

Maine Island Coalition Meeting

September 22, 2022

Creative Housing and Workforce Solutions

MIC Members

In person

Kendra Chubbuck, Isle au Haut, Co-Chair

Donna Wiegler, Swan's Island

Online

Mark Greene, Long Island

Rachel Bishop, Frenchboro

Bob Earnest, Chebeague

Jim B, Monhegan, 1st assessor and postmaster

MIC Partners

Grace Ziehnert, Isle au Haut

John Burke, selectboard, Long Island

Janice Avignon, Long Island

Kathleen Billings, Town Manager of Stonington

Lauren Bruce, Selectboard, Islesboro

Elin Elisofon, Chair of Vinalhaven Housing Committee

Hooper Brooks, Vinalhaven Housing Committee

Sam Hallowell, Executive Director of Sustainable North Haven

Travis Bryant, Executive, Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine

Michael Gora, Middle Bass Island Ohio – Great Lakes Islands Alliance (GLIA)

Peter Huston, GLIA, project manager

John Egan, Genesis Fund (Brunswick)

Jeff Levine, Former Portland planning director, Urban Studies and Planning at MIT

Kelly Cotiaux, Staff, Office of Senator Susan Collins

Zac Schmesser, Staff, Office of Congressman Golden

Representative Lydia Crafts, Bremen, Bristol, Damariscotta, Newcastle, Nobleboro, Monhegan, Louds Island

Senator Nicole Grohoski, Hancock County - Cranberries, Swans, Frenchboro, MDI, DIS

Sarah Lawrence, Staff, Office of Congresswoman Pingree

Island Institute Staff:

Jackie Little

Bria White

Melanie Nash, Island Fellow Long Island

Nick Battista

Mia Colloradio-Mansfeld, Island Fellow North Haven

Brenna Cohen

Kim Hamilton

Kate Tagai

Alex Zipparo

Welcome

MIC Co-Chair Kendra Chubbuck

Organization Updates

MIC: Accounting Reminder – Swan's, Chebeague, Vinalhaven, North Haven, Great Diamond Island have outstanding dues. (Donna already sent invoice to town office)

Island Institute Updates:

Brenna - Last Friday was the first climate symposium. They used a different model of a “shift and share” to discuss solutions in small groups. Attendees moved from presentation to presentation around the room to hear, ask questions, and give feedback. The in the afternoon there was a panel and conversation with Dr. Susie Arnold and Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson (*All we Can Save* co-author) for larger conversation around climate action and engagement.

Bria – We are looking at housing through the lens of workforce housing, that link is very central to us.

Nick – We are developing a draft report on Maine State Ferry Service study. Waypoints Navigate publication came out this summer if you want a hard copy let Nick know. nbattista@islandinstitute.org

Mia – Five new fellows joined us at the end of August. We had a three day orientation at Blueberry Cove/Tenant’s Harbor. It was a moment of reflection for 2nd years to look back on what they’ve accomplished in the first year and gain new wave of energy and excitement. A few fellows are the first in their communities and it will be interesting to hear about their experiences.

Legislative Updates

Kelly- Service academies are open for applications – we’re conducting interviews, anyone interested in the services, reach out

Sarah- Working hard on solutions around the rulings that are impacting the lobster fishery and are very concerned about the impact in Maine.

Zac- Echo what Sarah Lawrence said– share concerns for lobster industry, recognize the significant importance to state.

State Rep. Lydia Crafts - As member of Marine Resources Committee, same level of commitment at state. Dire need for housing and looking ahead at next legislative session, looking at creative ideas and this is the time to talk about what’s next.

Feature Topic: Creative Workforce and Housing Solutions

Speaker: Jessica Valdez, Executive Director of Community Compass – sick household right now, unable to attend

Kendra – Shared an article about Sedgewick, tiny houses (Included). There was a person aging out of foster care system and the town came together and crowd sourced \$12,000 to build a tiny house with

interne and kitchenette. It took about 4 months to build. They hope the next one will include a bathroom.

Kendra thought about this strategy for islands. These tiny houses cost \$14-16,000 to build and was trying to brainstorm outside of the box ideas for island housing. Such a workforce shortage, housing is hard to come by. A friend on Isle au Haut is seriously thinking about putting in 3-4 tiny houses and renting them out for workforce. This could be a good idea. Will forward article to everyone. It can be simple apartments. People don't need big houses to rent, more than 300-400 square feet with the option of renting to then buy land. John on Isle au Haut has been looking for someone to take over caretaking jobs for him (he wants to retire) and it's really hard to find someone. This is stretching it a bit, but maybe time for islands think outside of the box for sustainability and to attract young people. Tiny houses might be a good start.

