

WHARF SURCHARGE: COMMUNITY PERCEPTION REPORT

PURPOSE

Prepared for the Monhegan Community to assist in the consideration of funding strategies for current and future wharf projects

Elizabeth Dudley

Island Institute Fellow

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Background and Introduction.....	3
Methods	4
Community Meeting.....	5
Success Criteria	5
Existing Strengths	5
Challenges.....	6
Opportunities.....	7
Additional Thoughts.....	8
Survey.....	10
Question 1	10
Question 2	12
Question 3	14
Question 4	14
Discussion	15
Commonalities	15
Divergences	16
Limitations.....	16
Conclusion.....	17

Executive Summary

The Monhegan Plantation has been engaged in work to make the Monhegan Wharf, the only deep-water access to the island, more resilient in the face of changing ocean conditions and rising sea levels. Constructed in the early twentieth century, the Wharf has become the subject of conversations around long-term infrastructure on Monhegan. The current project work began in 2021 when the Monhegan Plantation contracted Baker Design Consultants—now part of GEI Consultants—to conduct a resiliency assessment. The resulting report included concept plans delivered in December 2023 that outline potential directions for the infrastructure project. Major elements of the concept plan involve raising the wharf by 4.5 feet to meet Maine Won't Wait commit to manage standards and installing a hard surface to prevent erosion. The Monhegan Plantation's wharf infrastructure project constitutes a significant investment in time and money. Understanding the costs associated with this project, it is necessary to consider funding strategies. While the Plantation is actively pursuing grant funding as well as FEMA mitigation funds, creatively considering alternative funding methods for major wharf improvements is necessary. The Wharf Surcharge is one such proposal.

The main issue for the Board of Assessors is whether the community supports this proposal. This report is an attempt to synthesize the positions expressed in the community meeting with those stated in the wharf surcharge survey to give the Board of Assessors a clearer understanding of the community's broader position. This report first addresses the community meeting. By combining the executive summary prepared after the meeting with the notes taken during the meeting, this report aims to give a full picture of the discussion held. Then, the report considers the wharf surcharge survey. It analyzes the responses to the four questions using thematic groupings. Finally, the report considers commonalities and differences between the two modes of community input; it is this section that should give the most accurate indication of the community's overall perspective.

This post-hoc analysis concludes that the community generally feels supportive of the proposal and its potential to aid the Plantation in much-needed wharf renovations. There are, however, necessary discussions before such a fee could be implemented, particularly regarding the administration of the surcharge and the maintenance of positive relationships with community partners like the boat lines. Through disseminating this report and holding ongoing community discussions, the Board of Assessors can effectively navigate the landscape of the proposal and find the appropriate path forward for Monhegan.

Background and Introduction

In December of 2023, GEI Consultants, Inc. submitted to the Plantation leadership the “Public Wharf Condition and Resiliency Assessment.”¹ In this report, they assessed the existing wharf conditions combined with the flood risk analysis to develop wharf improvement concept designs. This project comes on the heels of the Maine Won’t Wait statewide strategy to prepare for the next century of projected sea-level rise, specifically the commitment to manage for 1.5 feet of sea-level rise by 2050 and 3.9 feet by 2100.² GEI proposed raising the wharf by 4.5 feet to reach a top-deck elevation of 13.5 feet, among other functional amendments.³ This construction work, and the necessary precursors to construction, constitute a great municipal expense, one that is beyond the scope of what the Plantation can currently afford with the monies already saved. Therefore, the Plantation began to explore alternative funding strategies.

The proposal for the imposition of a wharf surcharge was introduced as one such funding strategy. The Wharf Surcharge would impose a modest fee—between \$1 and \$3—on all visitors to Monhegan. The additional revenue gained from this surcharge would theoretically enable the Plantation to leverage greater match funds for large grants, giving the Plantation needed flexibility as it pursues wharf amendments. The Plantation solicited a legal opinion as to whether it had the authority to implement such a fee, and the legal memorandum resulting from that inquiry answered in the affirmative: it is within the Plantation’s authority to introduce a wharf surcharge. The question, therefore, became if there was community support for it.

