

Dear Board Members:

I had a very informative meeting with Arch Gillies on Wednesday, following up on the board's interest in exploring affordable housing options. Arch was kind enough to provide me with an overview of the history of such efforts, most of which I would imagine board members know all about. My goal in this email is to summarize what Arch sees as the range of options that exist on Islesboro to provide more affordable housing on the island, and suggest a couple of possible steps for board goal setting.

In Arch's view, there are four different means by which increased affordable housing could be provided for the island:

- The town could build houses or apartments, an option that Arch believes would be most appropriate if the town itself could not attract key employees without providing easier access to housing. This is not the case at present, and would therefore not be a likely path for the town.
- The school could build houses or apartments, an option that Arch sees the same as the town. If the school is not able to attract and retain staff members, the case can be made that the school asking the town for budgetary support is an option. I'm not sure how much data we have on this but some sort of survey to staff could be done fairly easily.
- IAP could become more active in its efforts. This local non-profit has in the past done quite a lot in building and purchasing land, and Arch was able to outline several cases where IAP's houses have helped ICS teachers find housing. I'm sure you all know much more about this than I do, and would be better able to determine whether collaboration with IAP would make sense. Arch thought there was at least one undeveloped lot that could be a logical spot for a quick project.
- Create the conditions on the island that stimulate the development of private projects. Here Arch points to the broadband project, the pre-school, the town centers initiative, and local ordinance changes that make higher density housing options more cost effective. Arch notes that an ordinance change is in process to allow apartment development, and believes at least one project will move forward quickly.

As the board continues to explore a possible goal around affordable housing, it seem to me from the above overview that: 1) there have been a number of historical efforts to promote affordable housing that the board should be fully knowledgeable about and consider working with; 2) that the board should gather data from the existing staff about housing status/needs prior to a more fully developed investigation into options; 3) that the board should have some additional sense of what might become of the privately developed projects stimulated by the town centers initiative and the ordinance change; and 4) perhaps schedule a presentation by someone who could either update the board on current local initiatives, or someone who has led this kind of a project in the past. In other words, assessing the need and the feasibility carefully prior to launching a project.

All that being said, a board goal could easily be crafted to allow the board wide latitude in pursuing affordable housing options for staff. I'll work with Laura to develop an agenda for the next board meeting that moves the ball downfield on this goal. In the meantime, if one or more board members has a more informed sense of the history and wishes to point me in the direction of local sources of information, I'd be happy to help. However, it seems to me that you all might be better positioned to assess which of the existing options might be most appropriate for the board to explore.

Thanks much,

Patrick