Travis Bryant (Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine)– Gave example of purchasing an “Amish shed” in Northern Maine - they worked together to get that on property adjacent to grandparents so mom and infant (in foster care) could re-unify. Each DHHS has a youth transitions officer, so they know who will be transitioning out. Being able to offer some stability might hit a niche that is helpful. Resources: New Beginnings (Lewiston-Auburn) work primarily with homeless youth to get into school, jobs, etc. Youth Leadership Advisory Team works with youth in foster care, build leadership skills, how they want to tell/not about their experience, and how to utilize their own strengths as they reach adulthood. Largest support Travis's organization provides is to kinship families – Maine is an older state population wise and when kids come into care, Maine looks to place kids with relatives. Kinship care is a huge portion of what Travis's org supports. Nearly 14,000 kids being raised by kin in Maine.

Bria White – Thinking about what systems of support that youth/youth who have aged out might need. Bringing them into an island community - as welcoming as they can be - understanding that there needs to be support. What supports need to be there, how long, etc for young adult to be successful?

Travis – Great questions, I defer to the other two orgs (New Beginnings and Youth Leadership Advisory Team) for full answer. Youth coming over, host family, those sorts of opportunities. Maybe like the fellows? Our organization helps the family and connects them with support. I would envision that if the target was kids who are aging out, that once kids are age 18, DHHS works with them to decide what they want to do. A B9 agreement will help support a young adult until age 23 if signed, and provides direct connection to a youth transition worker who will help them set goals, check in as a quasi-counselor, telehealth, down payments/some costs of getting own place, cost of college/secondary ed, medical care through MaineCare coverage. They can support youth with lots of things.

Bria – Thank you for all of that information. I understand the state support but in my experience what they need is a diligent presence in helping navigate after being entrenched in a system. I understand that New Beginnings and Youth Leadership Advisory Team might be the right directions for those resources. Thanks for sharing that context too.

Travis – It is important to identify someone in the island community that they could start a connection with one way or another. Make a connection or match with that young person.

Brenna – How do you attract younger people to an island and help them to stay and contribute to a community? That's a conversation that we've had here in this group. We may want to have that

conversation in a future meeting. Swinging back to housing. in order to bring people to islands they need a place to live.

Bob – We are pursuing the 2nd round of affordable housing on the island. We did a pilot. Maine housing program – island affordable housing – the Chebeague Island Community Association built a duplex. First one was sold, still in the “affordable” pool and has not skyrocketed. Schoolhouse road property has been fully rented. Recently started again, talking to Habitat for Humanity and Maine Housing. Two duplexes (zoning requires less land for two resident duplexes vs. free standing) for rentals, on schoolhouse road and the second on an acre and a half donated by a resident. Working on survey and division of land. Talking to different suppliers of buildings that might be effective, cost and logistics wise. Modular builders and panelized approach to home building out of Bangor area, visiting their factory on Monday. Both projects to be written up by Indigenous Peoples Day. The thirdrd is looking at town owned land, may propose that some be allocated for residence, may put it before the board.

Donna – Are your housing projects through town government or a nonprofit?

Bob – 18 years ago when school closure was threatened, we chartered a nonprofit with a broad definition to “support and enhance year round community in Chebeague.” One of the items in the mission is affordable housing, so it’s through that organization that this is taking place. Another organization on island wanted to work on affordable housing, that has rolled into that 501 c3 nonprofit. Not as part of the town but with help from the town, with the thought that eventually might evolve into housing trust that could be part of town government.

Kelly – Yesterday met with EMCC (President Liz Russell) talking about a class/group that is building housing – their problem is finding land to put houses on. They have electrical, plumbing, all those trainings are happenings as learnings for students, and their challenge is land to place houses on afterwards. Kelly could put anyone in touch. They don’t build a bunch of houses but a few per year.

Bob – They are in early conversation with Habitat for Humanities (Southern Rivers) the building trades program in Bath was interested in building modular boxes to be shipped out on a barge, the challenge is income level – they are restricted to 80% area median income. Maine Housing can do 120% area median income, which makes more sense with higher cost of living on Islands.

Larger support on island for housing for workforce and maintaining diverse community – will be asking community for donations of land, money. Received \$10,000 grant from Recompense Fund (on island) and \$100,000 from a family. Support is there. Other factors are more expensive, if they can chip away at one or two of those factors, they have better chance of being affordable housing (and finding young families that will participate).

Brenna - In chat – There are some questions about zoning laws and tiny houses. Those questions would be good to bring to our discussion this afternoon on LD2003. For this group, does anyone have thoughts about those zoning laws?

