

THE OGUNQUIT BREEZE

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



Town News

- **Correction:** David Riccio, former Special Projects Manager, has secured almost **3 million dollars** in grant funding for the Town, not 2 million as previously reported
- Planning Board Workshop on **Town Ordinances related to Conservation and Watershed** August 9 at 4PM



**(Another)
Big Thank You**
to departing Captain
J.P Argenti and
members of the
Lifeguard Team who
have kept us safe!

Contents:

- Town News
- Thank you to Departing Lifeguards
- Why is a Town Charter Important?
- The Beach, Dunes, Erosion & Conservation
- Piping Plovers & Town Street that Needs a Name
- Town Finances
- Tennis Anyone?
- Great Works Event, Kids at the Library

**Check for daily Water & Beach
Advisory: [Maine Healthy Beaches](#)**

**Pay Attention to the Town Alert
System for local Covid Updates** 

Why is a Town Charter Important?

After support from voters, Maine municipalities in 1970 were given the right to adopt and amend their town charters and ordinances (local laws) as long as they didn't conflict with state or federal laws, "directly or by clear implication." Called *Home Rule*, it was recognized that some concerns of government are strictly local and have no impact outside the community. It also recognized that municipal charters should be tailored to meet the needs of a specific community, and decisions to adopt or amend them are best made locally.

The Town Charter of Ogunquit was initially adopted in 1991 and last amended in 2017. In November, 2020, three candidates were appointed and six elected to form a new Charter Commission to update the existing document. This group has been meeting to update and improve our Town Charter with a goal of putting it on a ballot for June, 2022. The committee will be deciding whether to include the entire Charter or to have individual sections on the ballot for voter approval.

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Key elements to consider:

- How will the Charter and Conduct be enforced?
- Is there a quorum required for a vote or election to be valid? How is a voter defined?
- What are the powers of the Select Board?
- What is the role of the Town Manager?
- What constitutes Conflict of Interest?
- How are taxes and the Town's Budget determined?
- How are citizen and recall petitions regulated?
- How independent are Town Committees and how are members appointed?
- And lastly, has consensus been attained by the Commission?

These and other major issues contained in the proposed new Charter should demonstrate how the Town Government will be responsive to both voters and taxpayers. Important as our Town's constitution, the draft deserves your attention. Please send your comments to the Commission by September 3rd.

[Initial CRC Draft](#) [Contact Commission](#)

Places: *How We Have a Beach*

The stark difference between the development of Moody Beach and the natural surroundings of Ogunquit Beach are hard to miss. The public has enjoyed the freedom this beach has offered for 133 years. If not for the diligence of some vigilant citizens early in the 20th century, Ogunquit Beach most likely would look like Moody today, with private homes lining the dunes and public access prohibited.

This is because Charles W. Tibbetts, a developer from Dover, New Hampshire, owned Ogunquit Beach. When he bought it for \$100,000 from the State of Maine with a quit claim deed in 1888 there was no public access to it, but things would soon change.

Just as the footbridge at Perkins Cove was built to allow visitors and artists to cross to the oceanside and interact with the fishermen in their shacks, it was soon evident that the tourists and townspeople now needed another bridge built to get to the beach and ocean and all that it offered. The new bridge was completed in 1888 and soon the activity on the beach was underway.

The town considered it a public park and soon built a pavilion, a bowling alley and dance hall to give the tourists and townspeople activities they could enjoy along with their swimming and sunbathing. Artists were painting the colorful umbrellas and beach goers in order to record the lively sights, while exhibitions of their paintings were shown in the pavilion.

As this frivolity continued, Charles W Tibbetts was busy dividing the Ogunquit Beach property he owned into 10 building lots, offering leases to these lots which could then be subdivided. Leases were sold from 1903 to 1919. Ogunquit townspeople felt their needs were being ignored because it was still part of Wells and they wanted better representation. When a petition for downtown street lights submitted at a Wells Town meeting was rejected, Ogunquit voters were so irate they introduced a bill in the State Legislature in 1913 which gave them a charter for the formation of the Ogunquit Village Corporation. It began its work improving conditions in town and later proved instrumental in saving the beach.

Continued ↗



The Causeway 1912 by Gertrude Fiske



Ogunquit Beach 1924 by Gertrude Fiske

As the cottages being built on Moody seemed to be creeping closer to Ogunquit Beach, the Ogunquit Village Corporation, in a move to block Ogunquit Beach from development, formed the Ogunquit Beach District in 1923. Its purpose was to have the beach acquired as a public park and the 10 lots be taken by eminent domain. The Ogunquit Beach District was incorporated and authorized to take and hold real estate for a public park, have a right to eminent domain and authorized to assess and collect taxes.

In 1925 the land was sold to the town by eminent domain for \$43,500 which was raised by taxing the citizens of Ogunquit. Trustees Roby Littlefield and Roland Maxwell went to Augusta in 1973 and filed a document making the Ogunquit Village Corporation the sole possessor and custodian of the 10 lots taken by the Ogunquit Beach District by eminent domain ensuring that they would never be developed in the future. The details of the fight that accompanied this saga is not included in this narrative. Suffice it to say that it took tremendous fortitude to wage this battle against formidable odds in order to save the beach. What is clear is that without this remarkable effort, Ogunquit would be a far different town today.

“When you take things for granted, the things you are granted are taken”



Charles Woodbury circa 1915

Natural Resources

The Dunes, Erosion and Conservation

The State of Maine boasts 3500 miles of coastline, only 27 of those are public sandy beaches. Of those, Ogunquit owns the longest, widest beach with its hard packed surface of fine quartz sand backed by two miles of dunes bound together by roots of low vegetation that protect the land and river behind from the ocean. For over 250 years, there have been measures put in place to ensure the preservation of this natural resource from the impact of human and animal encroachment.

