



**Peaks Island Council
MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday, July 28, 2021

6:15 p.m., ZOOM meeting

NEXT Regular Monthly PIC Meeting–August 25, 2021

July PIC meeting will be a ZOOM meeting

CALL TO ORDER: 6:15 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Randy Schaeffer, SE Rafferty, Peter Eckel, Fred Somers, Devon Kraft, Peter McLaughlin

Absent: Andrea Kelly-Rosenberg

Number of Audience Members (AM) in attendance: 18

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Kraft made the motion to accept the June 23, 2021 meeting minutes. McLaughlin seconded. No discussion. Unanimous vote to approve. Motion passed.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Schaeffer shared the expenditure report as of July 21, 2021 via Zoom. Only one expenditure during FY22 to date - \$2,885.75 for Middle/High School tickets. Further discussion about this later in the meeting. Schaeffer reported that the total remaining budget for FY22 is \$37,114.25.

Eckel made a motion to accept the expenditure report. Somers seconded. No discussion. Unanimous vote to accept the expenditure report. Motion passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS & UPDATES

• **Executive Committee**

- **Woodlands fire threat assessment – presentation by Kent Nelson, Maine Forest Service**

Schaeffer presented his letter of June 3, 2021 to Chief Keith Gautreau and Deputy Chief Chris Goodall regarding fire safety concerns on Peaks Island. He then introduced Kent Nelson of the Maine Forest Service.

Kent's presentation focused on the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) where homes meet the forest. He reviewed the Fire Risk Assessment report for Peaks Island in 2005. That report's suggested course of action to reduce fire risk was:

1. Education and outreach to residents

2. Smokey Bear program at elementary school
3. Fuel reduction

Kent said the Maine Forest Service is currently working with three communities to develop Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

Kent said the Wildfire Risk Assessment randomly selects 10-20% of houses in the area and does a 23 question survey. Survey tries to quantify the risk based on fuel load, proximity of fuel to houses, etc.

Kent said 90% of fires in Maine are surface fires (as opposed to crown fires in the tops of trees). Kent said that hardwood trees are not as likely to carry a fire – soft wood trees are more likely to ignite and carry a fire.

○ **Firewise public education – presentation by Kent Nelson**

Firewise program is free but community participation is required. Each year the community has to participate in Firewise education and have a brush chipping day to remove fuel. Can only do about 20 chipping days per year – have already done 12 in 2021. Little Diamond and Great Diamond participate in Firewise program.

Chipping concentrates on smaller brush that is more likely to ignite and carry a fire. Larger logs should be left to decompose.

AM asked about how many wild fires in Maine per year.

Kent said about 500 wildfires in Maine per year, about 5000 acres burn. However, in 2020 there were 1100 wildfires.

AM asked about amount of clear space around structure.

Kent said you should have 30 feet clear of vegetation around your structure. When you clear brush, prioritize the areas within 30 feet of your structures.

AM asked what happens to the brush at the transfer station?

Bill Patnaude said the city chips some of it, barges off most of it to take to Riverside.

AM said that we should communicate to people that they can take their brush to the dump and not leave it in the edges of their yards.

AM asked if the city could do more chipping on the island instead of paying to have it barged off the island.

Patnaude said it comes down to manpower. It's just quicker and easier to barge brush off the island. Kent said invasives mixed with the brush makes it hard to chip.

Schaeffer asked if chipping can happen in undeveloped woodlands. Kent said the Maine Forest Service doesn't do any cutting. They can take brush from forested areas if it is positioned along a road.

- **Report on meeting with Portland Fire Chief – Jamie Brennan**

Jamie Brennan is chairing the committee that is developing emergency evacuation procedures. The city has no plans for emergency evacuation of population off Peaks Island.

Brennan met with Katie Hager, Emergency Management Coordinator for the city of Portland, and Fire Chief Keith Gautreau to develop an emergency response plan. They discussed island-wide evacuation as well as localized evacuation/relocation.

The committee will meet again to understand what other information is needed to prepare plans, and to discuss what the different types of situations for which plans need to be made. That meeting will be on August 24th.

Brennan said Chief Gautreau said there are plans in place for a new Cell service tower going in Cape Elizabeth with long range that should reduce dead zones for cell phones.

Chief Gautreau is looking into the fire horn not functioning or being used properly. They are also working on reaching volunteer island fire department in a more timely manner. They are also ordering a new fire engine for the mainland, so the island will get a hand-me-down fire engine that is from 2014.

- **November municipal election**

Three PIC seats are up for election, all three seats are for three year terms. These seats are presently held by Devon Kraft and Andrea Kelly-Rosenberg. Peter Eckel was elected by the council for a one year term, and he will now run for a three year term in a public election.

