

Eliot Town Manager Report

October 5, 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.

FY2025 Budget.

The FY 25 budget process has begun, departments are reviewing contractors and suppliers'



services and materials that are likely to increase in the next fiscal cycle with the respective vendors. We will see increases in health insurance, fuel, and materials undoubtedly in FY 25. I can assure the Select Board, we will look at every reasonable measure to mitigate those increases through innovative, creative, and efficient strategies whenever possible.

While the Consumer Price Index measuring inflation has started to see signs of leveling at 3.7% over the last twelve months, energy prices recently have spiked (5.6% in August). This has an effect on all phases of the operation from town vehicles to paving (petroleum intense) to something as simple as the cost of coming to work for employees. It also will have an effect on deliveries of materials, snow plowing and heating if the trend continues.

The challenge of predicting costs 18 or more in advance is always a challenge, but in a particularly unstable market it becomes more complex by a factor of five. Becoming more comfortable with how reserve accounts may be used to satisfy unexpected increases during the cycle is something I am hoping for as this process evolves. The traditional question of "why did you not put this in the budget", is simply answered by "..... because we were being conservative in our projections". This would be an honest answer and should be viewed as an effort to keep a tight budget. To often the honest strategy is painted as conspiracy or obfuscation, that could not be further from the truth.

Compensation and the related pressure on tangential costs associated with staffing will certainly increase in the proposed FY 25 budget, there is no way to avoid it. Remaining (or becoming) competitive with salaries is something that cannot be ignored. The Town of Eliot has made some modest progress in that respect and as our staff becomes better trained and more efficient, they become more susceptible to "poaching", for lack of a better term. The cost of retention is significantly less than re-hiring and re-training new staff. Finally, we recently were fully staffed in the Town Hall. We still have openings for CSD, PW and PD. We will hopefully

remain fully staffed to determine our capacity and look at where we may have gaps in skill sets or additional allocation of staff.

There is a great deal to come on this over the next nine months before we deliver the FY 25 budget to the voters, but the process is started!

Eliot Festival Days.

It is now in the rear-view mirror, but everyone has declared Eliot Festival Days a success. In spite of an abundance of activities competing with the 42nd annual festival for attendance, but still this great community event experienced a steady turn-out all day.



The Road Race had over 150 participants, even though it was the day before the Maine Marathon (no I was not running in the marathon). The night before you can see the organizers registering runners and handing out the swag in Town Hall.

Everyone who attended had a real positive vibe and are already looking forward to next years Festival. The Chili Festival went well, thank you to the American Legion and the parade was enjoyed by young and old.



There is a lot to be proud of in Eliot and thanks to the Eliot Festival Committee there was a day to show just how proud the community is!

Route 236 Water and Sewer Extension Project.

The only part of winter I can truly say I am looking forward to is a respite from the project. As I have said and stand by this statement, this project is the most complex infrastructure project in Eliot's history. I have had a number of people who have made comment about the quality of the work and while there always can be improvement, this project was overseen by two engineering firms and Maine DOT and every compaction test, third party review and visual analysis suggested it was within the scope and practices of a road project of this nature.

Plainly, that does not make the teeth rattling bumps and jumps we have all experienced any less acceptable as we drive along. I do want to sincerely thank the vast majority of citizens who clearly understand we are wanting an end to this phase of the project as much as the next person.



Illegal Dumping on Public Properties.

The Public Works Department has worked very hard to clean up public properties, including parks. I would strongly encourage people to resist bringing their grass clippings, downed branches, or other debris to public or private property.

As property owners we bear the responsibility to properly dispose of our debris in a responsible and legal manner. Leaving it in our parks, not only is illegal, but often robs taxpayer resources of funded staff time or money which could be allocated elsewhere.

We would greatly appreciate citizens to never consider the parks as a receptacle and always report such activity when you witness it, just a tip, if you can get a license plate it helps!

York Region Chamber of Commerce.

I attended a meeting of YRCC and there was conversation about some new tourist activities in the region in respect to bus tours from North Carolina, Mississippi, New Jersey, and other states increasing their tours to Southern Maine. They would like to make sure the Chamber is aware of festivals, events, or places to visit that may be of interest to visitors.

We also discussed how we may encourage more businesses or events in Eliot, specifically to be insert in their guides or be present at their events. Please go to their website to learn more.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J Sullivan

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Town of Eliot, Manager