

Maine Islands Coalition Meeting
COVID19: Strategies for Connecting Community
Friday, May 15th, 2020
10-11:30

Cranberry Isles

Ingrid Gaither

Swan's Island

Donna Wiegler

Sonny Sprague

Frenchboro

Rachel Bishop

Isle au Haut

Molly Siegel

Kendra Chubbuck

Peggi Stevens

Vinalhaven

Gabe McPhail

Monhegan

Mott Feibusch

Jessica Stevens

Chebeague

Donna Damon

Beverly Johnson

Donna Colbath

Long

Mark Greene

Cliff

Roger Berle

Cheryl Crowley

Peaks

Randy Schaeffer

Millinocket

Matt DeLaney

Diana Furukawa

Legislative Representatives

Pam Trinward

Island Institute

Suzanne MacDonald

Meghan Grabill

Andy Theriault

Kate Tagai

Craig Olsen

Maine Island Coalition Welcome

Thank you for joining us and providing your expertise and insight into the conversation. These calls are hosted by the Maine Islands Coalition. This is the sixth call. All the notes to the other calls can be found on the Maine Island Coalition Webpage on the Island Institute site here:

<http://www.islandinstitute.org/maine-islands-coalition>

Today's topic is about ways in which we are successfully build community and stay connected especially as we are so reliant on technology.

Zoom Meeting Best Practices

- Introduce yourself via chat box, edit name to include affiliation for participant list
- Mute your phones, use the chat box for questions and resources, we'll share notes
- Stay on at the end if you'd like to continue the discussion
- Use the chat box to ask follow-up questions, share resources or connect with people directly

Legislative Updates

Pingree - Pam Trinward- The offices are open and if there are any federal issues that you need help with please call. The phones are being manned by staff working from home. An update from the Hero's Act which is a follow up to the CARES Act. It is authorizing grants for states to carry out the strategy for testing, increasing time frame for affordable care act, providing 100% coverage for people who have lost their jobs, and providing \$1.6 billion for community health centers to help cover costs incurred due to COVID19. Allows Non-profits of any size to be eligible for PPP loans. Eliminates cost share with FEMA to the state. Language of the bill is here: <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/s3244/BILLS-116s3244is.pdf>

Partner Organization Updates

Island Institute

Small Business Support: There is still funding for PPP so if businesses need help connecting with the right people to help we can make that connection. There are a lot of good webinars from chambers of commerce specific to hospitality and reopening.

The chamber's resource page is here: <https://www.mainechamber.org/covid19.html>

Small Business Association and Small Business Development Corporation will have more guidance on payroll taxes and what is forgivable on Monday.

Broadband: Broadband Bond question is coming up on the ballot in July. Times are making it clear the need for equitable access for high speed internet.

Media: Roger and Donna wrote a letter with guidance for people thinking of returning that went out in the Working Waterfront E-Weekly this week.

Resource Sharing: We have been hearing that other coastal communities are reading the letters and guidance being put out by island communities and using them as models for their own communications.

Main Topic: Keeping Communities Connected

Guiding Questions:

1. In what ways has your island been successful in keeping community together and staying connected?
2. How have you been able to broaden leadership or bring in more people to do the hard work of community leadership?

Millinocket

There is a lot of rebuilding and connections being made across the Katahdin region and the Millinocket Library is at the center. The library was a fully funded, fully staffed library. It had to close and reopen as a volunteer run library, which allowed them to rethink how they worked and dedicate energy to focus on the really important issues for the community. <http://millinocketmemoriallibrary.org>

The library has been a part of Thrive Penobscot, a public health initiative. Through that they identified that public transportation was a huge issue. In 2019 they applied to the John T. Gorman Foundation and were funded about half of the request. They brought the person on part time, but once the work shifted and the website launched in 2020, they reached out to other donors including the Soule Foundation who were able to provide funding to make the position full time for a year.

The transportation navigator was hired to create a network of volunteer drivers and create volunteer policies. The new position was brought on at the same time that COVID19 was happening. They realized that they could expand the scope to look at the delivery of medicine and food along with a broad group of partners including the school, town, and police who could share information between organizations to better understand who needs help.

Sharing solutions and working together is a new challenge for the Katahdin Region. There are six or seven towns in the region who have never had to come together, but now want to create a regional network that meets weekly. Smaller committees are meeting daily to make the work happen. They are training volunteers for direct service, case management, being a phone buddy. Two to three times a week they host training sessions for the volunteers to learn skills for the work- including how to get online and use zoom.

