

**Maine Islands Coalition
Covid Response Meeting
4/3/20
10-11:30**

Swan's Island

Donna Wiegler
Sonny Sprague

Frenchboro

Rachel Bishop

Isle au Haut

Kendra Chubbuck
Peggi Stevens

Islesboro

Lauren Bruce

Vinalhaven

Andy Dorr

Matinicus

Eva Murray

Monhegan

Mott Feibusch
Jessica Stevens

Chebeague

Donna Damon

Long

Mark Greene

Cliff

Cheryl
Roger Berle

Peaks

Randy Schaeffer

Island Institute

Craig Olsen
Suzanne MacDonald
Andy Theriault
Marydale Abernathy
Meghan Grabill
Stephenie MacLagan
Tom Groening

Seacoast Mission

Douglas Corman
Sharon Daly

Maine Municipal Association

Kate Dufour

Legislators

Genevieve McDonald
Dave Miramant
Kelly Cotiaux, Collins
Pam Trinward, Pingree

Collins' Office:

\$300 Million in the Covid19 legislation to support fishermen. Social Security recipients will receive rebate checks automatically as direct deposits. There is money to be disbursed to rural hospitals and health centers. The delegation is working with the National Health Services to get PPE and figure out how the disbursement of the federal stimulus money will work.

There is a loan program being ramped up to help small employers with their payroll for 6 weeks. \$1Billion secured for a community block grant program.

Please reach out to Collin's office if you have questions. Things won't move as quickly as we would like, but we are trying to move as fast as possible.

Pingree's Office:

The Governor requested a major declaration for disaster relief with FEMA on Monday. Should be decided in 3-5 days so hoping to hear (today) Friday. Requested permission to mobilize National Guard in the same way MA and CT have to be paid by the federal government to deploy as needed during this emergency.

For the new loans being made available through the CARES Act, people go to the website, they will be sent to the banks in their area who are handling the loans. The banks may not be quite ready, but people are urged to do this soon because the money is first come, first served.

Action: Contact Pingree's office to share experiences in the local government that would be helped by funding, so they have examples to share of small towns.

We are all being hit hard, but most of the money that went to municipalities went to those with over 500,000 people. Hoping the next aid package will include more for small municipalities. It is hard to get through, the lines are really busy, so email or keep trying the phone lines to let them know the challenges you are facing so they can be helpful.

McDonald

The number of people applying for unemployment has increased: 45,000 claims last week. Getting through is challenging. There is a backlog. Waiting for guidance on how the federal stimulus will be available and how people can apply for it so we can roll out some of the programs in the next week.

Maine Islands Coalition: Donna

Welcome everyone. We appreciate the time you are taking from your busy days to join us, especially the legislators.

Maine Municipal Association

They put many of the recommendations brought to the MIC meeting last week into a report for the Governor's office. They are listening and passing the information along. If you have any questions reach out to the legal department, they are helping municipalities navigate their responsibilities during this crisis.

Maine Seacoast Mission

Received a private donation that they are making available to island and Washington County coastal communities. If you know of anyone who would be helped by a small amount of money, have them reach out to Douglas. They are starting a phone calling initiative beginning next week to call every resident in an island community. They are starting with the islands in midcoast and downeast Maine to ask how they are doing, check on food security, and see if they can distribute the donation to maximize the benefit for those in need.

They are building a sizable list of resources related to spiritual, mental, emotional health. Sharon is hosting a weekly call with Eldercare resident facilities to share resources and best practices.

Island Institute

They are connecting groups that can benefit from learning from each other including ferry operators and organizations supporting towns.

Staff are focusing on expanding access to broadband around the bond legislation coming to vote in June. They are continuing the small business support that has been ongoing through impact investing and coaching.

There is now a small business subpage of resources: <http://www.islandinstitute.org/resources-small-businesses-artists-and-nonprofits>

They are trying to identify critical businesses within communities that may need assistance now or assistance through the process of accessing critical resources. Island stores, the plumber, the private ferry service, anything that is critical to a community's infrastructure.

