

League of Towns

A Collaborative Unit of Government Serving
Bar Harbor, Cranberry Isles, Ellsworth, Lamoine, Mount Desert,
Southwest Harbor, Swans Island, Tremont, Trenton, and
Acadia National Park
P.O. Box 248 Northeast Harbor, Maine 04662

LEAGUE OF TOWNS ELECTED OFFICIALS MEETING MINUTES

Somesville Fire Station
Thursday November 21, 2019 5:00- 8:00 pm
Dinner will be provided

Durlin Lunt called the meeting to order at 5:10pm.

Round of introductions. Durlin then explained that we would go through work plan from last year and then we'll have discussion about topics to be discussed next year.

1. Review of 2018-2019 Work Plan

a. **County Government** (Recommend formation of a Charter Commission)-Scott Adkins Hancock County Administrator

Last year, charter discussed. Concern around effectiveness of county tax dollars. County Commissioners believe there has been advancement in professionalizing County government, but current feeling is that it's not yet time. Progress is being made in professionalizing through work of newly appointed (4 years ago) County Administrator.

b. **Opiates and other addictive drugs**- Scott Kane Hancock County Sheriff unable to attend meeting.

General agreement that there is a significant opioid problem. Recently, there's been a rising cocaine problem. Marijuana dealers are now lacing product with other substances, such as cocaine and methamphetamine. MDI Hospital now offering on-the-spot treatment of Suboxone for up to 72 hours. One speaker emphasizes that substance use disorder is a disease akin to cancer, and treatments approach disease in this way. Speaker also emphasizes that legalization of marijuana has increased its risk as a gateway drug. Anxiety induced by marijuana can create psychosis, and this in turn necessitates treatment. Marijuana can also trigger violent behavior, paranoia, delusions, etc. Question as to how League of Towns can help address this issue. Speaker states that MDI Hospital offers program to help individuals suffering from substance use disorder. League of Towns could help publicize that program.

c. **Affordable Housing**- Latest activity by Island Housing Trust and MD 365

Marla O'Byrne- Island Housing Trust
Kathy Miller MD 365

IHT has 32 houses under covenant, meaning that they must be occupied by income-qualifying families working on MDI. They purchased one house in Mount Desert and have sold it to a public sector employee in Northeast Harbor. They also acquired a second home and sold it to a family working on the island. A third sale is also in the works. IHT has houses with covenants in all four island towns. IHT is also working with Maine Coast Heritage Trust to develop properties in Jones Marsh. One goal with this development is to make the homes energy efficient in order to make them more affordable and environmentally friendly. IHT has also researched what is defined as "affordable" on MDI. Price range is \$200-250K. There is demand for 2- and 3-bedroom houses. IHT has also surveyed residents of homes under covenant. Energy efficiency is very popular. Siting is very important. IHT is hoping to get houses started sometime in next year. IHT also participated in Island Institute group to help other coastal communities with affordable housing issues. As a result, IHT is exploring other partnerships to further this agenda. IHT is working with Witham Family Hotels to determine if IHT can help seasonal employees transition to yearround employees and residents.

Northeast Harbor has lost 62 yearround residents to seasonal/vacation. Very difficult to replace that, and character of village has been dramatically changed by depopulation.

- d. **Municipal Collaboration-** Discussion of Possible Opportunities for sharing services and personnel- Dr. Marc Gousse Superintendent AOS-91
Lee Umphrey- Director Eastern Maine Development Corporation, James Willis Bar Harbor/Mount Desert Police Chief

Staffing is a major issues for municipalities. Hard to have 4 of everything. Police-sharing agreement between Mount Desert and Bar Harbor is already helping fill this gap.

Dr. Marc Gousse of MDIRSS is suggesting an initiative to share human resources personnel. Gousse also reports that MDIRSS is undertaking an enrollment study. Emphasis that this study can only forecast future enrollment, not perfectly predict. Draft is complete, will be publicly released 12/16/19. MDIRSS is also undertaking a salary study to determine competitive wages. Finally, MDIRSS has

started a wellness initiative. Hope is that this will eventually lower healthcare costs. Also, this is just the right thing to do for people. Finally, MDIRSS is looking for answers to rising health insurance costs. Currently, MDIRSS pays \$9M/year in health insurance. Of that, \$4.7M is for “controllable” factors.

Regarding HR, this is a knowledge area that current staff generally doesn’t have. Role of HR includes succession planning. Observation is that we’re already spending the money on HR, we’re just not spending it wisely. Other HR functions include on-boarding, exit interviews, trainings, benefits. A draft RFP for HR management is included in materials for tonight’s meeting.

Another potential area for collaboration is technology.

Regarding solarization, Gousse describes solar efforts in the schools, including Tremont’s solar array and MDIHS solarization.

Gousse also recognizes the strong relationships between local law enforcement agencies and schools. Very effective.

Jim Willis gives an overview of law enforcement sharing between Mount Desert and Bar Harbor. They have now sworn all officers in each town into the other town. They have a unified patrol schedule. They’ve divided two towns into zones. They then combined their records management systems. Now, in the virtual world, everything is done under Bar Harbor’s name. As a result, all crime data is under Bar Harbor. The only difference is how two departments are paid. Having two people with different positions paid different rates presents a major morale problem. Last summer, SWH lost a midnight dispatcher. It takes 4 FTEs to staff a 24-hr dispatch center. As a result, Bar Harbor/Mount Desert looking at taking on night shift for SWH dispatch. BH/MD PD is also now using ANP frequencies. As a result of records management system, all agencies in Hancock County are on the same system, so they can see the same info when a call comes in.

Open question of what to do regarding dispatch on MDI. Hiring staff is a problem. Equipment is also very expensive. One console is \$75K-100K.

One analogy when thinking about dispatch can be seen in the consolidation of MDIHS. Took 20 years. Available in film “Consolidation.”

Also, when considering consolidation, it’s not necessarily a major step all at once. Can be done gradually, one step a time. For example, MD/BH started sharing just a chief and an admin assistant, but that gradually became more

extensive. Midnight dispatch might be that small first step. There's already dispatch consolidation in the agreement between BH and MD.

e. **Solarization-** Recent projects and future plans

Tremont already has a solar array and is looking at a community solar farm. All municipal buildings and the school in Tremont are now offset by the array. High School has a very similar arrangement. No upfront costs.

One speaker addresses the ways that climate change affects MDI, including sea level rise, ocean warming driving lobsters north, etc.

A Climate to Thrive has set the goal of making MDI energy independent by 2030. One major step in that direction could be to acquire land that could be used for solar arrays. EMR is working on developing a solar farm in 2020. Also, there is a 50-acre parcel in Bar Harbor that is owned by ANP, and so would take an act of Congress to free up, but could be a site for solar panels, affordable housing, etc. Since the original purpose of this parcel in the 1986 Park Boundary legislation was for an island-wide transfer station, and that need no longer is there. All towns on MDI have an interest in this. Therefore, this would be a good project for League of Towns.

ANP will convene a group to work on this that will include all island towns, ADD members, MDIRSS, and any other interested parties.

2. League Work Plan for 2019-2020- What items should the League concentrate on over the next year?

- a. Durlin explains how the plan for next year will be developed. Participants read through list from last year for approximately 10 minutes. They could also add items to the list. After voting was complete the following items received the most votes:

Affordable Housing- 25 votes- Carry over from 2018-2019

Municipal Collaboration- 20 votes- Carry over from 2018-2019

Transportation- 14 votes

Solarization- 13 votes- Carry over from 2018-2019

Tick Borne illness-13 votes

Meeting adjourned by general consent at 7:45pm.