



AUGUST 2014

About Town

- *Berwick's
Administrative
Newsletter*

DEPARTMENTAL & OTHER UPDATES

What's going on in Town?

By Patrick Venne, Town Manager

This newsletter is intended to keep Berwick's Board of Selectmen and the public at large abreast of how Town departments are functioning, i.e., what they have been up to, what obstacles if any stand in their way, and what they have planned for the future. It is intended to be a source of information for any and every person interested in learning more about what goes on at Town Hall and beyond related to the delivery of public services to the residents and tax payers of, and visitors to, the Town of Berwick.

Police Department

The Police Department was involved with monitoring the safety and occurrence of two special events in August.

On August 3, 2014 the Seacoast Trail Rider's *Noble Woods Enduro* took place on public ways throughout Berwick. It was the 9th time this annual event—which both began and ended in Berwick on Blackberry Hill Road, and which was privately

coordinated by resident Paul Boisvert—took place.

Secondly, the '*Great Maine Getaway Multiple Sclerosis*' benefit bicycle ride took place between August 9th and 10th. It consisted of approximately 450 cyclists and traversed Berwick along Route 4/Portland Street.

Both events went smoothly with no accidents or complaints generated.

On August 5th, the Berwick Board of Selectmen publicly opened bid responses for the capital purchase of a new police cruiser funded through Town Meeting appropriation. Two bids in total were received for this requested product. One of the bids was non-responsive to the specifications listed in the bid request, and therefore the Police Department



recommended, and the Board of Selectmen acting in accordance with the Town's Purchasing Policy selected, the only responsive bid, which was for a Dodge Charger. This vehicle has been ordered through New Castle Dodge and is anticipated to arrive in late September.

Also on August 5th, the Police Department and Town Management met with several residents from the downtown area regarding concerns about potentially illicit activities occurring within the general neighborhood. Discussion centered on application of the recently adopted

Disorderly Building Ordinance, and what changes if any might be made to that ordinance in order to strengthen its ability to enforce expected outcomes. In response, Berwick's Police Chief prepared and submitted several proposed modifications to the Ordinance which will be the subject of a Town Meeting vote on November 4th. A copy of those changes is available for public viewing at any time upon request, and will also be posted with the Town Meeting warrant in advance of November 4th.

The Police Department also held a meeting with downtown business owners and other stakeholders on August 20th. This meeting was intended to discuss parking and traffic-related concerns of those individuals and entities, and it resulted in several recommendations being made to Town Management, including modifications to parking spaces in front of Spence & Mathews Insurance, changes to hourly limits or designations within all three public parking lots in the immediate downtown area, and adjustments to the Town's traffic ordinance. These recommendations will be reviewed in conjunction with others made by VHB, an engineering and planning firm recently retained by the Town to complete a grant-funded parking and traffic analysis of the downtown area. VHB's commencement of this study is anticipated to take place in late September.

From a personnel perspective, the Department recently hired Officer Ronald Lund—formerly of the York County Sheriff's Office and also an officer experienced in "community policing"—to fill the vacancy created by the recent departure of Officer

Gregg Sevigny from the Town's employ. The Board of Selectmen authorized this hire by selectively lifting a hiring freeze instituted in 2011.

Regarding calls for service, the Department is experiencing a normal volume with nothing atypical to report.

For more information contact the Police Department at 207-698-1567.

Fire Department

The Department presently has a staff of 27 members, which includes four full-time and twenty-three part-time on-call members. Of this number, four are presently on leave due to medical restrictions. Since January 1, 2013, the Department has hired 9 part-time on-call members, and lost 10 due to retirement or other resignations.

From a recruitment perspective, the Department recently hired one new recruit—Jeffrey Doyle—in July, and three others have completed a first round of interviews with Department staff. One candidate's interview is scheduled for August 25th, and others are pending. Decisions will be made on all candidates, within budgetary parameters, in the near future.

Regarding its apparatus, the Department is presently conducting its annual vehicle maintenance procedures, and awaiting delivery of a new Command Vehicle to replace the former and now out of service automobile that served this purpose. This purchase was made through a State bid. All reusable equipment from the former Command Vehicle is being removed and will be recycled to

the extent possible through future installation. The Department is also continuing to test its fire hoses, as required.

With respect to implementation of the administrative aspects of the 2012-commissioned MRI Study of the Department, the Department's administration continues to review and update standard operating guidelines (SOGs) as recommended.

