

THE OGUNQUIT BREEZE

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

Town News

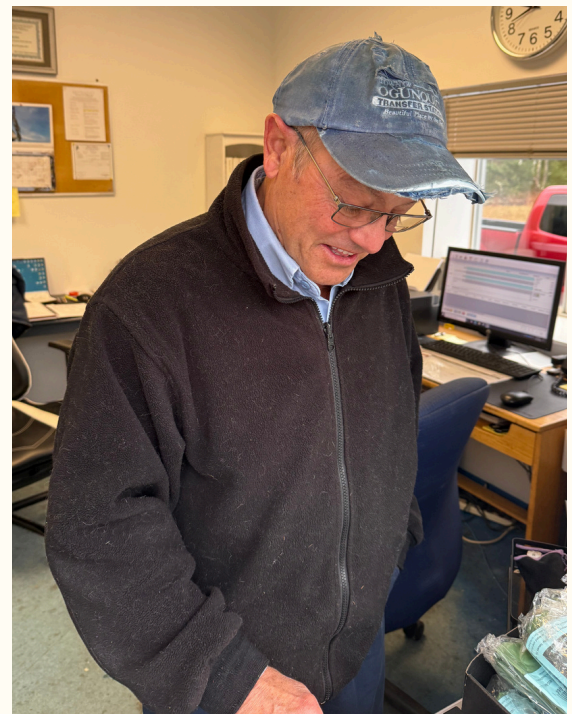
- Renovation Plans for the **Dunaway Community Center** are now estimated at **one million dollars over budget**. Cheaper options will be pursued and “working toward minimum statutory codes.” (Dec. 5th)
- The **Social Security Fairness Act** passes in Congress which will provide a huge benefit to retired public service employees in Maine including teachers, fire fighters and postal workers
- Chris Perry has been appointed to lead the Transfer Station

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Sadly, the Antique/Christmas Shop and Oarweed Restaurant make the 4th major, recent fire in Town. Why doesn't Ogunquit have an ordinance that requires a sprinkler system in every commercial building, especially the historic ones?



Many thanks to John Fusco who oversaw so many changes and benefits to our Town at the Transfer Station-upkeep, recycling, swap shop, and most recently, a composting system. He's off to paint in Italy in the spring!

Faces & Places

The Consequences of Zoning Changes

(from the June 11th Town Election Warrant Book sent to every voter): **Zoning Ordinance/Municipal Code - Article #3**

Article #3: Shall an ordinance entitled “ An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 225 (Zoning Map) of the Code of the Town of Ogunquit” be enacted?

Summary: The Zoning change will reduce nonconformity on existing parcels.

This proposed change was brought to the Planning Board by the owners of The Dunes (518 Main Street) so they could rezone their property from partially Residential to entirely Commercial (GBD2) (excluding the Shoreland Zone) which would then allow them to increase the building coverage on the property from 20% to 30%.

The Planning Board approved this proposal, sending it on to the Select Board who voted to include it on the June 11th ballot.

Voter approval of Article #3 now allows frontage expansion to be applied to all future development on the Route One corridor. One zoning change made to accommodate one particular entity can now be applied to many others....The slippery slope has been established.

With this new zoning change in place, The Dunes is once again before the Planning Board with over 350 page plan for expansion of their property. This includes 17 new cottages, a new building to house both their equipment and workforce as well as demolition of many mature trees to make room for the new additions.

QUESTION:

Did you understand Article #3 and what this change in the zoning would lead to?

Residents should feel confident that the Planning Board does its due diligence in a neutral way with no preconceived opinions about any projects presented to them at scheduled meetings. However, a recent resignation letter (below) submitted to the Select Board from a current member injects doubt in this assumption ([November 19th Select Board packet page 23](#)).

“...On August 13th I reached out to the liaison to the Planning Board and I asked for some advice/direction as I was frustrated by some recent changes to the operation of the Planning Board, which is a semi-judicial board. As of today (November 6th) the only response I’ve gotten from the liaison is, “Hi - I haven’t forgotten you - will follow up.”