The attempt to assess community perception of a wharf surcharge was twofold. First, there was a community meeting held to discuss the proposal, its costs and benefits, and general wharf affairs. Thanks to grant funding from Island Institute, the Plantation hired a consultant to run the meeting based on accepted best practices. The meeting notes were then compiled and condensed into an executive summary. Second, there was a four-question survey distributed to the community at-large. The questions aimed specifically at understanding where community members fell on the issue of a wharf surcharge; this survey did not address the wharf more generally.

This report follows these two stages. The aim of this report is to give insight into the results of both the community meeting and the survey, highlighting commonalities and bringing awareness to any divergences. This report is intended to assist the Plantation leadership in determining the extent of community support for the implementation of a wharf surcharge. It is also aimed at increasing transparency with the broader Monhegan community by making the analysis available

¹ GEI Consultants, Inc., *Public Wharf Condition and Resiliency Assessment* (GEI Consultants, Inc., Dec. 2023), https://cdn.townweb.com/monheganplantation.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Monhegan-Island-Town-Wharf-Report-Final_2023-12-26-1.pdf.

² Maine Climate Council, *Maine Won’t Wait: A Four-Year Plan for Climate Action* (Maine Climate Council, December 2020), 24, https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov.future/files/inline-files/MaineWontWait_December2020.pdf.

³ GEI Consultants, Inc., *Public Wharf Condition and Resiliency Assessment*, 17.

to the public, to allow the community to see the discussions that were occurring and to foster future conversations around municipal funding and planning.

The report begins with a brief note on the methods used. It then explores the community meeting takeaways, followed by the analysis of the survey. Next, it considers commonalities and divergences between the two modes of community involvement. Finally, it addresses analytical limitations and offers brief conclusions.

Methods

The method of analysis differed between the two modes of community input. For the meeting analysis, the previously-prepared executive summary of meeting notes and the meeting notes, themselves, were combined and then divided into thematic categories. By combining these notes, the intention is to give as much depth as possible to the discussion that occurred.

For the survey, the analysis for the first two questions was in-line with qualitative coding practices. The responses were coded using 0s and 1s based on the themes that were derived from initial analysis. These codes were then used to create visualizations and quantifications for engagement with each theme. The latter two questions had too few responses to make such coding meaningful. Therefore, they were discussed using the answers themselves, highlighting common ideas and differing perspectives.

Community Meeting

The community meeting discussing the wharf and the proposed wharf surcharge occurred on June 17, 2025. There were nineteen in-person participants at the Monhegan School House and eleven virtual participants over Zoom, combining for a total of 30 attendees. The discussion addressed the future of the island's public wharf, focusing on long-term success, strengths, challenges, and funding opportunities related to a potential multi-million-dollar upgrade.

Previous Island Institute Fellow Thomas McClellan delivered a presentation at the meeting on behalf of the Monhegan Plantation. It laid out the purpose of the meeting as well as the background of the wharf project leading up to the meeting. This included the timeline of the wharf project, the increase in operational expenses, the need for a raised wharf to address long-term viability, additional funding sources, and the details behind the proposed wharf surcharge. This presentation then transitioned into a group discussion, involving both those participants physically present and those present virtually.

The conversation notes were collected and grouped into key areas. Within each area of discussion there were several themes. These discussion areas are as follows: Success Criteria, Existing Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities, and Additional Ideas.

Success Criteria

The first question asked of attendees was how they defined success for the wharf. Consensus was that a successful wharf is safe, reliable, resilient, and accessible year-round. Safety largely refers to the ability for simultaneous operations on the wharf whether freight and passengers side-by-side, fishing and freight, or some other combination. As the wharf is multi-use, a necessary condition of a successful wharf is one that has adequate space to allow for flow of traffic, freight, and passengers safely. Reliability considers the ability of the wharf to operate in bad weather conditions as well as good, maintaining the safety of users throughout the year. This also relates to the need for resiliency: the wharf must be able to withstand future sea-level rise and significant weather events. Any plan designed for the Monhegan wharf needs to account for future sea conditions and prioritize sustainability of repairs. Simplicity, ease of maintenance, and local contractor involvement were also considered in this discussion, each relating to at least one of the overall themes.

