

Blue Hill Select Board Report

Since we have passed the half-way point in our Town's calendar fiscal year, we offer this report to our fellow residents on various Town matters.

Town Administrator resignation: The article in the 7/27/23 issue of the Packet seemed to leave some readers with questions. Here is the simple story. Nick Nadeau resigned for personal reasons. We were surprised and disappointed. It was not the result of a failed negotiation nor was it our choice. We felt he had great potential as a town administrator and had hoped he would stay in this position for a long period of time. However, when he resigned, it was the Select Board's responsibility to do what was necessary to ensure that the business of the Town moved forward as smoothly as possible. Our employment agreement with Nadeau provided for a 4 week notice period in order to allow the Select Board time to put in place an operational plan until a new Town Administrator is hired. Nadeau generously offered us 5 weeks. However, immediately after receiving his resignation, we began preparing for the transition, and after 2 weeks, by July 21, we had completed a series of meetings with Nadeau and other staff and a review of the ongoing issues, and had a transition plan in place. That left some confusion among staff as to Nadeau's continuing function. We felt that it was in the Town's best interest to simplify the situation as soon as possible. We thus decided at a special meeting on July 22 to end Nadeau's employment earlier than the 4 week notice period, since his work was done, with the Select Board members assuming the administrative functions until a new Town Administrator is hired. We communicated that to Nadeau on July 23, agreeing to pay him what he was owed per the employment agreement and the Town's employee policies, and wishing him well going forward. We have advertised the position and are receiving applications.

Recreation Program. The new summer children's camp, meeting an important community need, is now in its fifth week. Our camp director, Sawyer Houghton and his staff are doing a fine job making the camp's initial season a success. A survey of parents will be conducted at the end of the 8 week camp to help us evaluate the program. Planning is now underway for the fall youth soccer program.

Roads. The major reconstruction of the Mountain Road has been deferred until 2024 because of the unavailability of contractors. Other smaller Town road projects are underway and managed by the Town's road commissioner, Ben Adams.

Waste Water Treatment Plant. The details of the grants and loans, as approved at Town Meeting, to finance the multi-million dollar renovation of this facility are being finalized. The necessary engineering is underway.

Public Works Department. As approved at Town Meeting, we now have a public works department, with one full-time and one part-time employee and various necessary equipment. After analyzing the various expense lines in our budget, we are comfortable that the pledge made at Town meeting that savings from various budget lines will cover the costs of this program will be fulfilled.

Solar Project Controversy. This proposed solar project off South Street will now be resolved by the courts, following the ordinance changes made at Town Meeting and the subsequent lawsuit filed by the applicant, SolAmerica.

Property taxes. The 2023 property tax rate has been set at 13.40 per thousand of valuation, an increase of 6.3%. Bills will be in the mail shortly, and as usual are due by October 15. We have been told that the homestead exemption will increase this year because of the difference between our assessed property

values and the higher actual property values. A revaluation process for property tax purposes will be under way over the next twelve months; the state requires regular revaluations in order to ensure fairness.

Town Park. The renovation of the playground is nearly complete. The new playground equipment is being greatly enjoyed every day by children and their parents. We are grateful to Warren Berkowitz for leading a group of volunteers that has helped make this happen.

New outdoor basketball court at the AA field. Thanks to generous gifts of time, equipment, materials and money (but no property tax dollars), a new outdoor basketball court will soon be completed and available to hoopsters young and old.

We encourage residents to attend our regular Monday meetings, in person or via the internet, or to contact one of us by email or phone to bring issues of importance to our attention. Contact information is on the Town website. Meanwhile, our very capable and friendly Town office staff are always at your service.