

Town of Oxford

Town Manger Report

I cannot believe a year has gone by already. As we move forward towards the annual Town Meeting scheduled for June 4, 2022, I would like to review a few items for the coming budget year.

Budget: A collective effort has been made between the Board of Selectmen, Budget Committee, Town Manager, and Department Heads to put together a comprehensive and responsible budget for FY2022-2023. This year's budget was a balancing act of maintaining services and completing capital projects while keeping in mind the hardships that the current economy is putting on individuals. Some of the major changes you will see within the budget include the combination some departments (Fire and EMS Departments into one department) and some contracted services being taken over by Town Departments (for example the Highway Department now will be handling cemetery mowing). Some of these changes were made to simplify the administrative oversight of these functions as well as reduce cost.

One of the major budgeting challenges has been gasoline and diesel cost predictions. As everyone who goes to the pump knows, the price of fuel seems to be rising on a daily basis. In an effort to ensure the Town budgets enough to cover fuel costs a judgement call had to be made regarding the price per gallon. After careful consideration and discussion, the Selectmen, Budget Committee and Town Manager have budgeted the gasoline and diesel price at \$5.50 per gallon. As you review the budget you will see that this has had a major impact on this year's total budget.

Ordinance Changes: Outside of the budget this year's Town Meeting will see the presentation of five ordinance amendments/proposals. These include:

- Zoning map change (proposal to change the area at the intersection of Mechanic Falls Road and Main Street from "Village" to "Mixed Use")
- Marijuana Facility Licensing change/update (removes marijuana licensing from the Zoning Ordinance and creates a standalone licensing ordinance further clarifying the Selectman's authority in this process)
- Sewer Use Ordinance Update (makes general updates throughout the ordinance and modifies sewer hookup fees)
- Food Sovereignty (allows residents to grow and sell food locally without the need for State licensing)
- Property Maintenance (provides another method for the Code Enforcement Officer to utilize while dealing with nuisance properties)

Town Office Replacement: At the June 2021 Town Meeting the residents of Oxford authorized the Selectmen to sell the current Town Office building but stopped short at granting authorization for the purchase of a new building. Since June, the Selectmen and Town Manager have taken steps towards selling the current Town Office as well as designing/finding a suitable replacement. First, the current Town Office has been listed with a commercial broker for sale. Secondly, the Selectmen have signed with Harriman (architect/design firm) to aid the Town with site selection, building needs/design, cost estimation (\$3,000,000 to build new), bid oversight, and construction oversight. This process has been moving forward according to the timeline discussed at the June 2021 Town Meeting.

Recently however, the Town has found a preexisting building located at 127 Pottle Road which would be suitable with minimal updates for use as a Town Office. The Selectmen have made a conditional offer of \$750,000 to the seller. The seller has accepted understanding however that final approval must be granted at the June 4th Town Meeting. The Selectmen and Town Manager encourage Town Meeting to consider this option as it would be considerably cheaper than renovating the current building or building a new building. It should be noted that should Town Meeting approve this option, Harriman has agreed to work with the Town through the renovation process.

Thank you again to the Town of Oxford for allowing me to be your Town Manager. I have very much enjoyed meeting and getting to know people here in Town during my first year here. Please feel free to reach out to me anytime by stopping in, calling, or dropping me an email (townmanager@oxfordmaine.org).

Respectfully submitted,
Adam Garland
Town Manager