Existing Strengths

Attendees were also asked to discuss what strengths currently exist for the wharf and the project. It was agreed that the wharf has a strong structural foundation, organized operations, and deep community knowledge. The ground-penetrating-radar scan performed as part of a Shore and Harbor grant awarded to the Plantation shows a sturdy foundation. This foundation has supported the wharf to-date and is projected to be able to support future amendments.

Community connection to the wharf is another strength. The wharf's long history brings stories and nostalgia to the discussion of the wharf, in addition to the accumulation of community knowledge and collective understanding that help maintain the wharf. The boat lines, themselves, are part of the communal operations: they work in extraordinary conditions and support the community in situations others might not tolerate.

These connections lead to wharf strength in its organization and flow of operations. Loading and unloading happen quickly and efficiently, often in adverse conditions. Like the structural foundation, the wharf's strong organizational foundation can be built upon and improved throughout the wharf project.

One additional strength discussed was the existence of the Wharf Reserve Fund. Taxpayers contribute \$25,000 annually through the Plantation's budget to ongoing repairs and maintenance. This indicates an understanding of the need for funding wharf projects as well as a community commitment to keeping the wharf functional well into the future.

Challenges

After considering the existing wharf strengths, attendees were asked to discuss the challenges currently facing the wharf and any wharf projects. Discussion revolved around logistical issues, administrative burdens, and economic impacts associated with work on the wharf.

There were several logistical issues raised in the wharf context. The need to address sea-level rise—derived in the state's Maine Won't Wait projections—through raising the wharf introduces distinct challenges. First, the ramp angle and length need to account for accessibility. Even in the wharf's current state, low tide ramp angles already present an accessibility concern; an increase in wharf height of several feet would exacerbate the angular issues, particularly during loading and unloading of freight and gear. Understanding that the previous design plans presented by GEI Consultants included a lift and other equipment, not just a ramp, the concerns about continued operations with a raised wharf must be considered.

The administrative burdens highlighted ranged from those imposed on the boat lines to the Plantation's management of the wharf, and even to the individual usage by small boats. The implementation of a wharf surcharge to fund wharf projects, as discussed in the proposal, would impose certain strictures on the ferry companies who, in one collection model, would be tasked with collecting the surcharge and passing it to the Plantation. To some attendees, this constitutes an overreach of Plantation authority into the operations of the boat lines; even if not an overreach, it does impose administrative costs on the boat lines. As some attendees noted, this

could exacerbate the relationship between the boat lines and the Plantation, necessitating careful management and consideration of the risks and benefits.

The Plantation itself would also have increased administrative burdens resulting from any wharf projects, particularly in the funding realm. Though grant funding seems to be a necessity for funding major work on the wharf, the administration of grant funds requires large time commitments for municipal administrators, not to mention the time spent simply applying for grants. Additionally, as part of the planning for wharf projects, the numerous deadlines for feedback and plan proposals introduce significant time costs for the project managers.

The administrative burdens would extend even to the management of small boats, if included in any landing fee. While other islands use a Harbor Master to collect mooring or other landing fees, a system would need to be established for Monhegan. This has the potential to burden not only the administrator but also the captains of the boats in question.

Finally, the attendees introduced a series of possible economic impacts of the proposed wharf surcharge, as well as other fees discussed in the meeting. There was concern that increased costs of visiting Monhegan would lead to a decrease in tourism. This decrease would, in turn, hurt all the small businesses on the island. Attendees, thus, considered whether that economic risk would be worth additional revenue for wharf projects.

The economic impact discussion also extended to the costs imposed on residents and businesses. As some attendees noted, the costs of living on Monhegan are already high, and an additional fee for residents—who already bear the brunt of maintenance costs through property taxes—could be off-putting. The impact on local businesses is the same: increased fees make it harder to operate successfully. Therefore, attendees were concerned with exemptions for residents and business owners that, in turn, introduce additional administrative burdens.

Opportunities

The next wharf element attendees were asked to consider was any potential opportunities that could be created around the wharf, particularly through the implementation of a wharf surcharge. Attendees were encouraged by the existence of other surcharge models, the possibility of grant funding through collaborations with external organizations, and the pursuit of innovative design strategies.

