

THE OGUNQUIT BREEZE

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



Town News

Committees

- [Irish Dance](#) at the Dunaway March 11th at 6:30; \$5 at the door
 - Conservation adds 2 new members; Bike/Ped adds one
 - One member leaves Facilities; one leaves Comprehensive Plan
- American **Sign Language** Introductory Class at the [Library](#) March 7th

Town Budget Considerations

The **Unassigned Fund Balance** (the "Rainy Day Fund") is an account that every municipality has for unexpected and emergency expenses. It is an important measure of the Town's economic stability, and serves to lessen financial risks that can occur from extraordinary or unforeseen revenue shortfalls.

Ogunquit relies primarily on property taxes (73%) and the revenue from parking lots (23%) to cover operating expenses. The minimum in the Fund Balance is suggested to be at about \$2.6 million (10% of taxes plus 1 month of expenses). It dipped from \$3.2 in 2019 to \$2.7 million in 2020 as a result of Covid. By the end of June, 2022, the Fund recovered to \$4.2 million. Debt carried by the Town was \$8 million.

How much should the Town dip into the Fund and what for?

- Is now the time to protect the Fund to be used only for future shortages and emergencies?
- Should some of the Fund be used now to pay for conservation and climate change protection?
- Should more be put into Reserve Accounts for future capital costs like breakdowns and new vehicles?
- Should Rainy Day Funds be used for capital expenses to minimize borrowing (Town debt)?
- Should "excess" funds be returned to the taxpayers in reduced mill rate or paybacks?

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Select Board Quote of the Month

"It's like our barstools, they want in there, so I look at it and say... here's a martini, if I'm charging \$14.50, that's \$29 for two of them and that big parking spot is \$35, that's a bargain." February 14 at 36 minutes, workshop on License Fees

APPRECIATED

To the **Police Department** for their alert notice related to a recent burglary in the community!

Highlighting Extraordinary Volunteers

thank you!

For some, being a member of a Town Committee doesn't just mean attending a monthly meeting, and the volunteers who help with research, labor and events aren't always recognized.

This month, give a big appreciation to the over 2,000 work hours that were donated in 2022 to the Marginal Way by volunteers and members of the Committee!



Places and Faces

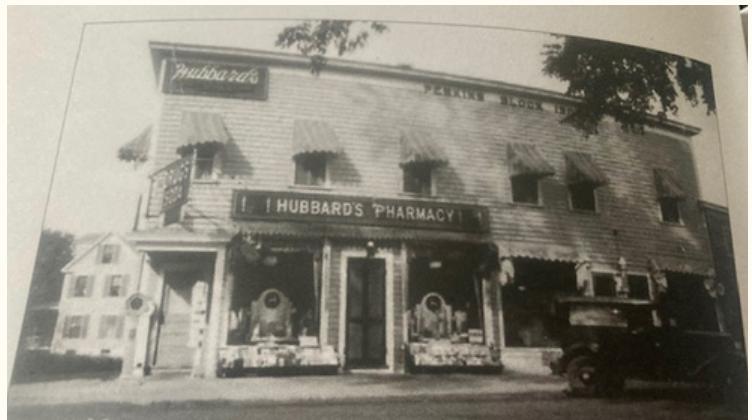
The Front Porch and Other Thoughts

When Moses Samuel Perkins (1862-1931) built the Perkins Block in 1907, the placement of the building was a shrewd move. Sitting in the middle of the square, (the busiest intersection in town), he hoped to take advantage of the location to establish successful businesses there.

His timing was perfect as the Atlantic Shore Line Railway was completed in 1907, resulting in trolleys coming through the square on a daily schedule from 5:30 am to 10:00 pm traveling to and from York Beach and Kennebunk. He soon opened a small cafe on the ground floor of the Perkins Block selling trolley tickets and refreshments to the passengers while also serving as a waiting room.