The website is built as a landing page for getting help or giving help. It was modeled after the statewide effort Mainers Together.

Mobilize Katahdin - <http://mobilizekatahdin.org>

It is challenging because a lot of people who need help won't ask for help or won't ask from the library or organizations they don't know. So they have been transparent about their partners who lend them credibility and they were strategic in their partnerships bringing in food pantries and other service organizations already doing the work, which has been really important. They are trying to work with the groups that have the expertise and the systems already in place. The Mobilize Katahdin is a centralizing service, connecting the dots. There is a phone line where people can talk to a real person, in addition to the website. It has been up for two months and they hope it can carry forward beyond the specific challenges around COVID19.

As few funds as possible are flowing through the library's books, instead they try to funnel the funds through a crowd sourcing website directly to the different organizations that can distribute it and have the best networks and information to do that. There is a financial committee who developed guidelines, so it wasn't just one organization responsible for distributing the fundraising funds.

If people were thinking of developing a website like this, how much a time and financial commitment did it end up being?

The cost was minimal, but Diana learned it and pulled together a WordPress website. The goal was to make it as simple as possible. It took about three days to pull it together and register the name.

Island Institute Social Service Resource List:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i9kOYiDbRwDVZ6T8aowELmP7JTzcxx3-B3dy45-xsa4/edit>

Peaks

Peaks Island Council used Zoom March 6th with 15 members of the community joining in. The next regular meeting will be May 27th and they are expecting to have even more participation. They are considering holding a public forum to solicit input from islanders about needs on the island that should be addressed and can be addressed by volunteers and the Peaks Island Council, rather than those that need to be addressed by outside agencies or the City of Portland. There is a professional health care task force who has been accredited so they can help out the team of the health center as well as a team to think about the support of mental health. They put together a food security committee to help keep the food pantry supplied and grocery store open. The new ferry has a capacity of 399. Casco Bay lines has agreed to reduce that capacity to 200 to allow for social distancing. There is apprehension about what will happen during Memorial Day. The challenge will be keeping the community unified as the stress between protecting individual health and protecting the economy gets balanced and negotiated. The emotional support team has been the most active in offering online group support and individual sessions. Randy, himself, has been gardening. We are taking care of each other by trying to address the sources of the concern.

Cliff

We put out another community information letter. What we found in talking with people who want to come is that they have the traditional summer image in their head, where all the services are on and it feels like it has always felt. So we tried to paint the picture of what the island looks like right now: the post office, the EMT service, etc. so they can make an informed decision and not one based on their past experience of the island. We have been communicating to keep our community together. We are also trying to prevent our older population from having to travel into Portland. The store owner has an order form for perishables. Cheryl collects the forms, sorts the orders when they come in and leaves it at the community hall. It ends up being the social event as everyone is masked and gloved and stands six feet apart yelling at each other over the wind to catch up. We struggle with people coming to the island and not being respectful and that feels hurtful, but the overwhelming amount of people are respectful, are choosing not to come right now, and are aware of the situation on the island.

Cheryl, herself, went on a boat ride to revive herself so she can keep giving back to her community.

Long

The letter that Donna and Roger wrote was well done. Long sent it out via the listserv and Facebook. They have been communicating through the listserv of almost 400 people which includes year-round and seasonal residents. The selectmen jumped into using Zoom early on. They meet on Thursdays. Normally no one would go to the meetings on a Thursday night, but they've been getting 20-25 people attending to listen in. They open up the meeting at the end for public comment. More and more of the updates are focusing on the summer and opening the island. In March the summer felt a long way off, but now it is here, and we are having to talk about it. We have gotten good at parades. Anyone who has a birthday, we will put together our junk cars and firetrucks and have a turn around the island which makes it a bit of a social event and makes people happy. The wellness council has been meeting, the clinic is closed, but Maine Health is considering opening it back up to treat aches and pains. Casco Bay is increasing their service on May 16th. Boats are getting into the water and the water taxi has been running. Enforcement of policies is going to be an issue- they have to rely on personal responsibility. There is a young couple who commute to town every day and work. They have two hours between work and when the boat leaves, so they have been bringing take-out food back for people. People have stepped forward who normally weren't participating much in the community to contribute in ways that are important. The selectmen have done mailings to all residents to make sure the communication is getting to everyone, but there is an information overload, so they are editing to bullet points, one topic, short lists so people can focus and be informed. In a recent survey done by the store, 82% of seasonal residents said they were returning and would support the store which was eye opening to the community that so many people were planning to return.

