



Town of Newcastle

Kevin L. Sutherland Interim Town Manager

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FROM: Kevin L. Sutherland, Interim Town Manager
TO: Newcastle Select Board
CC: Town Staff
DATE: July 10, 2023
RE: Town Manager Report

FY22 Tax Liens

This year's tax liens that were recorded this morning with the registry of deeds totaled 45. Should any liens and the 6% per annum penalty not be paid by January of 2026 (18 months after lien if filed), they will be back in front of the Select Board for potential foreclosure.

Having dealt with liens and foreclosures in other communities and being new to Newcastle, I was curious how that compares to previous years. Thanks to our Clerk's quick research, here's the stats for this year and the prior 2 years:

	<u>FY22</u>	<u>FY21</u>	<u>FY20</u>
30-Day Lien notices sent:	99	179	63
Properties sent to lien:	45	63	4
Properties foreclosed on:	N/A	N/A	1
Foreclosure date:	Jan 2025	Jan 2024	Jan 2023

New Fire Truck Replacement

The fire company has a truck committee that has been meeting for several months to spec a replacement pumper truck. This new truck will replace two of our current trucks, Engine 8 (1974 Ford Pumper), and Rescue 4 (2000) International. The specification is almost complete. Likely within the next 30 days. At that point we will be ready to request proposals. The current ballpark cost we have is \$650,000. It is important to note that in the last quarter there was a 4.5% price increase.

Sheepscot Station Furnace

Early in the spring the furnace at the Sheepscot Station failed to run, the fire company found that it had quit working and there was a small amount of oil on the floor. Combined with the age of the furnace (mid 80's) and the problems they've had with mold in the building, we do not feel it is worth fixing the current furnace and should invest our money into a heat pump. This would keep the building warm and dry year-round as well as free up valuable floor space from the removal of the furnace and the oil tank. There is also a potential grant opportunity from Efficiency Maine that could cover a large portion of the cost and we'll be working over the next few months to secure this.

Fire Department Cell Phone

At the last Select Board meeting, questions arose over two cell phones on the bill. After this was identified, our fire chief spoke with AT&T First Net last week. The additional line was fraudulently added so they will be crediting the account around \$350. Thank you for catching this and asking us to dig into it!

Shoreland Zoning Ordinance

We received conditional approval from the DEP on the Town's Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. Staff are still going through all of the state's conditions but essentially, they identified missing required standards, provided the necessary text to fix, and are requiring that we administer both the submitted ordinance and the several additions they have identified.

Staff will create a draft ordinance that will incorporate the DEP's requirements into the existing adopted ordinance 1) for ease of use--as we are required to administer both, and 2) in preparation of the next town meeting so the Town can adopt a fully compliant Shoreland Zoning Ordinance.

Sign Ordinance

The Planning Board has identified the current Sign Ordinance as a top priority. Our incoming planner will be discussing with the planning board what changes might be needed and will be bringing suggestions to you in the months ahead.

Midcoast Council of Governments

Select Board member Tor Glendinning attending the MCOG annual meeting virtually at the end of July. The key takeaway for the Select Board is that membership dues are going from 1.25 to 1.50 per communities population. This will increase Newcastle's contribution by about \$440. You can learn more about MCOG and the services it can provide for Newcastle at www.midcoastcog.com

North Dyer Neck Road

Based on concerns raised at the previous Select Board meeting, I visited the northern route last week and I've asked our Road Commissioner to make some modifications to improve the condition of that road.

2022 and 2023 Audits

We've re-established connections with our Auditor and will be working to bring forward the 2022 Audit in the next few months and then we'll work to prepare fiscal year 2023.

FY24 Tax Commitment

We've scheduled our commitment date for July 24th. In the lead up to that commitment, I am working with our Assessor to do a dry run and ensure the Property Tax Stabilization for Senior Citizen program is accurate and will freeze senior citizens taxes who signed up for the program and calculate the proper amount we'll be submitting to the state for reimbursement.

Declaration of 'May Day' Severe Storm

Last Friday July 7th, the President signed and approved a [Major Disaster Declaration](#) for a handful of counties in Maine effected by the severe storm of April 30th through May 1st. This will free up federal funding for public assistance grants. For Newcastle, this will mean we will need to be working closely with our County EMA staff and state officials to ensure finance assistance in covering the cost of clean-up and the repair / future replacement of the Lynch Road culvert/bridge. In the interim, we will need to schedule a Special Town Meeting soon to allocate fund balance to cover expenses related to the storm before we see any reimbursements.

Ad-Hoc Historic Preservation Committee

The Ad-Hoc Historic Preservation Committee was formed in January 2023 for the purpose of discussing issues related to historic preservation in the community with the goal of returning to the Selectboard with a recommended Historic Preservation Ordinance.

The Committee consists of five appointed members: a representative from the Planning Board, a representative from the Selectboard, and a representative from each of the Town's three historic districts (Glidden Street, Sheepscot Village, and Damariscotta Mills).

To submit public comments to the Committee, please [click here](#).

The Committee will be holding a public informational meeting on historic preservation, where a proposed, draft Ordinance will be discussed on **July 26th, 2023 at 6:00PM at the Lincoln Academy ATEC Building**. All are welcome to attend, and we hope that you'll join us!