That other municipalities throughout the United States have implemented similar wharf surcharges was presented as a learning opportunity for the Plantation. Attendees referenced communities in Alaska and Hawaii that have various models from which Monhegan could learn. Not only that, but the implementation of a wharf surcharge could form the basis of a new level of

collaboration and partnership with the boat lines. By learning from the examples provided by other communities, Monhegan would have the opportunity to tailor a program to the specific needs of the island, pursuing only the most viable of options. Whether that is a program where fees are collected on the island side, if the fees are \$1 or \$3, or if small boats and boat tours also pay fees, are all questions that the community would be empowered to answer based on its needs.

Attendees also discussed the possibility of grant funding and collaboration with external organizations. Monies are available for various public works projects from the federal government, state government, and private foundations through grant applications of varying competitiveness. These present opportunities to secure funding from a range of sources, thereby potentially reducing the need to secure any individual grant. Closer collaborations with Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission and Island Institute were also discussed as prime areas in which Monhegan can develop its administrative capacity regarding the wharf. Additionally, the outcomes of the feasibility study currently being conducted by Maine Department of Transportation, as overseen by Representative Lydia Crafts, have the potential to open pathways towards future state collaboration.

Finally, attendees expressed a wide range of innovative design solutions that could be included in a future wharf project. By having a hands-on process for the wharf design, the community could choose the elements that matter most to them. Some attendees were enthusiastic about a crane on the wharf corner to increase safety and ease of use. Others emphasized the necessity of improved drainage to reduce annual fill costs. Attendees agreed on the importance of modular design that could be executed in stages, improving the wharf a little bit at a time. All, however, would be up for discussion in a community-led design process.

Additional Thoughts

There was some time at the end of the meeting to discuss alternatives to the wharf surcharge and additional thoughts regarding the future of the wharf project. Discussion in this section ranged, with different attendees encouraging collaboration as key with others prioritizing the balancing of use cases for the wharf. Attendees agreed on the need for transparency throughout the wharf design process.

Attendees were interested in thinking creatively about how to engage with the boat lines. Some encouraged reaching out directly to the companies for ideas and input, making them key players in the community discussion. Others proposed a yearly contribution from the boat lines for wharf projects, to be pursued instead of a fee assessed on each ticket. All thoughts about the boat lines were discussed as ways to maintain and strengthen the relationship between these companies and the community.

Emphasis was also placed in this section on the balance between freight efficiency and any potential upgrades. Especially through prioritization of design simplicity, the desire expressed was that gear and freight loading would be uninterrupted. Implementing any changes in phases was thought to be able to support this goal. Continuation of operations was also discussed through the lens of addressing sea-level rise, potentially through the use of sacrificial or concrete pilings. Any upgrades, when discussed by the community, will need to consider safety and efficiency.

Finally, the attendees expressed a desire for transparency throughout any wharf projects. By communicating regularly with constituents, the goal is to honor business and personal independence through flexible and accountable financial structures. Future community discussions will need to address these specifics in greater detail to ensure wharf projects receive full community support.

Survey

The Wharf Surcharge Survey was an effort to gain additional insight into public perception of this alternative wharf maintenance funding strategy, following the public meeting. The survey was created to solicitate more opinions on the proposed surcharge from the broader Monhegan community. The survey consisted of four open-ended questions addressing different perceived benefits and costs to the imposition of a surcharge. The first two questions asked all respondents about the general strengths and challenges of creating this surcharge; the latter two specifically addressed ferry or business owners, asking about potential hurdles to administration of a surcharge and requesting suitable alternatives.