Chebeague

The take-out services are helping to perk us up. Chebeague had their first Covid19 case. The Long Island rescue boat came. The person is recovering at home. She worked at the long-term care facility, and so there is a lot of nervousness about the spread. The Chebeague Inn has decided not to open this year and so they are working with the Embassy to send their H1B Visa workers home. They have canceled the parade and other events so discourage people congregating.

The Selectmen started talking about Covid19 on March 11th. The town created an umbrella committee called the Chebeague Advisory Response Team charged with bringing the community partners together. By having it created by the town it gave it some authority and didn't burden one of other 15 non-profits. The minister and one of the selectmen are co-chairs to share responsibility between the community and the town. They invited each one of the non-profits to have someone at the table as well as a representative from each of the ferry lines and eventually the seasonal organizations such as the golf club. It is about outreach and communication. They have been preparing masks, hand sanitizer, identifying who didn't have internet. Meetings are open to the public. The Church attendance has increased, selectmen meeting attendance has increased. They want to provide real information in real time. The Town Administrator has done a great job at keeping up with the community and the task force and acting as a point person.

Monhegan

They have been looking at what quarantine looks like and what they mean when they say it. There is a perception that it is more relaxed because they are more spread out, so they are looking at how to clearly define it. The board of assessors met with the school board to form the Covid19 task force, which is now a mix of people from municipal, school, and nonprofit organizations. They hear a variety of opinions and it provides people with the opportunity to communicate with each other. Leadership has been an issue with some resignations which then increases the work of those left. Trying to create the

position of a Municipal Administrator to help take on some of the clerical work to help retain more leadership or attract people who don't have the patience for the paperwork side.

Vinalhaven

The town initially went into FEMA disaster response mode with emergency management that had daily communications with the community via Facebook, email, letters. But they are now are looking to develop the long term response. They are debating if coordinating among all the great organizations is the role of the town or a separate entity to build the coalition. They just sent out a community survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/vhccovid>

Are others collecting information by survey and if so what are you finding?

Islesboro

The town established a crisis committee in March between the school, health center, community center, and town that meet weekly. They do a great job of communicating out through different channels. They are prepared and waiting. But not knowing how long it will take is hard. The town has been doing a good job of communicating with the summer community but there has been an uptick of calls to public safety reporting on people who they don't feel are following their expectations of quarantine. The other worry is that families coming back who employ staff, and have deep relationships with their staff built over many years, aren't necessarily going to do those tasks for themselves for the duration of their quarantine and so how do you manage that?

Isle au Haut

Group phone calls and zoom have been keeping community connected. One person did a marathon on the island. The students painted rocks to mark the miles and made signs. There is a program called Zoom book buddies that pairs an adult with a student to read to each other. The Seacoast Mission hosts Zoom tea time on Monday with people. Everyone is calling each other to check in. The monthly Isle au Haut book club meeting just read The Hate U Give. The students decorated a woman's car and then had a surprise birthday for her online. Lisa sent Easter cards to the island. The selectmen are working hard, the boat company is working hard and our representative Genevieve MacDonald has gone beyond the call of duty to figure out the PPP, unemployment, etc. Kendra has been giving duck and goose eggs out to the community because they get more in the day they can eat. Seasonal residents are starting to come out, but they are wearing masks and quarantining. They are working on signage for the public landing to communicate with the private boats who are coming in to let them know there are no services. The park is working very closely with the residents of Isle au Haut and communicating often, so the current plan is to open in July but that could change. The boat company is not going to be expanding services or slots, which is creating a pinch as contractors come out. They are all doing the best they can and they are reliant on personal responsibility, but people are getting restless.

Frenchboro

The teacher is doing a great job to support remote learning for the students as is the school district. There is a need for more information from the state to help make informed decisions. The MIC calls and others are helpful in funneling information to the select board so they don't have to be the only ones gathering the information.

Swan's Island

Thank you to all the communities who are sharing their information. The Emergency Management Association and Health Officer are meeting regularly. The selectmen have started to put out regular communications. The situation is changing so the messages about what is happening in this moment

are very helpful. Summer people are retuning, and the community is hopeful they abide what they are being asked to do in the way of quarantine.

The island is going to be quiet all summer. Looking at the next two to three weeks and really being careful about the protocols they've put in place. The economy is a huge concern for the islands. The prices of lobster are down and costs are up as well as the unknown implications of the right whale issue.

