

# THE OGUNQUIT BREEZE

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



## Town News

- **June Election:** Nomination papers due April 12th & Ballot finalized April 16th
- The **Auditor's report** from June, 2023 was presented on March 7, 2024 and **should appear in the Town Annual Report** on April 1, 2024 as per Town Charter
- Obtaining a **Town Parking Pass** (\$40) formerly called a "Beach Pass" will allow resident parking at all beaches, Perkins Cove, and Obeds and Jacob's Lots. **Otherwise metered parking fees and tickets (\$63) will apply.**

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## A Surprise Document

At the Select Board meeting on March 19th, members in attendance unanimously agreed on a proposed **Memorandum of Understanding** between the Town and the Marginal Way Preservation Fund (MWPF).

In this document which had been finalized the night before the meeting between the Chair of the Fund and the Chair of the Select Board, The Fund commits to major financial contributions to address Storm Damage on the Marginal Way:

- Current allocation of \$500K
- \$500K within 2 years
- \$100K yearly after for 15 years (bonded by the Town)

The MWPF deserves a huge thanks from the community for this generous donation and commitment for future support.

Moreover, this funding will contribute to the estimated \$3million needed to complete repairs, some of which can begin without delay. After legal review, this document would provide a contract between the MWPF, an independent registered non profit organization, and the Town.

## Some Initial Questions

Given the absence of prior notice before for the meeting, a Public Hearing, and input from the Town's Marginal Way Committee itself, here are some of the MWPF details in the Memorandum:

- 5.3 Co-Branding: an agreement to use logos and other project materials
- 6.1 An agreement to support fundraising activities
- 6.2 Changes to landscaping
- 6.3 Signage with QR codes
- 6.4 Reclamation of existing benches and an expanded bench program

## Some Concerns

- How will the Marginal Way be protected against commercialization? (More signs, QR codes)
- How will existing plaques donated by family and friends for loved ones be protected?
- How will the natural beauty, including major efforts towards native plantings, be protected?
- What are the limitations on benches, signs, events, plaques, tree clearing, and more on the Marginal Way and throughout the Town?

# If you've been away for the winter or haven't been on the beach lately, you might be shocked by what you see...

Along with many Maine coastal towns, Ogunquit suffered serious destruction from winter storms, hopefully now over for the 2023-2024 season.

Flooding in Perkins Cove and in homes, businesses, low lying roads, and parking lot areas, to name a few, caused much structural damage and interior loss.

The Dunes have been especially affected with erosion such that there are now openings from the beach to the riverside.

There are no immediate fixes, and whatever is attempted needs to address what may continue to occur or even worsen on an annual basis due to the climate crisis.



While measures have been taken by the Town to protect vulnerable areas (piling more rocks on revetments), many are only short term fixes that may not be successful in all circumstances. The beaches, especially the Main Beach and its parking lot, will require long term solutions provided with the help of environmental, engineering and State expertise.

In addition, it is unclear how the work being done quickly (while State permitting requirements have been temporarily halted) will affect the Main Beach project where a \$600,000 allotment was planned as a [FEMA reimbursement](#) (page 2).

**See page 4 for info on Coastal Readiness and Adaptation**

## Who Pays?

- Annual Business registrations (increased from **\$175 to \$200** for 2024-2025) are the **same for small shops as busy restaurants and large hotels**
- As a potential source of more revenue for the Town, how about **stratifying fees** depending on, for example, the number of seats or rooms? This information is easily available on their applications and from inspections.  
***Surely larger businesses can afford to pay more than \$200 a year?!***
- Annual **Liquor (\$225) and Amusement licenses (fee is \$125 if added)** remain the same for 2024-2025 and apply to both small and large venues
- Shouldn't Select Board members who are business owners and may also hold Liquor and/or Amusement licenses, **recuse themselves** from decisions on these Town fees? **Isn't this a conflict of interest?**

## School Budget

The School budget contribution from Ogunquit for the next year is \$6,073,211 **at a cost of \$155,723 per student**

### *Fun Facts about the Town of Ogunquit?*

- There are 39 students from Ogunquit enrolled in the [Wells Ogunquit Schools](#)
- There are **more than 55** Liquor and Amusement licenses to Town businesses

**Check out the May Breeze for our annual issue on Ballot items**



# Faces and Places

## *What Makes a House Historic?*

Ogunquit owes a large part of its charm to the “historic” homes found throughout the Town. Although varied in look and style, the integrity of the structures has been maintained in order to preserve the original look of the buildings when first built. But what makes a building historic?

