



Town of Newcastle

www.NewcastleMaine.us

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: October 23, 2023
RE: Town Manager Report

Route 215 Drainage Improvements

You may have noticed the one lane traffic on Route 215 (Mills Road). It is/was related to some utility lines moving to new or replacement poles. That, however, sparked a reminder to send an update on the upcoming work to replace and improve upon the Maine Department of Transportation's drainage system along Main Street and a section of Mills Road near the intersection. I've reached out to both the Consultant Resident and the state's Project Manager to establish a town connection and to help keep everyone informed on the project and its progress. The actual work will get started next week and is currently projected to last through the entire month of November. The work's current specifications are for 2-way traffic at all times from 6am to 8pm, however there will be times when alternating lane closures will be necessary. This will cause some traffic delays, so they would encourage those who commute and use this thoroughfare to utilize Route 1 during the construction. Additionally, if Lincoln Academy students who currently drive or get a ride could carpool with other students and/or utilize the bus, this would assist with reducing traffic delays.

Absentee Ballots and the November 7th Election

Absentee ballots can be requested [online](#), over the phone, or in person. Voters may also vote in person at the Town Office prior to the November 2nd special circumstances deadline.

As of October 23rd, Newcastle has received 76 Absentee Ballot Requests for the State Referendum Election on November 7th, 2023. 24 ballots have been returned. The Town of Newcastle has approximately 1,800 registered voters with, typically, nearly 100% voter turnout for referendum, gubernatorial, and primary elections. Additionally, the Town of Newcastle has 7 UOCAVA (Uniformed Service and Overseas) voters. The Town of Newcastle is also in the process of conducting voting at the Lincoln Home.

On Election Day, the polls will be open from 8am-8pm at the Clayton V. Huntley Fire Station. Absentee ballots are available until November 2nd. After November 2nd, a special circumstances absentee ballot application will need to be completed.

This year's election addresses eight state referendum questions. Four of which are citizen's initiatives and four that are Constitutional Amendments. You can learn more about the questions and see the specific legislation in the [Maine Citizen's Guide to the Referendum Election](#) prepared by the Secretary of State.

PFAS near Town owned Landfill

Staff have connected with the three residences that have PFAS levels above the acceptable range and we are now providing bottled water to each of them. The estimated cost is about \$50 per property per week. We're still in the process of establishing an agreement for future maintenance and testing of their system and will have a call out to installers to design and construct filtration systems. This will need to be a major focal point for staff in November.

Additionally, we've reached out to Maine Municipal Association to help us develop ways to prevent further housing development where the risk of contamination is high.

Joint Workshop with Damariscotta Select Board

The Damariscotta Select Board will join us in the Newcastle Community Room next Monday, October 30th at 6pm for a presentation from the Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission on the Housing Needs Assessment and next steps. Additionally, we'd like to have a facilitated discussion on joint town priorities and opportunities to work together. We'll have a quick survey out tomorrow to gather some input and context for that discussion.

Upcoming Agenda Items

You'll notice on the October 23, 2023 agenda I've taken the liberty to start adding items to 10. Future Agenda Items. Most of these items I had hoped to have on the agenda for this evening, but given the gravity of what else needed to be addressed and some of my own limitations to gather all the information I wanted to provide or present, our Chair was supportive of postponing to the next meeting.

Ordinance and Policy Review Process

One of the top 10 priorities is "Ordinance and Policy Housekeeping". Newcastle has two dozen ordinances and nine policies. Staff assumption of this goal is to review each of them for necessary updates. At our meeting on the 11th will be ready to propose a schedule and timeline for reviewing and updating the existing ordinances and policies.

Traffic and Parking Ordinance

We just did this! Yes, but – I'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).

Fire Engine Bid Documents

The fire department is in the final stages of building a specification for the replacement of engine 8. The ballpark price was \$665,000. During the last two quarters there has been a 4.5% increase in cost for each quarter. The latest increase added \$29,925, the new budget price is 694,925. If this trend continues there could potentially be another \$31,272 added in January of 2024.

Some good news. The build time used to be estimated 2 - 3 years, this has since gone down to 18 - 24 months. Payment would be due at time of delivery, there are discounts for pre payments.

I am aware this item has been discussed previously, but I would like to discuss it again and get support to put out to bid. It would then be incorporated into the FY25 budget process.

