

## **LICP2035 Contractor Forum**

### **Oct. 6, 2021**

On October 6, 2021 members of The Long Island Comprehensive Plan (LICP) 2035 held a meeting with island contractors to discuss concerns raised in our community survey about the lack of qualified contractors on the island.

The goal was to hear from the contractors about ways the town could help them fulfill an overwhelming need and to discuss the barriers they face in providing these services. The forum was one of eight such events held in 2021 in conjunction with the LICP2035. This workshop was moderated by Vanessa Farr from the Greater Portland Council of Governments with help from Melanie Nash and Linda McCann from LICP2035. Also in attendance were Dennis McCann, John Mahany, Michael Lingley, Will Tierney, and Bill Crohn.

With more people spending more time on the island, the demand for contracting services has greatly increased as they try to make their old seasonal cottages into something more comfortable for a longer span of the year. This places more of a burden on existing services because there has not been an corresponding influx of new contractors. The lack of affordable housing also makes it difficult to attract new contractors and apprentices to the island. The consensus is it is tough to see a path for new specialists to come to the island to set up shop when there is such a shortage of housing opportunities right now.

Some common themes emerged about the difficulties of trying to provide services on an island. The availability of qualified helpers/workers to complete projects is a big issue for island contractors. About 5 years ago the flow of helpers to the island stopped. College kids don't have things to do out here so it is hard to get them to come here and train with local contractors, let alone to live out here. Well-trained young people are recruited out of school to the big companies, and it is hard for small contracting businesses to compete with their offers. Once helpers/apprentices move off island, it is rare that they want to come back and work. Some wondered if there might be a way for some trade internships/partnerships with the area high schools and technical/community colleges.

The availability of fuel on the island is another issue. Fuel is extremely pricey and there is not enough supply on the island. There is no diesel supply on the island so contractors have to secure this from the town, which costs time and money. Also, having to freight and barge all of the supplies and sometimes heavy equipment also adds to the cost and lack of work efficiency.

There is no storage on the island for contractors to keep their equipment. Some feel that because there is no access to safe winter storage, they do not want to invest in expensive pieces of heavy equipment for their jobs. Some wondered if there might be space in some town-owned buildings for equipment storage and the town could garner rental fees for the use of this space by contractors.

This discussion highlighted difficulties and barriers faced by contractors on the island as they attempt to provide services to members of our community.