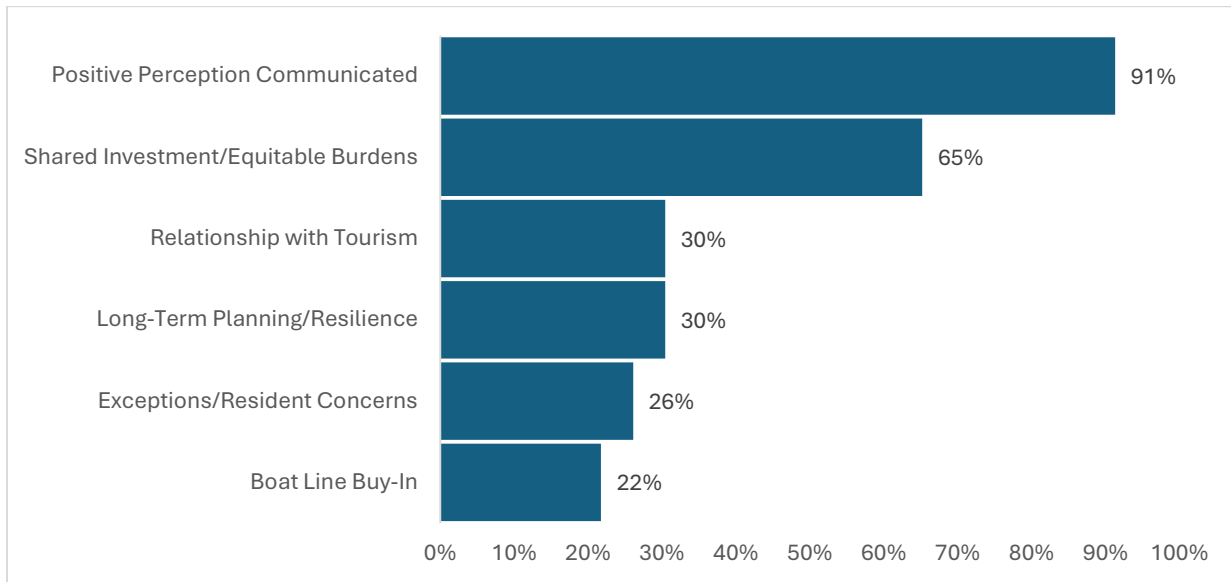
The Wharf Surcharge Survey was manually closed on September 25 after being open for just over two weeks. Responses began on September 10 and ended on September 24. In total, there were 26 respondents to the survey over that period. Of the 26 respondents, 88 percent gave an answer to the first question, and 100 percent gave an answer to the second question. These rates dropped for the third and fourth questions to 35 percent and 38 percent, respectively. However, one of the responses to the third question was removed from the general analysis because the respondent self-identified as not a ferry or business owner. This brought the response rate down to 31 percent for that question.

For the qualitative analysis, the strategy differed from the first two questions to the last two. The first two questions had large enough response pools that it was beneficial to identify the most common themes and then code for them. The results of this coding, as well as outliers and points of interest, will be discussed in this section. The latter two questions, however, were more focused on individual ideas. Thus, their analysis is more usefully understood through specific discussion of responses. This also will be explored below.

Question 1

Question 1 considered perceived benefits or opportunities resulting from increased income generated by the wharf surcharge, and it had an 88 percent response rate among respondents. Responses were coded into the following themes: Shared Investment/Equitable Burdens, Boat Line Buy-in, Long-Term Planning/Resilience, Relationship with Tourism, and Exceptions/Resident Concerns. Responses were also coded for Positive Perception of Wharf Surcharge. The overall theme percentages are displayed in Figure 1, and they will be discussed below.

Figure 1: Question 1 Themes



Source: Wharf Surcharge Survey

Positive Perception about the wharf surcharge was communicated by 91 percent of responses to this question. These responses often addressed other themes as well, but the general tenor was positive. The respondents seemed to be optimistic about the potential benefits of a new wharf surcharge survey and its impact on the community.

65 percent of this question's responses discussed Shared Investment/Equitable Burdens. The responses were concerned with creating a system that balances costs of use with fair or meaningfully shared benefits resulting from an improved wharf. Several responses highlighted the wear-and-tear caused by boat lines and tourists that previously have not invested in the wharf, emphasizing that this new surcharge would share the burden of maintenance with those who profit from the infrastructure provided. Some responses also considered the bond shared by island residents and the tourism and boat line constituents, all of whom benefit from a resilient wharf, but among whom costs are not shared. The general conclusion of these responses was a desire for fairness in future operations.

