

Summer Residents Association

Fall 2011

A Publication of the Summer
Residents of the Town Mount Desert

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am privileged to be your new president, and to be able to step into this position after all the hard work done by your past president, Lanie Lincoln. She was a most capable leader, and the SRA was a much more focused and organized association under her tutelage. We also have a strong and engaged Board of Directors, and with this as a setting, I hope to be able to build upon the accomplishments of Lanie and the Board over the past two years.

This year, I was fortunate enough to be able to stay on Mt. Desert Island into October, and the late summer and early fall produced some of the most spectacular weather of the year. When we did have to leave, our garden was still healthy and putting forth new blooms and the grass was as green as ever. The island was still abuzz with tourists, but there was a noticeable slowing of commerce in our Town, especially in Northeast Harbor. Still, it was special to be in this "summer" community as the leaves began to turn and the temperatures fell noticeably in the evenings.

Here is some local news from the Town this fall. The proposed re-building project for 141 Main St. (just north of the Colonel's) in Northeast Harbor has been delayed due to lack of commitment from po-

tential future tenants. Businessman Bob Ho indicated that he needed to pre-lease at least 60% of the space in the proposed three-story building before he could procure financing and commence construction. The anchor for 141 Main was to have been a 60-seat restaurant located above retail space on the 1st floor, but as of now, no rental prospects have been identified for this space. Another option still being considered for this space is to build out a boutique B&B, but the timeline for any construction on the site is now 2012-13.

The Kimball Terrace Inn, also in Northeast Harbor, was placed on the market for sale toward the end of the summer, with a price tag in excess of \$8 million. The owner, John S. Fernald of Somesville, subsequently reduced the price to \$6.5 million, but was unable to find a buyer who would close on the purchase prior to year-end 2011. The property is now off the market, and it will be run as an Inn again next year.

In regards to our association, your Board of Directors went through a thorough process over the last year to re-refresh the Summer Residents Association By-Laws. A copy of this updated document is available on The Town of Mount Desert website at: http://www.mtidesert.org/PublicDocuments/MtDesertME_SRA/index. We hope to use this site from now on as a repository for SRA historical information. Note, too, the Town's home page -- www.mtidesert.org -- if you are interested in looking further at the Township's structure and current developments.

Lastly, if there is sufficient positive response from our members, the SRA Board would like to be able to communicate newsletters and other current developments electronically to the membership. As part of this effort, we will be requesting an e-mail address from members when we send out the dues notice for 2012.

SRA Board of Directors

Ham Clark, President
Kathe Gates McCoy, Vice President
Charles Merriman, Treasurer
Callie Brauer, Secretary
Jan Russell, Nominating
Elaine Lincoln, Membership
Jamie Clark
Leslie Fogg
Temple Grassi
Donald Graves
Ed Lipkin
R. Anderson Pew
Tony Robinson
Rick Wheeler

Contact:
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of the Town of Mount Desert
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SRA Mission Statement

The mission of the Summer Residents Association of the Town of Mount Desert is to provide an effective means of communication between the summer residents and the Town leadership on issues that concern the current and future well-being of the Town. The Steering committee (Board of Directors) seeks to represent and to keep them informed of, and involved in, the Town planning process on current and future issues.

The Summer Residents Association seeks to be the timely and constructive voice of the summer residents with Town government working closely with Town leaders to preserve and protect the unique character, culture, environment and quality of life in the Town of Mount Desert.

Board of Selectmen

As many of you may know, there were substantial changes to the Town of Mount Desert's five person Board of Selectmen in 2011, first brought about by three open positions and then further complicated by the sudden and untimely death of Sumner Rulon-Miller, who had just been elected to the Board in May. This additional open position was subsequently filled by Martha Dudman in July. The turnover to the Town's governing body made it more difficult for the TMD Revitalization Committee to get traction from the Selectmen on the recommendations this committee delivered to them at the Town's Annual Meeting in May. Because of these factors, additional engagement and education of the Selectmen became a priority for the Revitalization Committee during the summer (see separate article for more updates from this committee). To better acquaint our group with the Selectmen, Lanie Lincoln hosted a cocktail party in August for the Selectmen, their spouses, and members of the Revitalization Committee. This was a very good first step.