Most recently, I was informed that my Planning Board information packets would no longer be mailed to [me]...

My frustration which is shared by others was that the Board is now being influenced as opposed to being supported....

I spend a great deal of time giving careful consideration to the information applicants include in their packets. It is imperative that every applicant be treated fairly, and that can only be achieved... without outside influence.”

Rusty Hayes, a 9+ year member

Residents rely on this Board to thoroughly vet all projects brought before them and deliver their decisions **with the betterment and preservation of the Town as their number one priority**. Their reliance on the Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) opinions as well as those of the Southern Maine planners (SMPDC), and Town Historical Preservation (OHPC) and Conservation Commissions should be factored into their final recommendations.

If you answered NO to the question posed earlier in this article then please consider paying closer attention to Town affairs that impact the look and quality of life here.

- **Read and understand proposed ordinance changes...ask questions of the CEO or the Planning Board for more clarification**
- **Watch or attend Planning Board meetings to stay informed**
- **Read the packets of each meeting which are available online**
- **Ask questions at scheduled public hearings concerning proposed projects**

Remember: Proposed Ordinances have to be approved by the Voters



Natural Resources Projects/Funding

Nature Based Solutions

Two and a half year "Coastal Resilience Study" under SMPDC led to:

\$50,000 grant awarded August 2023 for Nature Based Solutions study

GEI Engineering-
Potential costs:
\$500,000-
\$10,000,000+

Ogunquit River (Potential Projects)

Removing invasives along Riverside Beach and planting natives.

Preserving the small marsh along River Road

Revetment stabilization along Ogunquit River, alongside Norseman

Dredging

NO FUNDING AT THIS TIME

Natural Disaster Fund

A taxpayer approved reserve account to help pay for emergency damages for natural disasters such as the 2023-2024 storm repairs.

Some actions could receive FEMA funds.

The reserve account is fully funded when it reaches \$325,000

Dunes Study

GEI Engineering

1. Short term (emergency) = \$330,000
2. Longer Term = \$4.6 million (2-3 years+)

NEW RESERVE ACCOUNT

= \$800,000 approved by voters on 11/5/24

This will pay for the dune engineering study, future details and short-term repairs.

Longer term \$ will need to be secured.

FEMA (2018)

Needed repairs to the Main Beach parking lot revetment.
CMA Engineering.

\$600,000 approved by voter
RFP in October 2024

Work begun in December 2024

May receive FEMA reimbursement

Watershed Based Plan

Final phase of project funding for 2014 plan- nearing completion.

319 Grant through DEP (Phase 4).

FB Environmental and Acorn Engineering
Catch Basin 1

Rain garden @ Young's Crossing

Funded

2024 WBP in final development (10 year plan)

Total costs \$5,000,000+



How the Annual Town Budget Gets on the June Ballot or how it's supposed to...

According to their 2024 Annual Summary, some questions generated by the Budget Review Committee for the Town Manager and Department Heads on their budget proposals went **unanswered**.

In an unprecedented move, this year Department Heads will present their budgets **in previously-taped video format** answering **only** questions they have received from the Select Board. Budget Review Committee questions may **not** be addressed at this time.

Furthermore, according to the timeline provided by the Town Clerk, BRC questions will be submitted to the Select Board (also unprecedented), not to Department Heads. It isn't until March that the Select Board "reviews and responds" to BRC questions (again unprecedented). The ballot is finalized by April 1st.

In an effort to have a more thorough process for this year's Town budget, the BRC Chair has made a request to the Select Board Chair that BRC members meet **directly** with any Department Heads and/or Committee members after their presentations if further explanations are needed. Until last year, this had been the historical process. (Letter November 22, 2024, BRC packet December 12, 2024). To this date, there has been no response.

Since votes by the BRC on budget items are recorded on the ballot, will their access to Department Heads be denied by the Select Board?

Isn't the public entitled to hear any concerns voiced or additional information requested by their elected representatives?

