

THE OGUNQUIT BREEZE

A MONTHLY EMAIL NEWSLETTER FOR THE COMMUNITY
FROM THE OGUNQUIT RESIDENTS ALLIANCE

Town News

Financial News

- Up to \$50K will be spent to upgrade the Town building (currently used by the Chamber of Commerce) to accommodate the **interim Police offices**
- **Annual Budget Meetings** January 11th, 16th and 18th at 9 AM
- Watch for the **Public Hearing** at an upcoming Select Board meeting for the **Citizen's Petition** to restore the Budget Review Committee's role in Town funding. ***See Page 4 for more information**
- **Sewer Department** bills will **increase 5% per year over the next 4 years**

Other News

- Three new members appointed to complete the **Conservation Commission**

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- Start Native Plants from Seeds

How Did an "Exterior Improvement Project" Turn into a Demolition?



In the absence of a recommendation by the Historic Preservation Commission of a structure from **circa 1900**, it is the responsibility of the Planning Board to review :

- "The reconstruction, alteration, maintaining, or moving such buildings should be done in a manner to preserve their architectural, historical or neighborhood significance"

Town Ordinance 255-11.7.C.10

Approved by the Planning Board on July 10, 2023 to:

- "Remodel the front building for maintenance and visual improvements: replacement of windows & vinyl siding"
- No site plan or public hearing contrary to Ogunquit Zoning Ordinance Article 225-11.6
- Building permit issued October 25, 2023 for remodeling at a cost of \$215K
See Application [Sea Chambers](#)
- Was a subsequent Demolition Certificate issued?



How is the Planning Board "...protecting and enhancing our historical treasures and safeguarding the visual charm of Ogunquit for future generations"?

Natural Resources

The Ogunquit River Watershed Based Plan *Our ongoing series for 2024*

While we applaud the promise of the new Watershed group (TAG), formed solely by the Town Manager, constructing the content and timeline of prior information since 2012, the use of prior funding, and the reasons for inaction may shed light on **what challenges and potential opposition** lay ahead.

Part I: Prior Findings and Recommendations

In **2012**, the Ogunquit Conservation Commission, the Town of Ogunquit, FB Environmental Associates, and Maine DEP began working together on continual water quality issues. Their mission:

- To improve and protect water quality in the impaired estuary due to persistent bacterial contamination from unidentified sources, largely attributed to nonpoint source pollution from the watershed
- To conduct bacteria sampling during wet and dry weather events at **11 previously identified hotspots** throughout the watershed, particularly along the coast
- To include other water quality data such as temperature, dissolved oxygen (DO) and salinity collected at the same locations

The purpose of the monitoring program was to:

- Help identify and bracket sources of **high bacteria levels** in the Ogunquit River Watershed
- Maintain a baseline of bacteria data for hotspot sites to assess the trajectory of changes as a result of remediation efforts.

All of this data collection has been made available annually, initially with the **2014** Bacteria and Water Sampling Report for the Ogunquit River Watershed, and since then in the annual Water Quality Monitoring Reports.

Beach monitoring was also conducted by Maine Healthy Beaches and the Ogunquit Sewer District to track Enterococci bacteria levels that indicate the presence of fecal contamination in waterbodies. High concentrations can lead to posted advisories at swimming beaches and the closure of shellfish beds.



*OR-13
Leavitt
Stream at
the outlet
of the
estuary*



- **Why was there so little action taken after all the data was collected during these years?**
- **Why were the many recommendations and next steps as outlined by FB Environmental for action by the Town largely ignored?**

Here is just one example for each year:

2015 – Investigate the source of OG-seep **south of the beach street bridge using dye testing** in the stormwater and sewer systems. Identifying the source of the consistently elevated bacteria counts should be a priority as many families and their small children play in that area of the beach

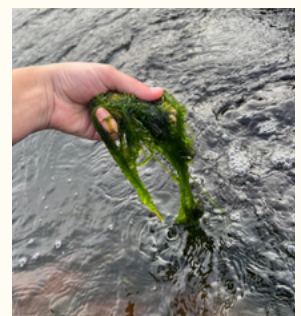
2016 – **Resample** historical sites **above and below Roby's Pond**, which drains to OR-18, a rediscovered **hotspot** of fecal contamination to the Ogunquit River



OR-18 at low tide

2017 – **Provide outreach** on river-friendly home practices to property owners adjacent to the river (in both Wells and Ogunquit).

2018 - Investigate the **source of excess algae (bloom)** above OR-13 and around OR-**Jothams** by testing for both phosphorous (typically the limiting nutrient to growth in freshwater systems) and nitrogen.



cont'd on the next page

The Ogunquit River Watershed Based Plan

Continuing Recommendations from the previous page

2019 - Follow up on the elevated groundwater nitrogen concentrations found in groundwater samples along the Littlefield Village properties and **investigate the state of the sewer lines**

2020 - **Further investigate** sources of secondary indicators present in upstream surface waters contributing to the **unnamed tributary north of Littlefield Village**

2021 - Include in the watershed planning process, **water quality data gap analysis** that considers the need for additional Enterococcus data or other water quality parameters such as nutrients. This gap analysis can be used to inform a robust water quality monitoring plan that will be integrated into the watershed planning process

2022 – **Inspect the retrofitted catch basins and bacteria filters** that treat stormwater runoff from the Main Beach parking lot and Beach Street for potential failure.

