

# Island Ad-Vantages



**DONATE**

**Support the News That Supports Your Community**

*Local news matters. Let's keep it strong—together.*

## Public hearing forecasts noncontroversial referendum ballot in Deer Isle

February 26, 2026

BY JACK BEAUDOIN



Deer Isle town office as seen in Sept. 2024

DEER ISLE—Only a handful of residents turned out for a February 19 public hearing on referendum questions slated for the upcoming town election next week.

Voters will be able to cast ballots for an uncontested seat on the select board, treasurer/tax collector and town clerk on Monday March 2 from 7:30 a.m. to noon. At that time they will also be able to decide the fate of fourteen funding requests from area nonprofits totaling \$63,340.

"We hold public hearings in two situations," said Town Manager Jim Fisher as he opened the meeting. "The first is when there's no opportunity to discuss the issues at town meeting, as is the case with third-party requests which the select board has moved to the morning election. And the second is when (town meeting) warrant articles might require greater discussion than might be afforded at the meeting."

Fisher went through the third-party requests individually, speaking on behalf of the first six organizations because no one from those organizations were present. When he turned to the Island Community Center, which is again requesting \$13,000, both director Jeannie Hatch and Board Co-Chair Torri Robbins reeled off a number of services and opportunities provided to residents of the Island.

"We've been around for many, many years," Hatch said, noting that the ICC has not sought an increase in funding since its inception. Nonetheless, the center has continued to expand offerings. "This year, we're working on an expansion of the fitness center, where a donor has provided \$15,000 for a new piece of weight-training equipment," she said.

The ICC meets the needs of all residents no matter their ages, Robbins added. That ranges from a weekly coffee and social hour for senior citizens to management of the youth sports programs on the Island that have already included 150 children across three sports seasons.

The Health Island Project was up next, with Fisher noting that it requested "the only substantial increase in funding," from \$9,000 in 2025 to \$12,600 in 2026.

"We've grown eleven-fold since 2019," said HIP executive director and sole full-time staffer Renée Colson. "So much of that has been in response to other programs that once served the Island but no longer do... We continue to find more needs that have to be met."

Primary services include a free food pantry, the Salt Air Seniors program meeting the social and nutritional needs of senior citizens on the Island, a lunchbox program to provide meals to seniors, a backpack program to do the same for school-aged

**988**  
LIFELINE  
maine  
No Judgment. Just Help

**WE MANAGE YOU EARN.**  
Is Your Home a 5-Star Stay? Let's Talk!

Partner With Us for Seasonal Revenue  
**CALL TODAY: (207) 412-8184**

### Special Sections

**Holiday Entertainment E-Edition**  
November 20, 2025

**Penobscot Books Store**

STONEMAN & MORE THAN A CAT  
HARROWER EVER  
SOUND  
Maine Lighthouse ABC  
By Connie & Peter Roop  
Illustrated by Jeremiah Savage

### Coming Events

Use our regional events calendar to plan your week!

April 2026						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

### Weekly E-News

Get the headlines delivered to your inbox

children, and Bridging Neighbors, which connects seniors with volunteers to help them meet and solve any day-to-day challenges they might face. HIP also puts on Winterfest and a bike rodeo for island kids.

Project Launch, which seeks to help island high school graduates prepare "for whatever comes next" is seeking \$2,500 once again. According to director Kim Hutchinson, this year's funding will help launch the new Student Support Fund, with a total goal of \$10,000 to help recent graduates with unexpected expenses that might otherwise prevent their studies or new employment. Grants from the fund could be used to take certification exams, pay deposits, acquire course materials or licenses, for example. "The first two students to apply have been approved to get their captain's licenses," she said.

The Opiate-Free Island Partnership is seeking \$5,000, the same as in 2025. Chair Charlie Osborn said the organization's harm reduction programs include naxolone distribution, which stops an opioid overdose as it is happening, and test strips to test any substance for the unsuspected presence of fentanyl. "It's working," he said. "The good news is that opioid-related deaths in the state of Maine have decreased 46 percent since 2022. In Hancock County, they're down 78 percent."

Pam Dewell, executive director of Island Workforce Housing, said her organization's \$6,000 request—which is the same as in 2025—would be used to help complete the \$3.6 million Thurlow's Way project in Stonington, which is scheduled to begin housing residents in June. Thurlow's Way is the second affordable housing project the group has built, after the Oliver's Ridge project in Deer Isle, with both offering one and two-bedroom apartments rents at no more than 30-35 percent of monthly household income. "We've almost met our goal of raising two-thirds of that building cost," Dewell said, while the remaining third would come from a traditional construction loan. When occupied, both projects will be sustainable.

None of the speakers faced questions from the audience. In fact, most attendees were representatives of the organizations that were making the requests.

#### Ordinance updates

The other questions on the election ballot addressed changes to existing ordinances. None generated any substantive discussion at the meeting, which was also available on Zoom.

Bill Wiegmann, chair of the planning board, explained the origin of the warrant question that asks, "Shall an ordinance entitled 'Establishment of the Deer Isle Planning Board' be enacted?" He said town research revealed that the planning board's authority previously rested on a warrant article from 1962, which contained little in the way of specifics other than to set the size of the board at five members.

The text of the ordinance explains what the current question would authorize if passed: "The board that has been acting as a planning board is hereby reestablished as the legal planning board. The members and alternate members currently serving may continue to do so until the end of the term for which they were appointed without the need to be reappointed or to take a new oath of office. The actions which that board took prior to the adoption of this ordinance are hereby declared to be the acts of the legally constituted planning board of the Town of Deer Isle."

It goes on to enumerate the appointment process, organization and rules, and the board's duties and powers.

"I know this was really boring," Wiegmann said after describing the warrant article in depth. "But I would urge you all to make us legal."

Amendments to the commercial site plan ordinance would define the differences between major site plan reviews and normal ones. If the code enforcement officer deems a new application "major" it would have to go to the planning board for review.

Meanwhile amendments to the shoreland zoning ordinance would re-align Deer Isle policies with state mandates and correct typographical errors, while changes to the shellfish ordinance would create a new three-day, non-resident recreational license; institute a \$5 fee for licenses for senior citizens, which were formerly free; and make minor changes to the conservation service requirement that applies to licensed shellfish harvesters.

As with the third-party requests, the ordinance-related warrant articles—which will be decided at the March 2 Town Meeting which begins at 3 p.m. at the Town Office—generated little discussion.

every week. Sign up for our tree weekly newsletter so you never miss a story!

Email  
Subscribe

### More From Island Ad-Vantages Latest News

[Go To The Island Ad-Vantages Latest News Section](#)



Deer Isle fire station project at a standstill until funding is found



DAR Good Citizens Scholarship awarded to Deer Isle-Stonington High School senior



Pizza from the heart(h) and soul



St. Brendan the Navigator Episcopal Church in Deer Isle hosts unique art show



Isle au Haut's thoroughfare to be dredged



Alleged Deer Isle stalker held without bail after multi-agency police search

Contact Us  
Subscribe  
Advertise with Us  
Visit Our Book Website



River Observer  
Island Ad-Vantages  
The Weekly Packet  
Bay Community Register

Stonington: 69 Main Street, PO Box 36, Stonington ME 04681. 207-367-2200  
Blue Hill: 13 Main Street, PO Box 646, Blue Hill ME 04614. 207-374-2341

Powered by  
**Our Hometown** DMCA Notices  
Newspaper website content management software and services

©2026 Penobscot Bay Press | All Rights Reserved | Privacy Policy