Mark – Interested for this afternoon’s speaker. We don’t know how this will impact future land use ordinances across the state.

Bob – Couple years ago, legislation makes it easier for towns to get tiny homes – Good legislation to look up. Define tiny homes as under 400 sq feet and there are other specific definitions in there.

Kendra – In Ellsworth, they can have them, there's a man that rents them out. Sedgewick too. Isle au Haut is thinking about it (for year-round housing).

Brenna – There's a difference between stand-alone tiny homes and building structures that can house multiple residents – any conversations about that?

Kendra – Some people have yurts.

Donna – On Swan's there was a low income/disabled 8-unit housing complex went up 25-30 years ago, through some government help. Unique facility, always full, common/laundry area, two 2-bedroom and then 1-bedroom apartments. Residents are all seniors and folks look out for each other. This might be a better idea to go with for our housing shortage, rather than single family dwellings – so expensive to build – multi unit provides neighborhood where they live. Project in development right now with Genesis (hoping funding comes through). Seems funny to have an apartment house on island because it's not what we're used to seeing, but I think we should consider.

Brenna – Noted that idea of islanders taking care of each other

Travis – Something that's becoming a focal point for state/federal funding is intergenerational housing, so something to consider. We have an aging population and kids in need of homes. These projects have taken place in larger communities, but the model is there.

Bob – ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Unit) are marginally allowed today on Chebeague. Trying to make it more attractive for folks to put ADUs on land. Homeowner would get a garage/workshop on their land, but would also get an apartment (above) that could be rented out on a year-round basis. Try to get structure to benefit both homeowner and community.

Peter – There is restrictive zoning here. (Put-in-Bay, OH). High density housing with restrictions that they can't be used for short term rentals. People like it because it's quiet and not a lot of transition of renters.

Kelly – Would there be apprenticeship opportunities to get young people on islands?

Kendra – Would people aging out of foster care want to do that kind of work? A caretaking apprenticeship? It's hard work and you've got to be dependable/reliable.

Donna – Where does money come from to pay for apprentice while they are being trained and you're transitioning out to retiring?

Lydia – Maine Service Fellows has just opened program, happy to connect folks to that grant process.

- Maine Apprenticeship Program through the Department of Labor offers limited funding and opportunities for developing an apprenticeship program.

https://www.maine.gov/labor/jobs_training/apprenticeship/

Rachel – Lobster fishery has built in apprenticeship program. Licensing structure requires new licensee to undergo certain number of hours before they can apply for license. Certain number of licenses have to go inactive before we get new ones in.

Brenna - We're going to take a slightly longer break and reconvene at noon.

LUNCH BREAK

Speakers: John Egan and Jeff Levine

John Egan, senior program officer for Genesis Fund and on commission looking at short term housing.

Jeff Lavine, former planner for Portland, expert on housing policy.

Alex Zipparo –Welcome to reach out to at any time, anything housing/economic development/business support on island.

Brenna: What are the causes of unaffordable housing?

John – We could spend over an hour on that topic. Reaffirm that the issue is affecting most of Maine, certainly along major transportation corridors and in all kinds of communities. Scarcity of units and escalating prices. Not new for you on islands. One of the primary underlying factors is the difficulty of assemblage and construction on islands. Good news is that previously, expense was a limiting factor, but due to work by the legislature (state and national) there are a lot of resources available, such that funding for affordable housing is dropping back from being a limiting factor. Capacity and finding construction crews – scarcity of resources is somewhat new. What's precipitating the urgency? Driven a lot by pandemic – disrupted economy and opened up idea of people working remotely and Maine is an attractive place to work remotely. A lot of people (don't have super accurate data yet) are moving to Maine and maintaining jobs and bringing resources from other parts of the country with them. Increased demand and shortening/nonexistent product – that means price increases and they are persisting over long periods of time (well over 2 years) and that's starting to become more normalized and foundational. That's bad news for people who live and work in our communities and especially islands and aren't bringing resources from other places. If you're holding on to legacy real estate, you have options to lease or rent that out through the short term rental economy – that's sharply expanding and not just along the coast. I'm on the land use commission that's looking at this issue – we've had one meeting so don't have a lot of data yet. Our demographics are changing rapidly and this is driving demand. We're desperately trying to get recent graduates to stay here but don't have places for them to live.

Jeff – As background, a year ago the legislature convened group on housing, focused on zoning and how that affects the housing market, with a focus on equity. A lot of the zoning restrictions in place are being used in practice as inequity and limiting. How do we figure out what zoning is helpful and what has these impacts whether intentional or unintentional. Group came up with 9 recommendations for policy changes regarding zoning and land use. Bill LD2003 elements:

(A "users guide" will be coming out in the next week or so).

