



Millinocket

Maine's Biggest Small Town

Town Manager's Report – 8.24.23

Department Updates

Public Works:

- The DEP required summer flushing of the town sewers has begun. This gives us a chance to inspect the condition of the sewers. This is also a good time to remind everyone that wipes, cooking grease and other foreign objects cause problems in the sewer.
- B and B Paving has begun summer paving. This may be a two-trip process for them as we will have some sewer covers to adjust and repair after they mill the existing road surfaces.
- We are continuing to trim brush and limbs that are causing line of sight obstructions and growing into the rights-of-way around town.
- Summer maintenance of the plow equipment is underway in preparation for winter.
- The new Arial Lift truck is being built at the dealer and is expected to be ready in Mid-September.
- Some rocks have been dug out of the Rice Farm Road to smooth out what we can.

Transfer Station:

- This is a reminder that the Millinocket Transfer Site is for waste generated within the town, and those approved unorganized Territories only. Surrounding communities have their own Transfer sites for residents in those towns.
- Everyone should have their transfer site usage stickers by now, if not, they need to be purchased ASAP
- Recycling is being accepted and we are looking for all the cardboard, plastic jugs and tin cans that we can get.
- Freon has been collected again from the ever-growing pile of refrigerators and air conditioner units.
- The scrap metal dealer is in town taking some of the metal pile.

Cemetery:

- Mowing, trimming, and burying is ongoing throughout the season. Please give the crew ample room when they are running equipment, for your safety and theirs.
- The cemetery has rules on what decorations are allowed around headstones. They can be viewed on the Town's website. They are in place for the safety and convenience of the maintenance crew as well as the public.

Respectfully submitted, Bryan Duprey – Director of Public Works



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Wastewater Operations:

- The treatment plant is running well as we push through the summer months. A lot of rain this summer season has kept the flows on the high side but not pushing us over an exceedance on our monthly average for July. Our maximum flow was 1.46, minimum was 0.624 with a monthly average flow of 0.907. Our license is for 2.33 MGD. Total rain for the month of July was 4.12 inches.
- Our BOD5 removal was 95% and TSS was 97%, which is where we want to be. 85% and higher is expectable and is what we are licensed for. We do our weekly testing as directed to do so.
- Continued daily routine checks and maintenance as needed of all our pump stations and the treatment plant are done with weekend coverage and on-call personnel as well.
- This month we have two new roofs being installed on both the Bates street pump station and the garage at the treatment plant. Both buildings needed this. Over the Top roofing out of Winslow will be doing the work. Greg Vigue is the owner and owns a home here in Millinocket. The total amount of both jobs is \$8000. Bates street being stripped and re-shingled and the treatment plant will be prepped and gone over with new shingles. Both buildings will have 30-year architectural.
- Finally, the two new pumps for the Stearns pump station are slated to be completed on August 24, 2023 and will be shipped within a week to the treatment plant. I will know more by weeks end. EJ Prescott out of Bangor will be installing the pumps due to the size of the pumps and equipment that needs to be used. This will be better for us and safer. I will have more details on this project next month, but as always will keep you posted on this.
- The year goes by too quickly, as we continue our excellence in maintaining an older Wastewater treatment facility that operates very well. Upgrades will continue when we can do them or as needed.

Jason Ingalls, Superintendent



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Town Treasurer:

- A dividend of \$7,890 was received from the MMA Workers Compensation fund for FY23.
 - For the Town to qualify for the dividend, the 2022 loss ratio had to be less than 40% and the three-year loss ratio less than 75% as of June 30, 2023.
- The July Maine Revenue Sharing payment of \$170, 251 is \$17,000 less than last July's payment of \$187,531.
- A sewer lien was recently filed 6/23 for unpaid sewer fees dated 10/26/22 to 1/27/23.
 - Approximately 100 accounts were affected with a total due of \$30,476.

Mary Alice Cullen, Town Treasurer.