Action: Email Craig Olson with list of critical community businesses colson@islandinstitute.org

Main Topic: Navigating Media and Coordinating Communication

Andy: Vinalhaven has been in the news for Lumberjack Vigilantes. We don't want what happened last week to be a road map for how we act to out of state'ers. Every community at one point has had individuals who end up in the news and it paints the community with the same negative brush. It distracts from what is going on. Especially when the town has to spend hours responding. We want to focus on the positive things that our communities are doing to support each other. So, we created a message to show what our response is in supporting our community.

<https://bangordailynews.com/2020/03/31/news/midcoast/vinalhaven-pushing-back-on-vigilante-actions-amid-covid-19-panic/>

Genevieve: Be careful with public social media posts because reporters are looking for stories to promote and can take them from anything that is public. Once it is on a social media platform, you can't control it.

Donna: Contacted by the BDN for a human-interest story and her work at the health center despite her cancer diagnosis. There was a framing change where the original diagnoses made four years ago was to estimate that she had 5 years to live. The article stated it as "1 year to live" since April is Donna's 4 year anniversary of her diagnosis, which isn't quite how it works. But there was no negative press around her or the community from the piece.

<https://bangordailynews.com/2020/04/01/news/hancock/she-has-ovarian-cancer-but-is-working-during-the-pandemic-to-keep-her-island-clinic-open/>

Peggi: Isle au Haut was in three stories in the Stonington paper. Things were taken out of context and put in the reporter's words that made them sound unwelcoming. Thought to respond but realized there was nothing she could do without creating a conversation. The more you add to it the more it stays in the public eye.

<http://islandadvantages.com/news/2020/mar/27/isle-au-haut-to-everyone-else-stay-away/#.Xodl-NNKiwQ>

Randy: The community had one intention and the newspaper had another intention. We had concerns about the onslaught of summer tourism and keeping our ferry working/running. Casco Bay Lines has significantly cut back the schedule and will continue to run as long as the staff is healthy. We had the premise that if we reduced travel to just essential travel, we would lessen the risk to the ferry service. We tried to highlight the vulnerability of our lifelines and also what we were doing on the island to prepare for health/mental health/volunteer support. In the coverage they emphasized the rugged individuality of Maine Islanders which felt more like a downeast message. Knowing what we put into it and seeing what we got out of it, our important messages were lost.

<https://wgme.com/news/coronavirus/maine-island-residents-work-together-to-keep-community-safe>

Eva: I am in the middle of working on Pen Bay Pilot, Fishermen's Voice, and Free Press columns and welcome positive, interesting stuff from anybody if they wish--and I will not knowingly contribute to sensationalism. I'm trying not to repeat what is coming out from every other news outlet. These are just my regular columns. I am happy to be anyone's access to getting stories out, but I am not a reporter and don't want to be a reporter.

Mott: No surprise as to why this wasn't picked up, it is one of the driest stories out there, the reporter asked leading questions, we responded "We are following guidelines set forth by the Governor, please see our website for more information": <https://lcnme.com/currentnews/monhegan-advises-new-arrivals-to-self-quarantine/>

Kate: Public Information Officer generally has two roles: One: to respond to right to know requests and to make sure that the town is responding in the spirit of the law. Two: easier said than done which is to coordinate the community's message. Someone is identified as the lead for the media inquiries with talking points, so they have one uniform message coming out each and every time. When you have a video interview, she suggests having three points to make and actually voicing that allowed and numbering them, one is... two is... three is... which makes it harder to cut and paste and leave out a large piece of what you wanted to say or to edit things out of context. Stick to the points, have the points and only answer the questions you want to answer. "This is what we are focused on in our community at this time..." They can only write what you give them. Don't bother with the comments on articles, ignore it to the extent you possibly can. Once it is in writing, unless there is a reason for it to be held confidential, it is in the public record, so make sure it is something you don't mind being shared. The news cycle is also very quick, and your story will cycle out quickly.

Andy: The Public Information Officer on Vinalhaven was in the process of updating Emergency Plan just prior to this disaster. She is at the office for part of everyday so they can keep her up to date on what is going on in the community and trying to stay ahead of some of those things. It takes a lot of time to put that stuff together and so it allows the other town workers to focus on other parts of the response.

PIO can overlap with the local health officer especially as this is a public health crisis.

