



OCTOBER 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

At this time of year the Department is engaged in a number of activities, including participation in annually required training exercises to meet state mandates. Such training consists of topic areas selected by the State directly, and must be completed by December 31st of each year, by each officer. This year's topics include the following: Firearms, Legal Updates, Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment, Elder Abuse & Exploitation, and

Methamphetamine Labs, amongst other things. Officers must also complete elective training in addition to the above.

On October 20th, the Department held an internal training day and meeting at the Police Station which included four members of the District Attorney's Office. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and analyze prosecutorial issues focused on domestic violence cases. The Department reviewed its own guidelines on such cases following the meeting in light of the discussion.

The Town Meeting-approved new police cruiser arrived this month, and is presently being outfitted for police equipment in a manner that will allow it to be used in regular patrols. The cruiser should be ready for use in November.



Officer Ronald Lund, an experienced professional who joined the Department from another jurisdiction earlier this year, has recently been appointed to the assignment of 'Detective.' Detective Lund has specialized knowledge and training in a variety of law enforcement areas with a considerable degree stemming from criminal investigations.

The Department also recently began a search to replace the vacancy created by resignation of Officer Joshua Morneau. Officer Morneau accepted a position with the Town of Eliot and

will remain on the Berwick Police Department as a reserve officer.

Calls for service at this point in the year are approximately 4.5% higher than last year. The Department has witnessed an increase in call volume of about 5% per year for the last decade.

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

Fire Department

The Department presently has a staff of 29, with four members on medical leave. It also recently welcomed former Junior Firefighter Dylan Leary as an official On-Call Firefighter.

The Department completed its annual pump testing in October, and all apparatus pumps passed. The Command vehicle is scheduled for delivery in November with emergency equipment upgrades expected to take one additional week post-delivery. Following that, the vehicle will be ready for regular use.

The Department continues to review and update where appropriate its Standard Operating Procedures in light of recommendations made by the recent Municipal Resources, Inc. Study of its operations. It is developing a proposal for review by Management to use per diem firefighter / EMT staffing to fill day shifts when paid staff are on vacation, are sick, or for any other reason are out of the station. This would apply only when on-call staff are not available.

There are no pending recruitment applications at the present time, but

those interested are encouraged to contact Fire Chief Dennis Plante by the information below, or Town Manager Patrick Venne at 207-698-1101.

The Department continues to conduct wood stove and other fire safety inspections upon request. Please refer to the contact information below if you are interested in receiving this service.

61 permits for open burning and seasonal camp fires were issued for residents throughout October.

The Department also offered the following fire prevention educational programs during October:

Two days spent by staff at the Knowlton School consisting of a Fire Safety jeopardy game and evaluation of children's knowledge of different fire safety information. 218 children participated.

At the Hussey School, staff spent three days providing children with information about smoke detectors and CO2 detectors, which are this year's National Fire Protection Agency's theme. Information provided included when to test these devices, change their batteries and replace them, and what to do when a detector activates. 426 children participated in this program.

Local daycares and pre-schools in Town also participated in these sorts of educational activities. To date, staff has visited 6 pre-schools in Town. The children in attendance are taught the basics of smoke detectors, stop-drop-and-roll, the concept of evacuation meeting places, how and

when to use 911, firefighter recognition, and are provided tours of a fire truck. This part of the Department's educational program has reached 106 children to date.

In all, a total of 750 children were contacted during the 2014 Fire Prevention Safety programs.

Regarding calls for service, staff responded to 53 calls involving fire and/or EMS between September 29, 2014 and October 26, 2014.

13 calls for EMS were missed due to the availability of EMS staff after normal business hours or on the weekends and, in each case, American Ambulance or a mutual aid responder provided first response instead.

In October the Department also participated in the Noble High School's Crisis Response Plan annual review process and also a discussion with the Maine Rural Water Association regarding an upcoming 'table top' planning exercise concerning a hypothetical chemical spill within the Salmon Falls watershed region. The table top planning exercise will take place November 13th at the South Berwick Community Center. Both activities fall under the Department's emergency management efforts.

Following a biannual safety inspection by the Maine Bureau of Labor in which several minor areas in need of attention were noted, the Department has taken several steps to bring itself back into compliance with SHAPE-award standards for safety in places of public employment. All noted areas are intended to be complete by the end of November.

