

THE OGUNQUIT BREEZE

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

Town Budget on Track

The good news is that Town finances are on track to be better than planned when the budget on revenues and expenses was approved at the beginning of the pandemic.

Tax collections in November were on target having received 49.88% for the first payment for half the year. Parking revenues (the largest non-tax revenue available to mitigate the need for property tax revenue) were 162% or \$663,000 above the budgeted goal and are comparable to prior years. Building permit revenues were 138% or \$53,000 above the budgeted goal. In fact, income from building permits in the first 4 months of the fiscal year are significantly above annual revenues in the four prior years. Expenses, adjusted for spending that must occur in the beginning of the year, are on track to be within the approved budget.

This level of budget discipline is consistent with the current town management team's performance that has produced significant budget surpluses in each of the past three fiscal years.

The bad news is that many local business are struggling. However, Town finances are more directly impacted by residential property tax and tourism generated by the town's natural beauty (Marginal Way and Main Beach), not by taxes or fees generated from local business activity. As a result it is possible to be cautiously optimistic.

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Spirit of Giving

The [Ogunquit Spirit of Giving](#) needs your support in helping to provide for families in need this holiday. Instead of physical gifts, the organization is accepting funds through their online GoFundMe page, or checks and gift cards for major retailers (Walmart, Target, Amazon, Hannaford) can be sent by mail:

Spirit of Giving
PO Box 88, Ogunquit, ME 03907

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine and the Frannie Peabody Center Thank You.

Town Manager Profile



In 2017 when a resident met Pat Finnigan at a "meet and greet" during the final phase of the Town Manager hiring process, she asked, "When did you become interested in this kind of work?" Ms. Finnigan answered, "Always...in high school I was in leadership and civics groups."

Pat spoke with all comers and her confidence shown through her ready smile, grace, and poise. Pat's prior work includes the Town Manager in Camden, City Manager in Auburn and Assistant City Manager in Portland.

We were fortunate to attract a proven Maine municipal leader from a tourist community who has a depth of experience in municipal law, employment practices, finance and union negotiations, and who was also able to take on problems previous administrations had failed to confront. Understanding what was needed to turn around the Town, Pat hired outstanding leaders in procurement, public works, and financial management. Pat and team have brought professional management to our Town government, fairness, budget management, open bidding processes, and financial integrity and visibility.

Continued →

What we notice, of course, are infrastructure improvements such as three new bathhouses, the renewed Perkins Cove boardwalk, new lighting, and major renovations to the Marginal Way. Pat has implemented a data-driven five-year road management priority program resulting in funds for Agamenticus, Captain Thomas and River Roads.

Notably, our taxes remain static due in part to savvy employment practices, major new revenue sources, and smart budget and union negotiations. Our tax mill rate is the lowest in York County.

Other markers of success include balanced budgets, excellent independent audit reports, and the pursuit of new revenue sources with an expert to bring them to fruition. One example is that we have commitments of approximately \$4 million from FEMA alone, 40% of all of the funds committed to all of York County.

Pat's personal style is perhaps the driver of her success. Her support of her staff is unfailing. She sets a high bar for professionalism, work ethic and courtesy. Often found in the office or about town on weekends, her door is always open. Her commitment to improving anything within these 4-square miles is constant, and she has been particularly strong in making difficult decisions for our safety and businesses during this pandemic. We are fortunate to have a Town Manager who brings her professional expertise along with her personal qualities.

COVID-19 News

Did you know an "outbreak" is only reported when 3 people who are residents of the *same Town* are confirmed positive and are traced to the same contact location?

We know that there is community spread even in Ogunquit. Protect yourself and others by following Public Health and State Pandemic Guidelines.

Need a COVID-19 test? The York Hospital website offers test information along with other COVID-19 updates.

Join the Town's new Facilities and Space Needs Committee

Help re-envision the municipal campus including the community, Police and Town offices.

Find the [application on the Town website](#) or contact the Town Clerk, Christine Murphy at 207-646-9546

Ogunquit's Natural Resources

By Elaine Cooper

One hundred years ago, residents of Ogunquit had the foresight to purchase Ogunquit Beach and to leave the Marginal Way to the Town. At the time, they saved our coastal town from building on the beach, the destruction of the dunes, erosion, and water quality problems.

They saved our vital resources for generations to come. Today, we have an ever-growing crisis in our beautiful little coastal community.

The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has recognized that our Watershed is a disaster. The Estuary, into which the watershed drains, is impaired due to elevated fecal indicator bacteria (*Enterococci*). The cause is largely attributed to nonpoint source pollution (stormwater runoff, malfunctioning septic systems, leaky sewer lines). The 21 square miles of what used to be pristine rivers, ponds, streams, estuaries, vernal pools, and wetlands which run through South Berwick, Wells, York and drains in Ogunquit is no longer.

