

Maine Islands Coalition Meeting
COVID19: Island Updates
Friday, June 26th, 2020
10-11:30

Swan's Island

Donna Wiegler, co-chair

Cliff

Roger Berle, co-chair

Isle au Haut

Kendra Chubbuck
Peggi Stevens

Vinalhaven

Gabe McPhail

Matinicus

Eva Murray

Monhegan

Mott Feibusch

Chebeague

Donna Damon
Donna Colbath

Long

Mark Green

Legislative Representatives

Pam Trinward, Field Representative,
Congresswoman Chellie Pingree

Special Guests

Kate DuFour, Maine Municipal Association
Bob Anderson, Great Lakes Islands Alliance

Island Institute

Suzanne MacDonald
Meghan Grabill
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 ninth call. After today we will be changing the schedule from bi-weekly to monthly, as we recognize that even during a pandemic, summer is still a busy season. 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 want to remind MIC members that there is a closed Facebook group where you can ask questions and share resources with other island communities.

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
- Use the direct message feature in the chat box to connect with people directly

Legislative Updates

Congresswoman Pingree's Office: There is a huge backlog at the IRS for anyone who submitted paper copies of their tax return. If you haven't gotten a stimulus check or tax refund and were expecting one or eligible for one, call the office. The census numbers are important for representation and funding so please, please get people to fill out the census form. The concerns shared here do get shared with the Congresswoman who is back home on the island and voting remotely.

Donna Damon: We have two landings: The state landing which is deep water and the stone wharf which has to be dredged every ten years. We knew that if we stayed within the ten-year period we could avoid a lot of testing. We have been in limbo with the Army Corps and the wharf has filled in so much that at certain tides they have to cancel the ferries. The emergency boat also can't dock at those tides which is creating a very dangerous situation during Covid19.

Pam: I am the specialist on staff who is charged with following up on these things with the Army Corps. I attend their meetings. Send me the information for town staff contact, copies of the information you sent to the Army Corps and some other information and I will investigate.

Eva: So encouraging and wonderful to see a real-world, real-time problem solved by having these meetings.

Suzanne: Shared Screen with Waypoints Connect: Working Waterfronts Protections which provides larger context for the working waterfront dredging program.

<http://www.islandinstitute.org/waypoints-connect>

Partner Organization Updates

Maine Municipal Association: Keep Maine Healthy Initiative has \$13 Million available. They received \$18 million worth of requests, but every municipality who applied will get money. We are working with the Mayor's Coalition and the State Budget Coalition to get information from the state. The Governor has set aside \$30 million dollars to reimburse municipalities on the local share of the FEMA grant. The cost share breakdown is usually Fed: 75%, State 15%, Municipality 10%. But the state is trying to make it so that if a municipality has a FEMA reimbursable expense it can be covered 100%. But they want to

know the accurate expenses to make sure the money set aside is accurate. They are trying to get a sense of how much communities have spent since March, including lost revenues, FEMA expenses and non-reimbursable federal expenses. They are looking for this information to help inform the legislature when they talk about budget allocations and shortfalls. We want the state to understand how it has impacted municipalities and pushed out other spending priorities. Please participate in the survey. It is technical and a bit long, but very important. Any dollar that a municipality has had to spend because of Covid19 is important information. Email Kdufour@memum.org for a link to the survey.

Craig: The Islesboro town is working on the survey. It looks pretty straight forward and is a fabulous planning tool for communities. It will also help communities to look at lost revenues. My big fear is the fall and the tax bills that will go out in February.

Mark: Where did it get sent?

Kate Dufour: It went to the key municipal official- usually either an administrator or the first selectman

Island Institute

Census 2020: Meghan Shared Census Response Rate for each island. Chebeague has a 27% response rate which is the highest of all the islands. Vinalhaven is second with a response rate of 25.5%. Isle au Haut has the lowest response rate at 6.2%. The census is open through October 15th.

Census takers are out and about doing door to door visits. Filling it out now will prevent people from knocking on your door. If you are looking for ideas for how to spread the word there are ideas here:

Response Rate Map: <https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates.html>

Census Outreach: <https://2020census.gov/en/partners/outreach-materials.html>

Spread the Word: <https://2020census.gov/en/how-to-help.html>

Donna Wiegler: One of the selectmen said that it counts households that are summer residents. If that is the case with Swan's at 20%, that would mean all the year round people have probably done it.

Eva: Re/census: we have a very high percentage of multiple-homeowners, people who have maybe inherited a family place out here but live on the mainland in winter, etc. Lots of census door-hanger things were seen out here a week or two back, so somebody was clearly out here wandering around, but I suspect they hit a lot of homes where the owners respond from their mainland town.

