

**Bar Harbor Age-Friendly Committee**  
**May 25, 2022**  
**Municipal Building Meeting Room**

Present: Allie Bodge, Susanne Hopkins, Nancy Howland, Andrea Lepcio, Sharon Linscott, Terry Wagner  
Guest: Kevin Sutherland, Bar Harbor Town Manager

The meeting was called to order by Chair Susanne Hopkins at 3 PM.

Minutes of April 20 meeting were approved.

Susanne introduced Kevin Sutherland to the committee. Committee members introduced themselves.

Kevin started as town manager in January 2022. He is trying to meet with each town committee or board. He reported that he has spent considerable time identifying issues needing attention through discussions with council, committee members, town staff, residents and members of the business community. At a retreat in the spring, over 200 items were distilled into 3 top priorities: housing, infrastructure and tourism capacity.

A plan to address housing is being addressed mainly through the Comprehensive Plan process.

Work on infrastructure items requires budget action/approval by the voters. Significant bond funding will be needed and grant funding will be sought as well. One of the towns initiatives is the hiring of grant writers for this and other needs. Sewer infrastructure is a major problem with failures in capacity threatening during major weather events. The plan includes improvements to the Cottage St. streetscape. Approval for a \$44M in bond funding will be sought at Town Meeting on June 7.

A quality assessment of sidewalks has been performed. Sidewalks in town have been rated from 1-5 with the goal of guiding prioritization for repair/replacement.

In discussing the burden of tourism on our infrastructure, Kevin noted that Bar Harbor generates \$236M in sales tax annually which goes to the state. We receive back about \$4M in funding. He is hopeful that we might make some progress on getting a more equitable share in a second Gov. Mills term. The overall approach to addressing tourism capacity requires further definition as there are many variable opinions among stakeholders as to the nature of the problem and the possible mitigation strategies.

Kevin reported that council has requested the establishment of a property tax relief program. It will likely follow the income based state program and add 50% to what the state provides. This way the vetting is done at the state level and not replicated locally. The state's income threshold is \$42K. Perhaps our group could help with connecting residents to info about the program.

Action plan updates were as follows:

- Andrea reported that the initial Islander column will need to be split into two to meet length limits. The first part will appear in an upcoming issue.
- Brad Stager from the Window Inserts project and Mary Parnum from the hospital are interested in contributing columns.
- Mental Health needs in the community – no action as of yet.
- Transportation update from Sharon included info that cab service is inadequate for the local population as companies prefer tourist business in the summer and often don't operate at all in the winter. Down East transportation bus service is very limited. She noted that Island Connections would benefit from greater name recognition and more volunteers. IC would like to restore some of the rides to less critical services such as exercise and haircuts that were cut during the pandemic.

-Allie reported that the waiting list for Housing Authority placement is not that long currently. The most significant gap in housing seems to be capacity for middle income families. Allie operates a service that helps our older population with minor home repairs. Often the need in the home far exceeds the ability of that program. Kevin offered that the town might help with grant writers if there are outside funds we could tap.

-It was suggested we consider a senior recognition week/health fair.

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 4 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Wagner  
Secretary