- Developed state housing goals. State will move forward with developing those statewide housing goals and then divide those up regionally. That piece is underway.
- Municipal role in regulating short term housing rentals.
- Any place where single family home is allowed is also allowed to have an ADU (garage, basement, attic). Can put some local restrictions on, but those restrictions are also limited. Any place where single family housing is allowed, have to allow a minimum of 2 units in some areas

and 4 units in others. You're still allowed to require larger lots, so it's more nuanced. *Doesn't supercede shoreline zoning and for areas without municipal water and sewer, have to handle water, sewage, etc.

John – background on commission on short term housing – born from a legislative action looking at short term rental impact on community and state level. 2nd meeting tomorrow. Task of commission is to look at land uses and other instruments of designing and crafting how a community expands/contracts with land use in terms of the build environment, with a focus on short term rental (but can look at other things too). Looking at affordable housing and housing across the spectrum. Groups is diverse – reps from development, real estate, policy, legislature, advocacy, technical assistance. Aggressive timeline – the report is due at the beginning of November. Issue is quite significant, to look at the regional impact of short-term rental. Only a few communities identify and/or regulate short term rentals – unwieldy aspect of this is that residents and consumers of vacation and short-term rentals can connect and conduct business outside of traditional commercial pathways. If there's an opportunity for the free market to expand, that's what is happening (with limited regulation). Plus, and minus to this. Need to understand this part of the market and understand that the horse has already left the barn – short term rentals are already here and impacting our communities. Question - can you regulate private property? It will bring a lot of heated and emotional discussion. No immediate dramatic solutions or changes because there's such heat on both sides of the issue.

Brenna – tiny houses came up as one of the solutions for island housing and a question about zoning. How do tiny houses fall in zoning?

John – Municipalities have their own definitions (zoning or framework to get a building permit). Minimum requirements for access to public road, wastewater, setbacks. Other than that, the size of the house is much less regularly regulated. Many times the designation comes down to whether a tiny home is designated as permanent or temporary/motor home. Also, how it's getting water and dealing with waste water. Once those issues are identified, you can probably work them into most communities zoning compliant.

Jeff – Often these are building code and housing code issues, not zoning. Caution that tiny houses can be expensive. They can play a role (ADU – tiny house in yard).

Mark – Makes no mention about quantity of water, which is what we grapple with here. We have lots of small lots, but water (sole source aquifer) - we have a hard time knowing about water use. Any hydrologic study of groundwater is tough.

Elin – When the commission is looking at the number of temporary units, are they distinguishing units that can be year-round and those that are not (lack heat, etc)? We need housing rehabilitated so people can afford to live there or new affordable housing. Lots are very small where there is town water and sewer. We need to update hydrologic study to figure out carrying capacity of island in terms of water use (and that's expensive to do). Question about ADUs and property lines. Issues presented despite well-meanings, not always a good fit for all communities.

(Ideas for solutions?) Donated land, as has happened elsewhere. Town-owned land allocated to build on for families. Condos and in town houses without grass won't be a good fit for families.

Bob – Jeff put something in chat about new website. Has the document been issued?

Jeff – Document is going to final editing now, a bit behind. Will be out hopefully in next 10 days. They should fix that on the website.

John – LD2003 allows community to put their own safety code into requirements – for example may allow ADUs to have a certain setbacks from property line – those are local code issues that any community is still allowed to exert. LD2003 allows it but does not mandate it. (responding to Elin’s comment/question). Local codes are still required, not super ceding by LD2003.

Brenna – What are success factors for communities to create housing options?

John – Look to each other for pathways to success, including taking advantage of available funding. One of key factors is that real estate development is a multi-step process regardless of size of dwelling. To get over hurdles, easiest to have an experienced professional (but that makes cost more expensive). Going back to my point earlier, I’m not saying funding is not a concern, but historically has been extremely tight and required a lot of local fundraising – this will still happen, but grant sources that are flowing now will be helpful.

Jeff – Important for communities to acknowledge that some of these issues won’t be addressed without bold options. Look at what are the things you’re finding people who want to build housing on your island struggle with? Some will be obvious, and others might be easier to resolve. Look at the existing zoning code – it’s “free” to change your zoning code – see if it matches with what you’d like.

