

Summer Residents Association Meeting
Thursday, July 12, 2012

Ham Clark called the meeting of the Summer Residents Association to order at 4:00. He welcomed all into the Neighborhood House, a new and larger venue for the group. He mentioned that we were to share a number of developments within the town as well as give a report of the Urban Land Institute, Boston Technical Assistance Panel.

The Board members present introduced themselves. Ham also introduced the guests, Durlin Lunt, town manager, and Martha Dudman, selectman.

Durlin Lunt reported on the development of the Marina project. Mr. Lunt read a story from a book published in 1960 about the Kennedy family's visit to town. The marina project is coming along and the town is currently assessing the operation. Mr. Lunt goes down to the marina twice daily to get a sense of how the project is working where he frequently interviews visiting yachtsmen and other visitors. He has gotten very positive feedback. He went on to explain the funding of the Marina project. Payment from the project is coming solely from user fees. The marina is paid for from an enterprise fund. It has separate accounting from the town budget. All salaries and expenses for full and part time employees are paid for by the enterprise fund. The town pays some administrative fees to the enterprise fund, but these are very minimal. Expenses for Seal Harbor, Somes Harbor and Bartlett Landing expenses are also included in this fund. There was a \$58K surplus in the fund last year, which was had very slow July. In July 2012, so far, we are way over budget in terms of income.

Now that the Visitor Center is right by the Marina and the bus stop is located there as well, we are getting a lot more traffic on Main St. In May, they logged 250 people through the Visitors Center.

The Marina is a work in progress, but the signs are positive. History will render the verdict.

The Harbormaster's Office is still being worked on. There will be a TV set up with the weather channel on full time. There are also plans to hang pictures and charts, etc. to make the space more attractive.

Lining of parking lots may have to wait till after the "season" so we don't inconvenience current slip renters.

There are dumpsters currently down there.

There are plans to expand the Town Hall due to some Federal regulations. The project should begin by early August.

One issue the town will look at shortly is the Land Use Zoning Ordinance. It was passed in early 70's when there was a fear of overdevelopment. It is very restrictive. It needs to be amended

but we need an overview of the plan. It is very important for the people who earn teachers salaries, electrician's salaries, etc be able to live in this town.

There was an issue in Seal Harbor with a resident asking to allow heavy equipment storage on the Main St, but it was turned down.

The tax rate went up 4.8% this year. The largest portion of this income was for the Elementary school. The school is growing and is currently the second largest on the Island. This year they added a second kindergarten, which is very good news.

We pay \$800K to Hancock County and are not sure we get our money's worth. Mr. Lunt is very disappointed in the current CFO of Hancock County. We pay 15% of the whole county.

We have a Harbor launch that runs people to and from their boats. That person collects mooring fees. We will hopefully capture some fees that we haven't in the past.

Next the meeting turned to the report from the Urban Land Institute. In the summer of 2010, Lanie Lincoln was instrumental in gathering a Revitalization Committee composed of 4 summer and 4 year round residents. The committee met and presented suggestions to the Board of Selectmen. The suggestions were such things as expand marina beyond current bounds and engage a technical consultant to work on strategies to revitalize the community. There have been encouraging grass roots initiatives. The Committee engaged ULI Boston to come look at NEH. The site visit from ULI happened in June 2012. They asked for a great deal of information on the history of the town, including tax information, zoning information, etc to prepare for the visit. A written report of the project from ULI is expected within 6 weeks of the site visit.

The TAP was asked to address questions such as improve Main St., better utilization of town owned property, add more affordable housing, encourage larger employers onto the Island, and encourage the possibility of a public/private partnership for affordable housing.

The process for the report included a site visit along with a series of panel interviews: they identified merchants, real estate experts, and large employers (Jackson Lab, Hospital). TAP identified a great number of assets within the town including schools, tax rate, etc. The challenges included such things as expensive real estate and a decreasing year round population. ULI came up with some interventions to provide opportunities. They suggested the need for NEH to be a "beehive" of activity, capitalize on Marina improvements, Main St streetscape improvements, enhance historical assets, infill and support commercial core, identify workforce housing, market rate year round housing, and catalytic projects.

The revitalization committee has completed its responsibilities. A new committee is needed to take the energy and implement changes taking into account the interests and needs of seasonal and year round residents.

Lanie expressed sincere thanks to Ham for all of his hard work in putting this report together

The meeting was then opened up to questions. One thought was to involve the College of the Atlantic and encourage them to bring their business incubator project to NEH. It was noted that there are currently artisans from COA exhibiting and selling in the tent on Main Street.

With regard to housing, the Day Mountain project is very nice. It was noted that the Island Housing Trust has built 16 houses in Somesville and they are all designated as affordable housing. There are covenants on those houses so they must stay affordable. There were 1,000 year round residents in the 60s, now about 350. With summer residents, the population is about 6500 in the whole town of Mt Desert. The township population has remained stable; there has just been a shift away from NEH.

The ULI did not speak to interest of the summer residents. This was purposeful.

A question was raised as to any thought being given to developing a retirement community on the Island. The committee did discuss this issue at length. The issue is still on the table.

The final report is due any day. The town hopes to post the final report on the Town website and it will also be available at the Library

The Board of Selectmen is the customer in this process. The Board needs to digest all the information and instigate initiatives.

Martha Dudman thanked the SRA for sponsoring the study. There is a lot of interest from both summer and year round residents in keeping this Village wonderful for our children and grandchildren. It is going to take money and work. Martha encouraged participation by the SRA members at the Selectmen meetings

Meeting closed at 5:20