



SEPTEMBER 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

From a staffing perspective, one of the Department's new full-time hires, Michael Howie, recently began the 18 week Basic Law Enforcement Training Program at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy in Vassalboro, Maine. The program commenced on August 18th and will entail instruction related to all aspects of law enforcement; it is a State requirement that all full-time officers

receive the certification offered by this program.

Just prior to the start of this month, the Department's staff conducted a safety checkpoint in the downtown area as part of the 2014 Drive Sober Maine Enforcement Grant. During this process, the Department made contact with 658 motor vehicles resulting in 35 warnings, 6 summonses, and 1 arrest. In addition to allowing staff coverage of the checkpoint, the grant also allowed officers to complete saturation patrols with a focus on reducing the number of impaired motorists on the roads. These "saturation patrols" are in addition to the Department's normally scheduled patrol activity.

September marks the return of Officer Milton Fogg to the Berwick schools as a School Resource Officer (SRO).



Officer Fogg has been working with the schools in this capacity for nearly a decade. The School District reimburses the Town at a rate of 85% for this service. This reimbursement is reflected as Town revenue rather than subtracted from the Police Department's operating budget.

On September 8th, Officer Ron Lund started working for the Department. Officer Lund replaces Officer Gregg Sevigny, who accepted a job recently with the York County Sheriff's Office. Officer Lund has over 20 years of diversified law enforcement experience and training.

On Saturday September 27th, the Department held a drug take back day, as advertised, which is a semi-annual opportunity for members of the community to safely dispose of unwanted or unused medications of both the prescription and non-prescription sort. The medication collected is sealed and delivered to the Drug Enforcement Agency, which incinerates it. This event is important because Maine has one of the highest prescription drug abuse rates in the country, and medications are frequently one of the items burglarized during home invasions. Removing medications from households helps address both of these issues.

The Department concluded its bicycle program in the downtown area during the last weekend of September. In light of positive community feedback regarding the program, it will be reinstated next spring.

Regarding the Department's recent Board-approved purchase of a new Dodge cruiser, the vehicle has been ordered but has not yet arrived. It is anticipated it will arrive in early October.

Lastly, the Department's calls for service for this time of year are about 4.5% higher when compared to this time last year. The Department has experienced a steady growth in call volume of about 5% per year for approximately the last ten years.

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

Fire Department

The Fire Department presently has a staff of 29 employees, including four full-time and twenty-five part-time/on-call members. Four of these individuals are presently on medical restrictions until further notice.

During the month of September, the Department completed its annual vehicle maintenance. Annual fire hose testing was also completed during the month. Maine Emergency Medical Services (Maine EMS) also conducted an inspection of the Department's medical equipment, as well, and found the Department to be in compliance with all State rules.

The Department is still awaiting a delivery date for its purchase of a new command vehicle as authorized by Town Meeting vote and approved by the Board of Selectmen.

Regarding implementation of the administrative aspects of the comprehensive department study commissioned by the Board of Selectmen in 2012 and completed in 2013 by Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI), the Department continues to work reviewing and updating its standard operating procedures, on an ongoing basis, and is also re-evaluating and updating its on-call job descriptions and promotional policy to match the recommended practices. Future promotions will be based upon written testing, practical task assignment, and an oral board interview.

The Department is also developing a proposal to use per diem firefighter/EMT staffing to fill in day shifts when paid staff members are on

vacation, are sick or are for any other reason unavailable to fill regularly scheduled shifts. This policy would apply only in the absence of regular on-call member availability.

Regarding company fire officer training, four existing and one officer candidate attended the Fire Officer Program over the weekend of September 27th and 28th to focus on the subject of 'Commanding Fire Attack.' The program was sponsored by the York County Chief's Association.

From a recruitment perspective, the Department hired one new recruit in late August, Brian Raineri.

Regarding fire prevention efforts, Fire Prevention Week is October 5th – October 11th. The Department continues to offer inspections of wood stove and other safety inspections upon the request of residents/others (see contact information, below), and has issued, inspected, and approved 47 open burning permits this year for residents.

The Berwick Volunteer Firefighter's Association (BVFFA) Family Fun Day is scheduled for October 11th at 9:00AM at the Knowlton School. The event is scheduled to last until 3:00PM. Firefighter/EMT Travis Doiron is working with local school staff on this year's Fire Prevention activities as well as with locally-permitted child daycare centers.

The Fire Station was inspected by the Maine Bureau of Labor (BOL) on September 16th. The BOL conducted a review of Fire operations and the facility itself in order to assess the Department's eligibility for renewal of

its Safety & Health Award for Public Employers (SHAPE) designation. It noted a list of minor concerns and provided the Department 6 months within which to correct them. The Department will be taking steps to address each in the coming months.

In the context of calls for service, staff responded to 50 calls involving fire or EMS requests between August 25th and September 28th. 19 calls for EMS were missed due to the availability of EMS staff after hours and on weekends. American Ambulance or a mutual aid provider provided first responder service in each case.