Comprehensive Plan State Approval

In the Manager Report from September 25th, 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 haven't had a chance to finish that exercise. By November 11th, we will have completed this task and be ready to walk through it to determine the next steps.



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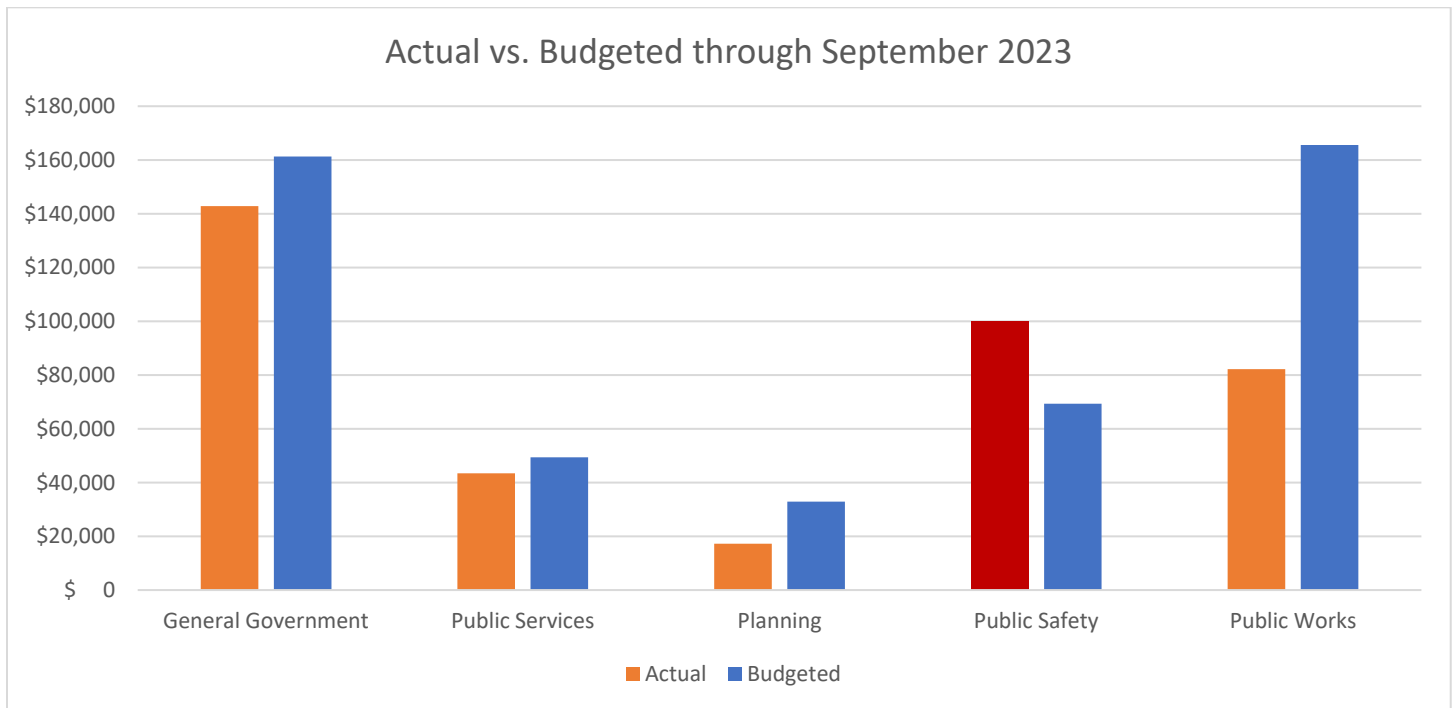
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FROM: Kevin L. Sutherland, Interim Town Manager
TO: Newcastle Select Board
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DATE: October 23, 2023
RE: Town Manager Monthly Financial Report

We've now reconciled our accounts through three months of the fiscal year (July – September). This memo was developed to show a quick snapshot of Actual spending compared to Budget.

After three months or 25.00% of the fiscal year (represented below in the blue bars for each of the spending categories), there is only one category where we're currently over budget (red bar) - Public Safety.



Public Safety

Public Safety is well over as we've paid the full share of Newcastle's CLC ambulance service. This expense of \$74,200 represents roughly 26% of the entire public safety budget. If we were to only recognize three months of this expense, the Public Safety category's actual expenditures would only be 20% for the first three months. Below the budgeted 25.00%.

Actual through September vs. FY24 Budget