Pam: I am on a phone call today, and I will try to get a concrete answer and pass it along to Suzanne to update the MIC.

Pam's Updated Answer: People who own second properties should technically fill out a census for that property and just indicate 0 people were living there April 1. However, as Pam explains, there is no benefit to doing this. And potentially people do not think about this. But if they did do this step for second properties then their response would increase the response rate.

Mark: If we knew how many households have responded that would clarify it quickly because we know how many households we have on island, instead of a percentage.

Suzanne: We will use the Facebook group to keep posted on this until our next meeting.

Kendra: They put one on our cottage, even though we told them no one was living there, and it seems like a waste.

Peggi: We had one put on our house, too and were told that we should fill it out indicating that it was a seasonal house with no one living there year-round.

Meghan: The response rate is based on housing units, so if there are vacant housing units on the Island that counts against the percentage of response. We will dig into how they can get adjusted and if people who own summer houses need to respond that they are summer or vacant to get the response rate up but my immediate reaction is that it will be still be pretty flawed unless I can get more numbers. I would need to know the number of responding housing units and if those were year-round responders or seasonal responders (indicating the property is unoccupied). Just because islanders don't see people picking up their packet doesn't mean the seasonal residents aren't doing it online from wherever in the world they are. If the response rate on an island is at 25% and they know only 25% of housing units are year-round this does not mean one can assume that everyone on the island year-round responded because some of that 25% could be seasonal residents indicating it is a seasonal home.

Technical document on response rate calculations:

<https://2020census.gov/content/dam/2020census/materials/partners/2020-02/response-rate-map-technical-documentation.pdf>

Donna Wiegler: Thanks Meghan for that census update. That makes me think we are doing a great job here on Swan's Island and on some of the other islands, too!

Broadband: We are helping lead the Yes on 1 Better Internet for ME to bring \$15 Million dollars from the state to community driven broadband planning and infrastructure grant. This state money will help us leverage \$30 million more in Federal money. There is a huge media push around this with op-eds, advertisements, events and panels. WABVI. July 7th is the endorsement event. There are 70 towns, businesses, and organizations who are endorsing this. We do have a sign on letter, if your business or town wants to sign on should contact Kendra Jo Grindle at KGrindle@islandinstitute.org
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdIZugchsPBCJyOdCcMCI2-aosI1o6uyarnN8VI-M6IkaGW0g/viewform>

The event will be a quick 30-minute event where we hope to get most of the sign on folks together as a show of support. We sent off a voter guide mailer, but we aren't doing signs or stickers or traditional campaign strategies. As well as pushing for the campaign, we are also pushing for people to go and vote because it is different timing than people are used to. Previous primaries have about 70K votes in total and already 140K have requested absentee ballots. Starting July 1st, the Island Institute will be doing a get out the vote campaign through social media. Get your ballot in early to avoid delays.

Eva: As a town clerk let me toss in my thumbs-up for absentee/mail-in balloting! It IS safe. But when you use the website to request a ballot there isn't an automatic message that comes in, I have to go into the website to check daily. It will be faster to request it directly from the town office.

Donna Damon: We had opposition when we originally brought it to the town. Now that it is so essential because of Covid19, people are having to pay individually to run the lines and it is very expensive. It is causing hard feelings towards the two providers who dragged their feet about helping the town implement a community wide approach.

Main Topic: Island Updates

Beaver Island, MI: Great Lakes Islands Alliance is 15 islands and 2 countries all with different restrictions. Our summit has been postponed because of Covid19 concerns, the closed Canadian border, and fundraising challenges. Many of the islands rely heavily on tourism for the economy, some islands would have 22K visitors in one day. On Beaver Island the activities have been curtailed. The fourth of July parade will have the floats parked along the side of the road for people to drive by to see in order to prevent congregating. Some businesses have decided not to open at all because of the age

of the proprietor. One of the most serious concerns is the record high lake levels causing severe erosion. On Beaver island there is a dramatic photo of a septic tank hanging over the bluff with the leach field completely gone, and yet when it was built, it was built in code with no idea the erosion would have been so dramatic.

Matinicus: We had a successful outdoor town meeting a week and a half ago with a karaoke microphone and a tent left up from a wedding. We had 20 registered voters and another 15 homeowners who don't vote here. Eva is town clerk again. Talking about whether or not to host a fourth of July parade. The organizer is an epidemiologist by training and is very risk averse, others are advocating for a safe-distance. The challenge is that the discussion for and against is happening on social media.

