, 2014
10:00 A.M. Cross Building, Augusta, ME

In Attendance:
MIC and guests

Arch Gilles
Avery Day
Bev Roxby
Carol Loehr (virtual)
Cheryl Crowley
Christopher Johnson
Candi Joyce (virtual)
Herb Maine
Beverly Johnson
Jim Fortune (phone)
John DeWitt
John Norton

Kathy Warren
Kendra Chubbuck
Marjorie Phyfe
Roger Berle
Timothy Wile
Mary Anne Mitchell
Tara Hire (virtual)

Island Institute Staff

Heather Deese
Karen Burns
Kate Tagai
Shey Conover

Legislative Representatives:

Chuck Kruger- District 48
Chris Johnson
Chris Rector- Senator King
Walter Kumiega- District 36
Janice Cooper- District 107
Brian Hubble –District 35
Deane Rykerson- District 151
Mic Devin –District 51
MIC Business

Roger moved the minutes from the last meeting be approved. They were seconded and approved.

Treasurers report: Karen says that we are $250 ahead because no expenses have yet been incurred. Frenchboro is the only island that has paid dues for 2014.

Cranberries, Matinicus and Isle Au Haut have not paid dues from 2013.

Roger moves to accept the treasurers report. Moved and voted to accept the report without additions or corrections.

Roger will get out the annual report by the end of January.

Donna: Last meeting a recognition award was instituted. Eva was the last recipient. Kathy Iannicelli is this meetings recipient. Nominated by Travis Dow. She has extensive volunteer experience and started the Island Farm project that helps to inspire further volunteer opportunities.

The certificate will be mailed to her. We are looking for nominations for the next meeting.

Conference Call sign up sheet was passed around for a call in March regarding the Searsport Development issue.

Arch Gillies talked about Searsport Development Issue: talked about the dredging issue itself, the million cubic yard expansion of Searsport to accommodate super-tankers, and the potential negative impacts of these developments on Penobscot Bay, fisheries, and the current ecology and economy of the Bay. He asked Towns in the Bay and along the Bay to write letters to the Army Corps of Engineers requesting an Environmental Impact Statement (E.I.S.) and cited the Towns (Stockton Springs, Searsport, Belfast, Islesboro, Camden. North Haven, and Rockport) that already that already have done so.

Island Institute Update

Karen: Update on recruitment activities for Fellows and internships. Island Scholarship Fund for island students going on to secondary education. Last year II gave out $170,000 dollars. Applications due in April. New Scholarship for Pen Bay and DownEast students called the Gieger Scholarship for an abroad or semester program. First recipient just left for Australia.

Internship Program: Current college students and rising high school sr.s will be placed on island business as interns. Tiered system. Businesses can create their own placement to give students a professional experience on the island. End of Feb application due. Intern application is due in April.

Fellow placements: Still looking for site placements for Fellows. Host Site applications are due in March 7th.

Island students are eligible to be Island Fellows, but they are not placed on their home island.

Question: Perks for people who make their houses available for Fellows. If people offer their house for a Fellow to live in it is a tax write off for the value of the donated housing.
Shey: Formal Invitations will be sent out but March 23 will be the ISLE Cohort graduation. 18 participants from 9 island communities are participating. They are developing social change business plans and presentations. Graduation is in Northport at Point Lookout, it is a 3 hour event for them to present their plans going forward.

Heather: Policy Update. Legislature is in session. Legislative update and ways to get involved that Avery will give during lunch. Avery was born on Vinalhaven and is a lawyer and lobbyist in Augusta. He is being paid by II to keep them up to date on key policy issues that we track. We are tracking Mick Devin’s Bill on Ocean Acidification to set up a Legislative Commission to study the impacts of OA. The exact current impacts are unknown, the study would study both what is happening and what steps Maine should do to address the issue. 60 Co-Sponsors on his bill.

