

Select Board, Planning Board, and the Budget Advisory Board – Joint Work Session

October 9, 2024

SRS Hall – Madison

6pm – 9pm

Present: Denise Ducharme, Heidi Burrows, Cheyenne Stevens, Jeff Drew, Julie Forbus, Don French, Danny Moreshead, Albert Veneziano, Sally Dwyer, Kathy Estes, Shawn Bean, Ron Moody, Mary Tomlinson, Robin Turek, Mark Doty, Don Skillings, Craig Christopher, Randy Bliss, Patrick Dolan, Ken Moore, Richard Bartlett, Rob Shibley, Sheriff Dale Lancaster, Chief Deputy Mike Mitchell, and Tim Curtis.

Town Manager Denise Ducharme opened the workshop with a group exercise. There were posters on each table with a phrase or statement that the table group reviewed and discussed. What did it mean to them, what emotion or feeling did it evoke in them?

- 1) **Government should be a facilitator for a better quality of life in our community:**
 - a. Perception is that the government is always hiding something, over-taxing residents, when in reality government exists to facilitate and provide services to residents. No taxes, no services. We are trying to serve everyone.
 - b. Government should guide the movement, get answers and be prepared.
 - c. ALL citizen voices matter.
 - d. The people who serve in government should be responsible for initiating positive changes or continuation of positive programs to ensure that our community is a good place to live, learn and play.

- 2) **Change is a PROCESS, not an EVENT:**
 - a. Change is necessary for growth
 - b. An event may precipitate change
 - c. Our Town needs to be *pro*-active, not *re*-active
 - d. Embrace diversity, welcome migrants
 - e. Change usually involves new knowledge
 - f. Invite the community to be a part of the process!

- 3) **Change BEFORE you have to, not BECAUSE you have to:**
 - a. Get ahead of necessary communications
 - b. Develop community conversations
 - c. Create changes that will keep young people here and attract others back
 - d. Resiliency – more extreme weather patterns means we need to be prepared in order to protect our citizens' health and property
 - e. Create diverse economy so as not to rely on one industry

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- 4) **If you ALWAYS do what you've ALWAYS done, you'll ALWAYS get what you've ALWAYS gotten:**
 - a. Change can be good and facilitates moving forward
 - b. Outside influences (things around you, others) may force changes
 - c. Change comes with education and communication on issues
 - d. Getting citizen “buy-in” will get better results
 - e. Need open and clear mission to change community culture
 - f. Learn to have civil conversations with different-minded people

- 5) **Change is less about PRESENTATION and more about CONVERSATION:**
 - a. Use a variety of means to be proactive
 - b. Social media attracts negativity, not open-mindedness
 - c. Ask others what changes they would like to see that would improve things

- 6) **Training is an EXPENSE, but learning is an INVESTMENT:**
 - a. Training is necessary to remain in compliance with ever-changing laws and rules
 - b. Better to pay for training than to face fines for not doing things properly
 - c. Train the “trainer” - invest in the trainer
 - d. Put expense out for people who are invested in our program/community

- 7) **There's a RISK whenever you add, cut, or change anything:**
 - a. Public backlash due to not understanding the “why” behind the change

- 8) **But there's also a risk when you choose to do nothing:**
 - a. Not keeping up with changing technologies
 - b. Being outdated in modes, methods, and messages

- 9) **Public Service is a NOBLE profession:**
 - a. One person CAN make a difference
 - b. Listen more than you talk
 - c. Nobody spends your money the same way that you do (priorities)
 - d. “We the people” need to trust in people
 - e. “American” ends in “I CAN” – not “I CAN'T”
 - f. Everyone's opinion has value
 - g. Honesty
 - h. How best to serve the people

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TOPIC: School Resource Officer

Sheriff Dale Lancaster and Somerset County Administrator Tim Curtis spoke to the working group about the opportunity to have a School Resource Officer (SRO) as soon as January if both the Town and the School District could fund the position for 6 months. Sheriff Lancaster spoke of a COPSFAST grant that would provide some of the funding over a series of years. He has a patrol deputy that would be a perfect fit for the role. He wanted to know if having an SRO was a priority for the working group and the people of Madison. All agreed that it was a priority and that we would collaborate with the School District to move forward with looking for the funds that would be required of each entity. Sheriff Lancaster said it would be about \$40,000 for wages and benefits for January to June, with half coming from the Town and half from the School District. If using the COPSFAST grant money, there is a requirement for the SRO to offer safety to ALL schools in the County; to review safety plans, training, floor plans and for staff resources to be provided to dispatch.

TOPIC: ACO Regionalization

Tim Curtis spoke about an effort to create a regional ACO position under the County umbrella. Denise Ducharme mentioned that the Town's ACO had recently resigned as a result of threatened violence against her husband (he had a shotgun pointed at his face). Town Manager of Norridgewock, Richard LaBelle had reached out to the County Commissioners to request that they consider regionalizing an ACO. There will be a meeting on Wednesday, October 16th at the Somerset County Courthouse at 1pm. Tim said there are two counties currently using regionalization models, Hancock and Penobscot.

TOPIC: Department Head Comments/Concerns

Human Resources, Cemeteries, and Finance – Heidi Burrows:

- standard operating procedures don't exist for majority of town services
- Paid Family Medical Leave Act – start deducting on January 1, 2025
- personnel policies are out of date and not in compliance on some issues
- Mr. Veneziano suggested reaching out to Matt Tarasevich, labor attorney with Bernstein Shur to review our policies and help bring/keep us in compliance with the state Department of Labor and/or Transportation rules

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Town Clerk – Cheyenne Stevens:

- The upcoming election is going to have a huge turnout with MANY absentee ballots already being requested and cast
- Temporarily moved office space to Old Point Avenue to allow greater room for voters seeking to vote absentee
- Security at the polls has been addressed with the Sheriff's Office
- The front office staff are working hard to keep up with incoming tax payments and vehicle registrations, including training a new part-timer

Recreation – Danny Moreshead:

- There is a need for more maintenance work and equipment
- Somewhat overwhelming responsibility (coaching, planning, admin, etc.)
- Enough work for more staff (volunteers and donations for now)

Library – Julie Forbus:

- Our library is over 100 years old, on the national register of historic buildings
- Current ADA ramp is crumbling and needs to be replaced (town expense)
- Engineering study found mold and asbestos in the building
- Basement and children's room needs work (floor tiles, closet, etc.)

Fire Department – Don French:

- Last year Madison responded to 325 fires
- We pay better than Skowhegan (currently at \$23/hour)
- Eventually need to become full time
- Town needs new fire trucks, long lead time and expense of over \$500,000
- Continue putting away \$50,000 to \$100,000 each year, or more

CEO – Jeff Drew:

- “neighbors need to be neighborly”
- Issues with dilapidated houses and unsightly appearances of lawns and yards
- Shortage of Code Enforcement Officers across the county and state

The workshop ended without going through all items of interest. All present agreed this was a useful time spent and we should continue these efforts. Will look for available dates and make sure the place and time are publicized for any interested parties.