Human Resources Director:

- Personnel issues
- Drug and Alcohol testing.
- Municipal Release deeds
- Supplies for Municipal building.
- Employee Benefits
- Interviewed and hired EMT/Firefighter (Crystal Cail)
- Year End work

General Assistance Director:

- Assisted individuals to meet their unmet needs.
- Submitted for reimbursements.

Bookkeeper:

- Process payroll for Town and Wastewater to include the warrants for the taxes.
- Town and WW bills

Lori Santerre, HR Director, GA Director, Bookkeeper



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Code Enforcement Officer:

- Working with two developments through the site plan review
 - Car Wash on Bragdon Property
 - Residential care facility on Oxford St at site of old VFW
- Continual work on first round of identified dangerous buildings, two properties have been served court papers this week.
- Significant time spent attempting to locate absentee owners for several properties that are abandoned and in states of disrepair and or in violation of codes.
- Working with developers and the life safety officer on facility upgrades to several properties in town, including fire alarm systems and instillation of sprinkler systems.
- Forward progress on the online permitting system. Still some work to be done, should be online this fall.
- Working jointly with the Assessor to train the part time shared resource in our office.
- Working with the electrical inspector to review and streamline the electrical permit process and oversight.
- Developed an updated tracking system for issued permits. Hardcopies of all issued permits are now stored in the property tax card file. This will streamline research down the road.
- Fielded 87 citizen complaints regarding property maintenance & sign ordinance violations.

Shawn Mitchell, Code Enforcement Officer

Assessor:

- Received communication from revaluation team. They have had some speed bumps in life and will not be able to start listing until September. They apologize.
- We were out of commission last week with a dead computer. MTG was great with tech help, trying to resuscitate and then sending a new unit along. We are waiting on some additional setup so I can access the state's E911 addressing site and we are having difficulties attaching to the old dot matrix printer that TRIO requires to print valuation labels. Currently only have one screen but I have ordered the adapter. We have lost some data but overall emerged almost unscathed!
- TRIO has finally released the needed program updates for commitment.
- We did receive our new fireproof cabinet and Traci has moved the important documents to safety.
- We are now behind with the commitment. Had hoped to be able to commit by the end of the month but probably the second week in September now. I am still working on the tax stabilization applications. It is a slow and annoying process since we have not historically been diligent about our data.
- The following is the information I gained from my class last month. The collection office has copies to give to taxpayers:



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LD 290 "PROPERTY TAX STABILIZATION FOR SENIOR CITIZENS" HAS BEEN REPEALED BY THE STATE LEGISLATURE

The LD 290 "Property Tax Stabilization for Senior Citizens" program, enacted in August 2022 was repealed by the Maine Legislature on July 6, 2023. This popular program had allowed Maine seniors 65 and older who owned a permanent residence for at least 10 years and were receiving (or eligible for) a homestead exemption, to freeze taxes at the previous year's level regardless of income.

The repeal of this program means there will be no reapplication process and no need to follow-up with the Assessing Department in August, as previously thought. Although the program has been repealed, your application that was filed in 2022 will still be administered this year for the upcoming 2023 Tax Commitment. As a result, for this year's upcoming bill, approved applicants will only be responsible for the "frozen" property tax bill amount—this amount will be equal to the tax amount the owner was billed last year, unless their new billed amount would be lower, in which case they'd owe the lower of the two amounts. Per the law, the State will reimburse the Town for 100% of the difference between actual and frozen taxes.

