

2018 Town Manager's Report

The Town of Bucksport continues to make progress as it works to define its future, post mill closing. This fiscal year has seen continued expansion of the local business base with a number of new businesses choosing to locate in Bucksport - as well as a very active residential real estate market. RSU 25 reports 45 new students from Bucksport this year which reflects positively on the Town's plans to attract young families to Bucksport and to add students to our schools.

In addition, the Town Council was able to lower the mil rate slightly for the third year in a row following the increase when the mill closed. They were able to do this with no reductions in service levels and without a heavy dependence on the use of the 'rainy day' fund that helped the Town weather the mill closure.

2018 has been a busy year for business in Bucksport. Whole Oceans announced plans to construct a state of the art land-based aquaculture facility on the former VERSO mill site, Maine Maritime has announced plans to locate a mariner training institute at the site, and the AIM power plant is set to become a part of ISO New England as a back-up power source. The EPA grant-funded ADAPT plan for redevelopment was completed, and the Town moved forward with improvements at the Town Dock and the Marina.

Heart & Soul completed its two years of work and has moved into the implementation phase which includes monitoring the fate of the eighty two ideas that were identified through the H&S process as they are carried out by a host of local organizations.

Town staff continues to work hard to find efficiencies in their departments and to make sure that the public services we supply are second to none.

Town partnerships with RSU 25, Main Street Bucksport, Bucksport Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, the Bucksport YMCA and the Senior Resources committee of the Bucksport Bay Healthy Communities Coalition

Bucksport has been featured in the local Enterprise, Ellsworth American, Bangor Daily News as well as the Island Journal, Yankee Magazine, a number of seafood trade publications, and the Wall Street Journal for the positive work being done in the community.

Town residents are to be commended for their hard work and community spirit in supporting local programs, volunteering for town and local groups, and working to make Bucksport the best community it can be. I am honored to be your Town Manager. The following bullet point list is just a partial list of activities during 2018 – there are many more in addition to the work done by your Town employees every day. If we all work together in a positive way – there is no limit as to what this community can accomplish.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lessard
Town Manager

2018...

Public Works –

- Obtained road edger and have already done 8-10 miles of road edging that will improve safety for the traveling public and will provide longer life for the road surface
- Solar array installed on Public Works Garage that will offset electrical costs for 8 of our town-owned facility bills.
- Work done on trail maintenance at Miles Lane and Silver Lake

Transfer Station

- Orland no longer participates in the Town's transfer station as of 7/1/18
- Town Council updated transfer station rules and fees during 2018

Sewer Treatment –

- New plant construction finished.
- Second full year of operation with no rate increase
- Balance of grant funds to be used for solar array that will reduce electrical costs \$20-\$25,000 per year

Fire/EMS

- 2 Full time persons added, with first three years of salaries and benefits offset by grant funding
- Completing fire alarm and CO2 grant project for Bucksport residents
- Restructured work schedule to have 2 persons on per shift
- Roof repair approved at Public Safety Building
- Replacement Camera System approved for public safety
- Received 2018 Excellence Award from Maine EMS Services

Recreation

- Second successful year with YMCA as operator
- Expanded programming for middle school age children
- Additional swimming programs at the town pool
- Before/After school program
- Upgraded fitness facility

Police

- Chief Geagan completed his term as President of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association
- Sergeant Winchester Awarded Bravery Award from Maine Chiefs
- Restructured Cruiser purchase schedule
- Collaborative work with RSU 25 on upgrading school safety
- Additional grants received for speed details, and seatbelt enforcement
- Department obtained another speed monitoring device from MDOT at no cost to the town

Marina/Waterfront

- Town Dock repair project approved and underway
- Grant received for Gas/Diesel tank replacement project at Marina
- Additional slips to be ready for Marina for 2019 season
- 4 granite benches for the waterfront donated by residents
- \$13,000 in revenue from American Cruise Line stops in Bucksport this season
- First destination cruise ship to dock in Bucksport in October 2018
- Replacing camera system on the waterfront
- Served as location for the Bucksport Arts Festival, Bucksport Bay Festival, Ghostport, the Pirate event in conjunction with Fort Knox, as well as a number of Wednesday on Main events

IT/PEG Channel

- Town contracted with RSU 25 for IT services, resulting in cost savings over hiring a full time employee, as well as efficiencies in working with the RSU.
- Town began broadcasting Planning Board meetings on the local cable channel as well as via video streaming and also began broadcasting all Town Council Committee meetings.
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Economic Development

