



TOWN OF WINSLOW, MAINE

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Monthly Report to the Town Council –March 2023 - Presented April 10, 2023

Esteemed Councilors,

March was a very productive month. We kicked off the Municipal Facilities Study, held three full-day budget workshops, held interviews for Code Enforcement Officer, Town Clerk, Dispatcher and Public Works Foreman, and issued procurements for HR and Labor Attorney and Municipal Auditor. It feels like we've made some headway on some major issues.

March 1 Coffee with the Manager was again well-attended. Discussion remained focused around the Beautification Committee and volunteerism efforts.

On March 9 I met with Matt Carter and Jeanna Detour from Haley Ward to discuss the needs of an Administrative municipal office. We discussed the spatial needs, technology, efficiency and most importantly in my mind, security. At this point Haley Ward has met with all department heads except Library and Parks and they have been gathering data that will enable them to put together a comprehensive analysis of facility needs. This is the first step in determining what the Town's needs will be now and moving forward over the next 50 or so years.

We held budget workshops on March 14, 16 and 23 which encompassed all aspects of the budget except for Schools. They will present on April 3. I would like to commend my department heads and Sherie Fisher for putting together some really great presentations. I felt they were very effective and much easier to follow than merely discussing line items.

There is a lot of uncertainty going into this budget with rising costs of services, biosolid disposal fees which affect the fees we pay to Kennebec Sanitary Treatment District, the loss of Somerset County as our PSAP and no information on who will take over these services for Winslow or what it will cost, and ever-increasing energy costs. The Town's revenues are also subject to a great deal of speculation. The Sanitation budget took a \$139,000 hit with the exhaustion of the PERC monies that were supplementing the budget. Excise tax is trending down somewhat. The good news is that after the town-wide revaluation project we are likely to see valuations go up, which will limit the amount we need to raise taxes, and the State revenue sharing figures continue to be above what they were last year.

Unfortunately, this will not completely cover expenditure increases as there is a huge hole in the Capital budget with no excess sources of funding that have been available in the previous two budget cycles. The Capital budget is the bulk of the increase, amounting to \$900,000 over last year (\$900,000 was the amount we had put in from the sale of Orion Ropeworks in FY22, and in FY23 we contributed \$700,000 in ARPA funding). Sewer fees have not been adjusted in almost a decade and they are no longer covering the cost of operating and maintaining the system. This is a user-fee-based budget, so it is only supported by those sewer fees. This budget proposes a 25% increase to users on the system. The Schools are also projecting a significant increase, although they are hoping for better news before they present to Council on April 3. We will have a more accurate picture after April 3, but we are currently estimating a 1.6 mil increase. I would like to point out that once we address the shortfall in Capital this year we should be at the end of the major

mil rate increases. We can expect costs to continue to rise, but this is the last of the areas that were relying on fund balance or other windfalls to cover costs. Look for the full FY 2024 budget to be posted on the Town's website by April 13.

In project news;

Chaffee Brook is currently out to bid to start the river crossing portion of the project this year.

We have applied for Congressional Directed Spending for the Sunset Heights project with Senators King and Collins and Representative Pingree. Last year we were unsuccessful in this bid but we hope to get better news this year on much needed funding for this project.

The Comprehensive Plan is nearly finished and the committee completed the goals and strategies section at the March 22 meeting. We look to wrap this up by June.

The Ticonic Bridge project is moving forward the first week in April and the last pre-construction meeting was held with MDOT, Cianbro, Consolidated Communications and the municipalities. We worked out communication trees for critical information and the municipalities were able to discuss our concerns which are largely about traffic control, advance communications, adequate signage and phasing of traffic signals at the Waterville end of Carter Memorial Bridge. I feel comfortable that we have a good foundation to make this go as smoothly as possible and that we have a communications matrix in place that will aid in addressing any issues as they are encountered.

Last, we finally have some movement on the Junior High Environmental Study and should have some figures on the costs to do test boring soon.

March was a busy month in terms of full-time staff hiring.

On March 10 I extended an offer of employment to Jim Flanders for the permanent Code Enforcement Officer position. He started the position on March 27 and has been hitting the ground running. Jim has been the CEO for the Town of Pownal and the City of Brunswick.

We conducted the interviews for Town Clerk on March 20 and 21. We interviewed five candidates, three of whom were highly qualified. In the end the hiring panel chose to offer the permanent position to Audra Fleury. Audra has been with the Town since 2019 and has worked her way up from Finance Clerk/Deputy Tax Collector, to Codes and Assessing Assistant/Tax Collector. Audra has been the Interim Town Clerk since January 9 and has done an excellent job in that capacity. I'm thrilled to have her on as the permanent Town Clerk!

On March 27 Paul Fongemie and I interviewed three candidates for the Public Works Foreman position. Of this group we extended two offers. Trevor Tucker is currently one of our Senior Equipment Operators, and he will be training alongside Jean-Pierre Faucher so he is ready to take over the reins upon his retirement. Karl Morse is a 37-year veteran of Public Works and will be hired as the new foreman over parks maintenance and sewer operations. Karl has been the Highway Superintendent at the City of Waterville since 1991. He will be joining us on April 10.

On March 30 the Public Safety Director had me meet with their candidate for the Dispatcher position, Amanda Husson. Amanda is currently teaching English at Husson University and has an excellent administrative background that will be invaluable in getting through the accreditation process. And it's no coincidence that her last name is Husson. Her great-grandfather founded the university! Amanda will come on board on April 17.

Congratulations to all of you and I look forward to having you in Winslow!



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As we look ahead to April we hope to be contracting a new HR and Labor Attorney and a new Municipal Auditor. We will continue to issue procurements for spring and summer projects and should have the new offices at the Town Office completely finished. We will have the first vote and public hearing for the FY2024 municipal budget on April 24, at which time myself and the department heads will do a full presentation to the public and the Council. It will be another busy month!

Respectfully submitted by,
Erica LaCroix
Town Manager