

**Sears Island Planning Initiative
Steering Committee Meeting
Lions Club, Prospect Street, Searsport
November 9, 2006**

DRAFT SUMMARY OF SIXTH MEETING

I. Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Facilitator Jonathan Reitman welcomed participants to the sixth meeting of the Steering Committee (SC) and reviewed the day's agenda. Participants introduced themselves. Reitman reported that requested speakers, Matt Simmons and Professor Kumar from MMA, would be scheduled for a later time and that the follow-up meeting with DOT from the last SC Meeting is currently being scheduled.

Department of Conservation Deputy Commissioner, Karin Tilberg, welcomed participants, acknowledging their sacrifice of time and thanking them for their continuing good faith participation. She stated that the group's goal of reaching consensus by the end of the year is now entering its final phase during which the interests, needs and common values of the group will be blended into a set of recommendations for the future of Sears Island. She said she had been in contact with the Governor's office as recently as yesterday, and conveyed the Governor's belief that the group can accomplish its objective by year's end.

Tilberg noted the two documents sent to the SC in advance of this meeting: 1) *Sears Island Planning Initiative Draft Consensus Report* which serves as an outline for the potential SC report; and 2) *Draft Consensus Proposal Comments and Questions For Consideration by Steering Committee on November 9, 2006* drafted by the Facilitator to promote further SC discussion of potential elements of a Consensus Agreement.

Tilberg outlined some of the benefits of reaching agreement, including actively participating in the future, retaining control of the outcome, and providing a model for other communities to effectively resolve controversial matters. Ultimately, a Consensus Agreement reached by a group with such diverse perspectives will be given great deference by the Legislature. She reported that Governor Baldacci has been briefed fully and consistently about the efforts of the SC and that he stands firmly behind this effort. He asked that his personal "thank you" be conveyed to the SC for their sacrifice of time and energy and he pledges that if the SC does its part, he will do his. Tilberg added that the Governor's commitment to any recommendations produced by the SC would render them incredibly powerful and important to the State of Maine.

II. Review of Meeting Summary from October 16, 2006 SC Meeting

The 16 October SC Meeting Summary was not accepted as presented. Rather than spend meeting time discussing the document, the SC agreed to list those suggested revisions on an addendum to the original Draft and include them as part of the record of SC proceedings. (See attached: *Proposed Revisions to Draft Summary of Fifth Meeting dated November 9, 2006*).

III. Preservation and Port Affinity Group: Presentation & Discussion

Scott Dickerson of Coastal Mountains Land Trust led the presentation of the Preservation and Port Affinity group, stating that the key components of this group's vision are 1) conservation, 2) transportation needs of Maine, and 3) prosperity of the area and the State of Maine. In order to better elaborate on this vision, Dickerson referred to a document prepared by members of the affinity group that discusses the potential economic future of Sears Island if it is permanently conserved. The group asserts that the certainty of permanent conservation of Sears Island along with the port development at Mack Point will stimulate local investment, creating economic benefit throughout the region and across the state. See attached *Economic Perspectives Regarding Preservation and Port: A Recipe for Prosperity, November 2006*, citing the recent Brookings Institution Report, which emphasized the importance of Maine's "quality places and distinctive towns" as bases for its prospective economic health. According to Brookings, "the next Maine economy is unlikely to resemble the old one (based primarily on manufacturing)." Also cited were Maine State Parks Public Use Reports and University of Maine report on the economic contribution of Maine's State Parks, the DeWan & Lawton study, *Sears Island: Options for the Future*, and Bangor Daily News articles concerning Maine's new economic opportunities, including the growth of the biomedical science and research sector.

Questions were raised about the contribution of State Parks to the economy and their deferred maintenance costs. Tilberg offered to provide a report that depicts significant economic benefit from the parks. With regard to deferred maintenance costs, Tilberg stated that, unlike in the past, recent additions of land to public parks are coming with endowments. Dickerson added that, while there is a backlog of maintenance in state and national parks, this constitutes local construction activity, the same type that would be needed for port construction and maintenance. The Preservation and Port Group envisions a public-private partnership like that on Mack Point.

