



Eliot Town Manager Report

April 7, 2022

Submitted by

Michael J. Sullivan to the Eliot Selectboard

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

MSAD 35 Marshwood Middle, Eliot Elementary; Recently I had the pleasure to tour the Marshwood Middle School and Eliot Elementary School with Superintendent John Caverly. I would like to thank the Superintendent for taking time out of his busy schedule to guide me through the two schools.

In both cases I found engaged students and dedicated passionate teachers. The facilities were well kept and there was evidence of attention to maintenance at every turn. The staff and administration are utilizing every nook and cranny in innovative ways to provide education and to keep students safe and healthy.

Although these buildings both reflect their age in some ways, due to the attention and inventiveness at both schools they continue to serve the students well. However, with the ever-changing needs of education it will eventually be a need for substantial renovation or perhaps replacement at some point in time, it is just the way it works.

I was particularly impressed with some of the tech curriculum work being offered in the middle school. I was able to meet several impressive staff at Marshwood including Vice Principal Fillion. In the elementary setting it was heart-warming to see the genuine and caring relationship Principal Pete Harrison has with teachers, staff and especially students. The investment being made in the schools now will pay dividends long into the future for Eliot families.

Property Task Force; On Tuesday April 5th the Eliot Property Task Force met to discussed various distressed properties in Eliot. The "Force" is comprised of the Police Chief, Fire Chief, Code Enforcement Officer, Planning Director, General Assistance Administrator, the Land Use Assistant and the Town Manager. We have added the new regionally shared clinical social worker Diane Mynott. This is an important new addition as many of the issues we are dealing with are framed by mental health and/or substance abuse.

The purpose of having regularly scheduled Task Force meetings is intended to keep a laser focus on this significant issue for Eliot. We know and share the frustration these property issues fold and unfold over a long period of time for the owners and neighbors. It is like weeds in an unattended garden, you can get overwhelmed if you do not tend to it regularly.

The first couple of meetings the Force was concentrating on the Governor Hill and Depot Road properties, which we continue to address. We have had some limited success and will continue



to add more strategies to get those properties in to compliance. Always celebrate small victories, those victories could cause a smaller battle later on. We have added a properties in the Main and Aqua Ave neighborhood and others on State and Bartlett to the growing list.

At this point we will do everything we can to coerce the property owners into compliance, but will not rule out more aggressive approaches, including fines, legal action or condemnation when appropriate. We always need to be respectful of property owners' rights, as well, we need to avoid being the arbiters of beauty. That said public safety is of utmost concern.

Input from the public is welcomed, but these action and solutions are very plodding and unfortunately burn time. Believe me if we could find a quick solution, we would jump on the opportunity to expedite the process. Thank you for your patience.

CIP Town Hall Building Committee; I was in attendance at the most recent meeting of this committee. They continue to work diligently and methodically to develop a plan to present to the public to replace/renovate Eliot Town Hall.

The present iteration of the plan would double the size of the present Town Hall and provide some needed and innovative ideas. There is a drive-up window which will provide limited service for the Clerk's Office in an accessible and convenient manner in the latest drawing. The Community Service Department will have access to a multi-use space to provide some adult and senior programing, voting could be held on-site and General Assistance would have proper space to meet and address those citizen needs.

The final plan seems to be somewhat off distance, but the committee continues to ask and seek accurate answers to questions relative to their mission and critical to delivering a facility which will expand its usefulness, is cost effect (construction and subsequent operations) and serve the Town of Eliot for generations.

Finance Director; I was very saddened to receive the resignation of our Finance Director. We had great hopes, as she is a very accomplished municipal finance professional.

We have immediately started to seek filling the position, which will be very difficult. During her short tenure she did identify many of the organizational weaknesses which plague the system. Many of these deficiencies were ones the previous Finance Director pointed out as he departed.

It may become necessary for the Town to bring in contract staff to address some of the concerns and to get on a solid footing. The hope is we will be able to revamp the policy and procedures for finance within the next twelve months, however this will take significant training and focus on the gaps in our present procedures.

Spinney Creek Tide Gates; Recently I had the pleasure to meet with Laurie and Pearce Howell of Spinney Shellfish. I was appreciative they took the time to give me a tutorial on how the



operation of the tidal gates are vital to the eco-system of the operation and aquatic life related to the shellfish industry.