In 1910 his wife, Annie M Perkins (1862-1948), started running it as the Ogunquit Cafe and expanded the menu. Her retirement in the early 1920's led to a change in the use of the space when it was rented by J. Hubbard who turned the location into a pharmacy. Harley Freeman, another druggist, eventually replaced Hubbard and it continued as a drugstore until 1952 when it became a restaurant once again. Known as Samson's Surf Room Restaurant, run by a couple from York, it operated until 1980 when it became The Front Porch.

Interesting to note, there was an effort made to enlarge the rear of the property in the 1960's that was denied when it was determined that enlarging it would threaten the safety of the patrons escape route from the rear of the movie theater as there was so little room there to begin with.



Hubbard's Pharmacy 1920

The proposed renovation plans for The Front Porch presented to the Planning Board at their February 13th meeting was notable for a number of reasons.

1. The **impact of the scale of the work** to be done on the most visible building in the center of town will change the historic look of the square forever. Leaving the front of the building untouched (like the facade you see on a Hollywood movie set of a Western town) will not preserve the historic look or scale of the building. The plan to demolish the entire rear of the structure in order to enlarge the building by 800-950 square feet will dwarf everything in the vicinity and destroy what's left of the integrity of the square.

The fact that the side and back of the building are highly visible from all angles can't be ignored.

2. The failure of the Planning Board to present **any history of the building** in order to compensate for the absence of the Historic Preservation Commission (OHPC) makes it clear that their Mission statement, read at the beginning of their meetings, means nothing.

3. Not scheduling **a site visit** before the public hearing further reveals the absence of a **thorough evaluation** of this project.



1910 when it was a cafe

Why has the Board been treating site visits as negligible when, in the past, it was an integral part of the design review process, particularly when the renovation involved a historic property or was within a historic zone?

Will empowered Boards ignoring ordinances continue to damage the character of the Town?

Natural Resources

Trees: Do we take them for granted..... until they're gone?

We are slowly denuding Ogunquit of trees and woods. Pests like the boreal ash beetle are killing them. Non-native plants are choking them and depriving them of light and nutrients. The increase in paving is forcing them out of the way. Development is clear cutting them.

During the process of photosynthesis, trees absorb carbon dioxide (CO₂), a heat-trapping gas in our atmosphere. They then convert CO₂ into the oxygen we all need to breathe. One tree can absorb an average of about 48 pounds of carbon dioxide from the air in one year.

When a tree is protected, its carbon is safely stored; the older the tree, the more carbon is stored. A recent [Tree Survey](#) (see Committee meeting December 5, 2022 at 1 hour) showed even the small trees along the Marginal Way store more than 42 tons of carbon. When a tree is cut down, not only is it no longer absorbing additional CO₂ from the air, but all the carbon that was stored in the tree is released into the atmosphere.

Older trees, therefore, store more carbon (reducing air pollution), and their developed root systems filter stormwater and reduce sediment that pollutes rivers and streams. Trees are part of a wide ecosystem: their underground networks support new growth; their beds harbor the helpful insect world; and their nuts, seeds and blooms support birds and other wildlife. Stripping the trees and woods for development and replanting later does not make up for the impact of these losses, especially when they are replaced with leaf blowing, herbicides and excessive watering.



This was once was the look and feel of Shore Road!



"If we surrendered to earth's intelligence, we could rise up rooted like trees."