Cranberry Isles

The board of selectmen held extra meetings, especially in the early days, which the community found helpful and comforting. They are fortunate, especially since they are such a small town, to have a Public Safety Coordinator, and she has been a good source of local and national guidelines and how to apply those to the town and she is readily available for questions and concerns from the community. Our local health officer has really shined during this pandemic. That's a position that really hasn't been utilized much in the past but has proven to now be a very valuable position. She is a great resource to the board of selectmen and the community and takes many calls from residents with complaints and questions and confusion. And lastly, it seems Facebook has proven valuable at this time, as a place for healthy communication (most of the time) among all our islands and our seasonal and winter residents to clarify what the island looks like right now and what it hopes to look like this summer but I see as a bigger benefit the opportunity to maintain relationships between the summer and winter community in a healthy and supportive way during this trying time.

Final Word

It is so important to hear everyone and share our resources so thank you. We will circle back on the topic for next week. Keep reaching out to each other off-line to offer support and resources. Thank you for making the time to bring what you do to these discussions.

Questions that came up in the chat box:

Any good resources for de-escalation strategies for island constables, fire departments, EMS and municipal officials and for other community leaders.

I recall MMA has a "Verbal Judo" course every year that I wonder if that could be helpful?

Community Letters:

North Haven:

<http://www.northhavenmaine.org/assets/LettertoCommunity5520.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1WBKgpZNFqQM-73l-WFvt0Rmf5T0uUvfIMG2oyAn1i9TAcIaoz5ksOLc0>

Vinalhaven:

On Island Residents:

<https://www.townofvinalhaven.org/sites/vinalhavenme/files/uploads/eddm05132020.pdf>

Seasonal Residents and Visitors:

https://www.townofvinalhaven.org/sites/vinalhavenme/files/uploads/050920_seasonalresvisitorletter_1.pdf

Long Island:

== Released 11:47PM 5-5-20 ==

Latest Covid-19 Public Notice

RETURNING ISLAND RESIDENTS/VISITORS

Whether coming from out of state or not, if you are returning to the Island you must assume you could be carrying the virus. If you have been on this Island in self-isolation for over two weeks you probably do not.

All of us have reached the point where we are trying to make informed decisions on how to move forward from this COVID-19 crisis and the resulting closing of the State. The Town Select Board has been looked to throughout this crisis to provide guidance for seasonal property owners on when they can return. We greatly respect your patience and participation in protecting our vulnerable population but we feel pressured to come up with a workable plan. The problem is increased by the Governor's Four-Stage approach to reopening the State www.maine.gov/covid19/restartingmaine, which is not clear and leaves these decisions up to interpretation and the clarifications keep coming. It's important to note that we are located in Cumberland County, the hardest hit area in the State.

Returning from Out of State-We will continue to ask residents who are returning to the Island from winter stays or travels out of State to be responsible and heed the current warnings coming from the Federal and State CDC offices concerning travel and the risk of spread, plus the State of Maine mandates. We appreciate you, as you are all family, and you are what make this Island what it is to so many. We look forward to seeing you when the pandemic passes. If you are determined to return to the island, we urge you to bring your own food, pharmaceuticals and other needed supplies with you as you self-quarantine for the required 14 days, so as to not diminish the limited supplies available on the Island. Deliveries may be available but could be limited.

Some out of State owners decided on their own to just come to the Island and open up even before April 30. We are also seeing off-island contractors coming on a regular basis. These actions have elicited justifiable concern from those that have worked so hard to protect each other and ourselves for these last 2 months.

To be clear – The Maine mandate does not allow those coming from out of State to not quarantine, even if just coming to the Island to open up or “just for the weekend”. Back & forth ferry and water taxi rides and trips to the Boathouse are not self-quarantining.

Maine Residents-For those who are Maine residents returning to the Island, we trust they have followed the Stay at Home and social distancing rules since the Governor's first Executive Order and can plan on coming to their homes and opening up, based on their own assessment of the risk to their fellow

Islanders and themselves. They must, however, respect others and maintain social distancing and preferably a mask. **The observations in the last few days are that this is not something those coming to the Island understand. Social Distancing is real!**

All must consider the risk you expose your community to by coming to the Island. Our community has an aging population and our resources are stretched. Whether coming from out of state or not, you must recognize that you could have the virus, spread here to a vulnerable resident, and leave without knowing. We don't have the ability to help care for you if you get sick. You would have to go to the mainland which is already feeling the strain. Casco Bay Lines has severely reduced service to 3 boats a day which greatly hinders travel, and is supposedly only for essential travel and freight. Masks are required. These trips also stop at Peaks Island, resulting in crowding which prevents proper Social separation. As more businesses start to open, there will be more ferry riders and increased risk to exposure.

