

**Maine Islands Coalition Meeting**  
**COVID19: Strategies for Connecting Community**  
**Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020**  
**10-11:30**

**Cranberry Isles**

Ingrid Gaither

**Swan's Island**

Sonny Sprague

**Frenchboro**

Rachel Bishop

**Isle au Haut**

Kendra Chubbuck

**Matinicus**

Eva Murray

**Vinalhaven**

Gabe McPhail

Andy Dorr

**Islesboro**

Lauren Bruce

**Chebeague**

Donna Damon

Beverly Johnson

Donna Colbath

**Long Island**

Mark Greene

**Cliff Island**

Roger Berle

**Beaver Island**

Bob Anderson

**Legislative Representatives**

Kelly Cotiaux

**Seacoast Mission**

Douglas Cornman

**Greater Portland Council of Governments**

Jessica Hench, Resiliency and

Sustainability

Kristina Egan, Executive Director

**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 seventh 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>

We are shifting focus to follow a series of discussions on the economic recovery portion of this crisis in particular and to create the opening for shared communication and information sharing as quickly as possible. We have a tremendous opportunity for collective action and voice in how our state moves toward recovery and to resilience.

### **Zoom Meeting Best Practices**

- Introduce yourself via chat box, edit name using the three dots in the upper right corner of your screen to include your name and affiliation for our participant list
- Mute your phones,
- Use the chat box for asking follow-up questions if there are a lot and to share resources, we'll share notes
- Stay on at the end if you'd like to continue the discussion
- Use the private chat feature to connect with people directly. It isn't saved at the end of calls.

### **Legislative Updates**

My name is Kelly Cotiaux, I am a staff person with Senator Collins - Bangor office. We are here to listen to how things are going and what the concerns are and provide this information to Senator Collins. If anyone would like to send me an email in regard to anything in particular my email address is:

[Kelly\\_cotiaux@collins.senate.gov](mailto:Kelly_cotiaux@collins.senate.gov).

### **Partner Organization Updates**

#### **Island Institute**

Small Business: PPE funding has not yet run out- if you need help figuring out the paycheck protection act please reach out and we can help connect you with the right people. There have been a series of informational webinars and roundtables hosted by Island Institute. We are also funding business resiliency grants. In the past it was for professional development, but it has been changed so that it can be a tool to help people shift their business and business plan to be more resilient through covid. The podcast series has been popular and a good way to highlight what businesses along the coast are doing.

<http://www.islandinstitute.org/blog-post/commercial-currents-podcast-business-uncertain-times—44-north>

We have been building relationships with Scotland. The Scottish Government has been focusing on islands recently and have recently required that all new legislation takes into account any negative repercussions for islands. They have also been collecting information on how islands are navigating the Covid19 response globally.

<https://www.strath.ac.uk/research/strathclydecentreenvironmentallawgovernance/ourwork/research/absincubators/eilean/islandsandcovid-19/>

## **Seacoast Mission**

Project Reach Out-initiative to call islanders to check in, to date called 932 families and made 1800 phone calls with the bank of volunteers. They have been able to address some of the concerns and needs they have been made aware of. <https://www.seacoastmission.org/2020/05/19/project-reachout-update-nonagenarian-thanks-mission-for-making-her-dream-possible/>

They have established food pantries on islands that didn't have them and are supporting existing pantries with help in restocking. Starting June 7<sup>th</sup>, they are hosting weekly church services for 5 islands whose churches are not opening for the summer. They invited each island's minister to join them so the congregations can still maintain a contact with their ministers. Starting to pay attention to the mental health needs of islanders. They are looking for ideas on how they can support those needs that islanders are seeing. The Island Reader is published and will be free this year with contributions from 14 islands.

## **Main Topic: Helping Support Maine's Economy- Greater Portland Council of Governments**

Greater Portland Council of Governments work is focused on community planning and thinking about resilient communities. They have been a partner in the broadband coalition and an important supporter in getting the broadband bond before voters in July.

<https://www.gpcog.org>

Kristina Egan: We have a balancing act between understanding how each municipality is unique and yet also have a need to work together to tackle regional issues in a collaborative and comprehensive way.

Founded in 1969. Their purpose is to "Strengthen local self-government while combining total resources for meeting regional challenges beyond individual capacities"

Long Island, Chebeague, Cliff and Peaks are all part of GPCOG, as is Frye island.