The idea to designate historic sites originated in the 1930's when the National Park Service needed to create historic context for the country's historically important places that they oversaw.

The Historic Sites Act of 1935 cleared the way for the Park Service to identify and document historic sites throughout the country for consideration as potential park sites. Because of the large number of buildings needed to be surveyed, they initially chose an age limit of 1870 as a benchmark for historic consideration. This age limit morphed into the “fifty year rule” when the 1948 Guidelines criteria was issued. No property could be considered for historic designation until fifty years had passed since its construction.

As time passed and historic evaluation and designation became more common, the concept of significance changed from sites of important events and people to sites worthy of designation for architectural importance alone.

While the National Landmarks Program, established in 1960, was focused only on sites of national importance, the National Register of Historic Places, established in 1966, focused primarily on sites of local or state significance. The fifty- year rule was carried over to both of these programs. While it became the undisputed number used to begin the qualification process, it was only meant to be a suggestion. According to one of the authors of the Guidelines:

*“Fifty years is obviously not the only length of time that defines “historic” or makes an Informed , dispassionate judgment possible. It is chosen as a reasonable, perhaps popularly understood span that makes professional evaluation of historical value feasible.”*

Standards and guidelines must be met for a successful nomination to this Register including the property's age, historic integrity and significance. Does it still look much the way it did in the past? Seven details considered are: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Ogunquit's Marginal Way met all of these requirements when it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in March, 2022.



**Stevens house built around the turn of the century**



**Lincoln Cottage by John Calvin Stevens 1905**

Today, Ogunquit's Historic Preservation Ordinance recognizes only properties built in 1930 and earlier as historic. Applying the fifty-year rule contained in its ordinance, houses built in 1974 and earlier can now be considered for historic consideration. Important properties built in the 1940's and 50's have been demolished or renovated beyond recognition in the last couple of years even though an ordinance is in place to protect them.

Historic Preservation Ordinances for towns must be fairly general and they often adopt the National Register of Historic Places criteria for designation. Instead of creating a unique evaluation and designation process for their town, many local preservation ordinances borrow heavily from the National Register, as Ogunquit did. Since the National Register contains an honorary list of historic places and the town ordinance is a legal document, adoption of the fifty-year rule into law basically ensures that no property under fifty years will be locally designated and enjoy any protection the historic preservation ordinance may offer.

By designating historic districts, towns can protect large numbers of historic resources and preserve the unique character of neighborhoods. Ogunquit recognizes only one historic district located in the downtown business district. Perkins Cove, an important resource, is not recognized nor are areas of grouped unique historic homes in neighborhoods and along Shore Road and Berwick Road. They all sit unprotected and ignored.

*“So much of our future lies in preserving our past.”*

Peter Westbrook

# Natural Resources

## Coastal Readiness and Adaptation

Began in 2021, Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC) took the lead along with support from Wells Reserve on a 2½-year project aimed at developing the first regional coastal resilience plan for 10 southern Maine municipalities. Along with the communities (Kittery, York, Ogunquit, Wells, Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, Biddeford, Saco, Old Orchard Beach, Scarborough), local land trusts, regional conservation organizations, and state and federal natural resource entities were engaged.

The initial collaborative goals were to:

- Assess the impacts of climate change, sea level rise, and erosion on coastal communities
- Address regional resilience needs – plan for on-the-ground projects and policies
- Develop adaptation strategies and nature-based solutions for making the region more resilient to coastal hazards
- Increase and collaboration among the participating groups

Both the Working Group of municipal staff and volunteers and the Advisory Committee of professional staff were engaged throughout the project through workshops (4), an interactive project web site, and input and feedback options on all the work products. From a list of 50 “hot spots” of vulnerability throughout the communities, 15 “priority sites” were selected based on their local and regional significance, exposure to coastal hazards, present vulnerabilities, and how representative of other vulnerable sites across the region they were.

Main Beach and Parking Area and Perkins Cove were part of the final 15 sites. (Marginal Way, The Wastewater Treatment Plant and Footbridge Beach Access and Neighborhood were also listed as vulnerable areas).

“The Main Beach area, including the parking lot, were selected as a priority site because it is a critical economic resource, has important natural areas and wildlife including beaches and saltmarsh habitat, and is identified as supporting potential future marsh migration. The area is also a largely undeveloped barrier beach, making it a unique coastal area.”

