



MAY 2014

# About Town

- *Berwick's  
Administrative  
Newsletter*

DEPARTMENTAL &amp; 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

In an attempt to alleviate traffic congestion related to ongoing construction detours in the downtown area during the day, the Department met with Electric Light Company to adjust the timing of traffic signals at the Wilson/Allen and School Street intersection. Despite minor adjustments, traffic congestion during peak hours is expected to remain high throughout the

duration of the construction season.

Next, the Department's "Drug Take Back Day" on April 26, 2014 was by all accounts a major success. The four-hour event resulted in collection of 91.3 pounds of unwanted prescription and over-the-counter medications—the most ever to date. This event will occur again in October of this year, so stay tuned for more information coming soon.

From a staffing perspective, the Department has one open full-time position in light of the departure of former Detective William "Bill" Russell. Officer Russell has accepted a position with the Town of Ogunquit and will be missed in Berwick. Following approval by the Board of Selectmen to



selectively lift its hiring freeze to fill this position, the Town advertised the position on several media outlets. Applications are now being reviewed by administration.

Also, on cooperative weather days look for and say hello to your local Police officers, some of whom will be present on bicycles in the downtown area starting in mid-May and continuing throughout the summer season.

In conjunction with other first responder agencies in Berwick and South Berwick, the Department recently commenced participation

in the so-called “Yellow Dot” program, which is based upon application of a yellow dot decal on vehicle windows and is intended to alert emergency workers to the presence of vital health information including medical history in the glove compartments of program participants if needed. The program is voluntary and is intended to enhance the level of care Berwick’s first responders are able to provide to the community.

Notably, Captain Jerry Locke received an award from the “Choose to be Healthy Coalition” on May 15<sup>th</sup> for his efforts in helping foster an enhanced working relationship between the Coalition and the Maine Court system. The Weekly Sentinel also reported on this award.

The annual Memorial Day parade, coordinated by the Police Department from a traffic perspective, went well with few complaints or concerns despite ongoing construction in the downtown and associated traffic pattern adjustments and delays. Sergeant Steve Shisler worked closely with the American Legion Charles S. Hatch Post #79 and Recreation Director Kim Taylor, amongst others, to ensure a successful event.

For more information, stop by or contact the Police Department at 20 Wilson Street or call 207-698-1136.

## Fire Department

The Department continues to have a staff of 31 members with three

new recruits anticipated to be ready for service in mid-June following final testing. However, Jonnathon Terry, a member of the on-call force, tendered his resignation effective July 1, 2014.

Regarding implementation of the administrative aspects of the recent Fire Department Study conducted by Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI), the Department continues to work on updating its Standard Operating Procedures as time permits, and as of May 1, 2014 has implemented new mutual aid “run cards.” As discussed last month, run cards inform the utilization of regional resources for specific events requiring assistance from neighboring towns. These cards establish response patterns and detail which forces in the region will respond to which calls.

Two months into advertising for a second round of recruits in fiscal year 2014, the Department has received expressions of interest from four candidates, a lesser showing than its first round of fiscal year 2014 recruitment. Interviews by the Town Manager and Fire Chief will take place in June.

Like the Police Department above, the Fire Department too has begun to participate in the “Yellow Dot” program in conjunction with the first responders of South Berwick. It also continues to conduct wood stove and fire safety inspections at the request of residents.

Between April 20, 2014 and May 1, 2014, which is the last available statistical compilation, the

Department responded to 12 calls for fire service and/or emergency medical service (EMS). During this same time period, a total of 6 calls for EMS after hours or on the weekends had no staff available for a response. American Ambulance provided first responder response to all of these calls.

Lastly, the Department is soliciting quotes from contractors for interior repairs and modifications to its Station bathroom and surrounding wall area. Funding for this work was approved by Town Meeting in 2013.

For more information, contact the Fire Department at 207-698-1174, or stop by its physical address at 10 School Street across from Prime Tanning on Route 9/School Street in the downtown area.

## Water Department

At the present time the Water Department is dealing with a number of matters.

From a financial perspective, one of the most important matters is the reconstruction of Rochester Street. In accordance with the contract signed with Maine Department of Transportation, the Town is responsible for disruption to utility lines resulting from the construction project. To date, the Department has had to expend \$1,500 to repair each of three water service lines broken during construction.

The Department has also been coordinating the sale of water to a “pool water” trucking agency,

HLR Trucking, according to the \$25.00 per visit and \$8.00 per 1,000 gallon rates set by the Board of Selectmen. These rates were set to compensate the Department for its time and use of Town-generated water for private purposes like filling a swimming pool.

In order to more clearly delineate Department and visitor parking both from lanes of regular interior vehicular traffic, parking stalls at the Water Treatment Plant have been rearranged and clearly striped. Visitors are encouraged to take note of this change.

Spring hydrant flushing, which includes opening and closing buried gate valves and noting required maintenance, is anticipated to conclude in late May or early June. Buried gate valves allow portions of the Town's distribution system to be isolated in the event of something like a water main break.

