

Memorandum

To: Lincoln County Commission

Fm: Bob Faunce
Lincoln County Planner

Dt: May 15, 2011

RE: 2011 Census Data

We have received additional 2010 Census data. This data provides new information on housing and the first detailed look at population. I have attached two spreadsheets. The first summarizes the data from the 2010 Census and the second compares data from the 1990, 2000 and 2010 Censuses.

2010 Census

The 2010 Census reinforces the long-understood fact that Lincoln County and many individual county communities have proportionately more older residents than the state as a whole. While the median age in Maine is 42.7 years, making it the oldest state in the nation, the county's median age is substantially higher at 48.1 years. Average family size is 2.72 persons, which is only slightly less than the state average of 2.83 persons.

The average household size in owner occupied housing is 2.29 persons vs. 2.43 for the state while average household size in rental housing is 2.05, essentially the same for the state. Interestingly, only in Dresden does household size in rental units exceed two and a half persons while, as expected, the average rental household size is much less in Boothbay Harbor, Damariscotta and Newcastle, which are home to several senior citizen housing developments. A total of 5,918 persons live in rental housing in the county representing 17.4% of the total population. Only Boothbay Harbor and Damariscotta exceed the state's rental housing population of 27.2%.

The proportion of seasonal housing in the total county housing stock is 28.7%, which is much higher than the state as a whole. In fact, the portion of seasonal housing in Boothbay Harbor, Bremen, Bristol, Monhegan and South Bristol all exceed 40% and two-thirds of all housing units in Southport are seasonal.

While as noted above Lincoln County's population is comparatively older than the rest of the state's, the town-by-town data is interesting. Please note that the age groupings and descriptors presented below are of my own choosing.

Very young children (percentage of population less than 5 years age)

- Lincoln County is somewhat below state average
- Somerville is over 20% greater than the state average
- Alna, Boothbay, Boothbay Harbor, Bristol and South Bristol are at least 20% below the below state average with Southport and Westport Island less than half the state average

School age children (percentage of population 5-19 years of age)

- Lincoln County is somewhat below the state average
- Boothbay Harbor, Bristol, Monhegan, South Bristol, Southport and Westport Island are at least 20% below the state average
- Only Somerville and Edgecomb exceed the state average

Young adults (20-29 years of age)

- Lincoln County is well below the state average
- Only Wiscasset exceeds the state average
- All other Lincoln County communities except Nobleboro and Waldoboro are at least 20% below the state average with Bremen, Monhegan, South Bristol, Southport and Westport Island less than half the state average

Middle age (30-49)

- Lincoln County is moderately below the state average
- Boothbay Harbor, Bristol, Damariscotta, South Bristol and Southport are at least 20% below the state average
- Only Monhegan substantially exceeds the state average

Empty-nesters and pre-retirees (50-64)

- Lincoln County is moderately above the state average
- Boothbay, Bristol, Monhegan, Southport and Westport Island are at least 20% above the state average

Retirees (65-79)

- Lincoln County is a third higher than the state average
- Boothbay, Boothbay Harbor, Bremen, Bristol, Damariscotta, Newcastle, Nobleboro and Westport Island are at least 20% above the state average with South Bristol and Southport more than twice the state average

Elderly (80+)

- Lincoln County is a third higher than the state average
- Dresden, Monhegan, Somerville, Whitefield and Wiscasset are at least 20% below the state average
- Bremen, Bristol, Newcastle and South Bristol are at least 20% above the state average with Boothbay Harbor and Southport double and Damariscotta triple the state average

The fact that older persons choose to continue move to Lincoln County is, of course, gratifying in that it reflects the quality of life in our many coastal and inland communities. What is of concern, however, to anyone viewing the 2010 Census data is the low proportion of children and adults of child-bearing age in the county. While in some county communities this may be in part due to housing costs, I attribute this primarily to the lack of good job opportunities throughout the county. How many more graduates or young families would opt to stay in or move to Lincoln County if more attractive employment opportunities were available?

1990, 2000 and 2010 Census Comparison

The increase in median age in Lincoln County as well as the state as a whole over the past 20 years is nothing short of remarkable. In 1990, the median age in the county was 37.4 years but twenty years it had increased by 28% to 48.1 years. In practical terms, this is the difference between a parent with children in middle school and an empty nester. In 1990, Southport had the highest median age at 44.6 years. In 2010, the median age in eight communities exceeded 50 years and Southport's was over 60 years.

The county's population growth in the 1990-2000 decade was almost three times the state average yet it dropped to a bit more than half the state average during the past ten years. Although we haven't yet received detailed migration data, I suspect that the reduced population growth rate is in part due to a drop in in-migration late in the decade. The number of retirees moving into Lincoln County from out-of-state or elsewhere in Maine was likely affected by their inability to sell their current homes during the recession.

Lincoln County also lagged the state in the increase in seasonal residences during the past decade after far surpassing the state's growth rate during the previous decade. The numbers vary widely from town to town. For some communities such as Southport, South Bristol and Boothbay Harbor, significant increases in seasonal housing came with decreases or very small increases in year round (occupied) housing units. This is likely due, at least in part, to the conversion or replacement of some year round housing with seasonal residences. Another indicator of this is that while increases in total housing units in these three communities ranged from 9% to 15% over the past decade, each experienced a net decrease in population. These trends, especially when considered in light of substantial increases in median age, raise concerns for the future of elementary schools in these and other small communities that share similar demographic and housing profiles.