It is important to note that these are State programs and while the Town plays a role in the administration of them, the Town is not responsible for the policy objectives of these initiatives. Any questions or concerns owners have regarding this program should be directed to your legislative representative. To find your representative, please visit: <https://legislature.maine.gov/senate/>

TWO EXISTING STATE PROGRAMS BENEFITING LOW-INCOME SENIORS TO BE EXPANDED

To help lower-income seniors avoid higher property taxes and remain in their homes, two existing State programs are being expanded:

1. **The Property Tax Fairness Credit**, which currently allows eligible Mainers to take a \$1,500 credit, has increased to \$2,000; it also loosens limits on the program in a way that allows the benefits to remain constant for a Mainer whose spouse passes away. Note: This program is not administered by the Town; to claim the credit, you must file Form 1040ME and Schedule PTFC/STFC for the tax year during which the property tax or rent was paid. For help, call 207-624-9784. For more info, visit:

www.maine.gov/revenue/taxes/tax-relief-credits-programs/income-tax-credits/property-tax-fairness-credit

2. **The State Property Tax Deferral Program**, a lifeline loan program that covers the annual property tax bills of Maine seniors age 65 and older who cannot afford to pay them on their own, has been expanded. It doubles the income limit on that program to \$80,000 and also raises asset limits. Taxes must be paid back when the home is sold or becomes part of an estate. Note: This program is administered by the State; however, applications must be filed with the Assessor's Office between January 1 and April 1 each year. Applications are forwarded to Maine Revenue Services who review and make the determination for acceptance and approval. Questions can be referred to Maine Revenue Services, Property Tax Division, at 207-624-5600 or Prop.tax@maine.gov. For more info, visit:

www.maine.gov/revenue/taxes/tax-relief-credits-programs/property-tax-relief-programs/deferral-program

Lorna Thompson, Assessor



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Community Initiatives Director

- Worked on the community newsletter “Magic City Monthly” along with the Manager and various departments/organizations!
- Worked alongside DesignLab on the following projects:
 - Community Calendar
 - Social Media
 - Advertising
- Researched grant opportunities for various community/department needs.
- Lead event planning in coordination with various departments and volunteers.
 - Executed the following events:
 - End of Summer Pool Party
 - School Supply Giveaway
 - Handed out school supplies to 141 children from all over the Katahdin Region
 - We ran out of everything!
 - We would like to thank our incredible volunteers, the Millinocket Elks, and the Millinocket School Department for helping the Town make this event possible for the 2nd year in a row!
- Overseeing the following projects:
 - Recruitment of Fellow for Airport
 - LED Light Install
 - Rebates approved.
 - EV Charger Install
 - Heat pump Install.
 - This project has been completed!
 - Concept design of the Community Center
 - Put out for bid.
 - LED Sign Installation
 - This project is complete!
 - Taking webinars on use of the sign.
- Submitted a grant application to the Northern Penobscot Activities Council for 17 pairs of figure skates for the Town to offer along with the hockey skates already provided.
- Attended the 2023 Brownfields Conference in Detroit to learn about the grant administration process and rules.

Amber Wheaton, Community Initiatives Director



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Town Clerk/Tax Collectors Office:

Totals include July 22, 2023, through August 21, 2023: Receipt Summary report which provides by receipt type, the number of transactions and total dollars processed at the Town Office. In summary, \$1,909,637.63 were collected, which involved 2434 transactions processed in Trio. **Report Attached*

- FY22/23 Real Estate & Personal Property:
 - Tax paid summary as of 8/21/2023: **Reports Attached*
- (Lien –dated and filed on 7/20/2023: 103 delinquent RE accounts were recorded at the Registry of Deeds totaling 138,402.69)*
- Lien Summary; 87 RE Lien accounts: remaining due: \$120,866.13.
 - Total Summary; 159 RE accounts: total remaining due: \$124,183.84
 - 29 PP accounts total remaining due: \$1,799.83 *(no change from prior report)*
- July 2023 - 3rd Quarter Sewer Billing:
 - **Bill Date 7/27/23; Due Date 8/27/23; Interest Date 8/28/23**
 - Cemetery season is upon us – Recording sales, deeds, electronic and card file updates.
 - Working on council meeting minutes.
 - Fulfilling requests of tax information, providing normal daily requests of motor vehicle and wastewater and tax account balances via e-mail, fax and phone calls.
 - Processing daily mail, online, phone, and drop box payments.
 - Creating Agendas, posting advertisements of public hearings, notifications, and local paper advertisements, Email correspondence, returning phone messages and inquiries.