GPCOG priorities: Thriving, Sustainable, Prosperous, Vibrant

Provide responsive assistance to the 25 municipalities providing training, tools, networking and planning expertise. They want to be thought partners on transportation, climate change, and other local and regional issues of importance.

They have statewide projects as well looking at mobility management- helping people with mobility issues live in rural areas <https://www.gpcog.org/159/Mobility-for-All> and in green fuels- researching green fossil fuel alternatives <https://www.gpcog.org/158/Clean-Transportation> They are also the host of the Maine Broadband Coalition.

GPCOG is a federally designated economic development district. – A five year plan lays out their vision for a stronger economy, better education, and greater social equity. Covid19 has shifted the focus to resiliency. The region went from having a workforce shortage to a high unemployment rate.

We are trying to understand what we know and what we don't know in order to navigate the uncertainty. We need to figure out how to boost economic recovery. We want to see service for digital access get stronger everywhere. They want to start convening resiliency round tables. We are at the intersection of a lot of different sectors including social service providers, tourism associations, chambers, higher education organizations at the center of non-profit, for profit and education sectors so they can be a convener.

The greater Portland area has been very reliant on the food economy and tourism which have both been incredibly hard hit by covid.

Greater Portland Resilience Exchange: <https://www.gpcog.org/394/Resilience-Exchange>

There are entities out there who have resources that are dormant (restaurant/library) along with sectors that are working overtime (hospitals, municipal governments) so what we are trying to do is match those who have limited capacity (Users) to those with greater capacity (Provider). Discussing with AmeriCorps how to embed volunteers to help provide capacity.

Case Studies: <https://www.gpcog.org/397/Case-studies>

1. Cooking for Community: public private partnership between schools and restaurants to provide meals for low income students
2. Rouge Industries: produces leather goods. Had space and staff but needed machinery to be able to produce masks. They couldn't afford the machine to shift production to masks. With a GPCOG loan they bought the machine and are providing masks to senior care facilities.

Other ways they are helping support:

- Launched a rapid loan program for micro loans where half of it is forgivable.
- They have project management capacity.
- They are thinking and planning a few steps down the line so they can help municipal members and transit agencies adapt to the future.
- They have a platform and database to source and match, document for replication, and are seeking partners to pilot.

Seacoast Mission calling people is a beautiful example of an exchange that doesn't cost much money, but is an example of helping people stay in touch and fight against isolation by connecting the volunteers who can give time with those who need a little outreach.

Lauren Bruce: How are you funded?

They have a \$4 Million dollar operation. Federal money that is matched by dues from local municipalities (10%) and the state (10%) and a little bit of philanthropic revenue. They are a hybrid government agency and non-profit organization.

Donna Damon: First, our DSL line is in danger of getting played out and we are worried, so any support for Broadband is wonderful.

Kristina: Will pass that along to Andrew

Donna Damon: Are you just helping people write grants or do you have grant money to give?

Kristina: There are small grants for brownfields, etc. The small business loan program is partly forgivable.

There is a lot of advocacy that we do to contribute to the financial stability of municipalities to try to make sure that the revenue sharing and education funding start to flow into communities and things like revenue gaps get addressed.

Donna Damon: How would Chebeague Transportation Company get involved?

Kristina: We haven't heard from the company, but they are part of the region that we serve. They could reach out tell us about their needs.

Donna Damon: We are looking at increasing our capacity to test and contact trace on the island. Is this something that you are working on?

Kristina: Many responsibilities have filtered down from the federal government to the state and now to the municipal level that will be quite heavy lifts, so GPCOG is looking at how to support that emerging need that will be a key factor in reopening our state and keeping everyone safe.

Suzanne: How has Vinalhaven been making connections like GPCOG's exchange?

Gabe: There is the innate community wisdom where if you present the portal, people will go a long way to filling the need for each other. We are Facebook dependent where we will set up a page to fill a need and people will step up. Talking about support organizations on the island to build an online portal to track where the need is and how it can be filled and if I want to fill a need how can I step up. Currently have been doing it through the town keeping track on a google sheet and looking at providing resources. But it is more about information access and we are hoping that over the next few months that the community organizations will be able to rally and support each other in offering direct support.

Kristina: The use of embedded capacity through AmeriCorps members drew on the Island Fellows model.

Eva: Some of our island communities are so tiny that exchanges of help/resources are truly on the level of person to person rather than agency to "population segment." Getting people to make their needs known is sometimes an issue!