Tom: I've been in the Newspaper business for 35 years, so I put together a list of Do's and Don'ts. <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/zjbyyjit1kw03ovbhmca6/Reporter-dos-and-don-ts.docx?dl=0&rlkey=u7ls09lpwljsr5i85tn03awxr>

First, just the facts. Insist on the facts, but make sure the facts are agreed upon. Reporters need and want accurate dates, job titles. Its ok to say, "I don't know" and not go beyond the facts. Steve McCaslin is great at this. Don't go beyond what you know, and it is ok to say, "I don't want to get into that." It isn't your job to flesh out the reporter's story or suggest other sources for the reporter to flesh out their own story. Once the story is published, reporters look for secondary stories to see if it is being done everywhere to ask about attitudes, social climate, and if this is a wider trend. Reporters are looking for a good, unusual story but not necessarily an "angle". Dispassionate, don't get defensive or testy, it isn't your job to dissuade the reporter. Urge trying to spin or "message" the reporter because it sounds like spin- always. Poor behavior is going to occur and you as a town official aren't responsible for it, just as you aren't responsible for all the good deeds that happen.

Marydale: The most important messages to express now are the needs of the community. You can always take it back to the specific idea. I've created a template to use for crisis communications planning.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/bxp2jqstxobaecs/IC-Crisis-Communication-Strategy-Template-WORD.dotx?dl=0>

To have one person responding that is the best way to control the messaging and you can use the template to think through what the talking points are and what the communication tree is within the community. Also track and document what kinds of communications are going out so you can refer back to it. Social media: once it is out there you can't control any of it but using Facebook pages for just the facts is important. During the marathon of a crisis roles may need to be reprioritized, and so may need to share responsibilities. Both Tom and Marydale are happy to be thought partners or think through resources.

Island Updates: Needs

Chebeague

Two arising issues: Children congregating on the playground and children on their bikes and playing in the woods. Should the town and school close the school playground, how has it been enforced, how has it been messaged?

Genevieve: Deer Isle has closed their playgrounds. There are signs posted on the basketball court. The Governors Executive Order does not allow for people to congregate.

Casco Bay lines is now asking all passengers to wear masks and gloves on the boat. If we are doing it on one ferry should we be doing it on both ferries.

Donna: Not everyone has access to masks and gloves.

Peaks:

Randy would like to contact someone from the islands that have island stores that are using curbside delivery. We are looking for advice regarding how's it's been done in effort to help keep our Peaks Island store open.

Mark: We just started it today on Long Island. Shirley who runs the store took pictures of the shelves, so it is easier to know what they have in today. We will see how it works.

Craig: Islesboro is doing curbside pickup, we also have a local web designer who has created an easy online ordering website and is providing the code for free. Please email me at colson@islandinstitute.org and I will send you the information.

Christian Stolte on Islesboro has created an online ordering service for both island markets. Here's a link: [Islesboro Food](#). Christian has also provided the code for the architecture of the website for **FREE** to anyone to adapt for their community. It would be best to contact him directly if you have any questions or would like to use it. His email is Christian Stolte christian.stolte@gmail.com.

Donna: our small store is doing curbside pickup. You call in your order and make payment over the phone. Tell them when you want to pick it up and they will put it on a bench outside with your name on for pick up.

The sense of urgency was increased in the last couple of days because there are now Covid cases identified on Peaks. The family who runs the fuel tanks and laundromat. The family did a great job at messaging and ensuring that the barge service could continue.

Cliff

Our focus is on keeping the lifeline of the ferry and reducing risk for ferry personnel. April vacation is when people start arriving to the island to open their houses. Since we aren't our own town, we created the letter from the three non-profits that was sent out on the list and via hard copy mailing.

Long

There are only two boats that you can use to get off the island and get back. The store is reliant on Sam Whitener to get to the mainland and bring food back. The markets who are willing to deliver to Casco Bay Lines is changing so we need to get on top of that again. The selectmen moved town meeting to June 13th, tentatively, but will move along and get the town report and warrant out. The town administrator is the point person for communicating the town response.

Are there security concerns regarding Zoom?

Marydale: There have been some Zoom hacking events, but mostly from Public sessions, check your privacy settings. After the session ends, you are safe to keep the app on your computer. Most importantly, Zoom users should not share meeting links publicly. This is perhaps the single most obvious precaution you can take. Rather than posting a meeting link to a Facebook group or in a promotional tweet, distribute information via a more private method, such as email.