It is a beautiful area and we have sent out notification of the 2022 Tidal Gate Schedule to the abutters of the creek. It also is on the town website. I look forward to learning more about the operation.

Proposed Spinney Creek Tide Gate Schedule - 2022

Date of Opening	Time of Opening	Date of Closing	Time of Closing	Duration
4/11/22	8:07 AM	4/12/22	9:04 AM	1 day
5/9/22	6:23 AM	5/10/22	7:16 AM	1 day
6/8/22	6:31 AM	6/9/22	7:27 AM	1 day
6/27/22	11:43 AM	6/28/22	12:26 PM	1 day
7/25/22	10:31 AM	7/26/22	11:17 AM	1 day
8/22/22	9:12 AM	8/23/22	10:01 AM	1 day
9/19/22	7:31 AM	9/20/22	8:31 AM	1day
9/28/22	5:29 AM	9/29/22	6:24 AM	1 day
10/18/22	6:51 AM	10/19/22	7:48 PM	1 day

Please note this schedule may be subject to change due to weather, mechanical or unforeseen circumstances without notice. However, we will attempt to follow the schedule as close as possible.

Planning Board Retreat; Wednesday evening the Planning Board met in a “retreat” setting to break bread, discuss concepts and receive a tutorial on best practices for boards from Attorney Phil Saucier. I was honored to be allowed to address this hard-working group of individuals.

The heart of my message was to thank them for their work and to illuminate the work done by the Planning Director Jeff Brubaker and the Land Use Assistant Kearsten Metz who were in attendance. There was no disagreement how important these employees are to the present and future of Eliot.

I went on in my remarks to stress the importance of voting on June 14th and to consider the Select Board budget which will provide the Town Manager to provide critical training and



compensation so we can retain and expand the service capacity for these and other critical staff throughout the municipal organization. Thank you, Jeff and Kearsten for all your efforts

Citizens Option Meeting; The annual stand off was held at the Marshwood Middle School Monday March 28th. The Select Board Members Donhauser, Widi, Dow and McPherson were in attendance as well as members of the Budget Committee. There were several department managers and employees in attendance and three interested citizens.

I appreciated the Select Boards continued unanimous support of the “Select Board budget” which calls for “investing in Eliot” including the most important resource human resource. The Budget Committee continued to play outside the Charter with their budget and by hurling unfounded remarks, and remarks while only looking short term at the cheap way out. They seem to either not care or do not understand the long-term costs to the community with the BC’s “race to the bottom approach” to municipal budgets.

Please take the time to review the material about the FY 23 budget on the town website and call or email me with any questions to learn more about why it is important to invest in Eliot at this time. I am confident the voters of Eliot will see the need to invest when they review the proposed approach to the municipal needs and the need for investment in the human component of the organization. Thank you for all the calls of support we are receiving!

236 Sewer and Water Project; The bid (yes singular) was open as scheduled under the watchful eye of Planner Jeff Brubaker and Cole Mendy (Underwood Engineering). There was bad news, bad news and somewhat good news resulting from the process.

The first bad news is there was only one bidder and that bid came in over budget. Neither of these should come as a surprise given the cost of goods and the flood of infrastructure projects coming to market. There is simply not enough material, equipment or skilled labor to meet all the needs, so then it becomes who can pay more.

The good news is since the project has one bidder; within reason the project may be able to be realigned to accommodate the budget with an appropriate “first” phase of the project through negotiations. The most important measure is to move ahead with confidence. We will work to adjust the phasing and try to find savings, but ultimately there is a commitment to do this right.

Beech Road; more good news, through the diligence of Representative Meyer the Maine DOT contacted PW Director Steve Robinson and I on Tuesday to let us know they would be out at the failed culvert on Beech Road on Tuesday April 12 to make temporary repairs to the road to make it safe.

In July after the migration of various aquatic species in the brook below there will be a complete rebuild of the culvert and road surface, which will undoubtedly affect traffic for weeks on Beech Road, we will update with more information as the time draws nearer.



We also were encouraged by Regional Director Robert Macpherson who has committed to taking a personal interest in response to requests made by the Town of Eliot and its residents. Again, thank you Rep Meyer and Director Macpherson.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan
Eliot, Town Manager