30 percent of this question's responses were considerate of the potential Relationship with Tourism. The perception was that such a surcharge would capitalize on Monhegan's status as a popular tourist destination without overburdening the tourists coming to experience the island. All these responses believed a small—or even modest—fee would not deter tourists, many of whom already pay significant amounts to visit Monhegan. Considering the existing costs, the belief of these respondents is that the proposed surcharge would have no noticeable effect on island tourism.

Long-Term Planning/Resilience also received attention in 30 percent of the responses. These responses considered the costs over time and the importance of upgrades for long-term use. The general feeling was that costs for upkeep, improvements, and long-term planning are not going to get any lower, and the need to plan for how to finance them is critical.

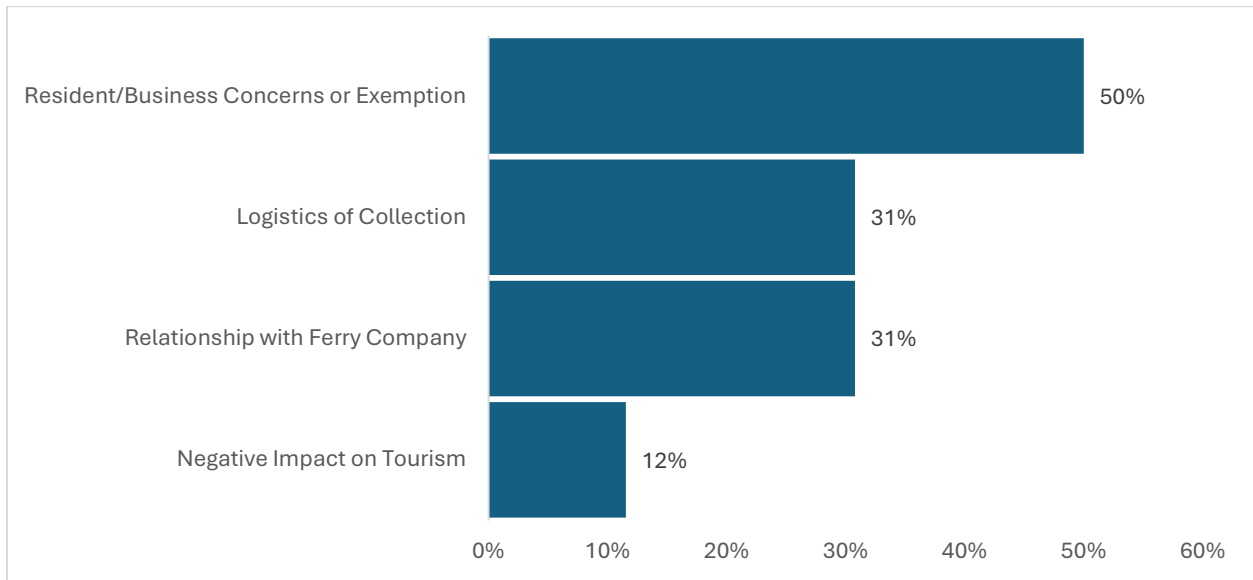
Exceptions/Resident Concerns and Boat Line Buy-In were referenced in 26 and 22 percent, respectively, of the responses to this question. The Exceptions/Resident Concerns thematic responses reflected an awareness of the cost of living on Monhegan and the need to manage the costs for residents. They also referred to the maintenance of relationships between the Board of Assessors and the resident community, the necessity of listening to resident concerns. Boat Line Buy-In was a similar theme, specifically as it applied to the relationships between constituent parties. This theme also related to the discussion of equitable burdens as the respondents wrote about needing collaboration from all stakeholders to make the long-term resiliency of the wharf feasible.

All the responses to this question fit into at least one of the thematic groupings. Overall takeaways are that respondents generally viewed this proposal as having various benefits for the community and that these benefits would come at little additional cost to any constituent parties.

Question 2

Question 2 asked about potential challenges from implementing a wharf fee on various users, and this question had a 100 percent response rate among respondents. The answers were coded into themes of Relationship with Ferry Company, Negative Impact on Tourism, Resident/Business Concerns or Exemption, and Logistics of Collection. These themes are illustrated in Figure 2 and discussed individually below.

