



# Town of Newcastle

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FROM: Kevin L. Sutherland, Town Manager  
TO: Newcastle Select Board  
CC: Town Staff  
DATE: November 13, 2023  
RE: Town Manager Report

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## **November 7<sup>th</sup> Election**

A huge shout-out to Shelly, Michelle, Emma and all the election clerks who made Tuesday's election seamless. I mean, they made it look seamless. A lot of work went into its preparation, and it was an extremely long day for everyone involved - so thank you thank you thank you! Next year will surely have a larger turnout, so staff will look to debrief this event and start brainstorming about the process, flow, and potential changes for upcoming elections.

## **Tidewater / Broadband expansion**

Tidewater was a recipient of \$2.5 million from the [Maine Connectivity Authority \(MCA\) Reach ME](#) grant to help support broadband buildout for some of Newcastle's and surrounding communities underserved residents. They were awarded the funding back in the Spring. I met with representatives from Tidewater on Friday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November to get an update on the MCA grant. Since then, the federal government has also been making a lot of additional funding available for internet providers and communities in need. Tidewater is currently in the process of exploring these additional federal funding opportunities and before they sign on to anything specifically, they want to make sure they can stretch those dollars as far as they can to serve as many potential customers as possible. I was assured during this meeting that they are still in the engineering process and intend to roll out the work, regardless of which funding stream they choose to access, the first of the year to reach our underserved populations.

## **Change in Cleaners**

After many years of serving the Town of Newcastle, our employee cleaners have parted ways. We want to thank them for their service and wish them well in their continued retirement. We've been fortunate to quickly identify a great local small company to contract with us to provide cleaning services to our two buildings.

## **Planning Board member resignation**

On Wednesday, I received a resignation email from Lee Emmons who had been serving on the Planning Board. If you know of anyone who might be interested in serving, I'd like to hear from you. Note: Taking a full review of the boards/committees, their memberships, and expirations for the Select Boards consideration is on the to do list.

## **Closing Early on 11/22**

Given all the extra work for Tuesday's election event and a historically slow day in the office the day before Thanksgiving, I am going to close the office at 12pm on Wednesday November 22<sup>nd</sup>. This is a thank you to our staff and will give them all a chance to prepare for the holiday.

## **11/30 Planning Board Workshop**

On Thursday, November 30, 2023 at 6:30 PM in the Community Room of the Fire Station on River Road, the Planning Board will hold a special meeting to review and consider potential changes to the Town's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. These potential changes will NOT be part of the Special Town Meeting in December.

## **Upcoming Agenda Items**

Item 10 on the Select Board Agenda is a list of items staff hope to bring to your attention at a future meeting. This section of the Manager's Report tries to provide some initial background information to that list.

### **Special Town Meeting Warrant**

At the [October 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting](#), the Select Board notified the Town Clerk to establish a Special Town Meeting for December 11<sup>th</sup>. The next step in the process is for the Select Board to approve the Warrant articles that will be voted on. This will have to take place at your next meeting on November 27<sup>th</sup>.

### **Comprehensive Plan State Approval**

In the [Manager Report from September 25<sup>th</sup>](#), I mentioned the comprehensive plan and how Michael and I were looking to bring to your attention the changes we'd need to make to the current document to get state approval. We are nearly complete with our review and are now working on the recommendations we'd suggest changing. Depending on what else is on the agenda, I really hope we can work on this on November 27<sup>th</sup>.

### **Fire Engine Bid Document**

We're having a discussion tonight about the general timeline and funding. Once we have some additional direction, we'll look to bring the bid documents for your approval to post.

### **Traffic and Parking Ordinance**

We'd like to propose (or at least discuss) some additional clarity around parking. We do not have anything in here about tickets or ticketing – just towing. Staff have done a little research into what other municipalities are doing and how we could adopt some additional language to further clarify.

### **Town Fee Schedule**

Some other 'fees' were recognized at a previous meeting and now need to be added to the document. The Traffic and Parking Ordinance also referenced the Fee Schedule around towing (and fees – which also led to the follow up question about what to do about tickets).

### **Finance Committee Ordinance**

After the discussion tonight, I assume we're going to start working through our ordinances – Therefore, I've begun the process of reviewing this ordinance and will bring some recommended changes to our next meeting.