Schaeffer encouraged people who are interested in running for a council position to submit their paperwork to the city clerk between August 9th and August 23rd, 2021.

- **In-person meetings**

Schaeffer said that Zoom meetings will continue for the foreseeable future because staffing of the Community Center is an issue. Staff are currently working with school age children, and are not available to staff the Community Center.

- **Priority Setting – survey results**

Eckel said the Priority Setting committee has received over 270 online responses and 11 paper responses to its survey.

Eckel presented a summary of the results.

Top priorities were:

- 1) Protection of natural spaces
- 2) Operations of Casco Bay Lines
- 3) Climate impact and environmental best practices
- 4) Traffic patterns and crowd management Down Front
- 5) Law enforcement/public safety
- 6) Off-island parking
- 7) Enrollment numbers for the Peaks Island Elementary School
- 8) Overall affordability of living on the island
- 9) Road infrastructure and maintenance

Eckel said results of open comments would be presented via a word cloud.

Schaeffer asked when the Council Workshop on the survey will happen?

Eckel said he would like to do that in September.

- **Ferry Service Committee – update**

Somers said CBL board did not meet in July so there is nothing to report from the board meeting.

Other items sent out via newsletter:

CBL Board of Directors election is coming up in November.

Three year seats for Peaks, Long, Chebeague, At-Large are open positions.

Paper work has to be submitted by August 16th.

Regarding new Peaks Island ferry: Bids came in at the end of June and only one shipyard submitted a bid. It was well over the budget that CBL put together. So CBL is now looking for supplementary funding sources. So there will be a delay in the start of the construction of the vessel.

- **Environment and Sustainability Committee – update**

McLaughlin said the committee met a second time.

They discussed a composting project that PIC funded through PEAT --- looking at expanding composting options for the island.

They discussed creative ways to tackle and educate about invasives. They hope to work with PILP, PEAT and the city on this. The site of focus would be Trott-Littlejohn Park.

McLaughlin said there are six people on the committee so far, but said anyone who is interested can still join. People should contact Peter McLaughlin if they are interested in joining the Environmental Committee.

OLD BUSINESS

- **PIC By-Laws - motion to create by-laws subcommittee**

Motion to establish an ad-hoc By-Laws Subcommittee, Co-Sponsored by Peter McLaughlin, Rafferty, and Fred Somers

The ad-hoc By-Laws Subcommittee will help lead the PIC through a process of examining our existing operating procedures and formalizing new by-laws to guide our work as a body. The By-Laws Subcommittee will finish its work and disband by the end of 2021.

Somers seconded. No public comment. No councilor discussion.

Motion passed unanimously.

- **PIC By-laws – motion creating process by which to prepare PIC by-laws**

Motion to outline the process for the PIC’s by-laws work Co-Sponsored by Peter McLaughlin, Rafferty, and Fred Somers

The PIC will hold at least three mid-month public workshops, beginning in August. Workshops will be led by By-Laws Subcommittee, will be held mid-month in August, September, October (November and December if needed) so that PIC can vote on by-laws at the December PIC meeting.

Rafferty seconded.

AM asked if public can participate/comment on by-laws.

McLaughlin said that subcommittee is not required to take public comment but it is interested in public input, so there will be opportunities for public to comment.

Eckel asked when the first committee would be.

McLaughlin said it would be in August.

Motion passed unanimously.

- **Meeting with Portland Police Chief – motion to reschedule.**

Schaeffer said that the first meeting was cancelled due to lack of public interest. There were only six questions submitted and some asked the same question, so it was not a good use of the Chief's time.

Schaeffer asked councilors for their consensus on re-scheduling a meeting with the Portland Police Chief.

Eckel said he thinks a meeting is valuable to establish a relationship with the Chief and because some of the top priorities in the survey involved police – traffic patterns down front and law enforcement/public safety.

McLaughlin said some community members had questions prepared but had not submitted them before the meeting. So re-scheduling the meeting is a good idea.

Rafferty said she heard from community members that they were disappointed that the meeting was cancelled.

Schaeffer said he would invite the police chief to a meeting on Peaks Island.

- **Student summer ferry passes - update**

PIC split the cost of upgrading school year passes for middle and high school students between two fiscal years. \$2,885.75 for June 2021 was paid in FY21, and \$2,885.75 for July 2021 is paid in FY22.

Patnaude pointed out that the situation was a result of COVID. The school department purchased boat passes on a month to month basis – they did not purchase annual passes. So the cost to PIC for providing year-round passes to middle school and high school students was considerably higher this year.

