

## Eliot Town Manager Report

August 29, 2023

Submitted by

Michael J. Sullivan to the Eliot Selectboard

Honorable Select Board, this is an abridged accounting of some of the projects and issues I and the dedicated municipal staff have been working on lately for the benefit of the Town of Eliot and its citizens.

### November 7<sup>th</sup> Elections.

State elections and local referendum ballots are available in the Town Clerk's Office now with related information about warrant articles before the voters. The material for this election can be found at the link below.

<https://www.eliotmaine.org/home/news/special-town-referendum-and-state-maine-referendum-be-informed-voter>

We encourage people to learn more and feel free to ask questions. If there is specific questions you would like addressed please feel free to send to me at [townmanager@eliotme.org](mailto:townmanager@eliotme.org) and I will do my best to help you find the information you need. There is also printed material in the lobby of Town Hall and if you would like please let me know and we will mail you a copy of the material.

### Eliot and the Eastern Trail.



The Town Planner Jeff Brubaker recently hosted a meeting of VHB (Tony Grande, Peter Goff), Maine DOT (Martin Rooney, Dakota Hewlett), Southern Maine Planning Commission (Dean Williams), Eastern Trails, planners from surrounding communities, and a host of others at the Eliot PD Community Room to discuss SMPDC Easter Trail Connectivity Feasibility Study which will provide create a strategy for bike paths from Portland to Portsmouth.

The longer-term plan is to create a bike corridor going 3,000 miles from Maine to Florida. This is a massive undertaking which is being given massive support from federal and state partners. We belong to the segment nick named the

Berwicks to the Border. This stretch will start at the Wells North Berwick line and travel down to Portsmouth.

The exact path is being worked out, but through Planner Brubaker's advocacy and avid attention to the economic juggernaut commonly known as Bike/Ped, Eliot will be on the map. I encourage all interested parties to make suggestions to Jeff or SMPDC (Dean Willians), let them know Eliot is ready to ride.

The above is a section already built near Ellsworth Maine, why not Eliot?



### **Biodegradable Bags @ Transfer Station.**

As we try to find all the different ways the Town of Eliot is slow leaking revenues at the Transfer Station, we have come upon another fissure. The biodegradable bags are now costing 25 cents apiece. We are handing them out for free. Diverting food waste is an important measure in lowering our solid waste tipping and transportation costs.

However, the number of bags being distributed does not have a direct correlation to the waste amount. I will propose selling 20 biobags for \$5 to offset the cost of the bags. I believe it will still be far less expensive than using PAYT bags and it would lower the subsidization by the taxpayers.

I fully understand no one likes the changes, especially those who are beating the system. Thank you to the staff at the Transfer Station for cooperating through these changes. Making the solid waste disposal process equitable for all will be essential to the long-term preservation of this service. It would be likely easier, as so many communities have done or are doing to throw our hands up in the air and let a contractor come in and take the operation over. Thankfully everyone seems to want to make this work and is committed to doing so.

### **Eliot Hosted MSAD 35 Meeting.**

We recently hosted the monthly meeting of MSAD #35 in Eliot Town Hall. The schools briefed us on the new Narcan availability in the Marshwood Schools and the basics of how that program will function. The district was also nearing the date where the school census is set for the school year. Each year during October the student count is set, this number is a key part of the funding formula from the State of Maine.

The Marshwood High School is seeing a growth in extra curricula participation and is nearing pre-pandemic numbers. This is a good sign for the health of the system in general and a good reflection on the communities of Eliot and South Berwick.

### **Budget, Health Insurance.**

We have been informed by Allegiant Care, one of our health insurance providers (Union) that their premiums will likely be increasing at least 4%. The expectation is the BC/BS will be around 5-6% increase in their premiums.

We have met with an insurance broker to give a cursory look at market trends to see if there are any options which will protect benefits while stabilizing costs or lessening increases in FY 25 or future years. This is a large ticket item, nearly one half million a year, which we have been taking a longer look at this year.

The challenge is not to impact the benefit to employees, especially in an environment where a qualified workforce is always getting offers and finding replacements remains difficult. We are exploring HSAs and other options which make stretch dollars farther for employees and save dollars for the Town.

**Murray Rowe Park.**

There is nothing better than being in a room of baseballers after a successful season. They love to relive and deservedly so through photos and video snippets scrolling on a screen that bear witness the season of success. While the smiles on the players in those videos will warm the coldest heart, the smiles on the coaches and volunteers watching the replay at a recent meeting of Marshwood Baseball on a cold and rainy October evening was heartwarming is well.

I was invited to attend to speak about the warrant article coming before the voters to invest \$500,000 in Murray-Rowe Park. There was obviously wide support from the crowd of 30 plus Eliot residents. They have already started to make their advocacy on social media and through family and friends.

We discussed the commitment from the Eliot Select Board and Budget Committee in supporting the article, there was also concern about whether it was enough. I admittedly could not answer that, but it is certainly a good start in terms of investment. All parties agreed there is a need and if possible, should be part of this investment to create a softball diamond at Murray-Rowe. While the primary objective is to get the existing facility back to usable conditions, we are committed to finding a way to establish a softball field in Eliot.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan

Town of Eliot, Manager