- These systems are designed to lower the number of bacteria in the effluent that is discharged from OG-Pipe during all but the largest rain events (greater than 1inch)
- The two samples collected at OG-Pipe in 2022 showed **elevated levels of fecal indicator bacteria after precipitation** events that were less than 1 inch, suggesting that the stormwater treatment systems are not functioning properly



2023 – Consider performing a coordinated bracket **sampling effort** within the stormwater drainage network of the Main Beach parking lot during a storm event to better determine where bacteria are being introduced to the system. This would include sampling all seven catch basins in the parking lot and OG-Pipe during the same storm event.

As can be seen, the past years have offered far more than data collection to discern what and where the problems exist in the Ogunquit River Watershed. The large number of recommendations derived from this data have not been fully completed or not addressed at all.

Addressing these issues successfully will require a coordinated effort, large financial support outside of property taxpayers, and the political will to make the Natural Resources of our Town (and the bread and butter of the tourist industry, in addition to the health of the public and ecosystem) an urgent priority.

Starting with the first issue of the Breeze, a page of each issue has been devoted to our Natural Resources. From that initial call to action (December 2020), the problems and potential solutions have been repeatedly identified. If you want to understand more about the Watershed and the history of Conservation efforts in Ogunquit, please refer to the following issues below:

- [What is a Watershed?](#) (January 2021 page 3)
- [Conservation Commission presentation to the Select Board](#) (February 2021 (page 3))
- [Advisory signs warning contamination appear](#) (July 2021 page 1)
- [Sampling and Illness](#) (September 2021 pages 3 and 4)
- [Demise of Conservation Commission and its history of accomplishments, Where Does All the Water Come From?](#) (November page 3, 4 and 5 with maps)
- [Water Quality Strategy presented by the Sustainability Committee and Others](#) (April 2022 page 3)
- [Watershed Workshop presentation to the Planning Board, and Septic Ordinance Ignored](#) (June 2022 page 3)
- [Visions for Comprehensive Plan](#) (November 2022 page 3)
- [Nothing Happening with the Planning Board](#) (January 2023 page 3)
- [Water Testing Update](#) (February 2023 page 3)
- [Fecal Indicator Bacteria](#) (April 2023 page 3)
- [Marsh Migration and Fecal Counts](#) (August 2023 page 3 and 4)



We are grateful to [FB Environmental](#) for all photos and maps which are publicly available.

What's Happening to Town Committees?

On December 19th, the Select Board held the first of a series of Workshops to **revamp** Town Boards, Commissions and Committees. These are some of the issues and potential recommendations discussed:

- The creation of a **two-tiered format** separating quasi-legal Boards and Commissions from Town Committees
- The **dissolution of some Alternate Members** under the guise that law suits can arise from their interference. When has this happened? The historical process of joining as an Alternate as a way to prepare for full membership & to step in to form a quorum when needed has been useful
- The **goals for each Committee to conform to those of the Select Board** despite each having unique mission statements and objectives
- Select Board Liaisons will chaperone **adherence** to Select Board goals despite the Town Charter which limits their role to “point of contact” **not** as influencers
- The **elimination of Committees developing and managing their own budgets but rather be “under the Town umbrella”**
- Minimizing minutes so only attendance and voting is transcribed
- Enlarging membership with part-time residents and including commercial property owners as eligible, while not appointing some residents who *do* want to volunteer
- **Merging Committees** despite differing mandates and priorities
- Repeated reference to the **Historic Preservation Commission (OHPC) as if it has been functional in 2023** (despite an Ordinance requiring one)



**More Workshops to come
Stay tuned....**



[Starting Native Plants from Seed](#)

Workshop with
Ginger Laurits
January 13th 10-12
Beach Plum Farm

Do We Want an Independent Budget Review Committee?

A Big Thank You to More Than 300 Voters

- Prior to 2010, **only** the Budget Review Committee (BRC) set the Town's Annual Budget recommendations
- As of 2010, the Budget Review Committee was able to offer an amount for a budget item that was different from that of the Town Manager and Select Board
- Since the members of the BRC are elected and often have financial expertise, voters valued their recommendations
- Frequently there was agreement on the budget, but if not, two amounts were visible for the voter to choose



- When the last Town Charter was approved, the ability for the BRC to offer an independent amount of money for a budget item was not included in the updated version
- As of June 2023, their alternative recommendation, when applicable, was no longer discussed nor appeared on the ballot



- Over the summer, about 200 Town voters signed a Citizen's Petition to restore the BRC's ability to offer an independent amount of money for a budget item; this was rejected on a technicality by the Select Board
- A revised petition was re-circulated that was signed by an additional 100 Town voters totaling about 25% of registered Town voters who wanted to see the issue on the June ballot
- Watch for the decision by the Select Board at the January 16th Pubic Hearing

CMP is offering new rates
for Seasonal Heat Pumps
[See if you qualify](#)



The Breeze welcomes your questions on Town issues. Your confidentiality will be maintained along with our mailing lists. Comments are moderated for relevance and civility.

