



JUNE 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

After hiring Nicholas Higgins, an experienced law enforcement officer, the Police Department is now at full staff. Officer Higgins will be introduced to the public at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Selectmen, which authorized selectively lifting a hiring freeze instituted in 2011 to fill this position, on July 1, 2014.

Between May 19th and June 1st, the Department was actively engaged in directed patrols to enforce safety belt requirements. Through a grant from the Maine Bureau of Highway Safety (Maine BHS), the Department was able to utilize staff to stop 138 vehicles, of which 91 had occupants who were issued seatbelt-related summonses, 36 had occupants issued warnings, two had occupants arrested for drug possession, four had occupants arrested for outstanding warrants, and four had occupants with "other" violations.

Also funded through a grant from Maine BHS was the Department's "Operating Under the Influence" (OUI) roadblock on June 6th. In total, 675 cars were stopped, resulting in two OUI arrests and two arrests related to other reasons.



Regarding calls for service at the midway point for calendar year 2014, the Department has fielded 5,272 calls for service, up from 4,685 at this point last year.

Fire Department

In an effort to supplement full-time staff, the Department continues to recruit part-time on-call members who serve on an as-needed basis. Normally, the Town accepts expressions of interest on a year-round basis, and participates in an

onboarding session once annually in accordance with training timelines.

Three new recruits recently completed over 300 hours each of basic firefighter training—Sebastian Thomas, Nick Mahoney, and Justin Menter. The Town is glad to have their service and welcomes them aboard. These three individuals are, as of the end of June, now capable of serving as trained firefighters.

One additional firefighter completed the same training at no cost to the Town through the Sanford Regional Vocational Center and will be able to serve as a trained firefighter in November 2014 upon becoming 18 years of age.

Regarding the remainder of the Department's call force, one member is on leave, four are on restricted duty, and one is departing from the Town's employ effective July 1, 2014. Town administration wishes to thank firefighter Jonnathon Terry for 18 years of dedicated service to the community.

In terms of equipment and apparatus, the Department will soon be replacing its command vehicle, for which funding was appropriated through Town Meeting, as it is ten years old and approaching 100,000 miles. This vehicle is used as an official command post during emergencies where radio communications between various respondent agencies is critical. Last year alone, nearly \$2,000.00 was expended toward repairs necessary to pass State inspection; this year, approximately \$2,500.00 in mechanical and body repairs is necessary to pass inspection. The existing vehicle was purchased for

\$31,340.00 and had a projected useful life of five years; it is now five years beyond full depreciation.

Management will be discussing a waiver of the formal competitive bidding requirements under the Berwick Purchase Policy Directive on July 1, 2014 with the Board of Selectmen at its regularly scheduled meeting that date. The reason for this relates to the fact that the State of Maine has already secured a competitively priced pool of vehicles like this for purchase through Augusta Ford. Augusta Ford is offering Chevy Tahoe vehicles for \$33,584.00 and has presently sold out. A vehicle like this comes as a base model and after purchase needs to be outfitted with requisite emergency equipment, including lights and radio.

With respect to the recommendations set forth in Municipal Resource's recent Fire Department Study, the Department intends to implement its revisions to the overall table of organization and chain of command, intended to make authoritative structure more effective and better establish hierarchical relationships, in July.

Concerning fire prevention efforts, full-time Firefighter/EMT Travis Doiron and Firefighter Jeff Libby, along with three on-call firefighters, recently provided four days of Fire Safety education at the Vivian Hussey School. They conducted the well-known smoke trailer program, which allows students to experience and learn about crawling through a space appearing to be filled with smoke. 439 Children participated in this educational program at the Hussey School, in addition to another 220

students from the Knowlton School later in the month.

Wood stove and fire safety inspections continue to be publicly available upon request.

So far this summer, 40 seasonal camp fire permits have issued following approval of inspection criteria.

Regarding calls for service, the Department responded to 52 calls involving Fire or EMS between May 26th and June 23, 2014. A total of 6 calls for EMS were missed due to lacking availability of qualified EMS provider staff after hours and/or on weekends. American Ambulance provided first responder service for all of these calls.

Lastly, following two unsuccessful attempts to competitively bid the project, Robillard Teague Group, LLC was selected to handle interior wall repairs and renovation of a shower facility at the Fire Station—both of which were funded by Town Meeting capital allotments. This work commenced in mid-June.

For more information contact Fire Chief Dennis Plante as 207-698-1174.

Water Department

The Water Department has a number of ongoing projects and work items including the following:

It is presently soliciting quotes from area contractors for the purpose of repairing and maintaining the Treatment Plant parking lot located on Rochester Street. One parking space has been without asphalt since it was removed several years ago to install

pipng for a wastewater recycling system; Boulanger Paving will be repairing this space at a cost approximating \$2,000.00. Following repaving, ShoEm Roadway Services will clean and seal the cracks in the lot, sealcoat the whole lot, and then re-stripe the parking lines.