Recognizing a downward trend in park visitation over past few years, Dickerson said that this could be attributed to construction in the area, particularly the Route 1 road construction in the vicinity of Camden Hills State Park and the diversion of traffic away from Route 1 in the Midcoast area to Bangor due to the construction of the new Penobscot Narrows Bridge.

Additional issues raised during the discussion of the Preservation and Port Vision for Sears Island included the following:

- Some expressed interest in obtaining monthly visitation data to the state parks in order to assess year-round benefit, and specifically, data pertaining to the economic benefit to Camden from the Camden Hills State Park.
- Moose Point State Park is closed in the winter, so there are no statistics regarding use at that time for skiing and snowshoeing.
- It was noted that those with seasonal businesses depend on the income generated during the busy season to sustain them year-round and not according to the monthly figures.
- An education center at Sears Island would be used on a year-round basis.
- Environmental education is a reality of the future, as all schools are beginning to focus on it today.
- There was some discussion about whether existing parks are operating at capacity.
- Some asked that the discussion shift away from past statistics and toward getting ideas out on the table pertaining to the future.
- Sears Island will not be just another state park, but will provide visitors with a different type of experience.
- Park statistics would not be applicable to this issue. Some questioned whether the data sets available for the DOC will help us determine the prospective economic impact of a conservation and education facility at Sears Island.
- It was noted that both conservation (Land for Maine Futures Program) and transportation bonds have both been highly successful with Maine voters.
- A member of the Maine Vision for Marine Transportation Affinity Group cited what he views as a difference in perspectives between the two affinity groups with regard to transportation as it relates to the environment. He stated that if Sears Island is no longer an option for marine transportation, then we are removing an option that would result in less roads and maintenance input. Historically, development was centered around ports and railroads, resulting in mixed-use development. However, today's land use development along highways is linear in nature and promotes sprawl. He added that ship transport uses the least amount of energy with rail transportation next. The leading form of damage to air quality is transportation and highways have the biggest impact on water quality over other transportation forms. When the vast maintenance requirements of highways are considered with all these other factors, it is clear that marine shipping is the most environmentally sensitive means of moving goods.
- The Preservation and Port Affinity Group is not disinterested in rail and port transportation, but wants to see Mack Point's potential more fully utilized.
- It was further reported that multi-faceted destinations will see more growth than those with fewer activities, therefore the Preservation and Port proposes the three-part purpose of conservation, recreation, and education for Sears Island.
- A question was raised of whether it would make a difference to conserve three of the five shorefront miles rather than all five (thereby preserving the possibility for a port). Dickerson responded that it would be difficult to attract the necessary investors for the educational component if there is significant industrial

development nearby. A preliminary draft document on the objectives for the Preservation and Port Management Plan, including some data, will be sent to the SC electronically.

- In response to a question about the extent and duration of the Preservation and Port proposal, it was stated that, as proposed, the Group's vision includes the permanent conservation of the whole island. If there is a question about the future of a portion of the island, this will impede potential investors in an education center. However, limited development is included in the proposal and that the Group is reaching out to other interests with regard to transportation possibilities, including: enhancements (trails, etc.), passenger transport, and Sears Island serving as a buffer for Mack Point.
- Another stakeholder voiced a perceived imbalance in the amount of time being spent discussing the Preservation and Port Vision over the Maine Vision for Marine Transportation.
- Development ideas should be shifted to those that create high-paying jobs in relation to a creative economy because the issue is not only about tourism, but also about bringing people here to live.
- The group was asked to consider how much money is currently being lost because of the "wait and see" approach to Sears Island? The Preservation and Port vision can be realized quickly.
- It was noted that the Maine Vision for Marine Transportation Group is in an odd position. It has been asked for details about a prospective port proposal; however, DOT, like all other agencies working for the Governor, is not permitted to entertain proposals from potential investors during this consensus process.
- There was some further discussion about the ownership of Sears Island and continued disagreement about the purpose for which it was acquired.

IV. Discussion of Consensus Proposals

After the break, Reitman acknowledged that the SC discussion has been moving into a negotiating phase and suggested that the Draft Consensus Proposal be used to guide those discussions. This document was drafted by Reitman after conversations with many members of the SC and includes potential elements of a Consensus Agreement along with comment and questions to be considered by the SC.