“Perkins Cove was selected as a priority site because it houses historic resources, is a local economic hub tied to tourism activity, and is a working waterfront. The historic village and fish houses, now retail shops, and the iconic double draw wooden bridge are a major draw for visitors. The area also provides access to the Marginal Way coastal walking path, which is a significant cultural and historic resource and drives tourism activity.”



Potential adaptation strategies for Main Beach:

- **Dune restoration all along the parking lot** (removing revetment) prevents erosion and reduces flooding, acts as a buffer for storm surge, and provides wildlife habitat
- **Realignment of Beach Parking:** parking lot elevated and footprint reduced, addition of raised dock style parking area, enables natural sand and dune migration, decreases impervious area, and protects from erosion and flooding
- **Stormwater Bioswales:** protects from flooding during storm events, improves water quality with stormwater filtration, and improves aesthetics

Potential adaptation strategies for Perkins Cove:

- **Modular Dock:** converts fixed dock to a modular floating dock, increases pole height to accommodate future sea level rise and storm surge, auto-adjusting gangway moves with dock fluctuations, decreases potential damage during storm surge and higher tides
- **Raised Cofferdam:** protects from flooding and erosion
- **Stormwater Bioswales:** protects from flooding during storm events, improves water quality with stormwater filtration, improves aesthetics
- **4. Retrofit Structures (Raise on stilts):** protects against flooding

Although the grant project has officially been completed, the work to advance priority coastal resilience in the region continues with assisting communities to scope priority projects, develop grant applications for coastal adaptation action, and outline needs, opportunities and next steps.

The recent storms are an unfortunate example of the increasing damage that sea level rise and climate change are causing. Ogunquit must utilize all of the resources for regional cooperation, assistance, and Community Action Grants that are available in planning for adaptation and the possibility of retreat.

# Update on PFAS

The harmful “forever chemicals” called PFAS are contained in many products we use, and pollute our waterways and farmlands. Many are found in our blood and are linked to serious health problems.

- **What is Ogunquit doing?** While the sewer treatment plant has reported no PFAS are found in local wastewater, the Town voted \$50K in 2022 to test several private wells and a pond near the DPW site. Results of two sites tested are available: the DPW site showed no PFAS while the pond tested positive. It is “[not clear whether this is a concern](#)” nor when the other wells will be tested. Almost \$39K remains in the reserve account.
- **What is Maine doing?** Enacted by the Maine legislature in 2001 with bipartisan support, Maine has a reporting law that requires manufacturers to report PFAS in their products and incentives for replacement for safer alternatives. The deadline for removal of PFAS in many household items may be extended to 2026; artificial turf until 2029, and others until 2032. These new extensions have been endorsed by the Environment and Natural Resources Committee by a vote 6-5. Certain industry products such as motor vehicles and medical devices will remain exempted. For more information on products containing PFAS, see [Defend our Health](#).  
In addition, the State has received its first application from a farm in Unity to receive assistance from a \$70 million fund to compensate those whose land has been impacted by contamination.
- **What is happening nationally?** As an amendment to the Safe Drinking Water Act, Senators King and Collins from Maine are sponsors of a bill to assist private well owners in addressing well contamination. More than half of Maine residents get their drinking water from private wells. [See Newsletter](#)

# Local News & Events

## York Hospital in financial trouble

Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Robin Labonte and Hospital Board Member Erich Fogg gave a 30 minute presentation and Q&A on the financial difficulties and potential jeopardy facing the Hospital. Listen to the March 19th Select Board Meeting starting at 2 minutes.


*Congratulations* to Ogunquit resident Barbara (Bobbi) Treen for her Opinion piece on Prison Reform in the Sunday [New York Times](#) on March 7, 2024

*THANK YOU!*  
 **GOOD JOB!**

To STS Construction and DPW for their work to re-open the Marginal Way!



*Want to see a play in a Barn? Check out the Summer Season and Kid's Camp at [Hackmatack Playhouse](#)*



*Check out the Summer Season and Arts Academy for Kids at [Ogunquit Playhouse](#)*

Want to Learn More about Gardening?  
Check out resources at Maine [Organic Farmers & Gardeners](#)



*Spring*

**Want to learn more about native plants or volunteer?**



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Town News you won't get anywhere else

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