On May 26<sup>th</sup>, Memorial Day, the 8" pipe responsible for carrying water from the Treatment Plant basement to the Town sprung a leak, likely induced by external use of a local hydrant causing a surge in pressure and associated gasket break. An alarm installed to detect such leaks worked as it was designed to, and staff responded in order to locate and fix the problem. No serious damage occurred. All persons using the hydrant in front of the Treatment Plant will be instructed on proper procedures for such use to avoid this issue in the future.

## Public Works Department

The Department recently expended money toward the purchase of a new lawn mower, and is in the process of gathering information to permit the purchase of a second mower.

At this time of year, the Department begins to engage heavily in lawn mowing. It focuses on certain areas and cemeteries to prepare for the annual Memorial Day parade, and also in other areas as needs become apparent.

The Department also assists the Town in the statutorily required maintenance of approximately 20 veteran's grave sites. It handles the responsibilities associated with this requirement several times throughout the year, and each time maintenance occurs approximately one full workday is required.

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 because 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.

Regarding its equipment, the Department is in need of major capital upgrades or replacements to several pieces of heavy machinery. The Loader, which is used for a variety of purposes throughout the year but most commonly for snow removal, is presently being repaired by Mick Bodyworks. It should be done in the coming weeks. This expense was approved by Town Meeting in 2013. In addition, the Department needs to replace one of its dump trucks. This too was approved by Town Meeting via an appropriation of money for capital equipment in 2013 and preceding years. Also, the Department's pickup truck is in need of replacement or serious repair.

Most of the repair costs for public works equipment stem from the corrosive effects of road salt coupled with the normal wear and tear associated with decades of service. The Department regularly engages in preventative maintenance throughout the winter by regularly washing salt from its vehicles, and has explored spray-on foam to desalinize contents

splashed on vehicle bodies in an effort to save on costly repairs, but this approach is itself a costly undertaking (around \$4,000 per drum).

This fiscal year, the Department anticipated purchasing a new dump truck and pickup truck, and forgoing replacement of its backhoe until the year 2018. However, the backhoe was recently taken out of service by the Town's mechanic. It was thereafter determined that replacement is wiser than repair, from a financial investment perspective. This created a question of priorities for the Town in the following manner:

The Department has approximately \$265,000 available to purchase capital equipment (which according to Town policies is essentially expensive machinery with an expected useful life lasting more than two years); however, a new dump truck is expected to cost approximately \$150,000, a new backhoe is expected to cost approximately \$100,000, and a new pickup truck is expected to cost approximately \$30,000.

These necessary expenses total approximately \$280,000, which is more than the \$265,000 in available funding. In other words, there are more capital replacement needs than available funding.

Management has determined the best way to handle the complexities created by the unexpected need to replace the Town's backhoe is as follows:

The Town will solicit bids for both a dump truck and a backhoe, but

not a new pickup truck. Because the pickup truck is in need of immediate repairs, however, the Town will utilize what is expected to be approximately \$15,000 in remaining departmental CIP funds to invest in "capital repairs" as opposed to capital replacement of the existing pickup truck.

Such repairs will assist the Department in attaining a state where all of its necessary equipment is again functional, and allow a reassessment of capital needs planning in the coming budget cycle that will permit replacement, if necessary, of the pickup truck.

Bid solicitation for a new dump truck and backhoe will commence shortly, and the Board of Selectmen will play an important role in prioritizing needs at an upcoming meeting when it is asked to open, review and act upon the responses to such a solicitation.

An alternative to the above-described investment plan is to hold a special Town Meeting in order to request authorization to either raise or transfer additional funding for purchase rather than repair of the pickup truck. With only half of the anticipated cost of a new pickup truck remaining under present circumstances following purchase of a new dump truck and backhoe, however, without that approval costly maintenance of the pickup appears to be the only viable option.

Specifics details as to what each piece of equipment discussed above is used for, and what repairs

are necessary and why, are available upon request from the Town Manager who may be reached at 207-274-1298 or [townmanager@berwickmaine.org](mailto:townmanager@berwickmaine.org).

## Recreation Department

Regarding events at Town Hall, a blood drive sponsored by the American Red Cross took place at Town Hall on May 17<sup>th</sup>, one of several throughout the year.

Regarding summer camp registrations, the Recreation Department recently purchased software known as "My Rec" which will enable the public to more easily and conveniently register on the internet as opposed to in person. This software will function through the following web domain [www.BerwickRec.com](http://www.BerwickRec.com) and online registration will now be mandatory. However, there will still be a variety of payment methods, including online as well as print-and-mail forms.

Those without a computer are encouraged to utilize publicly available resources, like the Public Library, or contact the Recreation Department Director Kim Taylor at Town Hall at 207-698-1101.

Those interested in working as a summer camp counselor for the Town's Rec Camp program should also inquire from Kim Taylor as to procedural steps involved in the process. The first step for both counselors and counselors-in-training (CITs), who may be able to earn community service credit for high school requirements, is to fill out and

complete an application.

