

Eliot Town Manager Report

October 6, 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.

Depot Road/Rt. 236 Intersection. Residents have experienced a significant change in the timing at this signaled intersection. It is especially noticeable when traveling south from the Berwicks.

This is due to an unfortunate interruption in the timing loop which is embedded in the road. It occurred when Unitil mistakenly severed the system during construction of the natural gas line extension north on 236. They immediately reported the issue and are taking full responsibility for the repairs.

Although this is a "DOT" road, the signalization is the responsibility of the Town of Eliot. Representative Meyer has continued to assist in coordinating communications with the Maine Department of Transportation on this matter and several others on state roads, her intercession is appreciated. At this point all parties are aware and committed to resolving the problem.

Unfortunately, the contractor who services traffic signals throughout York County and is familiar with this system, like so many is stretched thin when it comes to the technicians needed to make proper repairs. The group has reported to the Public Works Superintendent Steve Robinson it will take a couple of weeks before the right personnel can come to make the repairs to the signal and recalibrate the timing of the lights.

We understand the public frustration and assure you we will continue to encourage the contractor to move as quickly as possible to rectify the situation. In the interim we encourage people to enjoy the extra respite and autumn colors off to your left or right.

FY 21 Audit. As many of you are aware the audit firm of RHR Smith LLC from Buxton is working on the final draft of the audit. Recently Bill Hall from the practice gave a presentation before the Select Board on the progress and problems the firm has faced. I would strongly encourage citizens to take a look at the recorded meeting (September 22) which can be found on the Town website.

While there were several important assessments articulated, my take away was there has been generational process issues in accounting practices that have lacked important updates in regards to best practices. Eliot is not alone in these challenges, but I and Finance Director Kristin McNulty are committed to bringing processes in line with our auditors' recommendations and commonly accepted guidelines. This will certainly not happen overnight, nor does the straying from a solid a principled path happen overnight. We cannot ignore the need to comply with GASB and other sound accounting practices, as it costs money.

As we chart a new fiscal course looking behind us should only be done when as necessary to build a better system. It does us little good as a community to waste time and energy at resisting change or seeking blame. The best effort will be to work together listen to professionals to give us their sound advice, whether that be a contractor, auditor or employees.

There will be some changes of policy and practice resulting from the findings, we apologize in advance for any inconveniences it may cause. Please be patient as we disentangle all the various moving parts and some "stuck" parts as well.

It should be noted throughout this review of financial records and practices there has not in any manner or form revealed of suspected of malfeasance, misappropriation or intentional misuse of tax dollars. It does demonstrate a lack of appropriate training, competency and leadership in the organization. I personally appreciate the leadership the present Select Board has demonstrated and their willingness to invest in training and competency.

COVID 19. We cannot thank the citizens of Eliot enough for their cooperation during this difficult period. Nearly half the of the Town Hall staff suffered from CV19 over the last several weeks added to other excused absences. We found ourselves on one day with three out of the twelve-person full complement able to come to work. Without the cooperation and understanding of the vast majority of Eliot residents the wheels would have come off the busso to speak.

Thankfully due to the exceptional cooperation of the citizens and some incredible employee efforts we have weather the worst of it and seem to be gaining strength. We also recently filled two positions which have been vacant for several months. Kim Tackett has accepted the Land Use Assistant position and Lauren Albert will be joining the extraordinary staff in the Town Clerk's Office. Even though they are not related I hope Lauren is nearly as great to work with as the other Albert I have the pleasure to work with in Eliot Town Hall everyday (Melissa).

They each will undergo training for the next month or so, we will work to maximize their skill sets in connection to their jobs and make adjustments to the operation as needed. We will continue with the LUA appointment-based service model, until we can make a comprehensive evaluation of the needs to deliver services to the public as a whole.

Conservation Commission Autumn Clean-up. On Saturday October 22 at 11AM the Eliot Conservation Commission is hosting a volunteer clean-up at the Boat Basin. All interested parties are invited to participate.

There is no pre-registration required, no specific qualifications other than a desire to serve the community. Thank you to Kari Schank and the Eliot Conservation Commission for being so dedicated and thoughtful! Please go to the Town website for any additional details.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan
Town of Eliot, Manager