

News & Updates from the Town of Falmouth
September 2019
Volume 1, Issue 1

The Falmouth Focus

INTRODUCING FALMOUTH'S NEW NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the first issue of *The Falmouth Focus*, news and updates from the Town of Falmouth. In our recent survey regarding communications methods (see article on page 2), we asked residents which new methods of communication they were most likely to use. The response was overwhelming. Falmouth residents want a regular newsletter from their town government.

We are assessing our communications systems and analyzing survey data to improve communication and citizen outreach. In the meantime, we recognize that a newsletter is a communications tool we can implement now. We will continue to evaluate how we can make this

an effective and efficient means of communicating. Considerations include format (electronic or print), distribution (mail or e-mail), and frequency (weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc.).

At this point, we can commit to a digital version, available on our website, through social media, and via e-mail, with print copies offered at Town Hall, the Library, and the Mason-Motz Activity Center. In addition, we have committed to placing more notices, more regularly in the *Northern Forecaster* for those who like to receive their news in print. To subscribe to *The Focus* and other E-Alerts, visit www.falmouthme.org/subscribe.

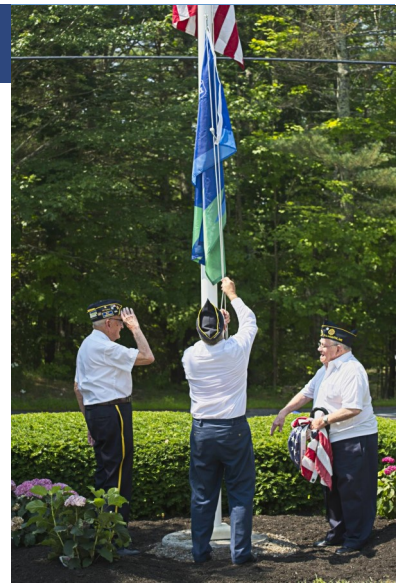


FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *The Falmouth Focus*. We are thrilled to bring this new resource to Falmouth and hope that it will help us all enjoy a stronger sense of community.

Although many see January as the start of a new year, for me it's always September. In this issue of *The Focus*, I am pleased to share the Council's work plan—our "to do" list—for FY 2019-20. Every year, the Town Council holds a day-long summer retreat at which it creates an annual work plan. This year's retreat took place on August 28. The Council spent the morning discussing the communications and public

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On July 30, 2019, the Town of Falmouth joined communities across the state of Maine in celebrating Maine200 Bicentennial Kickoff Day by hosting a bicentennial flag raising ceremony at Town Hall. Members of American Legion Post #164 raised the flag and Falmouth graduate Elaina Balzano sang the National Anthem. Remarks were given by Councilor Ted Asherman and State Rep. Teresa Pierce. The Town is finalizing a calendar of events and activities to mark key milestones throughout the bicentennial year in 2020. Visit maine200.org to learn more about this state-wide commemoration.

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SUMMIT NATURAL GAS EXPANSION UPDATE

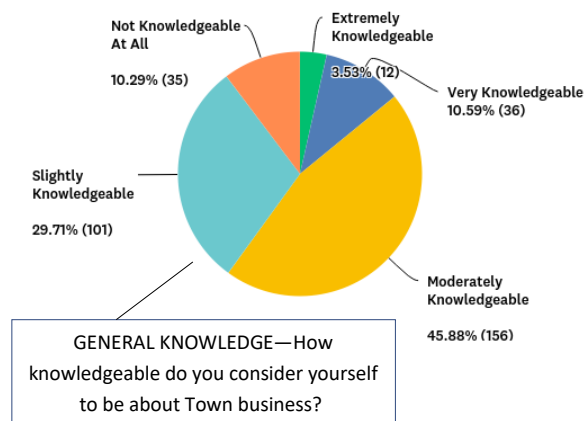
Construction is underway for Summit’s planned expansion to residential and commercial customers in West Falmouth. The company has already installed 6,000 feet of pipe on Winn Road. In total, Summit plans to lay over 4.5 miles of gas main from Main Street in Cumberland along Winn Road to the business district on Gray Road in Falmouth. Additionally, there are plans for another 4.5 miles of new pipe to serve residential areas off the main line with a large percentage of those homes in and around the Falmouth Country Club. Summit is also building service to several businesses along the route.