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

Water Department

Perhaps the biggest item of interest and action in the Water Department as of late is the proposed water service rate increase. The Chief Water Systems Operator, Chris Weismann, has been working with a water rate consultant to determine what level of rate increase is appropriate to ensure the Department is fully funded for all of its various needs, including capital depreciation. The Board of Selectmen will be holding a public hearing on this matter as required by the Public Utilities Commission in the coming weeks. The purpose of this hearing will be to inform the public of the planned increase, and allow the public to express opinion and ask questions.

The Department is also working with the Finance Department to determine the feasibility of providing appropriate data to the Berwick Sewer District in order to support its exploration of shifting to a use fee.

Also in September, the Department completed a one-year post-completion review of the recent standpipe painting. A remotely operated underwater video-recorder was used for this purpose. It searched for all locations where coating exhibits disbanding, cracking, rusting or other defects. Minor issues were noted and in accordance with the contract for this service the relevant contractor is repairing the issues at no cost to the Town or rate payers.

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

Public Works Department

With cooler temperatures setting in, the Department has been able to shift its focus away from grounds maintenance and toward other projects. Recently, it replaced the cross culvert on Old Pine Hill Road North, for instance.

It is also now handling ditching to remove leaves which may clog culverts and completing repair of certain roadway washouts. The Department moreover engages in leaf cleaning in a variety of other areas, including cemeteries, Town Hall and Water Tower.

Capital repair services are nearing completion for most of the Department's truck fleet, all of which will have inspection stickers by this winter. The "wheeler" (a 10-wheel dump truck) is having its frame replaced and body painted in Manchester, NH at this time. When it is complete, Truck 3 will be brought to Manchester to have minor work completed on its tailgate linkage system. Simultaneously, Truck 5 will

be having steel fabrication work done on its body locally at Mick Bodyworks. This will conclude the Department's capital repair schedule for the fall.

A new dump truck purchased with authorization from Town Meeting and the Board of Selectmen has also been ordered and will begin its assembly in mid-October. The Department anticipates that its backhoe, also approved by Town Meeting and the Board of Selectmen, is about 2 weeks away from arrival. Lastly, the Department is still awaiting delivery date information related to its new pickup truck, which was also approved by Town Meeting and the Board of Selectmen.

The Department anticipates being fully prepared by the start of winter for routine road clearing and maintenance efforts.

In Department news other than that related to fleet services, on October 11th the Public Works Foreman will oversee the Transfer Station's annual Hazardous Waste Day event at the South Berwick Maintenance Facility.

UPDATE: Do to an unprecedented surge in traffic within the first hour of this event, the Town reached its \$5,000 expenditure limit far before the event was scheduled to end, and therefore had to close the event prematurely to avoid over-expending the Transfer Station budget. The event generated more cars in the first hour this year than it did throughout the entire day last year. The Town apologizes for any inconvenience this unanticipated result may have caused.

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

Recreation Department

The Department will be coordinating the annual "Trunk-n-Treat" event this October 30th from 5:30PM to 7:30PM at the Town Hall and Sullivan Square. The event engages a number of diverse groups and businesses from Berwick and is an alternative to traditional trick-or-treating.

A number of other events are occurring throughout the fall. Football and cheerleading practices for all ages between Kindergarten and Eight Grade happen weeknights on the upper portion of the field. Travel Soccer practices take place on weeknights on the lower portion of the field. And Berwick Youth Soccer games occur on Saturday mornings.

The Recreation Committee has changed its regular meeting schedule back to Wednesday evenings at 6:30 PM. For specific dates, please see the Recreation Department's website or contact the Recreation Director, information for whom is provided below.

A recent lighting update at the Rec Field is anticipated to lead to a decrease in vandalism at that location over time. Nighttime visibility has been greatly enhanced by addition of 6 new energy efficient lights producing bright white LED lighting that improves security camera visibility. So far, the lighting has already helped identify individuals involved in recent acts of vandalism at the Field. Those individuals' names

have been turned over to the Berwick Police Department for follow up.

New "No Dog" signs will be erected at the Rec Field in early October at each entrance. This prohibition stems from a Board of Selectmen-approved amended version of the Memorial Field Use Policy. Berwick Community Television is also running a Public Service Announcement about the new signs.

Lastly, the Community Outreach & Events sub-committee of the Envision Berwick Committee is planning another holiday tree lighting ceremony for the same day as the annual Holiday Parade on December 6th. This group has also begun tentative discussions about the feasibility of re-using the Estabrook Doran School building attached to the Berwick Police Department.

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

Finance Department

The Finance Department has now transitioned its cash receipting, tax billing and collection, and water billing and collections functions to its new TRIO software (away from its previous system, Munis). The software is functioning smoothly and is anticipated to generate thousands in savings after upfront investment costs are recouped. Tax bills, which were generated on this new system, were mailed September 9th. Water bills were likewise created on this new system, and were mailed September 30th. The deadline for transitioning all remaining financial modules to the

Town's new software is January 1, 2015.