Asked whether the Maine Vision for Marine Transportation group could provide hypothetical scenarios that the SC could address and use to develop options, a group representative stated that while this SC has significant authority, the forum that they are given to work in is inadequate. He proposed a Master Planning process for the Port of Searsport to include constructive and civil dialogue between proponents of specific proposals and those with concerns. It was further noted that the Maine Vision for Marine Transportation group is here to preserve the future possibility of Sears Island's use as a cargo port.

Dianne Smith stated that the charge of the SC is to determine what can be done to enhance Sears Island and protect it from further deterioration while we wait to see what the future needs will be.

The group discussed what would be needed to advance the discussion toward consensus. Tilberg asked whether the draft Consensus Proposal elements #3 (Establish outdoor recreation opportunities on Sears Island) and #4 (Treatment of land which may become necessary for a cargo port), if considered as a package, could be fashioned into a proposal that would provide certainty to all affinity groups. In response, the following issues were raised:

- Reference to “Education” must be included in #3.
- Sears Island is available for transportation uses and other uses.
- The Sears Island Management Advisory Committee (1990’s) did accept the notion of permanent conservation of some portion of the island.
- #3 should reference “permanent” conservation.
- #3 should state “if and when” a port is permitted.
- Consensus Proposal element #2 (Build out of Mack Point) should not be skipped over.
- Is # really necessary? Mack Point would be considered under NEPA’s Alternatives Analysis prior to any permit being issued for Sears Island port development. (And vice versa).
- The Federal permitting process is not linear – it depends on what is being proposed and the configuration of the land necessary for a particular type of facility. (All types of facilities cannot be built at Mack Point).
- What interests should be marketed to based on this port’s strengths?
- A Master Plan would help the group achieve a good decision.
- Would the truck and rail traffic, lights and noise associated with any portion of Sears Island being developed as a cargo port preclude it from remaining a recreational asset? (Would it still be a place where folks would want to visit?)
- If we leave the door open for a port on Sears Island, can some parameters be set around what it might look like (what would a “state of the art” facility require?)
- If there is land set aside for a potential cargo port in the future, how could security concerns be addressed to allow for any other uses on Sears Island?
- The cloud of a possible future port prevents investment in an educational facility and reduces public appeal in recreation and education on Sears Island.
- Regarding Consensus Proposal element #1 (No LNG facility), the Town was clear that LNG was not an acceptable use of Sears Island and the Governor has pledged to not impose LNG against the wishes of the community.
- There should be an examination of quality of life issues in any potential proposal.

Tilberg identified some emerging themes around the Consensus Proposal elements based upon today’s discussion and asked that SC Members work within their affinity groups to adapt the proposals into ones they could live with. She also encouraged the SC to create sideboards and to take advantage of the diverse resources this group offers.

These themes include:

#1(No LNG facility):

- Could be acceptable as part of an overall package

#2 (Build out of Mack Point)

- Willing to consider, but recognize that all federal processes require that alternatives be analyzed (including Sears Island) to ensure the least impact prior to the issuance of a permit.

#3 (Establish outdoor recreation opportunities on Sears Island)

- Include “Education”
- Re-word last sentence to help assure concrete/tangible decisions (e.g. include reference to the permit process)
- Security issues could be the “poison pill” – even if the group were to agree conceptually on #3 and #4.
- There is a need for parity of concessions / protection (time) for port as well as conservation

#4 (Treatment of land which may become necessary for a cargo port)

- Technical Analysis could be a part of a workable provision
- There is a need for creativity.
- There must be a bias for action. (If we do nothing, the Town and the island will lose)

V. Next Steps including Discussion of Negotiating Sub-committee

Although the next SC Meeting was initially scheduled for November 27, a new date is currently being sought and will be sent to SC members. Reitman announced that the facilitators will take steps to promote dialogue among SC Members between today’s meeting and the 27th.

Tilberg reported that the Causeway Meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, November 16th from 1:00 PM at the State Planning Office in Augusta. Jon Kachmar, the habitat restoration expert at the State Planning Office and Ron Aho, an area biologist with Department of Marine Resources who can address shellfish issues, will present options and answer questions with regard to the Sears Island Causeway.

I. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 pm.

Meeting Summary prepared by Jonathan Reitman and Kimberly Vogel