We need to be more aggressive in identifying all our watershed pollution, not just fecal contamination. This must also include testing in the Josias River. Studies from FB Environmental and Maine Healthy Beaches are showing that the numbers of contaminates are increasing and not improving even with intervention.

In 2019, reports noted a 146% increase in bacteria levels as opposed to the previous year. This past summer saw the greatest number of warnings related to safe swimming.

We must identify the complete watershed and direction of the streams for area protection.

We need to put a halt to clear cutting lots, filling wetlands to access properties, lot splitting without fully studying watershed pollution and our surrounding wetlands and vernal pools. We must deal with critical stormwater management, erosion control, and density issues.

Our Conservation Commission, Sustainability Committee, Shellfish Commission, the new Ogunquit River Watershed Action Alliance, our testing groups, the Great Works Regional Land Trust etc. are raising the alarm.

The intent of our ordinances has been lost; they speak to capacity, not what we can sustain.

Ogunquit is atypical for a coastal town. Unlike Cape Elizabeth, Bar Harbor, Camden, Portland, Kennebunkport, and even Wells, we have no extensive stormwater management or Best Management Practices and Low Impact Development standards built into our Ordinances. These towns already have:

- Stricter lot density requirements
- Well defined preserved space requirements
- Forested wetlands included in the Resource Protection Zone
- More restrictive permitted uses
- Requirements for site plan and design review on all new buildings, major renovations, lot splitting etc. (not just code approval)

How do we address this crisis?

We suspend our Ordinances, as we have done in part, during the COVID-19 crisis. We find other mechanisms rather than waiting for Ordinances to be updated or a new Comp Plan to be completed. We put a temporary moratorium on building. This Select Board, the Town Manager, the Planning Board, the Code Office, all our Committees and citizens must make this a priority. Our Town Attorney has said in the past that we do not have to move fast in reviewing applications. We need to fully review the issues.

I suggest that we move at warp speed relative to this growing crisis; ignoring it and not working together will be the singular issue that destroys our beautiful Town.

Join the Town's new Comprehensive Plan Committee

Help create long term goals for our community and future land use policy.

Find the [application on the Town website](#) or contact the Town Clerk, Christine Murphy at 207-646-9546

Code Red Alerts



Sign up on the [Town website](#) for a new system that sends important alerts to your mobile phone or email

Town Manager's Contract

You may have seen articles in the local newspapers about the Select Board's inaction to renew our Town Manager's three-year contract which expired in August 2020. They extended the contract for six-months until February, and recently posted a statement on the website that Pat could work without a contract (if no action was taken before February). Would a woman with such a proven track record continue to work without a contract?

The performance appraisal of Pat was conducted over four meetings in executive session, but a short list of "reprimands" to the Town Manager was made public. Why weren't her achievements also made public? Does this demonstrate an imbalance in the Board's "transparency"?

Many positive affirmations of Pat's performance as Town Manager were expressed at the Select Board meeting on December 2nd along with questions about the conduct of the November 12th meeting. Stay tuned to future meetings in January. In the meantime, make your support known to the Select Board to renew her contract at slctbrd@townofogunquit.org.

Where did the name *Ogunquit Breeze* come from?
Be sure to watch for the next issue to find out!

2020 Financial Signals

Local Nov. 3rd Voting Results

All six ballot items that were prepared by the Town Manager and her Staff and pertained to the Town's budget were passed overwhelmingly by the voters. The articles consisted of purchasing two pieces of essential equipment for the Fire Department, one overdue vehicle for the Police Department, functional containers at the Transfer Station, new Town lighting, and a significant Land Purchase. They represented support for preserving basic infrastructure and improving availability of critical medical equipment.

Approval for LED lighting promoted long term cost savings as outlined by the Special Projects Manager. And, even in this time of financial uncertainty, almost 90% of those who voted supported Conservation and the Great Works project to preserve 150 acres for public green space and watershed protection.

Citizen Survey Gives Clear Direction

Thank you for taking the time to share your opinion in the recent ORA email survey: *Keep Ogunquit Beautiful Place by the Sea*. This newsletter and the work we do to improve the quality of life for all residents will focus on the priorities you stated:

- Sustain & conserve natural resources
- Support beach sustainability & water quality
- Ensure all citizens' voices are heard and respected
- Identify appropriate investment of tax dollars
- Manage Town development & growth to maintain our unique town character

Library Virtual Talk

The Library will be having a Gabby Gathering presentation on **Wednesday Dec. 17th**.

Join Administrator & Curator, Bryce Waldrop, as he takes you on a tour of the **Historical Society of Wells & Ogunquit**. We will enjoy a survey of the iconic 1862 Meetinghouse, a glimpse at the museum collections, and see the extensive research library, famed for its genealogy sources. Don't miss it!

Check the Library's webpage for the Zoom link:
www.ogunquitlibrary.com/programs
Or call: 207-646-9024

