

Report to Eliot Select Board

November 10, 2021

Town Manager Michael J. Sullivan

Please accept this report as an abridged account of activities and projects I and the dedicated town employees have been actively engaged in over my first two weeks.

Getting Settled; I would like to thank the hard-working municipal staff which I have the honor to work with during my initial days. I have found them to be a proficient and loyal group of professionals who care deeply about the Town of Eliot, dedicated to providing the best service possible to the citizens of this community.

The transition has been great, the Interim Town Manager did a thorough job briefing and leaving me with some great cheat sheets. The support staff has been wonderful in trying to get me to a place where I am a plus to the process, I thank them for their abundance of patience.

From an organizational perspective my first order of business is to peel back some layers of work which has been lacquered on to various employee's workloads over an extended period of time while the Town Manager position has been in flux. These tasks have caused undue strain and stress on the loyal staff who accepted those additional tasks. I will do my best to accept as many of those assigned duties and bring them back to the Town Manager desk as I can reasonably manage.

FY 22 Budget; Eliot Treasurer Jordan Miles has been extremely helpful in introducing me to the budget and the related processes. It has become apparent the FY 22 budget will be affected by external and internal demands for additional financial resources. Fuel, insurance and nearly every supply need has risen significantly.

The Consumer Price Index which is a key indicator of inflation has risen by 5.4% over the past twelve months according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics with the category of meat/poultry/fish/eggs up over 10%. This has clearly placed another burden of worry and economic hardship on municipal staff. Continuing to retain and attract qualified staff there will need to be a substantial investment in personnel.

The compensation issue has reached a critical juncture and the time for studies, promises, pontification and ignorance need to culminate with a unified commitment to address the organization imbalance. The cost of not addressing this and in some case acerbating the problem has been way too expensive for Eliot taxpayers.

It does no one any service to invest in buildings, trucks, phone systems, roads, sidewalks or parks, if a town or business makes little or no investment in qualified staff to operate, preserve and manage those investments. I look forward to discussing some ideas with the Select Board as this process goes forward.

Regional Relationships; At the suggestion of Gene Wypyski, others and something I wholeheartedly agree with, I have begun working towards building some regional relationships. I am hopeful these relationships will greatly benefit Eliot in growing an appropriate commercial base and making sure we are included in any regional best practices.

I will be meeting with Holly Robinson from the York County Chamber of Commerce later today and Paul Schumacher from Southern Maine Planning and Development to discuss opportunities. Planner Brubaker will be a major part of the SMPD meeting, as Jeff has already been involved with the regional organization on several projects.

Superintendent John Caverly from MSAD 35 took the time to stop in on my first day which is greatly appreciated. I certainly hope we can strengthen an already great relationship with Marshwood. I also received a call from Kittery Town Manager Kendra Amaral (also an ex-pat from Massachusetts) offering me assistance and welcoming me to the State of Maine. These associations hopefully will serve Eliot well in times of need and when necessary and we will reciprocate when possible and prudent. We are in this together!

Also, I reached out to Traci St. Clair who was gracious enough to meet with me first thing Monday morning. She is the business agent for the Teamsters, as the municipality has numerous contracts with that group it is fiscally practical to build strong relationships with labor representation. Ms. St Clair was very knowledgeable and willing to forge a working rapport to benefit both parties.

These first weeks I met with the Select Board members to review their hopes, ideas and strategies for Eliot, I really appreciate the frankness and experience each brought to the table. I am truly blessed to be working for and with such a dedicated, caring, respectful and cohesive group of municipal leaders.

Besides all the great people I get to work with, I also got to talk with some of the most important people, the citizens who make it happen and know the history of the community, people like Orlin McPherson, Cabot Trott and Harold Place externally and internally people like Judy Smith from the PD and Tina Buckley (ACO). I also got to experience my first fire call siren, which did not cause even the least bit of stir in Town Hall. Again, I am very lucky to work with this caliber of people, it is not always that way in some towns!

Route 236 Paving Project; DPW Director Steve Robinson, Planner Jeff Brubaker and I will be meeting with LaRay Hamilton from MaineDOT and Cole Melendy to discuss coordination of that project with several other projects along 236 on Monday. The state expects to send the project out to bid on March 9, 2022.

It will include 24 crossings, several raised islands and some improvements to middle turn lanes. The state is well aware of the growth potential for Eliot along 236 and will be building that into their planning process. The project will go from Kittery to South Berwick, so the entirety of 236

through Eliot with be repaved. This is a “hot-in-place” recycled material project and we all appreciate that environmentally safe approach to this needed improvement.

Town Hall Building Study; I had the pleasure of meeting with Lita Semrau from Port City Architecture who is helping guide the project as well as the needs assessment prior to my “official” arrival. Since arriving I have met with members of the Capital committee including Ed Henningsen who supplied me with some helpful background about the project.

It is refreshing to see that the Town of Eliot has taken a measured and well thought out approach to the important building project and investigating multiple solutions. It is that sort of diligence which will allow every resident ample opportunity to bring forth ideas and possible solutions. I look forward to attending a meeting of the committee and listening to the ideas and concerns in the near future possibly sometime the week of November 29th.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Sullivan

Town Manager, Eliot