

Maine Island Coalition (MIC) Meeting Notes

May 9, 2019

Theme: Healthcare on islands

Submitted by Ingrid Gaither, MIC Rep for the Cranberry Isles

MIC Representatives Present:

Roger Berle, Cliff Island, co-chair
Donna Wiegler, Swan's Island, co-chair
Ingrid Gaither, Cranberry Isles
Kendra Chubbuck, Isle au Haut
Bill Robecheck, Great Diamond
Mark Greene, Long Island
Eva Murray, Matinicus
Beverly Roxby, Frenchboro
Jay Corson, Chebeague
Kathy Warren, Vinalhaven
Arch Gillies, Islesboro
Andy Dorr, Vinalhaven

Island Institute Staff Present:

Rob Beams, Chief Operating Officer
Kate Tagai, Senior Community Development Officer
Christa Thorpe, Education Project Lead

Legislative Representatives

Chris Rector, Senator King
Pam Trinward, Congresswoman Pingree

Discussion, Healthcare on Islands

It isn't just about getting the access to health care but also about providing services to support the access and the social repercussions- if people have to go off for periods of time, what are systems that can help reduce their work (especially for the elderly) when they return, and that will incentive a trip into the doctors?

Telehealth is ok for routine monitoring of conditions and can cut down on number of mainland visits but isn't a replacement for emergency medicine. Technology can be cumbersome and less efficient especially for private practice or if end users don't have

comfort with technology. Biggest challenge for smallest islands, telemedicine is not always useful because mainland providers aren't always on board and generally, going to the mainland just feels more productive if a person is able to get on the boat. Generally, people need and want a face to face with a medical provider. In home care, Peaks Island as example with their home health service, is deal. Older folks struggle with the technology. However, telemed as a behavioral mental health seems to be flourishing.

Mill Pond on Swan's has info sessions, video workout classes, coffee hours. Long Island has potlucks and food nights to get people together.

Try starting with bringing providers out to do blood draws and routine work that folks would otherwise have to go into the mainland to get. Build with word of mouth. Very valuable for the elderly, but may need help with transportation even around the island.

To get started with setting up Telehealth, Long Island asked Maine Health - "Who are the doctors who have patients on Long Island?" Since patient info is confidential, they went directly to the doctors to work with them to set up schedules for telehealth on island.

Swan's, Isle au Haut, and Cliff have all done surveys and community outreach. In the past couple decades lots of surveys have been put out but they tend not to work for the smallest islands (everyone is an outlier).

UNE or other educational programs have upper year students/residents who might be interested in serving on islands

Chuck Radis has written a book about island medicine from his years of work as practitioner in Casco Bay - "Go By Boat"

Long Island Started from almost nothing 2 years ago (EMTs and highspeed rescue boat) but recently under dedicated passion of Amy Tierney, they have opened a Wellness Center staffed by Maine Health two Mondays a month and it's been overwhelming - huge numbers of islanders have been using the service.

Monhegan has basic service set up for emergencies with a roster of EMT's; Jess responds to emergencies but gets a lot of questions about other healthcare needs (which she can't answer); Worry about aging population and how to take baby steps toward planning; Potential for telemedicine (hook-up is there, but nothing happening at this time); Biggest issues with getting any year-round healthcare are structures available.

Vinalhaven able to offer housing and competitive salary both continue to be the biggest challenges in attracting healthcare providers.

Frenchboro is an example of having no healthcare / medical providers and a very limited to nonexistent EMT/EMS service.

Isle au Haut also has nothing, but the Acadia park rangers from May - October are EMT

trained and will respond to calls across the island, not just in the park.

Medical doctors (MDs) are often not the best option for providers on islands because of various reasons, so NPs and PAs might be better; nurses are a very valuable asset.

Peaks, Maine Med funding everything - very successful with lots of islander participation

Cliff has a clinic every Monday, Idea started from Seacoast Mission meeting (every fall about bringing healthcare to islands and especially addressing aging in place)

Islesboro is a Federally Qualified Health Center look-alike (in that they meet the requirements of a HRSA Health Center Program but do not receive health center program funding)

Vinalhaven has a large Island Community Medical Center, was awarded a federal grant of \$918 thousand in 2004. They have 2 dentists and 2 full time medical providers.

ISLAND UPDATES

Islesboro

Ferry rate increase is an ongoing issue. The Healthcare needs are mostly for the growing older population. Elder residents home has 8 beds and works closely with Wellness Center.

Chebeague

Starting broadband talks and looking at grants. Worried about being too bonded as a town. \$250,000 article to study broadband. Considering axiom. Wharf issues: Looking at building new wharf or fixing existing wharf, new wharf could be \$10 mil project, fixing could be 1.6 mil. Peoples' Petition is circulating to keep the wharf permanently undeveloped and publicly accessible

Cliff

Axiom is laying fiber right now. Expect service next month. 2 kids enrolled at the school. 5 percent mil rate increase.

Isle au Haut

Teacher Rita is retiring after 3 years. Got 40 applications for the teacher position. Chosen one that speaks Spanish and has a kindergartener. 2 new babies born. Town meeting last week. Asked for \$20,000 to start grants for broadband, no selectmen support, only got \$10,000. No money from town was approved for lighthouse renovations.

Long Island

Building a new cemetery. \$20,000 more needed. Town meeting is in two days. First tax increase by to 7.69 cents per ? which is their first in a long time. Control Burn last week working with the forest service, burned 15 acres. Deer and ticks are a huge problem, hunting allowed, but they only took 11 last year and there are 50-60 deer on island.

Matinicus

Focusing on non emergency health care on the island. They are a plantation, has a new assessor that is also a nurse and married to a fisherman. No students and no teacher. Third time this has happened. Some wanted to close schools. Since they are a plantation they are obligated to keep a school.

Frenchboro

Hiring a new teacher for next year. Rachel has been the teacher since Mindy left mid school year. There are no kids right now anyway. No more paper recycling. No way to get rid of vehicles and appliances. New aquaculture from leases, six people went to the boot camp. Town treasurer behind on audits. They are hiring and looking for a new treasurer.

Great Diamond

Part of Portland. 75 year round residents. Increase in retirement age population. 20 year round on one side of island. Private side has around 50 people. 3/4 of the island is private. Only 1/4 is public. And acts like a village. They want to succeed from Portland. Broadband is not supported by city of Portland, would cost a lot to build infrastructure.

Swans

Ferry negotiations continue. Lighthouse being renovated. Broadband Committee faltered. New committee now and stronger. They got zero money tho. Couldn't even make it to their town warrant. New auto inspection station on island now. They are starting discussions about benefits or not of hiring a town manager.

Cranberries

March town meeting, everything passed including \$350 thous for new fire truck. Dissolved the MAC. One teacher retiring this year, super says there were plentiful applicants.

Broadband almost completely fully, considered a successful partnership with Axiom. Discussion at a recent selectmens meeting about a moratorium on private dock construction.

Peaks

Parking in Portland an ongoing issue but getting worse. Maine State Ferry issues ongoing.

Vinalhaven

Ticks are a big problem. Ongoing ferry issues with MSF. EMS service now at paramedic level. 5% mil increase just recently.

Next Meeting is September 12

Topic: pesticides/herbicides

November 14

Topic: Broadband