In the coming school year, the school department is purchasing 11 month passes. The difference between the 11 month pass and the annual pass is \$82 per student. That is the amount that PIC normally has to pay.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Woodlands fire threat - motion to proceed with Maine Forest Service fire threat assessment.**

Schaeffer made a motion:

It is moved that the Peaks Island Council ask the Maine Forest Service to conduct an assessment of the threat of wildfire posed by the island's woodlands following the methodology as outlined in the Forest Protection

Division report entitled Wildland-Urban Interface Communities at Risk Hazard Assessment & Mitigation Strategies – Peaks Island, Maine 2005.

Somers seconded.

No public comment. No councilor discussion.

Motion passed unanimously.

- **Woodlands fire threat - motion to proceed with engaging in Firewise USA public education campaign**

Schaeffer made a motion:

It is moved that the Peaks Island Council engage with Firewise USA to become a Firewise USA site as a way to educate the Peaks Island community regarding measures to reduce the risk of wildfires.

Eckel seconded.

No public comment. No councilor discussion.

Motion passed unanimously.

- **Affordable Housing – motion to endorse affordable housing at 18 Central Avenue**

Schaeffer made a motion:

It is moved that the Peaks Island Council endorses efforts to create three affordable housing units at 18 Central Avenue that are compatible with neighborhood characteristics, promote the community's diversity of age, income, and diversity, and are accomplished with participation and support of the Peaks Island Community.

Eckel seconded.

AM said that the island does not have enough rental housing on the island and she supports the creation of year-round and affordable rental property.

AM said that she supports giving HomeStart the opportunity to develop this property for year-round, affordable housing. She said affordable housing is critical to the health of our community.

AM said it's hard to find affordable housing on the island, especially if the renter has pets.

AM said the deadline for the RFP is August 12th. Other developers from Portland could also participate in the RFP and offer a higher price. HomeStart will likely submit a proposal as well.

AM said the motion should say “a minimum of three affordable housing units” instead of just three affordable housing units.

AM said (as a neighboring property) that PIC has not solicited any community input prior to submitting an RFP.

Schaeffer said that the motion is to endorse the principle that affordable housing is needed on the island and PIC supports the effort to create it at this location.

AM said they support the creation of affordable, year round housing. Islanders are struggling to stay on the island because there is not enough affordable housing.

Eckel thanked Schaeffer for putting the motion on the agenda.

McLaughlin asked Schaeffer how he heard about the project.

Schaeffer said he heard about it from a HomeStart staff.

Motion passed unanimously.

• **Communications – motion to assume payment for Zoom and Constant Contact accounts**

Schaeffer said he has been paying for the Zoom account (\$150/year) and the Constant Contact (\$50/month) account personally.

Schaeffer made a motion:

It is moved that the Peaks Island Council create a Zoom account at a cost of approximately \$150 per year and a Constant Contact account at a cost of approximately \$50 per month.

Eckel seconded.

McLaughlin said the city has a zoom account and PIC should be able to use it. He also suggested that Schaeffer be reimbursed for paying for it.

Schaeffer said he was paying for it as a contribution to the island. He does not want reimbursement. He would like the council to absorb the cost going forward.

Eckel asked for an amendment that PIC begin paying for Zoom account and Constant Contact account in August 2021.

Kraft seconded the amendment.

No public comment. No councilor discussion.

Motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

AM said parking lot work is great but the original proposal went beyond the parking lot. Are some of the features in the original proposal going to be part of Phase 2 of the project?

Schaeffer said Bruce Hyman was working on that original proposal and he would follow up with him.

AM said the new traffic pattern is working quite well.

AM said the PIC should have a representative to the Island Institute.
Schaeffer said that he is the PIC representative to the Island Institute.

AM asked Schaeffer to give a report from Island Institute at future meetings.

AM agreed that the parking lot work has been great.

AM asked PIC to write a letter to MDOT to ask for a generator for the dock so there is always power on the dock.

Peter McLaughlin said he will reach out to Chris to coordinate the effort.

AM said the bike rack in “the loop” should be moved to the other bike racks on Welch Street.

AM said the tour golf carts should not park in “the loop.”

AM asked why there is no cadet this summer.
Schaeffer said that PIC voted not to have a cadet.

AM asked when we will go to in person meetings?
Schaeffer said it is up to the city – may happen in August.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/UPDATES

Next PIC Meeting: Wednesday, August 25, 2021, at 6:15 pm via ZOOM.

Eckel made motion to adjourn. Somers seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Adjournment: 8:37 p.m.