



Town of Newcastle

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Kevin L. Sutherland - Town Manager

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FROM: Kevin L. Sutherland, Town Manager
TO: Newcastle Select Board
CC: Town Staff
DATE: February 26, 2024
RE: Town Manager Report

Planning Board Efforts

The Planning Board held a workshop last Thursday 2/22 to review and consider potential changes to the Town's Shoreland Zoning Map and Ordinance. Additionally, they'll hold another workshop on March 7th to review and consider potential changes to the Core Zoning Code to address state statute changes better known as LD2003.

We'll look to share the work to date on March 11th and ask the Select Board to request a Public Hearing for these potential changes at the March 28th Planning Board meeting. All this in time for approval of Warrant articles in late April for the June Town Meeting.

Finance Committee Meeting

The finance committee will be holding a meeting tomorrow afternoon from 2-4pm. We'll look to review the Finance Committee ordinance and the intentions for the changes to be voted on for March 25th, recap the FY22 audit, discuss the FY23 audit and its process, explore some municipal banking options, share the investment policy and further discuss investment strategies. I'll also be sharing a few details and ideas about the FY25 budget.

Newcastle Fiber Optic Broadband Project

In April of 2023, Tidewater Telecom was awarded a Maine Connectivity Authority (MCA) "Reach ME" grant for fiber optic broadband build-out. The Grant contract was finalized and signed about two weeks ago. Approximately 80 Unserved addresses in Newcastle will be eligible for installation. As part of the grant application, Newcastle has committed a match for \$60,000. More information from Tidewater will be out soon about signing up and the Town of Newcastle will help promote this opportunity once its available.

OSHA

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has proposed rule updates that will replace the existing Fire Brigades standard. These changes range from frequency of medical exams for responders, to required training and to facility / community preparedness plans and reporting. This is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of what these new rules would require and because Maine has adopted an OSHA approved State plan, volunteers may be treated as employees under state law which would add significant expectations and trainings for 'volunteers' which may result in fewer members available to serve.

The deadline for public comment is May 6, we've begun reaching out to our organization contacts to assist in better understanding what these impacts might mean for our small volunteer-based department and how we can best provide comment / feedback.

Presidential Primaries

The primary will take place next week, Tuesday March 5th at the Fire Station's Community Room. The polls will be open from 8am until 8pm.

Nomination Papers

This June there are several open seats on the ballot for local elected official positions. Two seats for the Select Board/Assessors/Overseers of the Poor, one seat for the School Board, and one seat as a Great Salt Bay Sanitary District Trustee.

Nomination Papers will be available starting Friday, March 1, 2024, at the Town Office and the filing deadline is Friday, April 12, 2024, no later than 12:00 pm (noon). Submitted signatures need to be not less than 25, and not more than 100. Public Notices have been in the local newspaper.

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.

Ground Lease Agreement

This item is related to the conversation we had on [November 13th](#) about the potential for a Cell Tower on our landfill. Just keeping this on the near-term list as we work through details with legal.

Fish Ladder Agreement

In summer of 2023, the Select Board met with Newcastle's representative to the Damariscotta Mills Fish Ladder Restoration Committee to begin discussions on an interlocal agreement. I believe we'll be ready to present this agreement and other documents for your consideration at an upcoming meeting. Likely in March.