The library has just received a grant from the Steven and Tabitha King Foundation to get another small shed to create a children's room. Area Interfaith Outreach and SeaCoast Mission has sent us a lot of food pantry food to support the need. We want to acknowledge that on a formal level. We're trying to do as much as possible outdoors. I've closed my bakery and bake for orders (mostly just bread) like once a week or so with all transactions outdoors. For the July 14th election, unless it's raining hard, I plan to be set up outside the town office for voters, and to discourage the usual socializing.

Swan's Island: Selectmen held their first zoom meeting last night. They haven't had a meeting in over three months. TDS is on Swan's island with outside contractors putting in substations to make the signal stronger which will improve the internet speed for a lot of residents. We've had some early renters out here who I know are not supposed to be here until June 26th according to the Governors Mandate and that has caused some issues for us. Yesterday we had a huge bike group come on. The day trippers seem inappropriate at this point, we don't know who they are or where they are from, are they going to go into our small store? There are questions. We are still on a reduced ferry schedule and it changes so we would like to get back to our regular schedule so we can plan on it. The EMS service has calls that have been potential Covid calls. The Ambulance Driver brought some supplies to the EMT who was in the house and didn't go in with full PPE, so he had to isolate until the results were back from the hospital. Holton Ambulance service just had an issue with an asymptomatic patient infecting a group. The concern is real and scary. We only have two EMT's who respond and if they have a Covid patient they are out for 14 days which doesn't help the person having a heart attack. The other concern is the fundraising concern- all of the budgets to keep the community operational rely on the summer fundraising season which has been canceled.

Eva: Yes on Donna's EMS worry--and that's from one of the "big" islands! Also real concern because if EMT's have to isolate family members of EMTs also need to isolate and if they are other types of essential workers it can cause a real concern. It can also cause issues if the person isolating doesn't have symptoms but still can't respond, it creates a feeling of ill will.

Donna Wiegler: Our EMS is full gear now no matter what the call is.

Isle au Haut: Put out a new advisory note, thank you to Vinalhaven as they took a lot of the information from theirs. Researched town meetings and so they are planning on an outside town meeting in September with a loudspeaker. The National Park Service has worked closely with the town on day trippers. They have closed the park for camping and are taking the day trippers directly to Duck Harbor so they don't come through town. The boat company has been incredible, but they are losing tons of money. They wanted to ask for more money at town meeting, but the warrants have been read. Renters are opening their houses and come out. People are coming for short periods, you can't track them and they don't have a stake in the community. The mask thing has become so political it is hard to

enforce. People have relaxed because they are exhausted. There aren't many of us running things out here and we've been running things for months and we are exhausted. Peggi applied for a grant to hire someone to help.

Donna Wiegler: Peggy, you are right about renters not having a stake in the island. I've always thought the weekly renters use the island hard...only here for a short time and want to see and do everything that means coming into contact with a lot of people while they are here.

Islesboro: Quiet: We don't have nearly the people we usually have, but summer people are coming back. We don't have much for retail but there are a couple shops. The antique and the gift shops are opening today and my concern is people hanging out. I'm seeing a lot less mixing that usually happens, but I'm concerned about the friction between summer residents and year round residents. They are doing the town meeting at the end of August as a referendum. There are eight active members of the EMS squad.

Vinalhaven: We have not been able to stay out of the headlines. Andy did write a good response: Andy's letter to the community:

<https://www.facebook.com/townofvinalhaven/photos/a.1392839480789090/3970805936325752/?type=3&theater>

The situation has been very hard on the younger, local year-round community which has contributed to the increasing tensions. We are doing covid education/updates three days a week with posters and infographics. I posted an educational mask post and it became political for a lot of people. We are trying to direct people to talk to our public health team and make it about safety rather than politics. WE did a Vinalhaven version of the state certificate of compliance for people coming to rent on the island. We wanted to do a registry, but we couldn't figure out how to do it so we are using the certificate to track people. Seasonal residents are filling it out. We are trying to do some information for rental managers using the keep Maine Healthy guidelines. Town office is still closed to the public. The selectboard decided to keep it that way for the summer so are trying to push for increased online services and are trying to educate the public on what people can do remotely so they understand the office is still open and functioning. Our broadband committee hasn't met recently but we have a feasibility study done with Axiom, and will be meeting next week to finalize everything. There is a \$5M infrastructure project for updating downtown and they received a grant and are writing another. The Sea Level Rise group has continued to meet and will be putting out a report soon on their work. July 22nd will be the town meeting happening in the auditorium. We have an Island Fellow who will be working at the town office come September which will help us with the internal capacity issues with getting our systems up to date.