Figure 2: Question 2 Themes



Source: Wharf Surcharge Survey

Resident/Business Concerns or Exemptions was the thematic group that received the highest response rate, with 50 percent of respondents referencing these. While some responses simply named groups they believe should be exempted from the fee, others highlighted specific downstream effects that could be possible with the implementation of the surcharge. Some of these included freight cost concerns from increased utilization of shipping as well as possible decreased revenue at food establishments if tourists bring more of their own food to combat rising costs.

Logistics of Collection was addressed in 31 percent of the responses. Responses varied from considerations of administrative costs to distinctions between commercial and non-commercial use, even extending to specific suggestions of possible methods. Additionally, one respondent expressed concern over enforcement of whatever method is chosen. These responses indicate a need for critical thought to be given to the feasibility of a surcharge.

Relationship with Ferry Company was also referenced in 31 percent of the responses. Concerns included how to create an effective collection method in collaboration with the boat lines as well as maintenance of an increasingly delicate Plantation-ferry company relationship. These responses highlight the need for community buy-in, including that of the ferry companies.

Finally, Negative Impact on Tourism was referenced by 12 percent of respondents. These responses discussed the possibility that the institution of an additional fee to visit the island could

reduce desire to travel to Monhegan among tourists. This possibility would need to be weighed against the discussion in Question 1 about little anticipated effect on tourism.

Question 3

Question 3 asked ferry and business owners to describe personal and/or administrative concerns regarding the implementation of a wharf surcharge. As mentioned previously, though it received a 35 percent response rate, one of the responses self-identified as not a member of the group targeted by this question, so the response was filtered out of the analysis. The resultant response rate was 31 percent of respondents.

Many of the responses echoed those concerns mentioned in prior parts of the survey. These included the logistical challenges of administering a surcharge, the need for reasonable resident/business-owner exemptions, and the issue of enforcement of the surcharge. Ultimately, the responses reflect an anxiety that the surcharge will place an undue burden on those who live, work, and operate businesses here.

Question 4

Question 4 solicited from ferry and business owners their suggestions for alternative fee collection to support the wharf. This question had a 38 percent response rate. This indicates that either some business owners chose not to respond to question 3 or that there are respondents to question 4 who are not business owners.

The responses to this question represent a wide range of ideas. Some respondents were in favor of pursuing grant funding for wharf projects, either from the government or from private groups. Others recommended soliciting donations through other means, suggesting donor galas and donation-recognition plaques as incentives. The concept of an annual fee for wharf use was also presented by some respondents. One respondent recommended simply raising property taxes to generate the necessary income. The broad scope of the suggestions offered in the responses to this question indicate a need for the community to continue discussing how best to pursue funding for this major infrastructure project.

Finally, it is important to note that there were respondents who remained opposed to the wharf surcharge idea. One respondent indicated feeling that the wharf surcharge was an aggressive tactic to use, particularly as it relates to the boat lines. Another expressed that if the currently appropriated funds are inadequate to address the wharf update plans, then perhaps the plans are too extreme for what Monhegan needs now. Though these voices were in the minority of respondents, they should, nevertheless, be considered when thinking about the wharf surcharge.

Discussion

The feedback provided through the survey echoes that which was gathered at the community meeting. By highlighting the commonalities between the two, the municipal leadership, and the broader Monhegan community, can gain insight into the priorities and concerns of those involved in the wharf surcharge discussion. These insights can and should influence the development of future wharf funding plans and proposals.

Commonalities

In general, participants across the meeting and the survey seemed to have a positive perception about the possibility of a wharf surcharge and its subsequent benefits. The opportunities described in both avenues that could arise from a wharf surcharge, if managed appropriately, extend from necessary funding for the wharf resiliency project to an improved and increasingly collaborative relationship with the boat lines. Therefore, the community seems to view this proposal as a chance to improve community engagement to not only raise money but also to foster meaningful community engagement. The community perception of the wharf surcharge envisions a future that shares cost more equitably across sectors, making the island community, including all those connected to the island, more sustainable.

There were, however, logistical concerns related to the implementation of a surcharge voiced in both forums. Whether administered by the Plantation or the boat lines, there would need to be consideration given to the method used to collect any determined surcharge. From the Plantation's side, one suggestion was for a wharf monitor, a role created to collect the fee from those leaving the island. If administered by the boat lines, it could be either a per-head fee or a yearly contribution, the latter proposed to maintain privacy for the boat lines in their operations. Either way, the practical execution of a wharf surcharge should be evaluated critically in future conversations.