The following are subject to change but are current today;

- The new Long Island Bakehouse will continue to have gas two days a week, Wednesday (5-7) and Saturday (10 to noon).
- The Transfer Station remains on limited winter hours with an additional Thursday pickup.
- The Post office continues to be open but with adjusted hours and later mail delivery
- The Boathouse Store remains well stocked but with pre-placed orders only. No customers in the store. (207-766-5709)
- The Learning Center Facility and Library, Community Center and Town Hall remain closed to non-essential workers.
- There is no extra berthing at the Town Floats for extended tie ups, >2-hours.
- The Gift Shop plans to open at some time but with social distancing protocols.
- The Community Garden is open but also with strong protocols.
- Annual Town Meeting is set for June 13 2020 and details are still being worked out with the Governor's office.
- State primary elections are set for July 14 by absentee ballot and at the Community Center. (details to follow)

Cliff Island:

The Way Cliff Things Stand Right Now...

...out there: it's pretty simple – everyone either wants to be here, is making plans to be here or is worried that they might not be able to be here this coming season. Questions abound. The call for certainty is palpable...

...and out here: it's also simple, and also remaining mostly as we portrayed it in the letter you received the first of April, six weeks ago. So, in reading this update, please pause, take a breath and take it in as thoughtfully as possible.

First and foremost, and make no mistake, those on the Island right now still want every Cliff Islander to be able to be here, to be in their own Island homes or rental homes and to make ourselves one community, one family once again, as usual, as in any normal year. As ever: *We miss all our Cliff Island friends!!!* And,

Our caretakers and contractors want you to come; our unique economy depends upon your continued investment in your properties.

Our lobstermen and women need an economic reason to go out in their boats.

Our landlords need renters to sustain their investments, pay their taxes and insurance bills and maintain their properties.

Hope's and Ram's Store and Café needs seasonal residents and visitors to justify their opening up this May.

And, *everyone* right now feels that involuntary, fierce, seasonal draw to be on Cliff yet again.

On top of everything else, we are right now reeling from recent losses of loved ones and seek emotional reassurance that "life goes on...".

But here's a "right now snapshot" we'd like you to visualize and consider:

Chester, who is 85, is *not* taking passengers from or to the Wharf.

Masks are required to enter the *Post Office*, one person at a time, where Amy has a make-shift plastic barrier at the counter; even so, people feel a natural inclination to congregate both inside and out, *but this must be avoided*.

The food delivery process, courtesy of Hope and Ram and their vendors, is now really at its limit. The pre-ordered food is placed on a table on the Hall porch, in individually-marked bags, where islanders, in masks, one at a time, leave a check, pick up their bag and depart.

At the Wharf, there is a strange dance... Volunteers try to help Chester - from a distance! - with his UPS and Fed-Ex packages. Some people honor the State-wide distancing mandate, are wearing masks, but some are not *and that feels awkward*. No one knows which freight items might carry Covid-19 contaminants.

All CBL passengers on the only-three-boats-per-day runs are *required to mask up*. We cannot afford to infect the crew and force CBL to make even fewer runs.

In the bigger picture, *right now*, Governor Mills is struggling mightily under loud controversy as she tries to thread the needle between maintaining safety and restoring desperately needed economic activity.

This is a major straddle. We are now in Stage One of her Re-opening Plan; confusingly, some of the details can change due as much to pressures as to hard assessment. Three Stages will follow, and controversy will accompany each of them. While Maine, with its large area and small population, is so far faring better than many other states, an expected increase in visitors and summer residents threatens this current stability.

No State or City mandates are being legally enforced where people are being reasonable and thoughtful of others. Because, that is what it is all about as much here on the Island as it is in the rest of Maine.

Our sense of community, our concern for our elderly and immunity-compromised residents is our de-facto enforcement mechanism. Our own EMT's are still constrained by the City's EMS *Wait for Us to Arrive* protocol.

Again, amid clearly justifiable and undeniable concerns, there are no hard-and-fast, enforceable guidelines. We can only repeat the well-publicized calls to honor the quarantine regimen, the masking, the distancing. As we look to your being back on the Island, we ask you each to understand the limitations inherent at this moment and the risks we all present to each other and to make your decisions thoughtfully, with full respect for our whole community.

Finally, the situation here will be changing; as planning ahead calls for being flexible, we will be in touch again as soon as we find it appropriate to do so.

The folks at ACE, the CIA and SCI.