On June 20th, the Department completed its 4th quarter water meter reading, ahead of schedule.

The Department is also working toward shutoff of delinquent accounts in order to secure payment of amounts in arrears.

For more information please contact Chief Water Systems Operator Chris Weismann at 207-698-1231.

Public Works Department

At this time of year, the Department is heavily engaged in mowing the publicly owned lawns and grassy areas of Berwick.

Questions are routinely asked as to why the Town is not able to contract out lawn mowing to part-time staff members at a lower hourly rate. The reason behind this essentially relates to budgeting. While it is true that a lower cost arrangement may be possible to establish for the specific task of lawn mowing, the cost of the Town's full-time staff members would remain the same in such a case. The difference is that the Town would get a higher level of service if the full-time employees were permitted to engage in other various tasks throughout the summer. Holding all else constant, higher service levels of this sort would come at a *higher* cost than the Town is presently paying,

and one which has not been budgeted for in this or the coming fiscal year.

The conversation related to utilization of part-time staff for lawn mowing is an important one, but it is also most appropriate during the budget preparation cycle each winter. Full-time positions may not be eliminated and filled with part-time help under Article 36 of the Town's most recent collective bargaining agreement.

The Department is also handling calls from the public regarding culverts, drainage, and ditch clearing matters. While its backhoe remains out of service, however, the Department's ability to handle excavation-sort of ditch clearing is limited. In addition to clearing ditches, the Department also assists with tree trimming to reveal covered street signs.

Lastly, the Department has been working with Management over the last few weeks to critically assess its capital equipment needs. Several trucks and pieces of equipment are in need of serious maintenance or replacement in a short period of time, and these have been added as elements of the Town's capital improvement plan with several funding options contemplated. Several major repairs or replacement costs will be discussed with the Board of Selectmen at its regular meeting on July 1, 2014. All serious repairs must be completed by October, which is when early winters start.

For more information please contact Public Works Foreman Robert Perschy, or Town Manager Patrick Venne at 207-698-1101.

Recreation Department

The Recreation Commission last met June 12th. It does not meet again until the fall.

The Department's website for summer camp registration is now up and running and may be found at www.berwickrec.com. This year's summer camp runs between July 7th and August 15th. For children ages Kindergarten – 5th grade, the cost is \$385.00. For those aged grade 6 – 8, the cost is \$415.00. The cost in either case includes fieldtrips and tee-shirts (as well as registration fee). Also, the Town offers a sibling discount of \$50.00.

Camp runs between 9:00 AM and 3:00 PM Monday – Friday with options available for before and after care as well (from 7:00 AM - 5:30 PM). There is an additional fee for extended care options. Also, after June 30th, there is a \$25.00 late fee for registrations.

Horseback camp is also offered, for ages 7 and up, between 9:00 AM and Noon at the Goodrich-Puffer stables. This program costs \$160.00 and runs between June 30th and July 3rd.

Lastly, the Department is again offering discounted tickets for local recreation events and activities including the following:

York's Wild Animal Kingdom (zoo & rides) for \$11.00 each as opposed to \$21.50 at the gate;

Water Country for \$32.00 each as opposed to \$38.99 at the gate;

Funtown/Splashtown combination passes for \$27.00 as opposed to \$36.00 at the gate;

Cranmore Mountain Adventure Park for \$30.00 (those over 48" tall) or for \$20.00 (those between 38"-48" tall) instead of \$39.00 or \$29.00, respectively, at the gate.

For more information call Kim Taylor, Recreation Director, at 207-698-1101, or stop by the Town Hall lobby.

Finance Department

Summer is a busy time for the Finance Department. The Town's Finance Assistant and Bookkeeper, Lisa Huestis, has been working to verify water readings and issuing work orders to correct those which appear to be flawed. She has also been preparing to begin entering water readings in the computer system in order to generate quarterly water bills.

The Finance Director, acting as Deputy Tax Collector, has also been busy researching parties-in-interest in order to properly prepare a municipal tax lien list for those who have become delinquent on property tax payments. The Town's standard 30-Day Lien Notice will be mailed out on July 9th and tax liens will be filed in the Registry of Deeds on August 9th. Presently, excluding tax club accounts, there are 364 outstanding tax accounts. Including tax club participants increases this number to 378 as of June 23rd, although the Town anticipates this figure will decrease prior to the 30-Day Notice mentioned above.

The Finance Department has also been engaged in generating data files for the purpose of assisting in the transition from Munis to TRIO accounting software recently approved by Town Meeting. The Department hopes to have Cash Receipting, Tax Billing and Collection, and Utility Billing and Collection programs running on TRIO by late summer, with the remaining modules slated for activation upon commencement of the new calendar year. This conversion will integrate the Finance Department's software suite with that of the Town Clerk's office, and is anticipated to save the Town \$20,000.00 annually once the initial investment cost (approximately \$30,000.00) is recouped.