Suzanne: What would you like to see from partner organizations, are there gaps that can be bridged?

Lauren: The combination of things presented today, I'm thinking of ways to set up a forum series to bring in people via zoom and eventually in person to help us look at where we most have need and help us connect. This summer we are looking at a small group of workers who don't fit into any of the categories where they could get unemployment or assistance, and could we support them with works programs through the town. There are challenges there: what work is appropriate, how do we let them know, how many people would fit into that category?

Eva: Are there other islands that self-identify as primarily lobster fisheries? Because there are ongoing crisis's other than covid that are impacting economies and trickle down from supply chain disruptions. We don't necessarily want to continue to subsidize people's lives for the long term, people want to work, so how do we create an economic plan given the complexity and the various disruptions?

Craig: The MLA have been doing a lot with the self-employed support for lobstermen and even helping them connect with the PPE. These have been handled very well by the Maine Lobster Association and the Maine Aquaculture Association.

Eva: I wanted to give a shout out to Genevieve MacDonald who has been working very hard on helping islands figuring out self-employment.

Craig: One of the issues is that right now people can make more on unemployment then they can in the service industry, so they are slow to transition back to work.

Kelly Cotiaux: Yes...some of our island communities are so tiny that exchanges of help/resources are truly on the level of person to person rather than agency to "population segment." Getting people to make their needs known is sometimes an issue!

Donna Damon: Could there be a way, because the lobstermen fill out the same tax forms that farmers do, that they could do farm shares while the regular supply chains are disrupted?

Suzanne: We are looking at how to set that up from the supplier/distributor level rather than at the individual fisherman level.

Jessica: It has been very insightful to meet you all and put names to faces. I want to reiterate that we are in a creative and inventive space and our goal is to enable this new opportunity to weigh in together to become creative together in this time of disruption. In terms of needs that bubble up and those needs that aren't as obvious, my experience is that it is through individual conversations and conversations like this where we can have a more nuanced conversation. (jhench@gpcog.org)

## **Island Updates**

### **Cliff**

The city has put up signs (See below) on wharf as reminders for people.

### **Long**

We survived Memorial Day weekend with certainly many fewer visitors than normal, but maybe more than expected. Most folks seemed to hunker down at home but there were some obvious and concerning behaviors that certainly ignored the recommendations aimed at keeping the community safe from Covid.

It was interesting how few folks showed up on the Friday afternoon Casco Bay boats (noon - about 20 and 4:15 - about 10) but the water taxis never stopped coming and going and some folks slipped in on barges with their vehicles and others in private boats. I suspect the worry about crowding and limits to capacity on the ferries contributed to that.

Our year round "Boathouse" store has gone from call ahead and pick up order outside to allowing up to three customers in at a time and offering delivery to folks quarantining. Our new "Bakehouse" is planning an early June soft opening as is "Ed's Shed" with takeouts and weekend lobster bakes.

We held Memorial Day services (greatly distanced) at the three cemeteries but no gathering after. Other than that, there were none of the usual Memorial Day activities (school auction, library, community center all closed).

Our Town Meeting is scheduled for Saturday June 13 at 8 AM with hopes for a brief meeting and of a reduced turnout. Much planning has gone into ways to minimize ballots, maximize distancing, and making it as short as possible. Basically, there will be three separate sections for attendees (registered voters only this year). Looking into ways to "broadcast" the meeting. Comments and questions are being solicited ahead of time to be answered in advance of meeting.

We have a Broadband project on the warrant and are sending out much information ahead of the meeting and soliciting questions now and publishing FAQ sheets from those questions. A Zoom presentation will be held before Town Meeting to hopefully elicit final questions to reduce Town

Meeting debate time on this major project. The need for it has become crystal clear this year. You fellow MIC reps that know me are used to my annual Town Meeting predictions (most of which are wrong) but I am feeling pretty confident that the Broadband article will handily pass. Have not yet heard a peep against it.

The state and national tension over opening up versus staying safe spills over here too with an undercurrent of protecting the hard work we have done in the last three months to stay safe versus the coming tide of property owners and renters and day trippers "Constitutional rights". Our Select Board has strongly supported the community's health over the coming surge of vacationers, but it is discouraging and daunting to contemplate the next few months and avoiding the inevitable health hazards ahead. I have personally fielded a number of calls in the last few weeks from longtime friends and family wanting to know what is "right and best for the island" concerning their desire to return. I do not have simple answers for that. We are not in the enforcement business here but rely on our residents and visitors' common sense. We have had a few challenging rescue calls and know more "unknown" ones are coming. The availability of new Internet hookups is causing complaints from seasonal residents who cannot get service in a timely manner. The system was already straining with the use from home schooling to many folks now working at home. Even if the Broadband passes, it will be one to two years for the build-out to be complete.