Monhegan: The power was out from Midnight to Five in the morning doing unscheduled maintenance. More people are showing up and overloaded the system still set to the much lighter winter energy loads. Relying heavily on the boat line to regulate traffic without being detrimental to their business. Worried that if someone inadvertently shows up we could become ground zero for spreading it around the counties. Often believe there is a magical quality to the island that what is happening out in the world won't affect them here. Working on signage to reinforce cloth face coverings, can't social distance on the roads. Working on a brochure on business hours and protocols to reduce gatherings. Jim Boucari is a new local health officer and assessor. Covid team is still meeting weekly. We have submitted an application to Keep Maine Healthy.

Donna Wiegler: Mott, we have that same problem...about half of people are wearing masks, but a lot are not. Many of the non-mask wearers are locals.

Jes: I went inshore for my first trip in three months and I am worried for the Rockland area. We are getting our act in order for signage. Monhegan is in the most vulnerable position with

people coming from three different peninsulas. I hope we get the full funding because we need it to keep us safe. We need to figure out the FEMA funding. The funding is the biggest challenge for us, because of the restrictions on what you can and can't fund, where you can and can't use the money and what else is out there besides the two federal grants. I don't know what's going on with the flow of PPE from the CDC, but we have a good stock if we can help Swan's Island. We are just starting to talk with the families and new teacher to see what they are comfortable with in terms of restarting school in the fall.

Chebeague

Town office opened June 1; only 1 person at time with appropriate social distancing
Still doing curbside service, too. People are coming and after 14 days they get a discount on taking their car back to the mainland. They are taking a welcome packet to arrivals with regulations and expectations but are concerned about the mask wearing. Donna recently went off island to go to mall where signs said everyone was required to wear mask but 3/4 people were not

Mis-information out there: Mall security said that masks were not required by law; but the law says they are. The Apple store making people social distance and taking temperature

Chebeague Transportation Company: has had first mask refusal but after arguing for 5 minutes passenger agreed to wear the mask. They are running a reduced schedule; crew now handling baggage; only 9 people on bus; no bikes; no round-trip tickets; Coast Guard lifted one of requirements so now the boat can take 32 people.

Put in for temporary positions: 1 for playground to make sure the kids were safe; wiping down slides. Applied for a Historical Society National Endowment Maine Humanities CARE grant. Got a \$4,500 grant and money from recompense to get broadband at museum

Listening session via zoom for people to get together to discuss in how they felt about the summer being different. There were 50 people in attendance and lots of questions, some simple. Some want to do it again.

Curbside food; limited access to the store

No public bathrooms will be opened because it is too risky

Having town meeting July 8th with a public hearing beforehand, but eliminated anything controversial

Question: **Are people breaking the law or not by refusing to wear a mask?**

Long Island

Selectboard meets weekly - trying to get word out and make the place safe; sympathy to selectboard members for trying to do the right thing. Renters are here; day trippers arriving tomorrow - going to enhanced winter schedule for ferries; There are 3 places to get things to eat on the island now; no indoor dining; so far it's being done well.

Town meeting was 2 weeks ago; 70-100 people normally and had 30 voters this year. There were lots of things to discuss at the meeting but still kept it under 45 minutes. They are looking at a private public partnership with Consolidated for broadband; had a lot of support for this prior to Covid-19; now even stronger; current system is stretched to capacity

Cliff Island

Similar difficulties with mask wearing compliance. Fairly quiet but will change soon because of the changing boat schedule. There is a 3rd EMT on Cliff; stayed off island and pursued training; now he is back on island

Sustainable Cliff Island has a lot of ongoing physical projects including:

The teacher's apartment - should be about another 30 days; teacher is helping with the work.

Wellness center - may not finish until the fall. They have locked the community center because the PO woman (who works in the building) has to have a safe place to go to the bathroom and this gives a good reason to keep it closed.

Summer store will be run online with curbside pickup. No ice cream cones this year.

There was an assault 3 weeks ago where a man took issue with the dock signs; another local man was coming in on the ferry with wife and baby; visiting man came at local with a machete but the local was able to pin the drunk visitor to the ground and call 911. Employer of visitor showed no remorse for his employee's actions or how they endangered community safety.

Cranberry Isles (Ingrid Gaither via email) Although June started off slow, I've seen an increase in homeowners coming back to the island earlier than usual, so the island feels at least normal busy if not busier than usual for June. There is a noticeable decrease in tourists (day trippers). The general store is serving the community well, with reduced hours and curbside pick-up. The museum is not open yet, but I think will be on regular hours soon. The cafe at the museum is open with outdoor seating. The library on GCI is on reduced hours and extra precautions. The Islesford library is closed to the public but offers book delivery. Ridership on the two ferries is also down. There was a small scare recently when the CDC map showed an active COVID-19 case in our town, but it's pretty much been confirmed that it was a resident who has been hospitalized in another state for quite a while and thankfully they have since recovered.