Completion of the West Falmouth main-line construction is expected by November 2019. Summit is actively evaluating next steps and expects to make announcements about their plans for 2020 and beyond during the fall and winter.

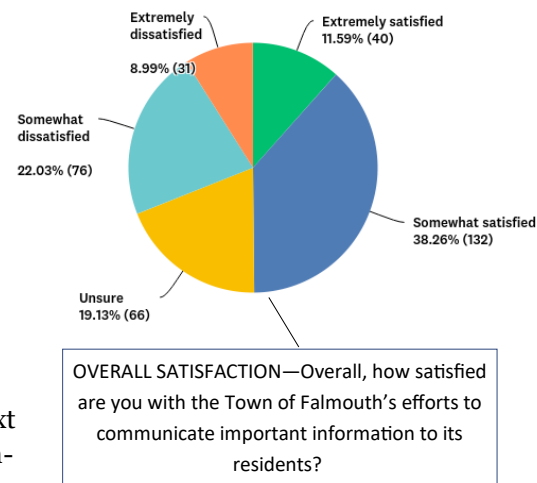
HUNDREDS RESPOND TO SURVEY

In July, the Town mailed a communications method survey to residents. To date, we have received 345 responses. Here are the highlights.

The types of information that most interested respondents included policy and/or ordinance information and changes, Town Council actions, and emergency alerts. Over 70% of respondents found Town of Falmouth E-Alerts to be an effective means of getting information about Town activities and 44% found it the most effective. For 68% of respondents, a mailed letter was effective. Social media outlets, such as Facebook and Twitter, and the Town website were also common ways respondents got information. A number of respondents also found print media, such as news articles or advertisements, to be an effective means of learning about what was going on in Falmouth.



When asked what new methods of communication residents would use most often, 76% said they would read an e-mail newsletter often or very often and 62% said they would read a mailed newsletter often or very often. Text messaging, along with more regular town-wide, issue specific mailings were also a favored means of getting information about Town events, issues, and activities. While 22% of respondents said they would use a software app often or very often, 46% said they would never or very rarely use one.



“Over 70% percent of respondents found Town of Falmouth E-Alerts to be an effective means of getting info about Town activities.”

With regards to giving feedback to the Town, nearly 93% of respondents said e-mailing the Town Council or staff, either directly or through the online e-mail form, was the most effective means of communicating with the Town. Filling out surveys and attending public meetings or forums were other popular ways residents provided feedback to Town officials and staff.

The results of the entire survey can be found at: www.falmouthme.org/home/pages/falmouths-communications-methods-survey-results

FROM THE CHAIR

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engagement resolution passed last spring and deciding how to advance those goals this year. In the afternoon, we reviewed, revised, and prioritized the tasks in the Council work plan, which carries over from year to year.

At the end of the day, the Council identified 40 objectives on which we (and various Town committees) will strive to make progress in the coming months. Highlights of these top priorities include:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan to improve how Town government engages with residents (This newsletter is a first step!)
- Review the impacts of short-term housing rentals in Falmouth and consider whether regulation is needed
- With new incentives available at the state level, evaluate the possibility of installing a solar array at the Woods Road landfill
- With state regulations now established, determine rules to govern non-personal use marijuana rules for Falmouth
- Monitor residential development across town as we prepare for an update to the Comprehensive Plan
- Develop a standardized checklist for developers to use when submitting proposals that require a zoning change
- Consider enhancing notification requirements for large scale developments that go before the Planning Board
- Review Route 100 commercial zoning recommendations
- Finish a Blackstrap Road Concept Plan
- Advance Route 1 North roadway engineering and update the Route 1 North tax increment financing (TIF) district
- Evaluate the intersection of Foreside Road and Johnson/Town Landing Roads
- Advance an affordable housing TIF at the Plummer School for 55+
- Review and evaluate Falmouth's 2016 Bike/Pedestrian Plan
- Review and evaluate current mooring fees at Town Landing
- Develop a comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan
- Plan for an update of Falmouth's Comprehensive Plan and begin pre-Comp Plan work by engaging the community in the identification of shared community vision and values



Town Council Workplan Retreat, held on August 28.

And much more... For a more complete list of Falmouth's Top 40, please review the Council's September 9 meeting online. If you have any questions or comments about these items, or anything else going on in town, please feel free to send me an e-mail at akuhn@falmouthme.org.