**Panel Discussion- Town Governance**

Tara (Assessor), Herb, Arch (Board Chair) and Dan- 4 Select people present

Karen prepared a handout on different forms of town Governance that are currently employed on islands.

Questions: How long does it take to have an understanding once your are elected?

Donna: Swan’s Island has a select board of 3 people and just formed a committee to explore town governance

What is the term of a typical selectman?

Herb: The Board has only been around for 7 years. The board has been stable. It takes at least a lifetime to figure out town governance. Chebeague formed their own town. When you get plugged into a system that has been up and running for a long time, it may be harder. Chebeague 5 people- 3 have been on since the beginning. Rotating 1 year breaks. There has been a good mix of people. The school committee is much more stable. 350 year round. Chebeague also has an administrative assistant. It started as a part time position with a 3 page job description to run the town. It has now changed to a full time position. Eric Dyer did a percentage break down of how he spends his time for the board. Most of it is in support of the board: Meeting packets, gathering agenda items.

Peaks also has a 5 person select board with 900 year round people.

Jim Fortune- Cranberries- Administrative Assistant for the board. Donna asked what the role of the AA is.

He isn’t a town Manager. The Cranberries also have a town clerk and treasurer. He does the administrative work which includes chipping ice from the dock steps to gathering board packets. He maintains town buildings and the leases and rental agreements. The Town operates a commuter Ferry in the winter outside of the mail boat, and Jim manages the contracts for that service. The road Commissioners are the selectmen so it falls to Jim to manage the day to day for road maintenance-including getting plowing contracts and bids to present to the selectmen. Background as a town planner in Topsham and Brunswick.

Donna: For selectman- have you been a selectman without an assistant and could you do it without an assistant?
Isle Au Haut has never had a town manager. They do have a treasurer, town clerk, Tax Collector and Tax Assessor. Selectman have been on the board for life. They have a hard time sometimes even getting 3 some years. The selectmen are elected at town meeting and sometimes the nominations go around two or three times before someone acquiesces to the job. There are also situations where someone wants to be a selectman but not enough people want them to. There is not the budget to hire a Town Manager. One of the selectmen gets paid a bit more to compensate for the extra work they take on.

Eva- Hiring an AA has become more necessary. The amount of paperwork and bureaucratic responsibility has increased exponentially. Eva was the AA for a few years, now it is George Tarkleson. Before you could do it from someone’s kitchen table- but now no one wants the amount of paper to take up their house- so now there has to be a town office- that includes heat, electric bills, maintenance on a building- now everything is online which requires training and specific skills. Costs go up because more time is involved having to compensate selectmen and town employees for their time.

Donna- On Swan’s town selectmen are paid $17 per hour, but the voters have not put a cap on it so they can not budget for the amount. The selectmen sign the warrant, submit the hours, and cut the pay check. Last year the unofficial town manager made $21,000, The other selectmen made $4,000, $3,500

Kathy: Important to differentiate between the Jobs and the Offices. Civic Duty- the older generations saying “I do this because it is my civic duty” but more are doing it because it is their job. The jobs have grown beyond the ability of civic duty to answer, because costs have escalated, paperwork and accountability has escalated.

Beverly- Frenchboro- Administrator who lives off island so she misses some of the details that go on in town and that is an issue. 3 Selectman who are paid no more than $500 per year. Dissention comes into the select board because they are such a small population to the point where one selectman walked out of a meeting. Has anyone ever had a mediator step in to solve select board issues?

Also because the job has grown, has anyone ever had a mentor program to help usher the selectman through the learning process.

Eva- the Selectboard members are the ones less likely to ask for help, though they need it. There is an idea that they have lived on island all their lives and know what’s going on- but the job has grown beyond that ability now.

Herb- Chebeague- they host a once a year retreat for the selectboard.

Chris: How much to you use the Maine MMA as a resource? Vinalhaven and Isle au Haut uses the resource.

Walter: Secretary of State’s Office can be of help for some issues. Seconded by Isle au Haut who has worked with him and found him extremely helpful.