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

Water Department

Business continues as usual, for the most part, in the Water Department, with the Department focusing most of its time and energy on preparing for a potential rate increase intended to take effect on April 1, 2015.

The rate increase, if it occurs, will be subject to a public hearing. The public hearing is at this time planned for January 20, 2015, as the first item of business on the Selectmen's meeting scheduled for that evening.

The final calculation of the proposed rate increase is 11.91% higher than existing charges for metered water. For an average residential customer using 2,000 cubic feet of water per quarter (which is about 15,000 gallons), the current cost is \$112.09. The proposed increase would change this to \$125.44.

Public Fire Protection charges, calculated in accordance with applicable regulatory law, will increase \$19,178.00 on an annual basis. This fee is paid by all tax payers, not just customers.

As averaged over all categories, including residential customers, and public and private fire protection, the increase averages to 11.41%.

A draft legal notice of the proposed increase is available for public review at any time, for those interested, and as soon as it is finalized will be posted publicly for all to see in a newspaper

as well as mailed individually to all customers.

The Department was also awarded a small Board of Selectmen-approved grant from Maine Municipal Insurance for the purchase of a gas monitor for use in confined spaces.

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

Public Works Department

The Public Works Department completed changing out a number of driveway entrance culverts as well as a series of ditching projects throughout the month of October. It intends to complete more of such projects prior to the start of cold weather. The intent of cleaning naturally fallen leaves from the road ditches is to ensure water may run smoothly and does not clog culverts which could lead to washed out driveway entrances and road shoulders. The Department focuses its ditching efforts in problem areas where issues have arisen in the past.

In addition, the Department is fine-tuning its equipment necessary for winter snow removal. Two trucks remain in Manchester, NH for capital repairs, but the Department is ready for first snowfall nevertheless.

The Department has received a new leased Caterpillar backhoe and as soon as appropriate lease paperwork is signed the machine will be ready for Departmental use. The Department's previous backhoe suffered from a unexpectedly cracked rollover protection system (ROPS) and posed too great of a safety risk to continue using. A leased machine was pursued

as a means of affording a replacement vehicle without incurring the cost of a total purchase. The Town will own the leased vehicle after 7 years.

The Department's new pickup truck is predicted to be delivered to the Public Works garage by November 10th.

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

Recreation Department

On October 30, 2014, the Department held the annual "Trunk-n-Treat" festivities at and around Town Hall in downtown Berwick. Many area groups and businesses participated, including Subway Restaurant, Deb & Dukes, Spence & Mathews Insurance, Kennebunk Savings Bank, the American Legion Charles S. Hatch Post #79 and Ladies Auxiliary, the Berwick Public Library, and the Berwick Police and Fire Departments.

The first session of the recently expanded Recreation Department's Early Release Care program was held on October 23rd. Space is still available for future early release dates from school for Kindergarten through 5th grade students. The cost is \$20 and pickup is required by 5:30 PM.

The next Recreation Commission meeting will occur on November 3, 2014 at 6:30 PM.

The annual holiday parade will take place on Saturday December 6, 2014 at 2:00PM and the theme this year is Classic Holiday Movies. All groups are welcome to participate in the parade and may contact Kim Taylor,

Recreation Director, for more information.

Also, the Community Outreach & Events subcommittee of Envision Berwick intends to plan a craft fair and tree lighting event to occur on the same day as the Holiday Parade. This group is also rekindling talks of establishing a community center at the former Estabrook Doran School which adjoins the Berwick Police Station. If and when such plans are explored officially by the Town, full Planning Board review would become necessary.

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

Finance Department

Water billing for September 30th proceeded smoothly despite the Department's recent partial conversion to a new software system, TRIO, which only triggered a few minor issues with respect to addresses.

The Department continues to work toward full conversion to TRIO and will be working next on its Accounts Payable processes and Payroll. These items are anticipated to be complete in January 2015.

The Finance Director also reviewed the Town's draft audited financial statements, and submitted her comments to the Town's audit firm—RHR Smith & Co. The Town anticipates receiving a presentation on its audited financial statements for Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2014 sometime in November.