Marina Redevelopment Project

Construction on the improvements to the Northeast Harbor marina finally began this October after almost a year of delays, and the three new marina structures should be taking shape in the upcoming months. These include replacing the harbor-master's office and yachtsmen's buildings and constructing a small visitor information center with public bathrooms. Much of the underground infrastructural work has already been completed, per a recent discussion with Town Manager, Durlin Lunt. The \$2.16 million project, which also includes a new boarding area for Island Explorer buses, improved landscaping and lighting, and the redesign of roads and parking lots

to improve safety and traffic flow, is scheduled for completion by June 30, 2012. E.L. Shea Builders from Ellsworth, the firm who built the new library, is the General Contractor for the project. Note that in 2011, the Town of Mt. Desert generated \$145,000 in surplus revenue (profit) from the marina, and this was after payment of \$113,000 on the bond the Township floated to finance the project. It is hoped that this surplus will grow in 2012 with the completion of all these improvements.

Revitalization Committee

This Committee continued to meet regularly during the year, as more work was needed to follow through on the Committee's recommendations to the Board of Selectmen at the Town's Annual Meeting in May. [http://www.mt-desert.org/Public_Documents/MtDesertME_RevitComMinutes/Revitalization_Com_Report_April_2011%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.mt-desert.org/Public_Documents/MtDesertME_RevitComMinutes/Revitalization_Com_Report_April_2011%20(2).pdf) As you may remember from the Spring, 2011 newsletter, the Committee had two primary recommendations for the Selectmen, and here is where we stand with each of these.

1. Seek recommendations from the Marine Management Committee (MMC) regarding expansion of the Northeast Harbor Marina beyond the current shore-side improvements, focusing on dredging for additional moorings and partnering with private developers for likely new businesses associated with a marina.

With construction of Phase 1 improvements to the marina scheduled to commence in the fall of 2011, the committee felt that we should let the Town complete this work before engaging with the MMC on potential further expansion of this area. The Committee did go in front of the Selectmen in July with the suggestion that a

public-private partnership might be formed to bring about additional development at the marina to include a restaurant and additional yacht services. The Township currently owns much of the land in the immediate vicinity of the marina.

2. Engage a Technical Assistance Panel from the Urban Land Institute (ULI), in the summer of 2011, to assist the Town of Mount Desert and all its villages to work on the strategies presented in this report and others to revitalize the economy of the community.

The Committee initially agreed to delay engagement of the ULI until several local grass roots development opportunities played out further, including the 141 Main St. project. Now, however, the Committee is proceeding to complete an application for a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) with the ULI, as originally planned. Our committee feels that the involvement and ultimate recommendations from this highly regarded organization will lend a lot of credibility to all further revitalization actions proposed to the Town. These sentiments were communicated to the Board of Selectmen at their first meeting in September, at which time the Board unanimously approved of the strategy and agreed to fund the cost of the TAP. Over the last month, the Committee has worked with a senior ULI contact in Boston who reviewed our verbal concept proposal at their Real Estate Advisory committee meeting in early November. This ULI committee "concluded that there is certainly enough interest to warrant a TAP application. That's no guaranty that it would be approved, but a good indication." The next steps for the Revitalization Committee in this regard are to agree on a timeline with ULI, complete and submit a compelling application, gain approval, and then schedule the TAP in the June, 2012 timeframe. The TAP application will assuredly point out the growing need to stimulate the year-round local economy and the need to identify affordable housing opportunities in the Town.

Among the secondary recommendations made by the Revitalization Committee in May, there has also been progress, as follows:

- The Town Manager has agreed to update the status of actions as recommended in the Town Comprehensive Plan in 2007-08.
- The Selectmen agreed at a meeting in September on the need for “a planning capacity” in the Town government. If a position for this function were approved in subsequent Town budgets, it would greatly help define the Town’s future priorities and assist in implementation of viable revitalization strategies.
- The Town Manager, Durlin Lunt, has agreed to bring up at the 2012 Town Meeting in May the recommendation from this Committee to allow certain events – such as a farmer’s market, art shows, and concerts -- be held during the course of the year on Town owned land.
- A committee of year round residents has been formed “to design, create, and have installed appropriate signage in all villages in the Town of Mount Desert.” Considerations will include consistency, branding, information, aesthetics, and directions. The SRA may make a contribution to assist in the cost of this effort.
- There is also an ongoing Revitalization Task Force comprised of year round residents that is working with Sam Shaw’s ReStore Group, the Chamber of Commerce, and the various village improvement societies to share the priorities of different groups and coordinate common implementation efforts.
- A “BUY LOCAL” sticker and decal, highlighting the Town of Mount Desert geography and communities, was designed and sold for \$1 in many commercial establishments this past summer.