As early as 1757, King George II of England, realizing that livestock could overgraze and trample the sensitive dune structure, proclaimed colonists could no longer drive cattle and horses along the beach and dunes. Fines were put in place for infractions. Without this restriction, continued erosion would allow the ocean to wash sand across the smaller dunes and into the river. Instead, the stabilized dunes and grasses continued to protect the beach and the tidal river which make up the 2nd largest salt marsh complex in Maine and include many species of birds, fish and ecologically important small organisms.

By the end of the 19th century, the dunes were a towering 25' natural sea wall covered in waving stalks of grass. The early years of intensified erosion were forgotten. Since the Beach was separated from the 'mainland' by the Ogunquit River, residents wanted direct access to the beach. At the time, Wells was losing tourist traffic as several of their main attractions burned down and they feared this bridge would further cut into their trade dollars. With approval from the legislature and the bridge constructed, the sudden drastic changes in the dunes and ecosystem began again.

Tourists came and have never stopped. Beach parties and other gatherings, bonfires, sledding down the sand, illicit activities, dogs and horses became the norm in the dunes. Then came the devastating storms in the 1970's. As the waves surged over the dunes, they washed sand into the river. Similar destruction happened several years later where the dunes were lowered by washout from the river flooding.



The Dunes circa 1930

Unseen, ridged dikes were built in the two areas by scraping sand with heavy equipment from the beach and river by the Soil Conservation Service, and seawalls were constructed to protect the hotel and the sewer plant. Outraged residents, led by a spunky grandmother, formed the committee "SCROD" – Special Committee to Restore Ogunquit Dunes to their original state. They lost.

In the ensuing years, Ogunquit has hired teams of experts to continue to determine the condition of the beach and the dunes and to suggest plans for their preservation, including the 70's, 80's, 90's, and as recent as 2014 by a wetlands and wildlife biologist, and 2016 by a group from Woods Hole who prepared the Ogunquit Beach Erosion Study. Different types of fencing; planting grasses and other native vegetation; post and roping to help collect sand in the dunes and keep people away from the fragile area; signs and fines posted for trespassing; part-time employees to walk the beach and educate the public have all been attempted with some limited successes.

With the continued significantly affected water quality in the estuary and erosion of the beach and dunes, once again Ogunquit residents are called on to make far reaching decisions about these resources; what steps must be taken for their preservation and conservation; and how enforcement must be mandated. The enjoyment of future generations, both human and animal, and the economic vitality of the community demand our attention.

Piping Plovers

Ogunquit Beach continues to be **the most successful site in Maine** for nesting plovers, chicks and fledges from April to Sept.



Help protect these endangered birds and their offspring by staying out of roped areas, filling in sand castle holes, and picking up trash to keep predators away.

[Learn more here](#)

What's the hold-up?

Give the Town-owned street a name and signage access to the beach around the Norseman

How about Plovers Lane?

Town Finances

- Town Treasurer, Mandy Cummings, has successfully transferred the towns accounting system to the vastly improved **Financial Transparency Center**. This site is “designed to make local government decision-making and activity crystal-clear to residents...[and to] make critical data easy for every resident to understand.”

Even if you are not a numbers person, the site is very user friendly. There are six tabs of interest: Overview, Revenues, Expenditures, Demographics, Debt and Checkbook which displays all Town expenditures. [Ogunquit Clear Gov Page](#)

- In the coming year, the Town will receive approximately \$100,000 divided into two payments as part of the **American Rescue Plan Act**. These funds have designated restrictions and uses.

Allowable uses:

- broadband
- water
- sewer
- affordable housing
- daycare and
- public health measures

Ineligible uses:

- reducing taxes
- paying down debt
- roads
- equipment or
- subsidizing budgets

Monies for some infrastructure projects are allowed if they are tied to revenue loss from the pandemic.

This may be an opportunity to partner with other towns and/or to make long term commitments to projects with input from the public. Watch for more information.



Tennis Anyone?

“Tennis has saved my life!” These are the words from Ogunquit’s tennis guru, **Bob Hatem**, and, at almost 87 years of age, he recounts the many ways. For the past seven years, this vigorous athlete has run the tennis clinic at the courts on Agamenticus Road.

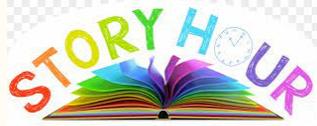
As a cub reporter for The Lowell Sun in the 60’s, his assignment was The White House; yes, THE White House. When he was introduced to Arthur Ashe by Bobby Kennedy (yes, THAT Bobby Kennedy), he decided to learn the gentleman’s game of tennis. And play he did; after his working hours throughout his illustrious career as a political publicist, a speechwriter, a newsman, leadership positions at Northern Essex Community College and finally with Raytheon for a brief 20 years, he mastered the sport becoming a serious competitor (until heart surgery ended that only five years ago). At NECC, he converted the empty summer student dorms into a tennis camp. His passion for the game is contagious and his persistence accounts for his amazing energy.

Bob became a resident of Ogunquit in 1983. Judging from the 12-18 people who assemble at the courts each Wednesday at 8:00 A.M., it’s hard to tell whether they arrive for Bob’s positive personality or the game to start their day. There is no charge... just a willingness to jump in and ‘save your life’. Bob is looking beyond the courts; badminton, soccer, softball anyone?

35th Anniversary Open House
Great Works Regional Land Trust
Beach Plum Farm Preserve
Saturday, August 28th
12 - 4pm
Local Food & Beer
Live Music & Games
Preserve Tours - Free admission
Everyone Welcome!



Children on the Lawn at
Ogunquit Library
Every Other Tuesday
9:30-10:30am Ages 2-6
August 3, 17 and 31



Contact 207 646 9024