The Finance Department is also spending a lot of time preparing for the budget planning cycle related to Fiscal Year 2016, which will begin next summer and determine next year's tax rate. As union contracts are settled or settling, and updated insurance premium rates are provided, the relatively fixed costs of next year's budget may be inserted into budget templates, leaving more discretionary expenditure areas for further review by the Budget Committee, Board of Selectmen, and Town Meeting.

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

Planning Department

During October, the Planning Board approved the following projects:

A 7 lot major subdivision for Fund of Jupiter at 20 Sullivan Street (Tax Map U-4, Lot 146) intended to maximize the grant funding potential of the property under the U.S. EPA's brownfield cleanup program (related to Prime Tanning); and

A conditional use permit amendment for Longleaf Lumber at 31 Commercial Drive (Tax Map R-54, Lot 29-1).

A scheduled public hearing for the conditional use permit amendment proposal of Cumberland Farms was postponed at the October 16, 2014 meeting at the Applicant's request. Notice will be published, posted and sent to abutters upon rescheduling.

Throughout December, January and February, the Planning Board will be holding a series of public workshops

and hearings during regularly scheduled meetings for the purpose of working through and devising proposed Land Use Ordinance amendments and discussing the impacts of such amendments with residents and property owners in the impacted areas prior to making recommendations for Town Meeting action.

The Capital Improvements Committee, which consists of the sitting Planning Board and one member of the American Legion, will hold its first meeting between 6:30 and 7:30 PM on November 6, 2014.

The Board of Appeals intends to hold a meeting to act upon a variance request of Leo Belair of 215 Long Swamp Road. Mr. Belair is requesting a variance from the dimensional requirements in Section 8.13.1 related to Owner Occupied Apartments.

The Town Planner also released a power point presentation to Berwick Community Television which explains with visual detail some of the proposed amendments to the Berwick Land Use Ordinance.

Lastly, the Planning Department set up a Twitter account to better engage the public through social media. The account will be used to get information out to the public about various official meetings and also about citizen involvement groups, like Envision Berwick subcommittees. The account may be followed at "@BerwickPlanning."

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

Town Clerk's Office

The Town Clerk's office is busy preparing for the Fall Town Meeting and Election Day which is November 4th. Town Hall will not need to close on Election Day as a suitable number of volunteers from the public has been found. The Warrant was posted in late October and includes a number of issues likely to be of interest to voters, including a new bedbug ordinance, a potential partnership with Fund of Jupiter for the environmental cleanup of Prime Tanning, a revision to the Town's Disorderly Building Ordinance, and petitioned articles relating to the sale of alcoholic beverages in Town.

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

Miscellaneous

Downtown Bridge to Reopen in Nov.

The Route 9 Bridge between downtown Berwick and Somersworth, NH is scheduled to open by November 14th. It will close again temporarily between November 21st and 24th.

The bridge includes brand new ornamental streetlights in an attempt to enhance the aesthetic urban design qualities and pedestrian realm of downtown. These light fixtures can be seen here:



Prime Tanning

On November 4th Town Meeting approved question 4 on the Municipal Ballot. This action delegated the authority to enter into binding contracts to the Selectmen, for the specific purpose of signing an agreement with a company called Fund of Jupiter for the environmental remediation of the Prime Tanning site.

Fund of Jupiter loaned Prime Tanning money at one point, and therefore has a major interest in the site. The agreement was signed by Selectmen on November 12th and will permit the Town to foreclose on the property, apply for money from the government to clean up the site, and then sell the property to Fund of Jupiter. The sale price will total all back taxes owed. Fund of Jupiter will also be paying the Town a sum of money during Town ownership which either equals what would have been assessed in taxes if the Town did not take ownership of the site, or some other payment in lieu of taxes that the Selectmen may agree to. A copy of the fully signed agreement is available for anyone who wishes to review it.

The Town will be submitting its grant application to the federal government through the Environmental Protection Agency on or before December 19th. In the first week of December, a public meeting will be held advertising the Town's intent to apply for grant funding.

With any questions about this matter, please contact Town Manager Patrick Venne at townmanager@berwickmaine.org or 207-698-1101.

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Berwick Town Hall
11 Sullivan Street
Berwick, ME 03901