For instance, the Department's table of organization has been amended to make it more effective at establishing appropriate hierarchical relationships from a chain of command perspective.

The Deputy Chief position, moreover, which has been vacant for several years, has been eliminated and replaced with an EMS coordinator position. The coordination of EMS activities was previously handled by the Deputy Chief, so in effect this modification is simply a reduction in the previous position's duties. This is a part-time on-call position, not a regular staff position.

All other recommended job position title changes have been made to reflect the recommendations of the Study, including a change from "Lieutenant" to "Captain" within the full-time ranks.

The Department is also reevaluating its promotional policy to bring it more in line with the Study's recommendations, which include written testing and practical tasks serving as the bases for promotional growth within the Department. This is an ongoing process.

From a training perspective, a number of the Department's officers will be attending company officer training programs now being offered through the York County Chief's Association; all existing Officers and future Officer Candidates have been encouraged to attend.

Department wide training for this month consisted of Water Supply Operations involving some of the Town's mutual aid partners, including South Berwick and Somersworth Fire Departments. The training included more than 20 firefighters in attendance.

Regarding Fire Prevention efforts, the Department continues to conduct wood stove and other fire safety inspections at the request of residents (see below for contact information).

The Department also inspected, approved and issued 72 open burning and seasonal camp fire permits for residents of Town.

Also, the Department is working with the Berwick Volunteer Firefighters Association (BVFFA) to coordinate the annual Public Safety Day event, tentatively scheduled for October 11th. More information regarding this date and event is posted on the Town's website under the PUBLIC NOTICES tab.

Concerning the Fire Station's physical building, repairs to its interior wall and renovation of its second floor bathroom to include a shower facility are now complete.

Calls for service include the following: staff responded to 49 calls for service between July 27th and

August 25th. A total of 22 calls for EMS were not responded to due to a lack of availability of EMS staff during after-hour and weekend timeframes. These calls were responded to by either American Ambulance or a mutual aid responder in each case.

For more information contact the Fire Department at 207-698-1174.

Water Department

The Department is working in collaboration with Tighe & Bond Engineers to study disinfection byproduct use by collecting samples and studying the many stages of and locations in the treatment process and distribution system in order to understand how different choices and/or innovations in the future might improve water quality.

It is also working with Sandy Bolotsky, an independent water billing rate consultant, to analyze what its revenue needs are and whether and to what extent a rate increase may be necessary to achieve those needs. The Department, with consent of the Board of Selectmen, will be scheduling a public hearing on this matter in the near future.

In response to a new fence constructed around property owned by the Berwick Sewer District, the Water Department recently moved a fire hydrant on School Street to the public side of the new enclosure.

Also, the Maine Department of Transportation (MeDOT) recently inquired of the Department whether a slope failure near the Little River "S-curve" on Hubbard Road would cause

a public water supply problem. This question was posed in light of the fact that the Department has posted the area to indicate that Little River is part of the Town's and the City of Somersworth's "source water." The response is that it would not create any problem.

For more information contact the Water Department at 207-698-1231.

Public Works Department

The Department has been working late night to stripe cross walks and parking areas throughout the downtown area in response to concerns raised by the administrative Safety Committee. The Department has also been mowing public lands, and will soon begin to recondition sections of Ridlon Road. The Department's mechanic and others are at this time preparing the fleet of vehicles and other equipment for the winter season.

For more information, contact the Public Works Garage at 207-698-1220.

Recreation Department

Summer Recreation Camp has now concluded for the year, and numbers show there was an increase in enrollment over last year. The final week of Camp included activities like basic skateboarding, water games, field trips to water parks, movies in the rain, and a visit from Wildlife Encounters.

This month football and cheering for all ages (K-8) commenced. Travel Soccer practices also have begun, and take place on weeknights on the lower

field. Berwick Youth Soccer games take place on Saturday mornings and will begin in September.

For more information call Recreation Director Kim Taylor at 207-698-1101 or visit www.berwickrec.com.

Finance Department

On Friday, August 15th, tax liens were filed with the York County Registry of Deeds. There are approximately 30 fewer this year than last year.

The Town's audit firm, RHR Smith & Co., had representatives at Town Hall to commence the annual audit of the Town's financial statements on Monday and Tuesday August 18th and 19th. Field work was completed and the firm's staff accountants are presently reviewing draft financial statements provided by the Town's Finance Director.

