



Town of Rockport, Maine

Town Manager's Office

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Town Manager's Report & Update September 13, 2021

Town Office:

Sewer Line - Since our last meeting, we were able to finally have the Town Office's sewer line replaced. The new line runs through the front lawn before crossing the driveway and into the basin. Due to the lack of significant pitch in the line thanks to a relatively flat geography, the contractor encased the pipe in larger stone in hopes the "bony" nature of that rock would provide a firmer base and prevent the line from settling once again. I was told by the former public works director, Steve Beveridge, that the old line was "a 25-year fix at that time" and whereas we are nearing the 25-year mark of the building being at this location, I'd say he was pretty close.

Mask Mandate – Due to the U.S. CDC finding Knox County as a place with "high" transmission of COVID-19, I initiated Stage 2 of the Town's Pandemic and Epidemic Policy which established a mask mandate in all Town buildings. I had hoped the cases locally would drop but unfortunately, we are not headed in the right direction to do so. Additionally, I have made a minor adjustment to the quarantine requirements as they previously existed in the policy, which was adopted before vaccines were available. OSHA has established a series of guidelines for employers, and I used their work as a template for the standards the Town is now using for our employees.

Fire Department:

The past few months have been quite busy for the Fire Department with a seeming never ending run of motor vehicle accidents. The department had 41 calls in just one 35 day stretch in the middle of this summer. The Fire Department is once again looking for more volunteers with several junior members leaving for college or new opportunities. Individuals with interest in joining should contact Chief Peasley.

Police Department:

Officer Celjeta Bixhaku is away at the police academy until early winter, which is causing some shift in responsibilities with being somewhat shorthanded. Camden's officers are being engaged to help, though their department has a pair of vacancies as well. To reduce impacts from COVID, we are having Mandy work out of the Town Office full time and sending those with requests of the administrative assistant to that office. While it is not a perfect system, it certainly reduces the potential impacts of COVID within the workplace.

Assessing:

Kerry committed taxes just over two weeks ago with a mil rate at \$17.05 per thousand, which is a 1.4% increase over last year. Our first tax due date is October 15th, and our second payment is due April 15th. We are certifying that we are at 99% of state valuation which allows our residents to gain nearly the entire exemptions for Homestead and Veterans which are established by the state. However, I would note that the changes we've all seen in the real estate market over the past two years must be watched carefully to ensure the quality rating is high. Speaking from personal experience, it is critical to have fair and equitable property valuation and jumping ahead of issues in that area before it spins out of control is an absolute must for any community.

Town Clerk:

The staff sent out 238 30-day notices in preparation for the filing of liens in the middle of September. Next week we are filing 119 liens which is fairly in line with the last several years (107 in '20, 118 in '19, and 114 in '18). As always, most of our liens are for the timeshare units at the Samoset Resort. The fire suppression system was installed in the vault last week, but we are still looking for our electrician to return to formerly energize the unit.

Opera House:

Megan and Marketing Agent Nancy Albertson have begun to put together marketing materials for prospective renters for private events in the coming months, though no one is sure the impact the pandemic may have on the ability for events to be held. Marketing Agent Kari Luehman will begin working later this month to set up Town produced events.

Harbor:

The busy summer season is beginning to wane, but this summer may have set records in terms of dockage revenue. We are nearly 50% over budget in our revenues for dockage this summer, which as our Harbormaster suggests, our harbor may no longer be the best kept secret on the coast of Maine.

Legacy Rockport has begun their campaign to fundraise for the repair of the Vulcan locomotive. A press release ran in local news outlets and a website has been established for donors to access to help preserve the engine. We anticipate the project will cost \$25,000 to repair the steel and metal, encapsulate the asbestos within the engine, and paint the engine.

Another Legacy Rockport project which is getting off the ground this month is the repair of Kiln #2 in the Harbor Park. Sheridan Brick and Stonework of Belfast has been selected to remove some of the improper mortars placed on the kiln in previous repairs and repoint the kiln with Natural Hydraulic Lime and sand, which is a more appropriate water wicking product. The Town has some reserve funds used for this project, but the bulk of this project is funded thanks to Legacy Rockport's generosity. The entire project should take approximately two weeks to complete for a sum not to exceed \$14,500. For those who wish to donate to these efforts, individuals may contact Legacy Rockport via their Facebook page or on their page on the town's website. On each of those locations, a link is available for online donation.

Library:

As of October 4th, the Library will have a new Youth Services Librarian with the arrival of Charlie Gluck. Charlie is coming to Rockport from the Boston Public Library, and she is excited to join a tight knit community where our kids will grow and learn together in our new building.

Public Works:

Today, we have accepted the bid from Hagar Enterprises for paving with their low bid coming in at \$79 per ton at 9.5mm stone and at \$77 per ton at 12.5mm stone. Paving on Mount Pleasant Street, Grove Street, and Spear Street will begin the week of September 27th.

On August 18th, I opened bids for the Harbor Parking lot which was designed to sit at the corner of Central Street and adjacent to the Boy Scout Trail. We received four bids ranging from a low bid from Farley and Co. in the amount of \$457,993 to a high bid of \$879,897. We are still evaluating these bids and attempting to find a plan to fund the project.

On August 19th, I opened bids for the Main Street sidewalk project due to be funded from the Infrastructure Bond approved two years ago. Unfortunately, the two bids submitted exceeded the amount available remaining under the bond however Maine Water has made us aware that they also have work to do in this section of Main Street. We are working with Maine Water to perhaps reduce our costs to accomplish this project. None of the bidders who participated with bids could accomplish this project until spring as well, so we have some time to formulate our plan.

Public Works Director Mike Young and I met with representatives from Maine DOT concerning plans for the replacement of the Goose River bridge. At present, funding dictates the replacement could occur in 2024, but many steps stand between now and then. Maine DOT is working through the design and survey portions of the project and likely will establish public engagement efforts this winter and spring.

Committee Public Hearing

Scheduled for Monday, September 27th at 6:30 p.m. in the Auditorium at the Opera House to adopt the remote participation policy.

ARPA Update:

Thanks to the tireless efforts of the indefatigable Diane Hamilton, we submitted the application for Knox County's ARPA funding grant process last week.