

Eliot Town Manager Report

May 3, 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.

Town of Eliot Staffing Changes.

Over recent weeks there have been several changes to the staffing model and responsibilities associated with the various positions. These changes have been given great consideration and approached in a thoughtful manner.

It always is a difficult balance to make the adjustments when an organization is committed to advancing and retaining employees in the organization. When you have employee(s) filling an organizational need well, the easy path is let the person continue. However, it is a much more complex and somewhat exhausting practice to move the organization ahead while keeping the employee who seek change fully engaged. In the end making moves internally you hope to avoid losing the employee and the investment the organization has made by them going elsewhere.

Every employee is different, some are content to stay in a position doing the same task for decades, others look for change, live to find new experiences. It is the “balance “of change and consistency that is so elusive. The operation of a municipality needs the person who seeks change, but is built on those who are “consistent”.

We continually are looking to first see if people are well suited to advance within the organization, but must be honest with ourselves when there is no internal candidate. It is when we do not have a candidate internally for management to ask why the staff does not have the want or capabilities to move up, take on new responsibilities. Often there are very solid reasons and that is okay.

However, we need to continually ask probing questions about the direction we are head as a unit. How will we help an employee be ready in the future? How can we rethink the work flow to allow growth? How can we be more efficient? Are we asking the wrong questions? Which may be the hardest question to answer.

As we look to fill the vacant position of Public Works Director as just one example, the easy step would have been to ignore how we may want to adjust the responsibilities, not try to redistribute some tasks, not take inventory of possible changes, just do it like it always has been done. That would certainly be the easiest approach. Still, we need to accept that the last Director had an effective style, which cannot be duplicated, emulated or matched. It worked for Steve Robinson, but he was uniquely suited to do the job his way. There is no replica we can insert; we need to understand the changing tides.

It is important we not only seek a different a style of management; we need to bring change to the support systems around management. As we try to reach that goal, we have been fortunate to have the help of an experienced former Kittery Public Works Director Norm Albert to step into the breach. He

was recruited by me as Town Manager to fill the need on a short-term basis as part-time consultant. It is common knowledge that he is the husband of Asst. Town Manager Melissa Albert. I want to make it clear that she did not participate in the outreach to Norm (other than to supply me with his number), does not oversee Norm's work (at least in Eliot) and had no involvement in setting his compensation.

Norm has brought some valuable experience to the Public Works and is already using those talents to help the department move forward, including the staff. I have asked Norm to listen to the ideas and concerns of the staff and coach -up the team to the greatest extent possible.

David Ross-Lyons has accepted the challenge moving from the exceptional work he was doing in the Town Clerk's Office to the Public Works to take over the administrative duties previously performed by Jordan Tweedie. His presence at the Public Works I am confident will have a positive and profound effect.

This was made plausible by the growth of Lauren Albert in the Clerk's Office and the training her colleagues and Clerk Wendy Rawski have provided over her first six months. The Clerk is presently working on a realign plan for the office. We fill two positions in the Clerk's Office, as Tax Collector Brenda Harvey will be retiring in the next 60 to 365 days:).

We also have had the good fortune to get a well-qualified Town Assessor Donald Ferrara, who began work on May 1. Don has hit the ground running and as soon as Consolidated Communications gets him one of the new phones, he will become fully available. He is available by email at dferrara@eliotme.org

On May 1 we also had a former employee Brian Holt return to the Public Works Department. His experience and knowledge in so many areas will make him a "Swiss Army Knife" kind of employee. We expect our summer staffer Will B. Parker to return soon from college, so things are looking up all around.

Town Hall Security System.

The Town Hall security system was a victim of the phone system install. Not to get into much detail, as one should avoid with security systems, let's just say it is working!

The close circuit cameras are also fully functional at this time and we are working on several other upgrades in this area going forward. Our goal is to make Town Hall available, accessible and above all safe.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan

Town of Eliot Manager