

## **Eliot Town Manager Report**

**August 18, 2022**

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.

### **Pickleball Courts.**

We continue to search for a means of accommodating the growing demand for Pickleball Courts in the Town of Eliot. However, even with the Eliot Select Board appropriation of \$110K from an ARPA Grant we are unfortunately not close to what is needed to properly install courts.

Kittery recently installed two courts at Emery Park as part of a \$300,000 grant funded project. As you generously approved \$110,000 it is clear we would need at least another \$100K to build a basic stand-alone two-unit court. If we were to resurface the entire existing tennis courts and designate half the space to Pickleball we are likely looking at \$150K, but that would be a band aid on the growing demand for this activity.

Splitting the tennis courts would lower utilization for tennis (although it is suggested there is little use as tennis courts) and would not relieve any of the use pressure for Frost-Tufts Park, but would repair the distressed surface of the courts.

As we discussed previously, by creating Pickleball courts at Murray-Rowe Park it helps to balance municipal park utilization and brings some investment and public attention to Murray-Rowe. We also looked at the Boat Basin, but again that property experiences significant high use, which is always a catalyst for conflict when adding a new activity in a high demand park situation. Hammond Park would likely require getting rid of the volleyball courts and eliminating that asset which is used often by CSD's Kids Play and others.

We will continue to seek strategies to add to our recreational offerings, increase participation within our appropriated budgets and within in our capacity to maintain facilities long term.

### **Compensation Plan.**

The plan as contained in this week's SB agenda packet is intended to reflect the position, not necessarily the person occupying that position. What I would suggest is the adjustment are all too often not enough to justly reward the personal effort the vast majority of municipal employees are putting forth in Eliot.

The plan as I explained previously is a reasonably good step towards nudging theTown towards being competitive and more importantly retain staff. However, there is more to be considered in the future to continue to stabilize the workplace.

There also will be a performance-based evaluation (PBE) implemented. At the completion of the voluntary PBE a participant could earn 1% or a portion the 1%, of their salary based on their individual effort to meet the mutually set goals. I have heard there was comment at a recent public meeting to the effect “that only makes employee do what the supervisor wants”, hmmm.... what a novel idea, managers getting cooperation. I will have to give that some thought, but not too much:)

I thank everyone for their support and efforts in our collective attempts to invest in Eliot, especially Town Meeting.

#### **FY 2021 Audit.**

There continues to be unfortunate delays in receiving a final audit for FY 21, which is particularly troubling as we need to start the audit for FY 22. The importance for having timely audits for federal funding, grants and borrowing is vital to any city or town.

The most recent delays have been related to issues with the firm, but I cannot be blind to the fact if our recordkeeping was in proper order this process would be long in the rear-view mirror for all. I cannot thank the Finance Director Kristin McNulty enough for her efforts and diligence and would add she cannot be held accountable for any of the shortcomings.

It goes without saying the lack of an audit has had an adverse effect on the SRF borrowing and in respect to the progress of the sewer extension project. We continue to work diligently in getting the audit finalized and keep the project on track.

#### **York County Community College.**

We are very excited to be working with York County Community College (YCCC) for an upcoming training. On Friday September 16<sup>th</sup> municipal staff will go back to school for training in de-escalation tactics and customer service at YCCC.

I would suggest there are a number of people working in Eliot who could teach the customer service class, but we can always learn new strategies. The staff of Eliot prides itself in delivering the highest quality customer service we are sometimes hampered by staff shortages, but we continue to look to new and innovative ways to provide service.

Earlier this year we increased our on-line permitting services, we are presently exploring an on-line scheduling app for non-public hours (or even off hours) to expand citizen access and the Select Board is looking at additional communication tools such as government cable access

channel for Comcast customers. None of these are enough improvements to declare service perfection or should be seen as stand-alone solutions, but part of a multi-prong approach and service evolution. Please be patient as we try to find the “prong” that works best for you.

As for de-escalation, we like so many organizations which work with the public are seeing increased incidents of hyper-excited, sometime threatening customers. Learning strategies and best practices to try bring the temperature down is critical, as we often find ourselves in situations where it is necessary for us to deliver bad news. The vast majority of the public are civil, whether they accept the determination or not, but there is growing number who become dangerously volatile.

We will also be learning more about how we can recognize personality traits and cues, such as spectrum or cultural differences. We know we cannot attempt to see everyone through the same lense, but must be fair and equitable in our treatment of all clients, that is not as easy as it may sound.

The training will be on the YCCC campus in Wells and is part of a Workforce Development Grant which we have partnered with YCCC to obtain. Thank you to our State Representative Michelle Meyer and others for their support for these important funding sources through YCCC!

#### **Fuel Assistance.**

Speaking of Representative Meyers..... General Assistance Director Mellissa Albert and I meet recently with Rep Meyers and Footprints Food Pantry Director Megan Ross-Shapiro to discuss the coming winter.

We determined there was nothing we could do as group to stop winter from coming:) However, we can and will work together to develop stratagems to deal with rising fuel prices, food insecurity, housing and homelessness challenges. We all agree we need to engage the faith community, business leaders, non-profits and other partners in the region.

We also discussed an exciting project in Kittery to take a regional approach to these issues every community face related to these the underserved community. Housing, food insecurity, mental health, lack of transportation and child care are huge challenges, which York, Kittery and Eliot are better to adopt a shared method than trying to affect them as individual municipalities.

It is worth noting Megan was effusively appreciative of the support she receives at Footprints from the Select Board members collectively and individually. She thanks you all, especially Bill Widi for his bounty and Stan Shapleigh for his weekly assistance to Footprints Food Pantry

Thank you to the participants and more to come!

**Goodwin/236 and State/236.**

Thank you to Town Planner Jeff Brubaker for organizing a meeting between MDOT, SMPDC, Jeff and I to discuss the two intersections and what resources the MDOT can apply to making safety improvements to these crossroads.

We reviewed the crash data, maps and other data in Town Hall before going on site to observe traffic patterns. We were happy to not witness any accidents while we were at each site, but it was easily discernable these intersections are dangerous and likely meet the standards to establish in the case of State/236 a new signal and upgrades at Goodwin.

Thank you to Dale Doughty and Steve Cole from MDOT for taking the time to come to Eliot to hear our plea first hand and as always, we appreciate SMPDC especially Stephanie Carver and Dean Williams for the efforts of that agency.

**Eliot Festival Days.**

I recently had the pleasure of meeting with Gene Wypyski to discuss the September 24 Eliot Festival Days and the Eliot Festival Road Race.

Let's be clear if I do win the 5K race there should be a full investigation, as when I do get a chance to go for a walk, I can never catch up to Orlin McPherson. That aside we will be working to provide an internet link to the road race, some pre festival storage and limited access to Town Hall for the organizers.

A debt of gratitude to all the organizers, your efforts capture what is at the heart of Eliot. Pride in community! See you there!

Respectfully submitted

Michael J. Sullivan  
Town Manager, Eliot