



TOWN OF WINSLOW, MAINE

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Monthly Report to the Town Council –May 2023 - Presented June 12, 2023

Esteemed Councilors,

The month of May was full of meetings, personnel changes, a software upgrade, contaminated water and a major storm. These events kept us all busy in the Town Office as we attempted to meet the needs of the community with limited resources.

Unfortunately, the new Code Enforcement Officer chose to relinquish his position with no notice on May 16. While there is a great deal of grist for the rumor mill I cannot and will not comment on personnel issues. Those are private to the individual concerned. What I can tell you is that he left of his own accord, not due to anyone in the Town dismissing him or otherwise pressuring him to leave. The CEO's sudden departure left us in a lurch during the height of construction season with no one certified to issue permits or perform inspections. This obviously resulted in frustration for residents and contractors. We are very fortunate that our former CEO, Amos Michaud, has agreed to help out four hours per day throughout the summer as we seek a new permanent candidate. Due to his limited time Amos will be triaging the most important issue. Permits and inspections take priority. Property maintenance complaints will be the lowest priority, however if anyone has a concern that constitutes an immediate threat to public health and safety that will be addressed. Amos will not be taking on Planning Board duties. Kaity Philbrick and I will attempt to keep up with those duties. I appreciate everyone's patience as we work through this transition. I want to thank Kaity for all she has done to help serve everyone's needs during the vacancy. This has not been an easy task.

We also had a major water system event as KWD's infrastructure was infiltrated by fire suppression foam as a result of a major structure fire in Waterville. While most of the system remained safe, KWD issued a Do Not Drink Order in an abundance of caution. Our staff did an excellent job of responding to the sudden crisis by keeping the latest up-to-date information flowing on our website and facebook pages and providing 4 pallets of bottled water to our residents on the KWD system. As well as we did there is always an opportunity after such an event to take stock and see what could have been done better. The Department Heads and I will be performing a situational debrief at our monthly meeting this week to identify what went well, what didn't go so well, and how we can improve our response in future events.

One of the major concerns has been the notification to residents and business served by the KWD system. While the responsibility to notify customers resides with KWD, the municipalities they serve have a vested interest in getting the word out quickly to protect our communities. Again, we did a great job getting the word out on social media, but there is no guarantee when people will see those notices. The incident happened in the morning, and many people don't look at our website or facebook while they're working. To that end I am investigating multiple options. The first is reverse e-911 which calls all residents in a community when there is an emergency. That is not available to us at this time because we are not part of a PSAP currently. When Waterville is reinstated as a PSAP this is a possibility, although I don't yet know what types of information we'll be allowed to disseminate through that system. Another option is a system called Go.gov. Kennebec County Emergency Management uses this system, and I already had a meeting schedule with one of their reps this summer. This system sends texts and phone calls, but only to individuals who have enrolled to get notifications. Last, I have reached out to Winslow Public Schools to get the name of

their vendor for the program that notifies parents of school closures and other school notices. Again, we need to have access to all resident phone numbers to make this system work, but it may be a solution. I will keep the Council informed as these solutions are investigated. In the meantime, please continue to monitor the Town of Winslow facebook page and sign up for email alerts from the Town's website. Thank you to our Public Works and Fire Departments for delivering and distributing the bottled water.

On the topic of disasters, FEMA toured the damage from the May 1 flooding at Fort Halifax Park. Although a few of our neighboring communities had it worse, Winslow is still the fifth worst hit Town in Kennebec County. We will be working with KCEMA and FEMA to manage the cleanup in such a way that we ensure compliance with shoreland zoning and meet all requirements for reimbursement. This will be an ongoing effort over the next couple of months.

The last major event in the Town Office was the financial system upgrade on May 22. We opened two hours late in order to give the staff time to set up the new platform at their workstations. Unfortunately, we experienced ongoing technical issues throughout the day, and we were unable to print registrations or receipts until late in the afternoon. Fortunately, Audra and Kaity were able to work with Munis to get the issues resolved so that things were mostly back to normal by Tuesday. The situation was made worse by the fact that there was an error in the sewer billing which doubled the use flow for a segment of customers with account numbers beginning in 55. The staff had to hand correct the bills for those customers, taking additional time in a day where the average transaction was already taking longer than usual. That situation has also been corrected and credits have been issued against all accounts affected. I would like to commend the front office staff on maintaining their professionalism and courtesy during the upgrade difficulties.

In project news;

The contract for the Chaffee Brook Pump Station force main river crossing will be signed on June 8 after which mobilization can begin.

We are still in the running to receive Congressionally Directed Spending funds for Sunset Heights. Senator Collins will be in Town to view both the Sunset Heights area and the Chaffee Brook Pump station on June 9. She is interested in seeing the projects that she has advocated for.

The Ticonic Bridge project is ongoing with daily single-lane closures in each direction. Nightly full closures will begin the night of June 4 with the bridge being closed at 7 p.m. and opening at 6 a.m. the following morning. These closures are expected to continue through June 15. Additionally work will commence on the new traffic pattern at Carter Memorial Bridge on June 5. This will add a dedicated right turn lane onto the bridge for south-bound traffic.

In staff news we have our first Officer Trainee and a new Blue Pin Officer scheduled to begin work on or about June 18. Dylan Rodrigue is a National Guardsman who will begin as a trainee. Dylan has to complete one additional requirement to be eligible for the Maine Criminal Justice Academy. In the interim he will be learning about police work by becoming involved with dispatch and doing daily ride-alongs with staff. He will also be continuing to do preliminary classwork and training for the academy. Craig Johnson is a tenured law enforcement officer currently working for Somerset County. He is also a Winslow resident and looks forward to coming on board with the Winslow Police Department. Welcome to both of them!

We have job ads out for Truck Driver, Code Enforcement Officer and Tax Collector. Unfortunately we aren't getting a lot of response to these ads, although we do have some potential for the CEO position. I encourage anyone who is aware of people who might qualify for these positions to direct them to the Town website for more information.

Respectfully submitted by,
Erica LaCroix
Town Manager