<https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/03/20/keep-uninvited-guests-out-of-your-zoom-event/>

Monhegan

Three big hotels have delayed start until the end of June. Restaurants will be closed. Library is closed to the public. Need help navigating the CARES Act. Seasonal businesses and tourism are concerned about employees being eligible for unemployment. Concerned about workforce which usually shows up in May, not showing up at all because of uncertainty.

Email Newsletter got flagged as spam and bounced. Any tips on how to keep important, town centered newsletters from bouncing?

Monhegan in process of working on plans for medical response, transport from location of emergency to helicopter or USCG vessel or ferry or lobster boat. Have a very rough draft. Ferry doesn't have a plan communicated to community yet for transport of possible/known COVID-19 patient.

Monhegan has PPE and fit testing but need PPE don/doff training/practice still (among many protocols needing polishing/training/practice still).

Action: Share community emergency action plans with Jes Stevens, EMA Director

Monhegan Protocol is to give Fire Dept members a safe means to provide medical assist to communicate with person in need, and transport off island EMS and transport a person with the off-island EMS back to the helicopter/boat.

Matinicus

We are better prepared to survive because of how we live all the time. But it doesn't take much to disrupt that. There is a myth that everyone knows what everyone is up to, but there is nothing like serious trouble to prove how much of a myth that is. People can put on a good face but still be facing trouble or struggling.

We no longer have a licensed EMS service and do not have a written policy regarding moving patients from home to any vehicle.

Islesboro

Crisis team includes EMS, Public Safety, Health Center, and Volunteer Coordinator. There are over 30 people who have volunteered. The crisis team is coordinating internally and externally about what is going on. The framework is going to be solid, though it is still being set up. Communication includes website, regular mail, e-blasts. Select board has drafted a resolution regarding capacity of Islesboro to handle additional arrivals during the crisis. Trying to send out guidelines in advance of people returning.

A preamble accompanies it that explains in a gentle way why the guidelines are necessary. The guidelines themselves are strict.

Isle au Haut

People have returned to the island and are quarantining. Still trying to figure out how to transport someone from their house to the ferry. The National Park has officially closed at all its access points.

Frenchboro

Still don't have a good solution for a round trip option on the ferry. The passenger boat started today, which helps getting off the island, but doesn't help with getting vehicle on and off. They have put protocols in place for spacing and keeping crew safe. Biggest concern is recognizing the community limits for getting people to follow social distancing rules- kids going over to each other's houses to play. The numbers aren't the issue, but the regular contact is a concern. It falls on the individuals to police themselves. Any ideas for how to respond would help.

Swan's

We have not received any PPE and will not we are so far down the line. If we need to use it, it will run out quickly. Residents are leaving the island and bringing their grown children back from other states. The expectation is that the whole household will quarantine for 14 days. Some residents are not adhering to Governor's mandate for social distancing. As the local health officer, when this happens, Donna will call them and address it with them firmly, but politely. Put out signs strategically along the roadside, to remind people to stay at home. Town office did a mailing to summer residents to give them info on what is happening on the island. Bar Harbor and Ellsworth have recently released statements about tourism and visitors to discourage people from coming. Concerned about the fishing community over the next few weeks, assistance is going to be hard pressed and what the market is going to be like when this is over.

FACEBOOK! Can we please talk about this? Does your town have an official page? An unofficial page? It seems to be where most people in my town go to get their information, yet it is the hardest to monitor to ensure accurate information is circulated and only by people authorized to. It's become our blessing and our curse, in my opinion.

Oh, FB, it's a tool and a curse for sure. My advice is to set rules for your group, so the expectations are clear, and to enforce them equitably.

FB is the best way to get information out on Swan's Island. We have a closed group information page that is very busy lately...for the good and bad of it!

Our town does not have an "official" page on Facebook. Yet there are two that appear to represent the town. So, the town can't set rules or enforce. For the most part, our town officials stay off Facebook. So, what appears to be town business is often being posted and shared by residents.

It is possible to set up/change a town page on FB to have a moderator that limits posts and comments.