- 2 lots in the Business Park sold to seafood-related businesses. One will be in operation in 2018
- Friar's opened a business on Main Street
- Glenn's Place was renovated and opened as a family-style restaurant
- Flower Shop opened on Main Street
- Knox Masonry purchased the old town office (and former Chamber building) from the town
- New signage on the waterfront
- ADAPT plan from EPA area wide planning grant nearing completion
- Accessibility grants awarded to 6 local businesses to help make their premises more accessible
- Sign upgrade approved for Business Park
- Microloans provided to three local businesses
- Whole Oceans land based aquaculture development at former mill site is set to close the sale by year end
- Maine Maritime Academy has a purchase and sale agreement with AIM for the location of a mariner training institute at the former mill site
- Our Community & Economic Development Director also acts as a liaison to all local groups that are working on Bucksport's future.
- Developed Dock, Dine & Shop commercials to air on television to promote local businesses

TOWN OFFICE

- Town Office staff implemented an updated software system for vehicle registrations in FY 2018. Car registrations continue to exceed budgeted expectations with the Town collecting \$80,000 more than budgeted for excise tax collection in the 17/18 fiscal year.
- Ergonomic evaluations for Town Office staff work stations was conducted in 2018 with some improvements to be implemented
- The 17/18 audit was completed in a timely manner this year and resulted in a clean bill of 'fiscal management' health thanks to the efforts of the Town Office staff.
- Work on selling abandoned foreclosed properties in 2018 has resulted in sales of a number of properties that had been abandoned so they are now being restored to usable condition.

ASSESSING

- 2 year property assessment revaluation done in-house with the assistance of a part time individual for a cost of \$40,000. Implemented in the 2018/19 tax commitment. Outside revaluation estimates were at least \$200,000 or more.
- Coordination of the Comprehensive Plan and the development of Bucksport NEXT as a means to keep all the local organizations talking with each other and working cooperatively.

Code Enforcement

- Has spent considerable time in 2018 in assisting the Town Council with rewriting sections of the Town Code for clarity. Ordinance changes have also been made due to changes in State statutes that affect our local ordinances.

Council & Administration

- Mill rate at 16.30 is an 80 cent reduction from the high of \$17.10 following closure of the mill
- Town was awarded several awards in 2018 – one from Maine Development for downtown revitalization, one from Hancock County Regional Planning for development efforts post-mill closure, another from Eastern Maine Development Corporation for community development efforts, and was recognized at the State House for its efforts to move forward following the mill closure.
- Council recognized Pat Ranzoni for her work 'Still Mill', sponsored the Robotics team, recognized various school athletic teams, and worked with Senior Resources to address ongoing accessibility concerns
- Town Manager named to State Board of Environmental Protection as well as to the EPA Local Government Advisory Council and Small Community Advisory Committee to the EPA at the national level
- Town continues to get substantial rebates for property and casualty and workers compensation policies due to the good claims experience that the Town has.

Outside Organizations

- Heart & Soul completed their two year process, the Town Council adopted Community heart & soul value statements, 82 ideas emerged from the H & S

process that are being worked on by multiple local organizations. Town Manager and Heart & Soul coordinator Nancy Minott were asked to serve as Heart & Soul Champions by the Orton Foundation.

- Main Street Bucksport held the Bridge the Gap Race, coordinated the first 2 day arts festival, held the third annual International Maritime Film Festival, sponsored Pop Up Art program in Town, started at \$10 on the tenth program to encourage people to shop local, and obtained several grants including one that showcases successful folks from Bucksport. They were a co-recipient with the Town of an award from the Maine Development Foundation for downtown revitalization. MSB also coordinates holiday activities that encourage shopping at local businesses. They also have offered to write grants to assist the Town with stabilizing Wilson Hall, coordinated a highly successful Main Street Clean-up project in conjunction with our Community & Economic Development Director, and are currently working on a grant proposal to bring more arts-related activities to Bucksport.
- Chamber of Commerce sponsors the very successful farmer's market on Thursdays in Town, coordinates the Bay festival, Ghostport, Pixie Harbor Hoopla, and participates in the pirate festival among other member-oriented activities.
- Historical Society put a new roof on their building on Main Street and has indicated a willingness to work with the Town for the addition of a first floor and a relocation of their building.
- Great Pond Mountain Conservation Land Trust – Developed trails on a parcel on Upper Long Pond Road, and worked with RSU 25 to develop a project off the Miles Lane Trails for vernal pool observation.
- Little League and the softball volunteers did a tremendous amount of work to upgrade not only the little league field – but the Reggie Ginn Field as well. With some assistance from the Public Works crew – the field and its amenities are looking great thanks to the volunteers who worked so hard on the project.
- Senior Resources Group of the Bucksport Bay Healthy Communities Coalition continues to serve as the advisory group for maintaining the Town's AARP Age & Ability Friendly status. They volunteer hundreds of hours of work to promote the use of the public transportation bus and the taxi that are available once a week. They also are an active presence at Town Council meetings and Committee meetings in advocating for the inclusion of accessibility considerations in the Town's permitting and inspection processes. Outside of those meetings they work to identify areas where improvements can be made to improve accessibility to all Bucksport locations.