Rainer Maria Rilke



The report by the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission on [Economic Resilience Planning](#) for York County (March 2022) projects the potential effects of both a 1.6 and 3 foot storm surge and/or sea level rise for Ogunquit. Can we imagine our Town without the beach and Cove? Should we be more actively protecting green space? As the summers potentially bring more heat and drought and, at the same time, the storms get wilder with flooding and damage, how can we preserve our **other natural resources?**

- We should adopt **sustainable beautification** by planting native trees and shrubs that require less maintenance and no annual purchasing. Their growth will create a natural canopy providing shade and allow vegetation to hold the soil.
- Many of the parks and trails we now enjoy were land donations and purchases through **generous and visionary residents and Town leaders**. While we have an abundance of funds, we should actively set some aside for conservation.
- **The disregard shown by the Planning Board and Code Officer regarding lot owners who clear cut their property before presenting building design plans for approval must be stopped. Trees must be part of the equation from the beginning if we want to preserve what's left in our Town.**

Wells-Ogunquit School Funding Formula

When Ogunquit finally separated from Wells almost 43 years ago, the schools remained the only function shared by the two towns. Along with the approval of HP 753-LD 949 by the voters of Maine for the incorporation of the Village of Ogunquit into a separate town on June 22, 1979, thus granting all the powers and privileges, duties and obligations to the new town by the laws of the State, there was one additional determination. The apportionment of the total expenses of the Wells-Ogunquit School District between the two Towns was to function using a specific formula:

"One hundred percent of the total will be assessed between the Towns in the same proportion as the State valuation for each Town for the year preceding that year to which the budget applies bears to the total for both Towns."

On July 1, 1980, both Towns agreed to form a community school district. Any withdrawal from the District would be authorized only by a separate act of the Legislature. The yearly cost to the taxpayers was locked into the annual valuation of the Town. All efforts to make the formula more equitable over the years as the Ogunquit student population steadily decreased and the valuation of Ogunquit steadily increased have been unsuccessful.

- 1985 the School Committee voting is weighted in favor of Wells.
- 1997 Ogunquit offers to pay \$35 million plus tuition. Wells declined the offer.
- 1999 the State recommended mediation which failed as Ogunquit had no bargaining power and Wells had no incentive.
- 2004 negotiating teams agreed Ogunquit would pay \$52 million over 13 years plus tuition. The Wells Select Board declines.
- 2006 Ogunquit agreed to pay a lump sum of \$40 million and tuition. Wells wanted North Beach parking lot in addition which failed.
- 2009 Wells suggested Town boundaries be redrawn prior to any cost-sharing arrangement. This failed.

Continued ↗



Between 2000 and 2003, the proportion of Ogunquit valuations were reduced from 89% to 66.7%. In 2003, the School Trustees found the Ogunquit Village School unnecessary and unprofitable, closing it in 2004. The State also enacted a consolidation law in 2007 requiring all districts with less than 2,500 students to merge into a Regional School Unit. Wells-Ogunquit was unable throughout 2008-2009 to find a third partner and was allowed to remain a stand-alone district. Ogunquit again raised the possibility of withdrawal.

In 2010, Ogunquit testified at the Legislature proposing to revise the current cost-sharing formula. LD 1747 proposed allowing member towns the opportunity to withdraw from the school district. (Anecdotal information indicates the Legislative Committee was prepared to report in Ogunquit's favor. A late evening push from influential persons from Wells affected a change in vote). The bill was voted down in a 17-14 decision.

No other attempt has been made to go before the Legislature since 2010. Ogunquit will continue to pay (\$131,762) **at least 8x per student** the amount that Wells taxpayers do (\$16,055) despite having **less than 3% of the students** from Ogunquit.

Did You Know?

As reported by the Harbormaster, Erin Gott, at a recent Budget Review meeting (January 30), there are 40 boats in Perkins Cove, 36 of them commercial (fishing and tourism) and 25 small crafts. Their annual mooring fees include \$30/foot for large boats, \$750 for small, plus some hoist and umbrella fees, and there is a long waiting list. Short term mooring fees cost \$40 for a 2 hour minimum. Revenue last year was \$60K and \$27K for long and short term moorings respectively. The bridge malfunctioned four times last summer and the Harbormaster hopes for minimal fixes this summer while reconstruction waits until 2024-2025.



**Check out the
Spring Auction
at Great Works
March 5-11**



Sign up at ogunquitbreeze@gmail.com