Election:

- November 7, 2023 State Referendum and Municipal Election process has begun: Multiple state forms and ballot coding submitted by their designated deadlines; **Nomination Papers:** were available on Friday, July 28th, 2023, and are due back in the Clerk's office by 4:00 pm on Friday, September 8th, 2023; the following municipal seats up in November 2023 and nominations taken out to date:
 - **Town Council** - Three 3-year Terms: Jane Danforth, Louis R. Pelletier, Gail A. Mackin-Returned, Jennifer McKinney, & Gilda G. Stratton.
 - **School Board** – Two 3-Year Terms: Donald E. Raymond.
- Applications for Absentee Ballot Request – Only- available electronically through the State ABR site (Absentee Ballot Request) and manually at the Clerk's Office August 7th, 2023.

(Absentee ballot – State projections to be received in the Clerk's office beginning of October)

Other Items:

- **Reminder: Dogs must be vaccinated and licensed in their residing towns to utilize the Town Dog Park.** Fees: \$6 spayed/neutered; \$11 intact.
- Boards/Committees: Personnel Appeals Board: (1) Full seat available
- 2023 Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Licenses and registrations
- Continued restoration efforts of vital records by filing, indexing, and storage.

Respectfully, Diana Lakeman Town Clerk/Deputy Tax Collector & Sharon Cyr Tax Collector/Deputy Clerk



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Fire, Ambulance, Public Health & Safety:

- Attended various committee meetings.
- Chief Cote attended the Penobscot County Fire Chiefs Association Meeting via zoom.
- Chief Cote attended the Pine Tree Burn Foundation Meeting via zoom.
- Chief Cote attended a training at Maine Fire Service & Institute in Brunswick on new training props for Fire Departments to use.
- Chief Cote met with Maine Fire Service & Institute on a Firefighter 1 & 2 Training for the Katahdin Region.
- Chief Cote met with the department medical director on department EMS operations & training.
- Chief Cote met with Administration Staff at Millinocket Regional Hospital on Emergency Preparedness.
- Chief Cote met with the Maine Forest Service.
- Chief Cote continues with Basic Fire School Trainings.
- Chief Cote & Fulltime Staff participated in the Pool Party at the Town Pool.
- Chief Cote & Fulltime Staff participated in the Back-to-School Event.
- Chief Cote has been working the Ambulance Drivers to get them licensed as Ambulance Drivers under the new Maine EMS standard.
- Chief Cote has been working on a new call back procedure for Fulltime staff during emergencies.
- 2 Fulltime staff and 1 paid call staff attended a Basic Pumps Operators Course in Medway instructed by Chief Cote.
- Full-time staff have been working on drivers training and pump training while on shift.
- Pump Test was held on 783 after the necessary repairs were done and passed.
- A committee was formed and met to work on starting a Annual Fire Department Recognition Night.
- One new fulltime Firefighter/EMT-Basic started.
- An interview was held for one position and an offer was made to start August 21st.
- One FF/Paramedic out for on-the-job injury, unknown at this time how long personnel will be out.
- 2 Heat Pumps were installed inside the fire station. (Chief's Office & Living Quarters)
- Generator batteries were replaced in the emergency generator that services the Fire Dept and Town Office.

Jon Cote – Fire Chief, Emergency Management Director



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Public Health & Safety Officer:

- Working with CEO on building inspections and complaints.
- Signed up to take Licensed Plumbing Inspector training to get certified to provide backup for our CEO/LPI.
- Followed up on trash and debris complaints.
- Spoke with vendor at Peddlers Hill and gave information on Peddling Permit requirements.
- Working with Rick Lax on fire sprinkler system plans for two area businesses.
- Did inspection for couple that are looking to provide foster care in Millinocket and wanted to advise on issues before they contact vendors to do some work.

Millinocket Memorial Library:

SEE ATTACHED REPORT

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Jamieson, Town Manager.