Regarding year-end financial conditions, the Finance Department estimates all departments are under budget.

For more information contact Maureen Finger, Finance Director, at 207-698-1101.

Planning Department

At its June 5th meeting, the Planning Board approved a 5 lot Major Subdivision in its final form. This subdivision is found along Old Pine Hill Road at Map R-44, Lot 13 and was presented by John Corliss of Civil Consultants.

The Planning Board will not be meeting on July 3rd despite the fact that this is a regularly scheduled meeting night.

The Planning Board will meet again on July 17th for the purpose of reviewing the following projects:

1. Preliminary review of a 9 lot Major Subdivision on Sullivan and Logan Streets (Tax Map U3, Lot 9), presented by Wedgewood Commons as represented by Corner Post Land Surveying; and
2. A proposed subdivision amendment along Old Pine Hill Road (Tax Map R-44, Lot 21) presented by Richard Desmaris. This project relates to a lot line adjustment.

The Board will also begin to meet for regular workshops at Town Hall in order to start the process of updating the Land Use Ordinance and subdivision regulations to conform to the recently adopted Downtown Vision Report, now appended to and part of the 1991 Comprehensive Plan. This work will begin the week of June 30th and continue as needed.

There have been two recent resignations from the Planning Board; the contributions of regular member Art Ream III and alternate member Peter Galfetti are both appreciated.

Nothing is pending before the Board of Appeals.

For more information please contact Town Planner John Stoll by calling 207-698-1101, visiting Town Hall, or email at planning@berwickmaine.org.

Town Clerk's Office

The Town Clerk recently completed the second of at least three Town Meetings in FY 14. The Annual Town Meeting occurred over May 13th and 14th and resulted in voter turnout at the secret ballot referenda portion of 439, totaling 0.08% of the

registered voter population. Open Town Meeting on May 14th resulted in the participation of 25 voters.

0.04% and 0.05% of the electorate participated in the State General Election and special Town Meeting, respectively, both held June 10th.

Unless a special Town Meeting is called before, the next Town Meeting is November 4, 2014. If you are interested in assisting on that day, please contact Town Clerk Jo Anne Lepley at the number provided below.

In addition to Town Meeting business, the Town Clerk's Office has also been experiencing and dealing with multiple staffing shortages for a series of months due to factors beyond the Town's control. Part-time assistance has been utilized on select Fridays, when available, to alleviate some of the backup of customers this has on occasion created. Attempts to remedy this situation to the extent possible are actively being made.

In addition to being short on staff, the Department has also empirically verified that it is busier this year than it was last year. For instance, in FY 13 the Department registered 7,352 cars as of June and collected \$949,714.43 in excise tax. In FY 14, over the same time period, the Department has registered 6,724 cars (a decrease of 896), but collected \$1,003,771.55 in excise tax (an increase of nearly \$55,000.00). The conclusion which may be drawn from these data is that "new" car registrations are increasing, because the cost of existing car re-registrations decreases over time. New car registrations take about three times as long to complete than re-registrations,

on average, thus adding to the Department's workload.

Those who come to the Town Office lobby and find all customer service windows occupied with other customers are encouraged to go to the Clerk's window (to the left) directly if their business relates to bill payment or records requests. Payments may also be dropped off in the box directly outside the main lobby entrance.

For more information please contact Town Clerk Jo Anne Lepley at 207-698-1101, jlepley@berwickmaine.org, or stop by the Customer Service window in the Town Hall lobby.

Miscellaneous

Route 9 Bridge. Work has slowed on the Route 9 Bridge into downtown Somersworth due to a delay in steel production. An inquiry was made by Management as to whether the barricades could be temporarily removed to open traffic back up to the public while steel is en route, however Maine Department of Transportation, which is overseeing the project, indicated the contractor, Wyman & Simpson, will soon be setting up for steel erection and will need all space presently blocked off for this purpose. Work should be back in "full swing" by July 10th.

Paving. A section of Pine Hill Road has been repaved by Boulanger Paving, and a section of Long Swamp Road is soon to be repaved as well. Downtown road maintenance remains a priority and the Board of Selectmen and Management will be reviewing options for next paving season once other area construction projects—including replacement of the Route 9

Bridge and the reconstruction of Rochester Street—are completed.

Water Treatment Plant Demolition. Demolition of the former Water Plant will start when CMP confirms electricity to the building has been removed, and abatement of hazardous materials is complete. This will be sometime this summer but the final completion date is uncertain for now.

Prime Tanning Mural. The Berwick Arts Association (BAA) recently completed preliminary priming of a section of the Prime Tanning complex on Sullivan Street in preparation for a mural it intends to complete with volunteers from the community later this summer. For more information or to get involved check out www.berwickarts.org.

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