Falmouth comes to life in the fall—with our kids, faculty, and staff back to school and our beautiful open spaces brimming with activity. I hope you'll get out to enjoy it!

Warm wishes for a healthy and productive fall,

55+ NEWSLETTER

Falmouth Community Programs' "55+ Newsletter" includes bi-monthly calendars of programs and activities held in the Presumpscot Senior Room at the Mason-Motz Activity Center, as well as articles and tips focused on concerns and issues facing our aging population. Newsletters can be found at Mason-Motz, the Falmouth Memorial Library, or contact Kim Doyon, Senior Services Coordinator, at 207-699-5330 or e-mail kdoyon@falmouthme.org to be placed on the e-mail list.

SENIOR STAKEHOLDERS SEEK FEEDBACK

Falmouth's Senior Stakeholder group is seeking feedback regarding transportation needs for Falmouth seniors. Do you, or anyone you know, need help with transportation in Falmouth? If so, what for and how often? If there was a free ride program offered in the community, would you utilize it? Send or drop off your responses to Kim Doyon, Senior Services Coordinator, Mason-Motz Activity Center, 190 Middle Road, or respond via e-mail at kdoyon@falmouthme.org or by phone at 207-699-5330.

TAX DUE DATES TO REMEMBER

Tax Bills Mailed:
By September 25, 2019

Senior Property Tax Assistance Application Due:
October 16, 2019

Real Estate Tax Due:
November 7, 2019 &
May 7, 2020

Personal Property Tax Due:
December 1, 2019

TOWN TO CONDUCT PROPERTY REVALUATION

It's time for a townwide property revaluation. Revaluations ensure fair and equitable property taxes for all. Inspections are to begin in 2020 for the 2021 tax commitment. In the next issue of *The Focus*, we'll explore why this is necessary, how it works, and, most importantly, what it means for you.



SENIOR PROPERTY TAX ASSISTANCE WORKSHOP

When: October 2, 10:00am

Where: Presumpscot Room, Mason-Motz Activity Center, 190 Middle Road, Falmouth

TAX RATE SET FOR FY20

The Town Assessor has set the FY20 tax rate at \$16.87. This is a 2.5% or \$.40 increase over the FY19 tax rate. However, this rate is \$.12 lower than the FY20 Budget estimate of \$16.99. So, rather than a \$.52 increase in the mill rate, the increase will be only \$.40. The difference is primarily due to an additional \$226K in Municipal Revenue Sharing resulting from the State Legislature's approval of Governor Mills' Budget.

PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS

On your most recent tax bill, you may have noticed that the amount of your property tax exemption (Homestead, Veteran, Paraplegic Veteran, Blind) has changed from your last bill. All property tax exemptions must be adjusted by the local declared ratio (99% for Falmouth) per State statute. The local declared ratio is the percentage difference between the fair market value of your home and the local assessed value. This is done to ensure that each exemption is adjusted to apply to all property in the state equally.

The table below shows the exemption calculation for each exemption type:

| Exemption | Full Value | Local Declared Ratio | Exemption Amount |
|--------------------|------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Homestead | \$20,000 | 99% | \$19,800 |
| Veteran | \$6,000 | 99% | \$5,940 |
| Paraplegic Veteran | \$50,000 | 99% | \$49,500 |
| Blind | \$4,000 | 99% | \$3,960 |

If you have additional questions regarding the computation of your exemption, please contact the Regional Assessor at 207-699-2475 .

SENIOR PROPERTY TAX ASSISTANCE

The Senior Property Tax Relief Program is now in its second year. It is open to current Falmouth residents age 62 or older with annual income under \$40,000. Income levels have increased from \$30,000 to \$40,000. The program is open to both owners and renters. Maximum refunds of up to \$750 are determined based upon the number of valid applications received. The deadline for applications is October 16, 2019. Refunds will be paid on or before November 15, 2019.

The Town held two workshops in September to answer questions about the application process and accept applications in person. A final workshop will be held on October 2 at 10:00am at the Mason-Motz Activity Center, 190

Middle Road. Pre-registration is preferred but not required. Call 207-699-5302 for more information.

Workshop attendees are encouraged to bring all necessary documentation to complete their application during the meeting. A complete list of application materials, as well as additional information and an eligibility worksheet, can be found at: www.falmouthme.org/finance/pages/senior-property-tax-assistance.