Eva: I used to use MMA but often they were set up to help much larger towns with Town Lawyer, or Town Accountant, etc. and didn’t grasp how to work with smaller towns.

Shey: If there are commonalities it may make sense to pull together a stronger network to help identify and meet those needs.
Eva: Our Selectmen receive an honorarium. It isn’t meant to be a part of their livelihood. It just went up to $1,000.

These are not people with experience as professional administrators who take the job on under duress. There is a skill gap.

Karen will send out the breakdown of work from the Administrator on Chebeague once she gets it from Herb.

**Legislative Updates**

Tara: Offshore Wind on Monhegan- What is the awareness of the legislatures to this project?

Mohegan residents feel that they have been left out of the conversation, and now are untrusting of the plan moving forward because they were not involved in the development.

Chuck Kruger: Matinicus and Criehaven. –Impacts of the long term plan esp on Fisherman but also aware of the need for renewable energy. Mick Devon is very aware of the issue (though he is not at the meeting) Important and critical issue. Early stages of legislations- most issues are still in committee. Marine Resources Committee, House Oversight Committee Chair. Dredging issue: Concerned about it on behalf of Penobscot Bay and wants more local officials to take an interest in it. We must insist on an environmental impact study for this project esp. on the impact on the fisheries.

Walter: Stonington/DI Swan’s, Frenchboro, Brookline, Vinalhaven, North Haven, Mt. Desert- Energy Committee is working on wind power bills- but isn’t aware if any of them are specifically offshore. Offshore will have an impact on fisherman and those impacts need to be minimized but how that will happen he isn’t sure. He has a bill to prohibit spraying specific pesticides within watersheds that drain into the ocean. These pesticides are connected to the lobster die off of 12 years ago.

Chris Johnson- LincolnCnty including Monhegan- The project has changed from the small towers to the full size towers. He didn’t have any voice in the process either, the way the process is set up. Clean energy is needed to mitigate the impacts already seen on the fishery- but it could also have greater impacts on the fishery. It has the potential to decrease the cost of electricity, but there are legitimate fears about the visual, sound, and tourism impacts to the island.

Deane Rykerson- Kittery- He is on the energy committee and there is no current legislations having to do with wind at this point. The next step is a federal grant and they can’t move forward without that grant. I will encourage the consortium to get more citizen input.

Kathy: Cautionary Tale: There are a lot of national interests involved in wind that can take the legal battle away from the islands or the land that the project is being planned on. Lots of outside lobbying forces were involved in the Vinalhaven project.

Brian Hubble: Cranberry Islands: Saddened that he will be losing Cranberries in the redistricting. Generally supportive of Offshore wind but it is bad policy if we don’t allow local voice in the decisions. Dredging: Recognize the potential need and benefits of dredging but we need to make sure that there are not serious impacts to the Env. Questions: Fire protection- are there hardships regarding training
requirements to support a fire station. Also wants to know about LP Gas and predicted propane shortage.

Eva: Husband Paul Murray is the propane dealer, and propane installer for Matinicus. Eva has the license to drive the HazMat and tank truck. The price had gone up about 20% but there were no insurmountable obstacles that would prevent the delivery of propane. In terms of fire protection I have a lot to say as it pertains to homeowners insurance.

Beverly: Frenchboro: Teachers house and the school are running low on fuel. Trying to get Acadia fuel to come out and deliver but they have not been keeping their regular delivery schedule and so people are running short. It could be a serious problem in terms of fuel access.

Eva: Are you getting bulk delivery or bottle exchange?

Beverly: unknown, Swan’s does both.

Jim: Acadia fuel will show up with kerosene and oil periodically, but getting them to deliver propane is more difficult. It is an ongoing problem and they get different stories as to why-weather, barge service, shortages. No way of knowing when the next delivery will be, they just have to keep calling. Will forward an email he got to Karen regarding the Fuel Delivery issue.