As commonly done by Committees, the BRC has reviewed and revised their ByLaws over the course of 3 recent meetings. While the Select Board liason has stated he has attended or watched every meeting, he claims he "has no idea what's changed."

At the last Select Board meeting, ByLaw approval was postponed (December 17th at 2 minutes, 36 seconds-4 minutes, 50 seconds).

In fact, Section 802 of the Town Charter states: "**The Budget Review Committee shall adopt such bylaws as it deems necessary.**" There is no requirement for Select Board approval.

The BRC Bylaws simply state: "Upon receipt of the next fiscal year's proposed budget from the Town Manager, the BRC will analyze and discuss the proposed budget while obtaining information **directly** from Town officials, department heads, administrators, and committee chairs. The BRC will focus on the proposed operating budgets, capital improvement expenditures, reserves, debt, and revenues in a deliberative and collegial fashion. Some of the financial data may not be available online."

In addition, the Charter states in Section 503.2: "The Select Board will then, with the **collaboration and advice of the BRC**, review and revise, if necessary, and finalize the budget for presentation at the Annual Town Meeting."

Given the expertise and commitment of the Budget Review Committee, combined with a daunting increase in Town expenses and debt, don't we need an **independent BRC to guide us toward a reasonable Town budget?**

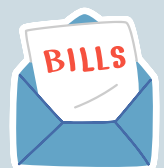


Need info on [State Property Tax Deferral](#) for Seniors?
Applications open January 1st

Want More Info on increased Rebates and Tax Credits from **Efficiency Maine?**

[Watch Sustainability Meeting](#)

Bridget Gifford, Project Manager (1st 20 minutes)



Reader's Comments to the *Breeze*

We receive comments with every issue and attempt to provide a personal response when we can. We've been asked, for example, why we don't advertise more Town Events. Our answer (provided directly to the reader) is that many events sponsored by Town Committees and the Chamber of Commerce receive a lot of publicity through Select Board and Chamber announcements, websites and Facebook pages. So we tend to provide information about events less advertised and frequently related to small local business, and non-profit and other community organizations. However, if asked, we will try to include others.

Here are some comments from the recent mail:

"Why are the residents of Ogunquit subsidizing the business community by giving them free parking during Oktoberfest and other Chamber events to the tune of tens of thousands of dollars?"

"Why is every Select Board vote 5 to 0? Do the members have little or no individual opinions? Why even bother when they seem to have all conferred ahead of time? It's so obviously just a formality as total agreement is guaranteed."

"I have observed people being treated quite rudely before the Selectmen. One member of the Budget Review appeared before the Select Board with a question. It was asked and quickly shrugged off. When he asked a follow-up question for clarification, he was told that he was entitled to one question. NO....he is entitled to three minutes so the chairman was effectively shutting down any questioning of the board because he apparently did not like the direction of the question. This was not the only situation. A woman in town told me that she was shut down in the same manner and will never speak up again." (Note: at the last 4 Select Board meetings/hearings- October 22 to December 14th, there were a total of 2 public comments).

"The agenda on board meetings rather limits the issues on which they will take public comment. Many other things may need to be addressed which are not even on these agendas and need the light of day."

"Select Board meetings the last couple of times have been VERY short—24 minutes this past Tuesday and not much more previously. So much for serious town business—huh? I figure you'll address that at some point." (Note: Duration of Select Board meetings: October 22nd: 1.5 minutes; December 3rd: 22.5 minutes; December 17th: 18 minutes).

Please continue to send us your comments and questions. These may suggest a topic for an article, elicit further information from a knowledgeable source, or prompt other readers to respond.

Local News & Events

Starting Native Plants from Seed*



Workshop with master gardener
Ginger Laurits
January 18th at 10am Beach Plum
Farm

*Registration required

Harvesting green
crabs to eat while
studying marine life!
Check out
[Shell+Claw](#) in York



Email or sign up at ogunquitbreeze@gmail.com
or go to our [website](#)