Both forums also considered the potential for impacts on tourism. Though this was a lesser concern both for attendees at the community meeting and for respondents to the survey, it is worth assessing more carefully the potential costs to businesses on the islands that could result from the imposition of a surcharge. In this circumstance, a cost-benefit analysis might be meaningful, considering different fee structures and their subsequent effects.

In both cases, participants engaged with the question of what alternative funding strategies could look like for the wharf project. Beyond the proposed wharf surcharge, there were suggestions for donor campaigns, grant applications, and collaboration with other funding bodies, as well as the one respondent who suggested raising property taxes to fill the gap. While these proposals were not the focus of either the meeting or the survey, that so many ideas were put forth indicates that there is energy to consider creative funding strategies moving forward, whether or not the surcharge is implemented.

Finally, one major point of discussion in both the community meeting and the survey responses was the impact of any new wharf projects on the Plantation's relationship with the boat lines. In both venues, the relative delicacy of the relationship was stressed by at least one community member. Even for those who did not emphasize the current state, there was concern evident that the implementation of a surcharge would negatively impact the future of the relationship.

Divergences

Because the survey was specifically targeted towards responses to a proposed surcharge, there was not the same space for discussion of wharf strengths and weaknesses in general operations. The community meeting did address these, as described above. However, the inclusion in the community meeting of the general wharf status and operations forms the main divergence in analysis. Future conversations should attempt to bridge the gap in understanding between the two methods for greater holistic understanding of community perceptions about the wharf.

The other key divergence lies in the consideration of future upgrades to the wharf. Related to the divergence of focus on wharf operations, planning for how to improve the wharf for future use cases was only discussed in the community meeting. As the wharf planning process continues, this divergence highlights a need for more community engagement involving plans and ideas for the wharf, engagement that could be achieved through both public meetings and through future surveys targeted specifically towards this question.

Limitations

The main limitation, for both the survey and the meeting analysis, lies in the small sample size. While the meeting had 30 people and the survey received 26 responses, both constituting meaningful percentages of the overall population of the island, it can nevertheless be assumed that there are possible perspectives and opinions not represented in the analysis. Additionally, it is conceivable that many of the survey respondents were those who attended the meeting, creating the possibility that some voices are being heard in discussion more than others. This sampling limitation should not keep the community from progressing with the discussion, but it should encourage the development of more opportunities for public comment and opinion.

Another limitation can be seen in the different levels of specificity between the community meeting and the survey. Though both were largely addressing the prospect of a wharf surcharge, the discussion at the meeting touched on more general wharf matters. On the other hand, the survey was more directed, soliciting opinions specifically on the benefits and drawbacks of a wharf surcharge, as well as the possible implementation thereof. This disconnect, though it does not preclude comparative analysis, does limit the applicability of some aspects of discussion.

Finally, a limitation specifically of the community meeting analysis lies in the notes from which the analysis was drawn. While the meeting notes gave a clear picture of the conversation flow and the executive summary was mindful of the themes of discussion, these do not allow for the same level of qualitative analysis as a meeting transcript or recording. While a transcript or recording could reasonably be coded for themes, like the survey analysis method, the meeting notes do not support this level of detailed analysis. Therefore, the meeting analysis is constrained to a greater degree of generalization that would otherwise have been pursued. This is not to say that the analysis should not be considered; rather, it should be taken into account in context with the survey and future community discussions to provide the most accurate portrait of community perceptions.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Ultimately, the discussion at the community meeting and the responses to the Wharf Surcharge Survey show a variety of opinions and perspectives regarding what the Plantation administration should consider. Future actions and discussions should take into account these ideas and the concerns they reflect. Particularly where concerns were raised regarding the feasibility of a surcharge, any movement on this issue should be mindful of community perceptions of the benefits and costs of implementation. By engaging in ongoing discussions with community members and partners, the Board of Assessors will be well equipped to seek funding strategies that are supportive of the goals and needs of the Monhegan community.