

## SRA July Members Meeting:

July 23, 2024  
123 Main Street  
5:30-7pm

28 members in attendance

5:30 PM

President's Remarks: Jim Green welcomed the members and spoke briefly on the importance and relevance of the housing crisis; noting his new position on the IHT board. He alluded to the change in leadership in the SRA, saying he would expand later in the meeting.

5:40

Jim introduces Eric Stiles, CEO and President of Friends of Acadia to speak on the need for seasonal housing and the Raise the Roof Campaign.

Eric Stiles spoke passionately about the origin of FOA in 1986. He said the non-profit was not there to keep the lights on at ANP, but to provide for a margin of excellence. It is Congress' job to fund the day to day. FOA operates in three ways: as Acadia's philanthropic partner, as a partner whose staff and volunteers work in Acadia and as FOA is a cheerleader and champion working with our delegation on the needs of the park including securing funds. We also work with partners on proposed projects that would affect the Park; such as the salmon farm proposal, which they helped quash. He went on to further list the priorities of FOA:

1. Trails and Carriage Roads
2. Acadia Experience - Congestion Management like the reservation system at Cadillac Mountain and expansion of Island Explorer bus system
3. Tomorrow's stewards - Providing experiences for the next generation of conservation leaders
4. Wild Acadia – Climate forward habitat restoration projects like Great Meadow

Eric went on to describe the seasonal staff needed to achieve these priorities and operate Acadia National Park. Acadia needs to hire between 150-175 seasonal staff, Island Explorer needs 120 bus drivers and FOA between 15-20 staff working on trails, summit education and recreation management. Recently, Acadia has only been able to hire 110-115 seasonals and Island Explorer between 80-90 drivers due to the lack of reasonably priced housing.

To solve this challenge, FOA and its partners need to secure an additional 130 beds.

FOA working with Acadia NP and Island Explorers launched a 4 four prong strategy including:

1. Acquisition of commercial property near Acadia National Park. FOA continues to pay property taxes for these sites to support important town services.
  1. Kingsleigh Inn in Southwest Harbor providing 10 beds. The site is rented to Acadia for \$1 per year.
  2. Jordan River Road providing beds for 18-24 bus drivers.
2. Renovations to existing Acadia NP homes to provide an additional 10-15 beds.
3. Design and building of RV pads within Acadia NP to provide an additional 10-15 beds.

4. Building new residential suites within Acadia National Park to provide an additional 64 beds.
  - a. Dane Farm – FOA acquired a 4.25 acre in-holding off Jordan Pond Road in Seal Harbor and is constructing two residential suites providing 8 beds. The site will be transferred to Acadia National Park.
  - b. Harden Farm – Acadia NP will be adding 56 beds to this site off located off Kebo Street in Bar Harbor over two phases. The contract for the first phase is expected to be awarded by the end of September 2024.

FOA launched the Raise the Roof seasonal housing campaign with a goal of \$10 million to leverage an expected \$20+ million from federal and other sources to fund Dane and Harden Farms.

All of the solutions FOA are working on relieve pressure from the surrounding communities and do not remove single family homes from the housing stock. In fact, in some cases they free up homes.

Bill Eacho expanded on the matching funds and added that the FOA projects can get done faster and cheaper than most government projects because they do not have the same processes to follow. Eric also wanted it understood that philanthropy cannot and does not direct the policy of the national parks. That would be privatization and against the very philosophy of having national parks.

Eric gave a big thank you to Anne Green for her work on FOA's Board including co-chairing the Raise the Roof capital campaign.

S. Savage asked what happens to the housing in the off season and Eric replied that all of the housing is built for 365 days a year and though most is used for seasonal housing, many units are used year-round. Another member asked what kind of units they were offering and Eric replied they planned spaces with private rooms and shared common areas for singles and couples and 1 bedroom efficiency units as well. He also wanted it to be clear that rent was being paid on all units. Rent was in keeping with what a park employee could afford: \$500-\$700 per month and all those funds go into the maintenance of the spaces.

6:10: Jim Green thanks Eric and introduces the current members by show of hands. He thanks all for their hard work and then explains the reasoning behind the new newsletter. He tells the membership that by participating in the surveys it helps the board know where the membership stands and gives us data so we can relay information and connect members with links and articles.

6:15

Jim introduces Marla O' Byrne, Executive director of Island Housing Trust to speak on the successful completion of the Jones Marsh Project, phase three of the Ripples Road project and the need for year-round housing on the Island.

Marla explained how IHT came to be: it sprang from the revitalization of the Mt. Desert Community Trust when a community working group increased interest in creating year-round housing. They went island wide and asked for the donation of land owned by the Town of Mt. Desert for workforce housing and the Ripples Hill project was underway. Marla explained that IHT promotes viable year-round housing opportunities with and for median income workers. Not only does IHT build homes (Ripples Hill, Jones Marsh), but they offer down-payment assistance and work within communities with homes that are donated or sold for a reasonable price. They have been creative and flexible in their projects to get year-round families into

homes and will work to help in any way they are able. She described how IHT even worked with a hotelier to help get zoning changes so the companies can build employee housing on their properties and free up housing stock for local families. She added that IHT works with local banks to get construction loans. John Slater asked about the land leases and she explained that by owning the land under the homes, those buying homes with covenants and land leases are able to secure loans. Land leases also help keep the taxes lower for the families living in the homes. Marla explained that the gap to build and the ability to afford the new housing is widening and it has led IHT to building duplexes to close the gap. She went on to describe the covenants placed on the homes and noted that the system requires “buy in” from families agreeing to the covenants. The covenants keep the housing affordable for the long term. She noted they have covenants on 48 homes (with 11 resales) and have housed 59 families. All funding is private; there is no federal or state funding or matching.

6:45 Jim Green thanked Marla and noted his involvement with the IHT and announced he was stepping down as President of the SRA and introduced the new Board: Ned Nalle as President, John Slater as Vice President, Marnie Phillips as Treasurer and Tracey Aberman as Secretary. Jim announced the date for the August Members Meeting is August 19<sup>th</sup> at the NHH, 5:30-7pm

Meeting adjourned at 7pm.