### **Chebeauge**

The good news: Our one Covid-19 patient has recovered!

Our video team continues to produce videos. Some are inspirational, while others are factual and presented by Dr.'s who are summer residents. There are more to come. Check out Bev Johnson's - [Chebeague.org](http://Chebeague.org) to view the videos and to see what else we are doing.

We continue to make masks and provide food at the food pantry. It is open to all so that folks won't have to leave the island. Folks have also been donating seeds and seedlings to encourage victory gardens. The Church, Library and Rec Center is giving away wildflower seeds to spread beauty over the island!

As of right now the store plans to be curbside only and just keep staff to family. The Golf Course is opening with restrictions.

The Chebeague Transportation Company bus will start running on June 1. It will only take 9 passengers to allow for social distancing. The boat has a limit of 20 even though the capacity is well over 100.

A group on the island is working to develop a program so that Covid testing can happen on Chebeague. Still in the planning stages.

Much discussion re: how to bring the summer and winter populations together. There is concern on both sides with some people. People have called in to our advisory committee meetings from out of state very upset and while some members tried to calm things down, others spoke harshly. This is tough stuff, and if we don't get it right, we may live with the fall out for a generation. We are trying to figure out what the message should be and how to present it. Some seasonal residents feel they aren't wanted; others are on the island but feel that islanders resent them; some islanders are extremely concerned for their own well-being. We have decided to try to create a forum where people can talk in

small groups and share their questions and concerns. This is just in the planning stages. We don't want to make it worse. We need help developing the program.

The Church is working on a welcome information packet for people who are coming back to the island.

### **Matinicus**

#### **Monhegan**

We have town meeting next Tuesday. Creative solution available on our website under annual report tab. Monhegan update: businesses are collaborating on a spreadsheet of opening/Coronavirus adjustments to be viewed by general public. Monheganwelcome.com has a new administrator and will help in this effort.

### **Vinalhaven**

#### **North Haven**

#### **Islesboro**

#### **Isle au Haut**

The summer people are starting to return to the island but are quarantining for 14 days as requested, other visitors who are coming for just a few days are staying to themselves. The female osprey has been on the nest for the last week.

### **Frenchboro**

#### **Swan's Island**

#### **Cranberry Isles**

No big news or changes. Memorial Day did bring some seasonal residents to the island. But, other than one minor incident, it seems they all did a fair enough job of quarantining and being respectful. But it was definitely a quieter holiday weekend than usual. Our summer only ferry to and from Manset is up and running according to its usual schedule.

### **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/Resources that came up in the chat box:**

Hardy Boat that serves Monhegan has a good summary of island guidance to offer to visitors:

<https://hardyboat.com/more-on-covid-19/>

Andy Dorr: Hoping to get DOT to be able to give out an info pamphlet to everyone buying a ticket from the mainland. Would like to hear other ideas about how people are communicating with visitors.

Donna: We are telling people that they have to quarantine for 14 days which means staying on their own property. It aligns with the current Governor's guidelines

Andy: How is the message being delivered? We are doing Facebook and mailings, email.

Donna: We have videos, and we are trying to give out information in as many ways as we can and trying to be as consistent as possible with word of mouth. We are trying to



tell the stories of people doing the right thing. Chebeague's "Quiet Summer" video  
<https://vimeo.com/showcase/7140323/video/421280642>

Andy Dorr: Have you had anyone stranded on the mainland because people couldn't get on board the ferry?

Donna: We've had to make double runs once or twice. The bus is starting next week and that will create increased demand which is not being met by increased capacity so likely it will become a bigger issue as we head into summer.

# City of Portland Regulations for COVID-19 Precautions: During Boat Times:

No Loitering on dock at boat time. Dock space limited to those arriving and departing only.

Only one vehicle on dock, with **Parcel Delivery Agent having Priority**.

Face Coverings Required

6' Social Distancing

Proceed directly off dock. Individually return for freight, allowing Parcel carrier to

conduct tasks safely **without**  
**assistance.**