

Now is the time to address the shortage of available year-round housing on Long Island

Statement from Mark Greene, head of the Year-Round Housing Committee

Survival of the year-round community on Long Island is at stake. We need year-round housing to retain and attract people who can add to the island's workforce - professionals and volunteers – to keep the town going.

While population has remained stable, the older segment has grown while the younger segment has declined. Increased seasonal population has led to a decrease in year-round housing stock. Over 50 year-round homes have converted to seasonal use in the past 30 years. Over the last 10 years, Long Island has lost an unknown number of families and individuals who would have stayed if not for the lack of available housing.

Our community is no longer able to fill important roles needed to sustain the town government, staff fire and rescue, maintain town infrastructure and assets, and run our committees. Close to 90% of roles required to run the town are filled by volunteers. Today we have over 20 open positions proving very difficult to fill.

We have a shortage of workers required to keep the local economy running including fisheries, construction and carpentry, mechanics, landscaping, electricity, plumbing, healthcare, home repair, stores, plowing, road repairs, overall municipal and other services we all depend on.

Our elementary school is critical and integral to sustaining a year-round community. With no housing available, we have lost younger families from the island with no new families coming. As a result, we have zero children living on the island to enter the school going forward. The Town of Long Island 2022 Comprehensive Plan process revealed that the community of Long Island strongly believes that to maintain the way of life that is so important to us, we must actively work to care for an island that is livable for all its residents.

Maine Housing is offering very generous grants to help unbridged island communities fund year-round housing on a first come, first served basis.

Now is the time to take advantage of this grant to invest in our future. We are uniquely positioned to jump on this opportunity right now. The town owns buildable lots and has a long-standing 501(c)(3) Year-Round Housing Corporation that can apply for grants, a new Year-Round Housing Committee working group to drive projects forward, and renewed support from the Select Board and the Town Administrator.

The first project is likely to involve building several rental units on a town owned lot, to be funded with grant monies, and to be potentially managed by a new year-round housing LLC. Two important votes at town meeting will help drive this work forward: funding a part-time town position for Housing Coordinator (Article 19); approving a portion of funds from sale of town land to go towards year-round housing and using those funds to establish a Housing Reserve Fund (Article 11,13 and 14).