Lastly, the Town will be meeting with its auditing firm, RHR Smith & Co., in the near future to go over draft financial statements in anticipation of an upcoming presentation of the Town's financial condition to the Board of Selectmen.

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

Planning Department

Throughout September, the Planning Board approved the following projects: a 7-lot major subdivision at Sullivan and Logan Streets (Tax Map U-3, Lot 9) known as 'Wedgewood Commons' and presented by Corner Post Land Surveying.

The Planning Board also scheduled a preliminary approval meeting for its review of a proposed 7-lot major subdivision presented by the Fund of Jupiter for 20 Sullivan Street (Tax Map U-4, Lot 146), also known as the Prime Tanning site.

Fund of Jupiter's proposed subdivision is related to its potential public-private partnership with the Town, which will be considered and voted on at the November 4th Town Meeting. That potential arrangement is described in more detail through a FAQ sheet posted to the Town's website under the Public Notices tab and Envision Berwick Committee Sub-Tab.

The Planning Board also scheduled a conditional use amendment application for potential final action related to Longleaf Lumber pertaining

to 31 Commercial Drive (Tax Map R-54, Lot 29-1).

Cumberland Farms also appeared before the Board for a preliminary review on September 18th and will return before the Board on October 16th for a public hearing regarding its proposed conditional use amendment to enable a 4,000 square foot expansion of its existing building and store at the intersection of School Street and Route 236.

Lastly, the Planning Board held a public hearing for proposed amendments to the Berwick Land Use Ordinance on September 18th. The Board voted to forward the proposed amendments to the Board of Selectmen for a Town Meeting vote in spring 2015. More work is expected to take place on additional proposed changes to the Land Use Ordinance with at least two more public hearings likely.

The Board of Appeals, which meets on an as-needed basis, had no applications or meetings during the month of September.

Regarding the Planning Department itself, the company "CAI" has delivered updated tax maps as well as new large prints for Shoreland, roads, and zoning maps. ArcView-compatible shape files for the Town's geographic information systems (GIS) have also been delivered from CAI and are being geo-referenced as the Town Planner has time.

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

Town Clerk's Office

The Town Clerk's office, like the Finance Department, has been transitioning to its new TRIO software system throughout the month of September. The system provides options that allow improved customer service functionality through ease of access to necessary information.

Additionally, in response to public demand, the Department continues to work on and learn the registration process for out of state leased vehicles. As this process is new and complicated, there have been both good and less-than-good results with the few customers who have needed this service. Previously, the Town sent customers to Springvale to have this service completed, due to the infrequency with which it arose in Berwick.

The Sales and Use Tax Division for the State of Maine is scheduling a training for municipal coordinators at the BMV—which is the source for State-level help contacts for local governments like Berwick.

Lastly, the Town Clerk attended the Secretary of State's Annual Elections Conference in Bangor in late September. This conference is mandatory on a biannual basis, corresponding with gubernatorial and presidential election years.

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

Miscellaneous

Prime Tanning

The Town is contemplating entering a public-private partnership with a company known as Fund of Jupiter. The partnership is aimed at facilitating remediation of environmental contamination at the Prime Tanning site located in downtown in hopes of fostering future redevelopment of that site. Town Meeting will be asked to vote upon delegation of its authority to enter contracts and acquire property to the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager for this purpose on November 4th.

The potential partnership will likely entail consensual foreclosure on the Prime Tanning site for back taxes, after which the Town will own the property and apply for cleanup grants for which private parties are not eligible. The Town would also likely contribute 20% of any grants received in the form of a match which could be either monetary or in-kind (such as staff time). This assumes the grantor (U.S. EPA) does not grant any sort of a waiver of these required match contributions.

Eventually, if this partnership moves forward, the property would be transferred to Fund of Jupiter for the amount of taxes owed on the property, less any money advanced by Fund of Jupiter to cover match or other funds.

This is a very basic description of what is contemplated, and a series of answers to an extensive list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) about more specific and detailed information pertaining to this proposal is posted to the Town's website under

both the Public Notices tab and the Envision Berwick Committee sub-tab.

With any questions about this matter, please contact Town Manager Patrick Venne at

townmanager@berwickmaine.org or 207-698-1101. Or, come to the October 21st Selectmen's meeting at Town Hall, which begins at 6:30 PM and will be the last regularly scheduled meeting of the Board until after Town Meeting/Election Day.

Budget Committee

The Town has already started its budget process for fiscal year 2016, which commences July 1, 2015. An important part of this process is review by an appointed advisory budget committee. If you are interested in serving on such a committee, please forward an email or letter of interest, along with any other information you believe to be pertinent to the Board of Selectmen's

consideration of your candidacy, to Town Manager Patrick Venne at townmanager@berwickmaine.org or by regular mail to Town Hall, 11 Sullivan Street, Berwick, ME 03901.

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