

SELECT BOARD
KATELYN DAMON, BOARD CHAIR
JANUARY BENNETT
INGRID GAITHER

TOWN CLERK / TREASURER
BENJAMIN SUMNER



ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
TO THE SELECT BOARD
JAMES FORTUNE

PUBLIC SAFETY COORDINATOR
SHARON MORRELL

Town Manager Transition Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 23, 2025

Attendance:

George Dickson, Chair
Lauren Noether, Vice Chair
Heather Spurling, Secretary
Joe Connell, Garth Hallberg, Committee Members.
Absent: Nan Hadlock, Ingrid Gaither, Jim Kehoe

I. Call to Order: 11:04am by Chair George Dickson

II. Approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve minutes from previous meeting was made by Joe, seconded by Lauren. All in favor.

III. Review Action Items from Previous Meeting

- A. George contacted MMA about legal questions. They in turn referred him back to documents already available to this committee. Consensus was reached regarding interpretation of MMA documents.
- B. Question posed by Joe regarding the 90 day stipulation for presenting findings to the town, and our overall time frame. It was suggested that the committee should work towards giving a report at town meeting in March, so that townspeople have a chance to weigh in before it comes to a vote. Lauren suggested that we also take the time as a committee to draft a contract for a Town Manager. Joe mentioned that perhaps the Island Institute could help conduct a forum as a third party. Garth: interim report could state that

this committee will continue its work. Lauren: Can we begin to gather data for our recommendation to the town in the committee's spreadsheet?

- C. George found some sample contracts with town managers on the MMA website. Some contracts are quite dated, and it appears to be up to each town to draft their own contract.
- D. We as a committee want to make it clear to the town that we intend to extend our research another year due to the nature of our findings. We will request an extension from the selectboard in order to continue our research.
- E. Interview findings:
 - a. Joe: had no luck after trying to contact Monhegan and Matinicus. Both are "Plantation towns", and seem less relevant to our research. Connected with a member from Chebeague, but is still trying to schedule a meeting.
 - b. George: interviewed Isle Au Haut Selectboard chair, Abigail. Each selectboard member has a salary, but the chair does the bulk of the work and has a higher salary. The chair acts as a manager and/or assistant to the selectboard. Abigail thought the present system worked for her town. Shortest term for any selectboard member was 10 years on Isle Au Haut. \$45k total annual salary for selectboard (about half the budget of the Cranberry Isles). Strategic planning: Hancock County Planning Commission, a non-profit. Their selectboard meets twice a month, often for 2-3 hours. Go-to for advice is MMA or town lawyer.
 - c. Lauren: interviewed Merrill (southern Aroostook county) population 250, which shares a town manager with Smyrna. Merrill has 3 a member selectboard, Smyrna has a 5 member board. Called town manager, who said that selectboard would be hard to reach. In 50 years there have only been 3 town managers. Manager's level of authority is on par with selectboard because of longstanding relationship. No real expenditure limitations because the board seems to trust the town manager to make decisions. \$80k salary with benefits for town manager. Roadblocks not really existent because of mutual trust and constant communication.
No response from Frye Island, though they don't seem as relevant to our study. Lauren was able to compile some data in the meantime.
Some research was done about Washburn.
 - d. Garth had good luck connecting with selectboard members and town managers. With referral from town office was able to call selectboard members. Talked to town manager of Tremont (pop 1500), which also includes Gotts Island. Following a town charter. Town website includes a lengthy list of town manager duties. Selectboard needs to approve many actions regarding spending. Town manager only has spending authority for \$5k. HR: town manager directs hiring and firing.
Garth also spoke with North Haven: 5 person selectboard, population 417. Town administrator (which seemed like an administrative assistant to the selectboard) but no town manager. Does have a part-time planner that was initially paid for by the Island Institute. Employee reviews had not been done in a while.
Vinalhaven Selectboard member interview: town manager runs department of public works. Theme: selectboard and town manager work closely together. Was very much in favor of town manager, but it was difficult to hire for that position. Worked with a "head hunting firm" to find town manager candidates. Definitely able to make time for strategic planning.

Islesboro: talked to deputy town clerk. Has had a town manager, historically for a long time. By charter, estimated 10-15 town personnel. Roadblocks encountered tend to be regarding large scale projects.

- e. Heather reported about interviews with a selectboard member from Mount Desert and the administrative assistant to the selectboard from Swans Island. Mount Desert recently hired a new town manager with the help of MMA. Swans Island seems most similar to Cranberry Isles format.

IV. New Business

A. Action Items Are agreed upon

- a. George will check with Katelyn about the timeline for making a recommendation to the town.
- b. George will make PDFs of our previous meeting minutes and have them posted to the town website.
- c. Heather will create a new tab in the committee spreadsheet for the committee's recommendation findings.
- d. Committee members will begin to draft a report about our findings to the Selectboard to be submitted in December, including quotes and paraphrases from individual interviews.

V. Subsequent Meeting

Was scheduled for Tuesday, October 7th at 11am via Zoom.

VI. Adjournment: 12:10pm

Joe motioned to adjourn, George seconded. All in favor.