Applications are on file at the Town Hall as well as on the Town's website ([www.berwickmaine.org](http://www.berwickmaine.org)) by clicking on the employment and volunteer sub-tab of the Recreation Department's page.

Recreation Camp runs from July 7<sup>th</sup> through August 15<sup>th</sup> for Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. It is furthermore broken up into age appropriate sections as follows: "Discovery" camp is for children in Kindergarten through second grade; "Explorer" camp is for children in third grade through fifth grade; and "Adventure" camp is intended for children in grades 6-8.

Discovery and Explorer camp sections cost \$385.00 and Adventure camp costs \$415.00. Included in these costs in addition to camp registration/enrollment are the following events and items: all fieldtrips and a tee-shirt. A \$50 discount for sibling registrations is also offered.

Camp hours are from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM and before-camp care is also offered from 7:00 AM – 9:00 AM at an additional cost.

The Department also recently assisted in coordination of the annual Memorial Day parade, which took place on May 26<sup>th</sup> and witnessed a public turnout estimated at approximately 300 individuals.

Lastly, the Department is again offering discount 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 the Customer Service window at 207-698-1101 or stop by the Town Hall lobby.

### Finance Department

In addition to handling routine matters, the Finance Department is preparing both in-house and with the auditors directly for year-end financial condition projections and reporting. It is also getting ready for commencement of the new fiscal year on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Also, with approved funding for a cost-saving switch to new software in the Finance Department (one which will align the department with the Town Clerk's office in order to streamline operations and enhance efficiency), a meeting with the software developer has been requested to commence the transition process.

Regarding tax collection, the Department's Director as deputy Tax Collector has prepared and will soon be mailing a courtesy letter to those with outstanding 2014 tax obligations (excluding tax club members) prior to commencement of the tax lien

process in July. This letter is intended to encourage as much voluntary payment as possible in order to avoid more formal and costly means of collection.

### Planning Department

The Planning Board has been involved in the review of several projects throughout the month of May, including a conditional use application of Steve Snow representing Saab Specific to permit a parking facility for Saab at 16 Commercial Drive (which had a public hearing on May 15, 2014); a conditional use *amendment* application for House of Hope, which sought permission to use its space at 6 Sullivan Street for outreach, food pantry and soup kitchen purposes (approved conditionally on May 1, 2014); a 5 lot major subdivision application of John Corliss represented by Civil Consultants engineering related to a site on Old Pine Hill Road located at Tax Map R-44, Lot 13 (which received preliminary approval on May 15, 2014 and will receive final review on June 5, 2014); and a 6 lot major subdivision application presented by Al Turner represented by Civil Consultants engineering related to a site on Wentworth Road located at Tax Map R-61, Lots 2, 2B and 3A (which received final approval on May 15, 2014).

Also at its June 5<sup>th</sup> meeting the Planning Board will review applications related to the following project proposals: a preliminary plan for a 9 lot major subdivision on Sullivan and Logan Streets at Tax Map U-3, Lot 9, presented by Wedgewood

Commons as represented by Corner Post Land Surveying; and an application to amend and existing subdivision on Old Pine Hill Road at Tax Map R-44, Lot 21, submitted by Richard Desmaris and related to a lot line adjustment.

The Board of Appeals has no new applications pending before it at this time.

Next, the Town learned on May 28, 2014 that its recent grant application to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for a site specific environmental analysis of the Prime Tanning site in the downtown area was denied. This competitive grant is offered to a nationwide pool of applicants, and EPA received 600 requests for 800 projects in addition to Berwick's. It awarded less than 275 such requests. The Town intends to arrange a discussion with EPA to learn how to improve its chances of receiving this competitively awarded assistance in the future if the Town is interested in reapplying.

Discussions with the mortgage holder for Prime Tanning (Fund of Jupiter) are ongoing related to potential productive re-use of the site, which sits central to the area for which Berwick recently adopted a new "Downtown

Vision." Those interested in learning more about any of the above or in getting involved with the Downtown Vision Committee should contact Town Planner John Stoll at 207-698-1101 or [planning@berwickmaine.org](mailto:planning@berwickmaine.org).

### Town Clerk's Office

The Town Clerk's office is always busy this time of year and this year is no different. With a bifurcated Town Meeting spanning May 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> and a special Town Meeting on June 10<sup>th</sup>, preparation of warrants, ballots, voting machines and associated legal requirements has been in full swing.

The Clerk's office has also been short staffed throughout May due to the unanticipated absence of two part-time staff members. Vehicle registrations and other routine matters are being addressed as quickly as possible by remaining staff persons, however longer than usual delays at peak hours are likely to continue through at least the end of May. The Town Manager and Town Clerk are discussing what options exist to provide better and more prompt customer service during this challenging time, and have begun to address this issue through the utilization of Rebecca Carter, a knowledgeable municipal

employee with experience in the Clerk's office of a nearby town. Ms. Carter is assisting in a part-time fill-in capacity on Fridays until regular staff is available again.

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

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