

Eliot Town Manager Report

September 1, 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.

Murray-Rowe Park.



The picture above is of the soccer field at Murray-Rowe Park. Like many lawns it has suffered through this year drought condition. The water table is so low the pump is not working properly to irrigate the field according the Public Works.

The situation has come to such a serious state of affairs the Public Works Superintendent has had to make a tough decision to close the field until such time we get enough precipitation to re-establish the grass. It is feared that continuous play will acerbate the situation and cause permanent damage the field.



As a former youth soccer coach, myself I know the frustration of trying conduct practices, managing forms, scheduling practice in between family commitments and finding a place to practice does not make it easier. It was and I imagine still is exhausting as well as frustrating. I also fully understand the Public Works Director's struggle to maintain the fields with the available resources.

Hopefully all parties respect each other's position in the matter and will continue to work together to find some short- and long-term solutions.

Yes, I do sound like a broken record, but this is another example of disinvestment. I am sure there will be plenty of finger pointing as to why the Town of Eliot finds itself in this position, the truth is there is plenty of blame to go around which can all be solved by spending the appropriately on an annual basis. We need to remember, pointing fingers never got the work done.



As many of you know, this park was established and maintained for many years by the good graces of one dedicated citizen. It is easy to be a "Monday Morning Quarterback", but it seems

the municipality never made plans for that generosity to run its course. Like the well, the goodwill has run dry. It is easy to say during that period the Town of Eliot should develop a plan for the future as to how it would maintain and invest in Murray Rowe.

The future has arrived and the “no-plan” plan is in place. I invite the residents to judge this plan results. I am hoping there will be advocates who come forward to demand investment in this and the other parks, projects and assets. People who having Pickleball Courts, hiking trails, soccer fields and other amenities.



One other note on Murray-Rowe we have a Transfer Station it is not on River Road. Dropping off construction debris, grass clippings and left over aggregate at the park does not make the situation any better at that property.

Now if you want to drop off some water or volunteer to paint the out buildings, please let me know and I will get it cleared buy all parties. Thank you.

We also are experiencing an uptick in vandalism at the Boat Basin. We are working to get some estimates on what it would cost to properly outfit the park with surveillance cameras.



I have been informed there have been attempts to bring in more revenues by increasing the cost equation for parks by establishing a fee structure and collection system to have more of the burden go to the users instead of the taxpayers. Similar systems are in place in parking lots of communities throughout York County and beyond which often have discounts for resident users, but rightfully tap into visitors to cover costs to taxpayers. I do believe there could be a horse exemption to accommodate this wagon ride, just a note those threatening clouds in the back ground burst a few minutes after I took the picture. I suspect the kids enjoyed the ride even in the downpour, it is the days of summer you remember.

Summit Follow-ups.

On Tuesday (August 30) there were two sessions held in Town Hall to get feedback from the July “Summer Summits”. Following the July sessions, the participants were asked to bring back the various discussion points from the Summits to their respective boards and constituencies for additional input.

The “follow-up” sessions were very informative for all of us in Town Hall. The entire process was to provide us with a better understand what direction citizens are likely looking for us to row the boat.

Thank you to Budget Committee Members Gene Wypyski and Diana Holt, Planning Board Chair Carmela Braun, Footprints Director Megan Ross Shapiro, Aging in Place Vice Chair Anne Lukegord for attending the follow-ups and bringing the perspectives of your respective committees and the constituents. Also, Assessor Brent Martin and Planner Jeff Brubaker absorbed and provided valuable input, thank you all.

In both sessions there was much focus on housing and what changes may be needed to code and ordinances to accommodate the changing needs. There were clearly concerns about density levels and what strategies would make sense for Eliot to balance the various demands housing may place on a community. This is a complex issue which will continue to become even more complex, but starting the conversation is critical. The Comprehensive Plan Update will be a perfect forum for the continuation of this important discussion.

FY 24 Budget.

Yes, that is right FY 24! Finance Director Kristin McNulty and I have begun laying out the form for the FY 24 budget. Our focus is to keep the delineation consistent with the budget ordinances, while providing the material in a more efficient format.

We had numerous questions asked last cycle directly linked to the fact that the public found the worksheet confusing. The goal is to make the form very intuitive and easy to follow. It is after all the people's pocketbook and it should have everything an average citizen has to make a decision on what is being request in a simple form.

The form changes will be more compatible with our internal accounting systems and more fluidly allow changes during the process. It will also have some new features which will demonstrate spending and trends for those who are more visual. All of the material will be on the town website, all the initial budget material will be provided to the Budget Committee and the Select Board in a hardcopy (no more binders).

The changes will give the process and product an updated look. I will do my best at providing additional material as available and within in our capacity for reporting.

As Town Manager I will begin meeting with department managers beginning in October to discuss their individual budget requests and have that part of the budget process finished up by the beginning of December. I am developing the budget calendar and will be releasing that with the budget books as soon as they are available.

Governmental Access Channel.

The Eliot Select Board recently voted to activate the Government Access Channel for all Eliot Comcast customers through the municipal agreement. This will give the municipality another significant communication tool for public messaging.

I am sure many of you have seen this resource being used successfully in other communities. Actual activation will likely be early in 2023 and I will be working with the Select Board as the FCC designated Executive Branch to define policies and use for broadcasting on the channel.

Just one of the areas where communication will be enhanced is in public safety. We are already discussing with Chief Muzzeroll, Chief Moya about how we may put fire safety, and home security tips, as well as emergency preparedness advisories looping on the channel. We also would be able to disseminate tax, CSD activity and AIP programs to the 1,852 homes who receive Comcast cable services. We will still continue streaming while adding cable for many public meetings.

Staffing changes.

There are presently two positions on our website soliciting applicants The Land Use Assistant position has already begun interviews and the Town Clerk Staff position will likely start interviews in the next two weeks.

The process remains the same, the HR Specialist (Melissa Albert) reviews all the applicants, then puts forward the most qualified candidates to a three-person review panel to be interviewed. Once the vetting panel then makes a recommendation to the Town Manager for appointment along with the panel's remarks as to how or why they chose the candidate. None of this material is public information.

If the panel has more than one candidate for a single position, they may send those names forward to the Town Manager. If that was the case, I would likely have a second interview with the recommended candidates to determine who I would appoint.

We are hoping these two positions will be filled by October 1. We will then begin the training process and hopefully each incumbent has a long career with the Town of Eliot.

I hope everyone has a safe and enjoyable Labor Day weekend and please drive safe with students back in school!!!

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan

Town Manager, Eliot