Walter: there is a nationwide shortage of propane which will have a greater impact on smaller companies than it will on larger companies. Call the Governor’s energy office to inform them of the situation on the island.

Brian: Maine Energy Marketers Association is also very interested in this conversation and would like to know of any problems islands have with fuel delivery.

Janice Cooper- Yarmouth, If reelected will represent Chebeague and Long- ENV. And Natural Resources Committee has been dealing with land base wind turbines and trying to get the residents of the unorganized territories a voice. At the moment the Monhegan wind issue is in the energy committee. Proposed Bill going before Legislative Council – to redefine codes to say who are exempted from bankruptcy proceedings and civil actions. Wants to know if others are facing situations that would apply to the bill.

Swan’s: Front page of Ellsworth American- not a shortage of Propane but a problem with the delivery infrastructure.

Brian Hubble and Chuck Krueger sit on the education Committee.

Chris Johnson: Wise to meet the legislators outside of session- connect with them when they are out of session and aren’t so busy, so they can get a sense of what is important for your specific island.

Mick Devon- Ocean Acidification garnered more support than any other bill in the legislature. Priorities of the ENV Priorities Coalition. Marine Resources Committee is fully behind the bill. Gov. LePage is not a fan of studies and commissions, so he had put some parameters on the bill. But there are no major roadblocks to the bill’s passage. Want to use the commission to establish Maine as the leader of Ocean Acidification Mitigation work at the federal level and also to show the local communities that we can
make a real difference. The commission will be working for about a year to come up with concrete steps.

**Special Presentations: Getting Involved- Avery Day**

Avery Day: Lobbyist at the State House. Works with the Island Institute. It is important to stay informed. Public Hearings are noticed two weeks in advance. Get on the email list of a particular committee if you are interested in the issues they deal with, and the trade associations newsletter. It is important to know the local senator and representative. Timing is important in Augusta. There are so many issues that representatives are dealing with- that you have to time your message to the time when they are dealing with the particular issue and making up their minds- shortly before or at the public hearing is usually the best opportunity to voice your opinions. (1 week out from a committee vote) Outcomes need to be influenced when it is still in the committee process. When it gets to the floor, minds are made up one way or another.

Focus on Ocean Acidification

Sends a weekly roster on legislative pieces working through the process to help Island Institute Track legislation.

It is hard to know which bills are going forward and which ones won’t get far to best make use of our time.

Don’t underestimate the impact of a few phone calls to reach out and really make an impression about how important an issue is- gather support and encourage people to reach out.

**Island Community Check-Ins**

Donna: Swan’s Island: Appointed a committee to study different forms of Town Governance. The selectmen hand selected a committee that includes Donna. Swan’s Island has a fitness craze and are embracing Let’s Get Fit and a pre-diabetes program. 4 lobsterman, 1 sternman and various ladies. Anna (the fellow) is very keen on exercise and runs a class on T-95 including husbands and wives coming together as well as a family where 3 generations come to exercise together. Unlikely role models have emerged from the community including Kenny LaMoine who lost over 60 pounds.

Swan’s pays about 30 cents per kilowatt hour but is going to have a rate bump in March

Herb and Beverly: Chebegue Cares- new project to help people age in their homes.

Cliff Island: 1 baby and another one coming in the spring. Sustainable Cliff Island is going to address sustainable housing, rebuilding houses, and methods to support businesses. It is hard to address all the issues because Cliff is not its own independent town. Each island has to create something that will meet its particular needs, but there are good opportunities.

Kendra: Isle au Haut: Started a Tuesday’s Table at the general store where a few volunteers cook for a community free meal. The congregational church gives the committee $50 per week to pull the dinner off. Three families with 8 little kids, visited the island, the school and had a pot luck. They are planning on moving out in April. Looking at the town rental and an ICDC house. Originally from Harpswell. One is
a fisherman, bringing his sternman- they need people so they'll let him fish. He’s already met with the fishermen on Isle au Haut. There aren’t many job opportunities on the island: Black Dinah’s, General Store, Sure Shop Gifts, carpentry work, landscaping, caretakers or cleaning houses. Isle au Haut pays about 35 cents per kilowatt hour.