Summer Residents Meetings in 2011
(excerpts from the minutes)

The first meeting of the SRA was held in the Town Hall on July 14th at 4 PM. At that meeting, there was an update from the Revitalization Committee, which focused on the Report to the board of Selectmen in May and the current status of those recommendations [see more under Revitalization Committee].

There was also a lively discussion on the Marina project led by ECS engineering consultant Noel Mussam, with some members questioning the economic rationale behind the Town’s investment in this project, the high design costs, and the delays in the project start-up. The Town’s bonded indebtedness for the project is \$2.0 million.

The Annual Meeting of the SRA was held on August 11th at 4 PM, and the venue was moved to the Neighborhood House due to the large number of attendees at recent meetings. Tom Richardson, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, discussed the workings of the five month budget process leading up to the Town Meeting. The Warrant Committee receives input from the town boards and committees beginning in January and the best time for residents to influence the process is during the hearings in January and February when there is a great deal of interaction between the Warrant Committee and the various groups. In March the Warrant Committee holds hearings on the Budget open to the public and most issues are brought up at these hearings. By the May meeting most voters have had their chance to speak to the issues. There were questions and discussion, and it was suggested that those interested can follow

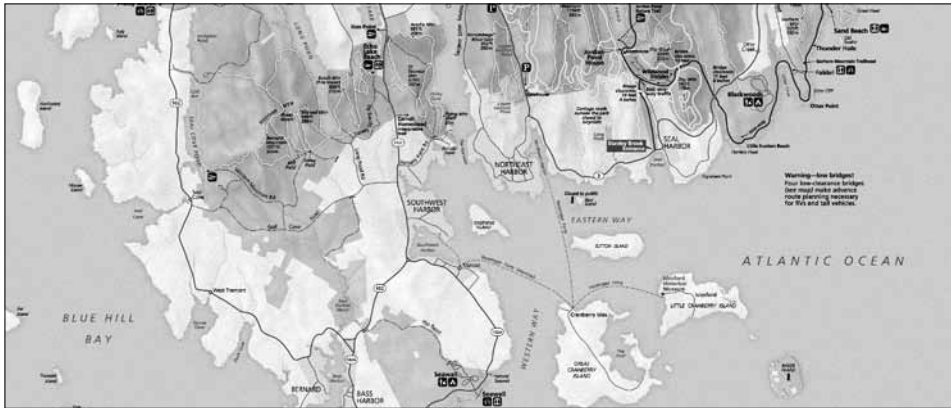
the process on-line at the town website: www.mtidesert.org.

Peter Godfrey asked, once again, why the Town Meeting was in May verses July or August when summer residents could attend. In response, Tom Richardson reiterated that the budget process took five months and that decisions on the budget had already made before the Town Meeting, so any input at that date by summer residents, regardless of when the meeting was held, could not be acted upon. Tom also stated July and August are the busiest months for the Town.

Kyle Avila, the Town Assessor made a detailed presentation on how the town assesses properties. He used a power point presentation, with graphs and comparable home values to explain the process. The Town did a thorough reevaluation in 2007, and the present assessed

value of all the taxable properties in the Town of Mount Desert is now just over \$2 billion. Kyle explained further that the Town's budget requirement for 2011-12 to be raised through taxation was \$11.9 million, which was essentially flat vs. prior year. In order to raise these funds, the assessed value of each taxable property in the Town was multiplied by a tax rate (also called a mill rate) of 5.9 (actually .005916436 for those accountants out there). For example, a property valued at

\$1 million would have received a tax bill from TMD in the summer of 2011 for \$5,916. He also stated that the tax rate is lower today than it was 20 years ago due to the reevaluation process and the construction of many new and renovated homes. Taxes can go up as a result of budget increases, but changes to individual property taxes are frequently offset by added value in assessment of new construction. Needless to say, there were many questions and much discussion from the audience.



Town Office Contacts

www.mtidesert.org

Board of Selectmen

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Dennis Schubert – Seal Harbor
Rick Mooers, **Vice Chairman** – Someville
John B. Macauley – Otter Creek
Martha Dudman – Northeast Harbor

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