

Manager's Office
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MEMORANDUM

To: Bar Harbor Town Council
cc: Department Heads
From: Kevin Sutherland, Town Manager
Date: March 22, 2022
Re: Manager Update

At our retreat a few weeks ago, I committed to keeping everyone up to speed on the goings on of this office on a weekly basis.

Visiting Washington DC

I had a lot of great conversations last week with our congressional delegates. Thank you again for supporting the opportunity to attend. Probably just a coincidence, but part of my conversation with Senator King has somehow been in the [news](#) – about National Park capacity and impact on the environment and surrounding communities.

We were also made aware of Congressional Directed Spending (CDS) opportunities through both Collins and Kings offices. Essentially, these are the old school earmark approach, but we can't call them earmarks. They are due by the middle of April - so, we are going to be applying for a bunch of the items on the 44 million punch list you received last week to help offset the warrant article (I touch on this a little further down).

Hopefully, the connections with congressional staff and the face to face time can result in a positive return for Bar Harbor.

MCC AmeriCorps ES

Members of our Climate Emergency Task Force had initially led the charge to apply for a Maine Conservation Corp /AmeriCorps Environmental Steward for end of May through the middle of November. Since then I have been working closely with the state to further develop what the AmeriCorp volunteer would be responsible for and to get the position promoted. Below are a few of the relevant duties for the position:

Description of Duties:

- Serve closely with Sustainability Coordinator on outreach and public education
- Provide Town Council and Town staff with climate education materials and training.
- Collate department head interviews regarding their needs to meet Greenhouse Gas goals and provide prioritized list for future efforts.
- Develop online climate “Public Service Announcements” series

- Collaborate with Communications Coordinator to create a “climate emergency” page on Town’s website.
- Utilize polling software to gather input on Town-wide climate initiatives
- Build climate-related partnerships between local educational institutions and Town
- Ongoing—actively participate in community climate and sustainability events
- Organize regular “Climate Community Meetings”
- Keep the website up to date with task force work and climate initiatives.

Community Resilience Partnership / Community Action Grant

Yesterday, on behalf of Bar Harbor, Mount Desert, and Tremont, Bar Harbor applied for a Community Action Grant to the Governor’s Office of Policy Innovation and the Future. Based on the feedback from all the community meetings we had prior to the application, the primary efforts of this grant are to support public engagement of climate change and to add EV charging stations.

This involves several tasks outlined in the grant:

Climate Ambassadors Program	\$18,697
Climate Action Plan Outreach	\$13,050
Decarbonizing Buildings Outreach	\$3,825
Electric Vehicle Outreach	\$2,385
Electric Vehicle Charger Purchase/Install	<u>\$66,000</u>
	\$103,957

I am eternally grateful for Johannah Blackman, Executive Director of A Climate To Thrive for carrying this heavy load through the process and staying on top of me to make sure I crossed all the Ts. I will be even more grateful when we have a sustainability coordinator on staff who can help navigate all these tasks.

Mitchell Center at University of Maine

I am excited to share, we’ve received full financial support to bring Jared Entwistle, a graduate student intern from the Mitchell Center for Sustainable Solutions in the months of May and June to help us focus on and consider waste reduction efforts. In addition, there may be an opportunity to have an undergraduate intern involved as well. I will know more about how, where, and what the focus will be in the coming weeks. Finally, there is a [conference](#) on the 31st in Augusta in which Jared organized an all day [session track](#) on waste. This might be a great conference to find a sustainability coordinator or at least help get the word out at that after 6/7, Bar Harbor will be looking for one. Given my pending vacation and the number of meeting requests I already have planned for Thursday next week, I don’t think I can attend and attempt to recruit. Would any of the Councilors or other department heads be interested in attending to represent us? If so, please just sign up and I will cover the expense from the manager’s travel/training account(s).

Fiber Connection to Municipal Facilities and Utilities

Council, at your January 4th meeting, on recommendation from CTC, you approved an approach to not accept any of the RFPs, to build a town-owned municipal-use-only network, and to have staff negotiate a sole-source agreement with a construction firm for building that network. Since that time, we’ve worked with Pioneer to price this project out and have been quoted some \$853,000 just for the known construction

elements. There would still need to be pole attachment rights and agreements to settle as well as maintenance agreements (costs not factor into this yet).

I am hopeful the CTC will take this up at their meeting on the 28th and will come to an April Council meeting with a recommendation on how to move forward – maybe to reconsider not owning the network and instead lease it out for 20+ years. The additional monies from the bond could be used as a local match for some of the ConnectME broadband funding as projects with local match and/or are multi-community application have a much better chance of being supported, but I defer to the committee and await their recommendation.

Atlantic Ave and Hancock Lane Neighborhood Meeting

On March 10, Bethany and I met with residents of Atlantic Avenue and Hancock Lane to explain some of the delays in getting a project started, the need for the infrastructure bond and to assure the group that any solution will need the support of easements and a financial contribution of 50% of the project that is associated with the ground water issue. The timeline may push this project into the winter of next year, so we've even begun thinking through a short-term fix to divert water which will temporary easements. Generally, there is support for the efforts, and we are now at a place to finalize our easement documents and begin lining up agreements. The final piece to the puzzle will be the approval of the utilities and infrastructure bond (Speaking of which)

Utilities and Infrastructure Bond

Thank you for moving this forward as a Warrant Article in June. I am sorry I was not there last week to help answer questions and assure the Council that we will do everything in our power to find other ways to help offset the cost of this very large request. There is more federal money to address these needs than ever before and, between our dedicated staff and Councils support to utilize some of our contingency to bring on some grant writing support, I am hopefully we will be successful in not have to actually borrow the full amount – as what is authorized, does not have to be fully expended. We will work the next few months ahead of the June vote to make the public understands the needs, the benefits, and the financial impacts of this bond. I do want to thank Sarah and Bethany for really stepping up to help clarify questions Council had and especially to Sarah for catching that last bit of error in language in the article to get modified on the floor.

3/8 Retreat Takeaways

As of this moment, your 4/5 meeting agenda is not overwhelming. I hope to delve into the priorities recognized at the 3/8 retreat and begin to develop a path to identify solutions and establish goals, timelines, and reporting. I also hope to allocate some time to address Council Rules of Order concepts we talked about at the retreat.

Union Negotiations

Management met with IAFF union leadership to begin negotiations yesterday. It was a good start to what I hope is a mutually beneficial agreement. It's possible we could have something for Council to review and provide feedback on as early as the middle of April.

We are looking to start negotiations with the Public Works Teamsters Union in early April.