Bev: Frenchboro: 30 -40 estimated year round population. 3 years ago tried to write a comprehensive plan, but the committee petered out. Trying to bring Island Institute to come do weatherization but no interest from the town. The town needs to take better advantage of opportunities around. Bev is now school board committee chair. The old Chair has become the part time Ed Tech. 7 kids in the school. Ferry repair is about to start- potholes in the Ferry landing. Challenge to find places for workers to stay while doing the work. Selectboard meetings- talk about removal of derelict vehicles and the ordinance for illegal trash dumping that isn’t being enforced. Solid waste effort will go better in the summer when the population grows. Fuel delivery is still the biggest issue.

Kathy: Vinalhaven: Cold weather has caused water mains to break. School has been canceled because of it and the standpipe was below 40% which means that water cannot be pumped from Fire Hydrants. Public Hearing on the comprehensive plan- approved by the State and town meeting will be held in February. Problems with plastic recycling. Marjorie will be stepping down so the position of Town Manager will be open in 2015. Selectman appropriated $5000 to have MMA help search for a Town Manager.

MaryAnn: Peaks is quieting down after many December island activities. People are appreciating the space and pace of the winter because the summer tourist season is so crowded. AJ Elvis, head of public works for the Casco Bay Islands passed away. The transfer station on Peak’s Island will be named in his honor. There was an interior storm window build for 31 families and had Dana Fisher from Efficiency Maine do a presentation on different types of energy programs and rebates available from Efficiency Maine. The heat pump is a heating system used for heating and cooling your house. The group is trying to get a discount from a contractor to buy and install the heat pumps. 28 families are interested. Peaks gets their energy from Portland by a cable and has lower rates for electricity than most other islands. There are 3 new councilors on the Peaks Island Council, recognized by the city of Portland. There is a fund to help people with property taxes, free ferry tickets, and fuel cost, and help with medical transport expenses. There is a cancer support group and AA group that are functioning. Historical Ice Pond used for ice skating, bought by private person and the Peaks Island Land Preserve has raised the purchase price of $60,000 and are now working to raise another $20,000 more to rebuild the dam.

Great Diamond Hotel- rebuilding and will be open by 2015.

Eva: Matinicus: 3 children in school. 8th grader is visiting Vinalhaven to look at enrolling. Knox County Emergency Management is encouraging rural areas to get someone in the town into ham radio to maintain communication if phone towers or electricity is out everywhere. Before everyone was on the marine band, and now that more people are relying on cell phones which are vulnerable to electrical outages and bad weather there needs to be a way to pass messages to emergency service teams. Working on more efficient diesel engines.
Kathy: Keep an eye on FCC and what they will be deciding on phone companies requirements to maintain land line infrastructure.

Jim Fortune: Cranberry: Preparation for Town Meeting- warning articles and preparing the town budget. 1 town gov’t for 5 different islands. The biggest item will be the school- how do you manage the school cost. There are 11 students- steady population for the last several years. Housing group trying to recruit families into two houses on Great Cranberry. Town has hired a new public safety coordinator, a former AmeriCorps Volunteer. Her role as an AmeriCorps had been to get Isleford’s Fire Dept. up and running as a functioning dept. Fuel delivery issues. Will send information to Karen about some information they have learned that has made it easier. Mail boat service, not a state ferry service, and a summer ferry service/excursion boat. New Island Coalition Rep is Tom Powell, who is a Pastor who was just hired- he goes back and forth sharing his time between the islands.

Next meeting is Friday, May 9th and the topic is Emergency Services.

Follow up question from Chris Rector: Island Communities and FEMA Mapping.

King and Collins sent letters about the Cumberland County FEMA Maps. FEMA isn’t as open to feedback and adjustment as they have been in the past. It’s an issue to keep an eye on.