Department staff attended a seminar sponsored by the Maine Municipal Employee Health Trust (MMEHT) in Scarborough on August 28th to learn more about how the Affordable Care Act may impact the Town of Berwick.

The Town's conversion from Munis to Trio software in the Finance Department continues, and two staff members are visiting Eliot Town Offices on August 27th to experience the new software as it pertains to utility (water) billing in a "live" setting. The Town will have a follow up training session on the new software, provided by the vendor, in September.

For more information contact the Finance Department at 207-698-1101.

Planning Department

Development review and approvals remain steady in the Department. During the month of August, for instance, the Planning Board approved the following projects:

1. Preliminary application for a seven lot major subdivision along Sullivan and Logan Streets known as "Wedgewood Commons," as presented by Corner Post Land Surveying;
2. A conditional use application at 9 Commercial Driver (Tax Map R-54, Lot 15-2) for a bottle redemption center, submitted by Daniel & David Mitchell;
3. A conditional use amendment regarding 10 Sullivan Street (Tax Map U-4, Lot 2) concerning a change of hours for applicant Maine Subs, owner of the Subway store in downtown Berwick. Hours of operation were permitted to change to 7AM – 10PM; and
4. A subdivision amendment to add an additional storage building to Old Route 4 Storage, LLC's storage area at 565 Portland Street.

The Planning Board also held a public workshop on August 28th at Town Hall to work on amendments to the Land Use Ordinance intended to implement components of the Downtown Vision Study, now part of the Comprehensive Plan. A public hearing to discuss a first round of such amendments is scheduled for September 18th.

There are presently no new applications pending before the Board of Appeals.

The Department is also working on finalizing updates to tax, road, and zoning maps, which it anticipates will be complete in September. These will be the first updates since 2010.

The Town Planner has also met at a staff level with the Town Manager and representatives of Fund of Jupiter and others regarding potential subdivision of the former site of Prime Tanning in downtown Berwick. This will likely be coming before the Planning Board for initial review sometime in September.

The Town's Planner will also be working closely with the Town Manager, Envision Berwick, and others as VHB—an engineering and planning firm retained by the Town—begins a grant-funded analysis of traffic and parking needs and options in the downtown area.

For more information contact Town Planner John Stoll at 207-698-1101.

Town Clerk's Office

The Town Clerk's Office is also transitioning an element of its functions to a new software system, just like the Finance Department. It is scheduled to go "live" with Trio software for all of its transactions on September 2nd.

In response to a request from the public, the Department also scheduled the presence of Connie Kaherl, a BMV Agent from the State, on August 29th for the purpose of providing refresher training on the registration of leased vehicles. The Town Clerk has also taken steps to ensure the Town has the most up to date and current paperwork regarding

vehicles leased from New Hampshire dealers.

Regarding elections, there is a special Town Meeting planned for November 4th, and the last day to sign the warrant for this meeting is September 19th. It is anticipated the municipal officers will finalize the warrant at the Board of Selectmen's regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday September 16th.

Ballot clerk volunteers are needed for the November 4th Town Meeting, and interested volunteers are encouraged to contact the Town Clerk via use of the contact information provided immediately below. Volunteers may opt for a half or full day.

For more information contact Town Clerk Jo Anne Lepley at 207-698-1101 or jlepley@berwickmaine.org.

Miscellaneous

Prime Tanning

After months of brainstorming and other unsuccessful efforts to facilitate a move toward productive re-use of

the former site of Prime Tanning, the Board of Selectmen recently entertained discussions with Fund of Jupiter—a mortgage holder with respect to that site—regarding a potential public-private partnership with that entity intended to allow application and receipt of federal environmental remediation grants.

This process will entail subdivision of the property which will be initially addressed at the Planning Board's September 18th regular meeting, and will also—if approved by Town Meeting this November—entail temporary Town acquisition of the property through a consensual foreclosure for taxes owed followed by a subsequent conveyance of the property to FoJ subject to the terms of a negotiated agreement.

To ensure an informed decision can be and is made in November, Town Administration is interested in compiling a list of frequently asked questions so that answers can be provided to voters and the public at large. With any questions about this matter, please contact Town Manager

Patrick Venne at townmanager@berwickmaine.org or 207-698-1101.

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