Island Updates

Mark (Long) - No one giant thing, just the usual things. Too many cars, too few spaces. Revaluation of the town is starting. Melanie (Island Fellow) is helping me with that. Selectmen meet every Thursday, with zoom there’s a lot of participation, which is great. Biggest thing I keep hearing is how many unfilled positions we have (harbormaster to boards and committees). Low point in getting positions filled. Looking at pay (some have stipends and town is willing to up them if that is what it takes). Housing – the comprehensive plan that was just completed and starting to be implemented. I’m really pleased with the emphasis on housing coming from the comprehensive plan. That’s another committee that can use more people. We have land the town is willing to let us use, we have ideas, allowed cluster zoning for housing – we have good stuff going on but need people to get active in moving this forward. Housing underlies every issue we have.

Donna – Housing project in starting phase by an individual that will hopefully get funded. We talked earlier today about multi generations living in the same home, and on Swan’s we have quite a few houses with “young adults” (20s-50s, sometimes families) living at home because there is no place for them to buy. 150th anniversary of lighthouse this year and its restoration – JOB WELL DONE! Busy summer, largest outbreak of covid this summer since the beginning of the pandemic. Seems to have died out for now. So many new people. Real estate market – 75 or more properties sold during the pandemic. New fellow working with museum. Shout out to Rachel Bishop (Frenchboro) - following their lead on public narcan boxes – have done some research and have 20 boxes coming from the state with

clear plexiglass boxes and in process of writing letters to locations on the island to see who wants to participate. Working with Healthy Acadia to provide training. 2 new EMTs on Swans (including Donna). Problems with Maine State Ferry Service and not making after hours emergency runs. But, lucky to not have missed regularly scheduled runs this summer like so many other islands. Boat is fully staffed right now, hope to keep it that way moving into the winter.

Bob (Chebeague) - elections last spring, few new members of board of selectmen. Lost a good bit of land in the Hook due to sea level rise – storms are more severe and water is higher, causing the federally designated dune to be changing rapidly. Committees are always a challenge to keep them fully staffed. Talked about housing earlier so won't repeat. Since the beginning of covid, but still accelerating – we're seeing more traffic on the island, both cars and bikes as well as barging. (More things shipped to the island means more cardboard boxes and this also impacts transfer station). Lot more business this summer that's gotten comment from the broader population.

Kendra (IaH) - got grant for dredging thoroughfare (last done 50-60 years ago?) and for broadband. Special town meeting a few weeks ago and town gave their rentals (3) to Isle au Haut Community Development so that they could apply for a grant and use that as matching funds. 4 kids in the school, 2 leaving at the end of October. Last two school board meetings – have 3 three year olds who are ready for preschool. Superintendent says you can only start preschool at 4, but in there's past precedence of 3 year olds (renters) attending preK program. Need to support young families, trying to push that and show up at school board meetings.

Congregational Church is 165 years old, rang the bells 165 times (pre-warned people that it wasn't a fire). The bell broke after 25 rings so Kendra and another community member climbed up in the belfry to investigate. Took 20 minutes of repair and they got the bell ringing again to complete all 165 rings.

House in Head Harbor sold to a veterinarian from Colorado in June, she came for a few days and put it back on the market because it was too remote. House is back on the market.

Annual pie auction to support school raised over \$8,000. Gift shop celebrated ten years. Inter Island event happening on Isle au Haut right now – first time in person in 3 years.

Jim (Monhegan) - Second year of 1st Aid Station is wrapping up. Have a meeting right now dealing with how zoning might change and support Island housing. Constraints for Monhegan is there's a small living area and so much of island is land trust. In the process of looking for buildable lots, limited in physical space. Are there parts of the land in land trust that can be given to/bought by Monhegan for housing? Seasonal housing/cottages exist, but would need \$50,000-\$100,000 (roof, septic, etc) to make them year-round livable. Commissioned study with sea level rise and how that impacts freshwater aquifer. Impacted by drought this summer. Had a boil water order based on *E. coli* contamination due to drought. Looking to upgrade water systems generally, concerned about impacts of sea level rise. This all speaks to the long term sustainability of island – housing, water, etc.

Eva (Matinicus) - We survived another summer, some close calls with finding post office staff, and a crappy price for lobster.

Resources from Closing Takeaways

From Jeff: This web page on the state site will be filled out over time with information related to LD 2003 and other housing tools such as the Housing Opportunity Program

<https://www.maine.gov/decd/housing-legislation>

Maine Apprenticeship Program: https://www.maine.gov/labor/jobs_training/apprenticeship/

From Kelly: Susan Cerini – new workforce sources – prison to reentry

ME-01 friends: please reach out anytime! Our Portland district office phone number is 207-774-5019 and my email is sarah.lawrence@mail.house.gov.