

## **Eliot Town Manager Report**

**February 16, 2022**

Submitted by

**Michael J. Sullivan**

To

**Eliot Select Board**

Please accept this abridge report of activities and projects I and the dedicated staff have been working on in Town Hall these past weeks.

**Route 236 Sewer Project;** We took one more step towards officially starting this long await project, as we received our FONSI or “Finding of No Significant Impact” from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. The next required step is to advertise the statement from MDEP both on our website and a “newspaper of local circulation”. We immediately took both actions; it is on our town website and will be in the newspaper (Seacoast).

We continue to work on the SRF application for the project bonding. I have reached out to some former bond advisors I have worked for guidance. We also just (today) received our “Contract #1 “notice from MEDEP. My expectation is we will have that portion of the process finished up shortly.

Underwood Engineering is moving to the 100% design phase and I am hoping the bid documents are out on the street by early March and we have a contractor in place by mid-April. At that juncture we will be able to set a construction time line coordinated with MEDOT and abutters of the project commencement of actual construction.

We also will be seeking a qualified owner’s project manager (OPM) to oversee and communicate changes on behalf of the municipality. It goes without saying there will be bumps in the road or clogs in the pipes or whatever other colloquialism that may apply, having a knowledgeable and experienced overseer working on behalf of the Town of Eliot will cause appreciable savings long term and short term for this project.

Planner Jeff Brubaker has been vital to moving this project along and will continue to play a major role in guiding it along and assisting in making decisions along the way. However, he has a multitude of other projects and commitments he needs to turn his attention towards. The OPM will allow him to reallocate some time towards other issues, while still lending his understanding to the Route 236 Sewer expansion project.

The increased allocated daily capacity from Kittery Sewer is being drafted into an amended agreement. I have had several very cooperative meetings and conversations with Kittery Town Manager Kendra Amaral. She has been very professional and clearly acting in the best interest of her town, but also keenly aware of the importance of regional cooperation. Thank you, Manager Amaral, for your professional acumen in respect to municipal issue which face our conjoined communities.

**Records and Storage System;** We have received a comprehensive analysis and proposal from King Information Systems to address organizational and storage systems or the lack thereof in Town Hall. As you can see by the before and after pictures below this is something which plagues many cities and towns (pix of other Town's storage areas). Eliot is actually better of than many, but still clearly in need of a system upgrade.



On the left you see a storage area which lacks any semblance of order. Boxes which are over sized and likely to cause injuries if someone attempted to move them from their present resting place.

A situation like this leads to prolonged searches, draining staff hours or even worse causing serious injuries which result in costly Workmen Comp claims for individuals. One such claim could easily cost more that the total cost of implementation of this system, complete with appropriate shelving.



Here on the left is the same are with a system in place, proper shelving and appropriately sized boxes to avoid injuries.

King Info's professionally trained team would come into Eliot Town Hall for seven days to put in place the system, file all the boxes, put them in a traceable data base so an employee can easily find the records and prepare all unwanted or unneeded documents for destruction under the rules set by the State of Maine.

Having an experienced people and a complete process will save staff from having to do work they an ill-trained to perform. This process is really an art and while it may look easy, I assure you many have made that unfortunate assumption and paid the price in numerous ways later on.



The solutions go beyond simple files. Their experience allows then to facilitate maps, binders, microfilm and other odds and ends. You cannot believe what is found in the bowels of Town Halls.

There will be a substantial acquisition of space as we better manage the contents and there is an annual maintenance component which will keep the system aligned. Between the space savings and the reassessment of need in the present or in the case of future renovations the savings are appreciable. This becomes the proverbial "no brainer".

**Payroll System;** Our HR Specialist Melissa Albert and I continue to meet with various vendors who offer data base payroll systems. The paper and input system now in place has served Eliot well, but is obsolete, out dated and fraught with error potential. It also is staff-time intensive, time which needs to be allocated to other tasks.

These systems provide remote features where key individuals may access securely to adjust or issue payroll remotely. For a small organization like Eliot this is critical, we all learned the importance of remote access during the last two years, the hard way. This will also allow the employees more direct access to information, such as pay, deduction, benefits and other features from their personalized portal.

We have met with Harper's and Paychex; both have impressive features. Harpers is slightly less expensive at this point, but Paychex has expressed a willingness to take a closer look to see what they may be able to do.

Each will do all tax filings and would be available to defend us in any legal action concerning payroll errors. Both provide robust training and have redundancy in their system to address any system attacks, malfunctions or the need to process outside of Eliot.

We hope to make a final decision in the next ten days and move forward with the project. This will be a major upgrade from how we handle payroll presently.

**Finance Director Doreen Chester;** I am pleased to announce Ms. Chester will begin her career in Eliot on February 22. She has already spent weekend time here in Town Hall getting training from the former Treasurer/Finance Director Jordan Miles who already is a superstar in Old Orchard Beach.

We are all excited about welcoming Doreen into the fold here in Eliot Town Hall. This is an opportune time for us to consider change to some of the procedures and policies for various departments in respect to fiscal policy. This will be a long and kaizen process. Kaizen, by the way is a Japanese business term which represents a "continuous improvement" approach to component systems and processes. I have always believed it should be applied to municipal operations regularly.

As well as we did something in the past, we always should examine how we may improve, lest we become complacent. That is why the previous "before" picture of record storage looks so bad and functions like it looks, there was no focus on improving.

Respectfully submitted

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