



TOWN OF WINSLOW, MAINE

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Monthly Report to the Town Council –February 2022 - Presented March 14, 2022

Esteemed Councilors,

The month of February was all about budget. This year is challenging on many fronts, and MTCMA members have been bouncing our numbers and information off each other in an effort to get a hold on the current trends and what that means for municipal budgets. First, the CIP index is 5.9% and inflation is rampant. Managers are proposing anywhere between a 3% and 6% wage hike for non-union employees. Fuel oil, propane and gas are rising rapidly along with the cost of electricity. Fortunately, I have managed to lock in 1-year pricing that will mitigate some of that, but those costs also affect the fees our other contractors charge in terms of delivery charges and commodities like asphalt. There are also continuing supply chain issues affecting things like culverts, pipe, auto parts and the vehicles themselves. The latter leads to a second issue that has come to light, which is a potential steep decline in excise tax revenue. Simply put, the car lot inventory is way down, and no vehicles to sell means no excise tax to collect. Third, as promised in last year's budget, I have been performing a total overhaul of our compensation structure. Fire, Police and Public Works were largely adjusted through negotiations and new contracts that have already been established. That leaves the remainder of our staff to research for market trends and then adjust for anticipated FY2023 market increases. This has taken the bulk of the time involved in this budget. I apologize to everyone who has had to deal with my unavailability and somewhat short demeanor as I go through this process, and I thank you all for your patience.

The February Coffee with the Manager meeting was held on February 2 at Big G's Restaurant. The switch to an afternoon meeting to give folks who can't make morning meetings an opportunity to participate did not work out very well. Not only were there no new attendees, but the regulars who come to the morning meetings did not show up. We will attempt one more afternoon meeting in March to see if this was a one-time issue or if afternoons just aren't viable.

The Waterville Council followed our lead in recommending a full closure of the Ticonic bridge during reconstruction next year. However, MDOT is now pushing back indicating that this may be impossible due to the utilities on the bridge. When MDOT originally met with Winslow and Waterville last spring there were 3 options on the table, one of which was a full closure which they estimated would save six to twelve months of construction time, so it is frustrating that they have now changed gears. A meeting between MDOT, Waterville and Winslow is scheduled for March 14 to discuss plans moving forward.

Project Updates:

The new Town Website. Revize has completed beta-testing and it is time to train the staff who will be managing content. The training has been scheduled for March 29. I should state that the delay is in large part on my end given that I have been focused on budget as the main priority.

Dude Solutions. No update since January. Again the delay in moving forward is on my end. I will look towards picking this up in April.

Junior High Environmental Study. I reached out to Craig Wilson at Icon Environmental again to get on their calendar and have not yet heard back. I will be looking into other potential firms to perform this study.

Food Waste Pilot. The January collection numbers are attached.

Agriculture Commission Report to Council – See attached.

Operations continue to be busy with budget preparation which is our current priority. Looking forward to budget discussions in the coming month.

Respectfully submitted by,
Erica LaCroix
Town Manager