Residents unable to attend the workshop may contact the Town's Finance Department or stop by Town Hall for assistance with their applications. For additional information, contact Pete McHugh at 207-699-5311.

| Project | Type of Work | Location/Notes | Status |
|---|-----------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Blueberry Ln. Improvements | Rehabilitation | Middle Road to Falmouth Road | Done ✓ |
| Foreside Rd., Harriet St., Johnson Rd., Avon Rd., Providence Ave. | Repaving | Regular Maintenance | Completion in October 2019 |
| Lunt Road Bridge | Bridge Rehabilitation | Lunt Road at I-295 Overpass; DOT Project | Completion by end of 2019 season |
| Blackstrap Road Bridge | Bridge Rehabilitation | Bridge over Presumpscot River; DOT Project | Completion by end of 2019 season |
| Route 100 Project | Reconstruction | Portland Line to the Libby Bridge (1,800' north of Mountain Road) | To be completed in 2020 |
| Blackstrap Road | Rehabilitation | Beginning at Mountain Road heading north approx. 4,400' | Completion by Mid-October 2019 |
| Middle Road | Repaving | Lunt Road to the Presumpscot River Bridge; PACTS Project | Completion by November 2019 |
| Fundy Road Sidewalk | Sidewalk | Sidewalk Extension and Safety Upgrades | September-November 2019 |
| Bucknam Road | Repaving | Route 1 to Legion Road; Middle Road to Railroad Tracks | September-October 2019 |



CONSTRUCTION UPDATE FROM TOWN MANAGER, NATHAN POORE

We're not going to sugarcoat it, construction in Falmouth is frustrating all of us. It seems like every major road and intersection in town is under construction. Delays are common and patience is wearing thin. We completely understand.

Unfortunately, our construction season is short in Maine and it's a challenge fitting in so much work with so little time. Road projects can take several years to plan, design, and initiate construction. Depending on the project, it can have different funding sources and be administered by different entities, including the MaineDOT, Town of Falmouth, Maine Turnpike Authority, utilities, and others. Many of these entities' long range plans have all coalesced in such a way that they seem to be happening all at once. Combine this with our regular repaving and maintenance schedules and you've got a big mess.

We are doing our best to keep you informed of closures, detours, delays, and other road work that will impact your lives and your commute. We encourage you to sign up for E-Alerts in order to receive important updates via e-mail. We will continue to update our Facebook and Twitter feeds with the most current information. We are also committed to placing regular notices in the *Northern Forecaster* to keep you aware of situations and schedule changes due to weather delays or other unforeseen circumstances.

To be honest, the end is a long way off.

- The Route 100 Project will continue into 2020.
- MaineDOT's replacement of the Veranda Street Bridge in 2021 will bring new challenges for Falmouth.
- Improvements to Bucknam Road (bridge, intersections, new traffic lights, bike pedestrian improvements) are slated for 2022.
- There are preliminary plans for significant streetscape work on Route 1 (north of Bucknam to the Cumberland town line) that could occur in a few years.

Is there a silver lining in all this? Yes, the many millions of dollars from state, local, and federal sources will serve Falmouth now and into the future. These improvements provide safer roads and intersections, improved pedestrian paths and bikeways, and the replacement of decaying infrastructure.

We are asking for your continued patience during this stressful time. Falmouth PD and Fire-EMS are reporting increased incidences of driver impatience which have put construction crews and motorists in danger. We believe that the results of this construction chaos will be worth the effort and frustration.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

Falmouth was honored to receive the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government



Finance Officers Association of the US and Canada (GFOA) for its comprehensive

annual financial report. According to the GFOA, the award is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.

Falmouth was named one of Maine's top five safest cities



by backgroundchecks.org. Falmouth, which ranked #4, recorded the lowest violent crime rate of any Maine community with a population over 10,000: a very low 0.33 per 1,000 based on just 4 violent crimes in 2017. The Town's ratio of law enforcement to residents is slightly below others on the list and this distinction was the only factor keeping the community out of the top spot. Speaking about the award, Chief John Kilbride said, "This is clearly a community effort supported by our citizens and town government that provides the necessary resources to recruit and retain high quality employees."

GET CONNECTED



E-Alerts are sent directly to your e-mail about the issues that interest you. To enroll, click “E-Alerts” on our homepage to select the bulletins you want to receive (including upcoming issues of this newsletter).



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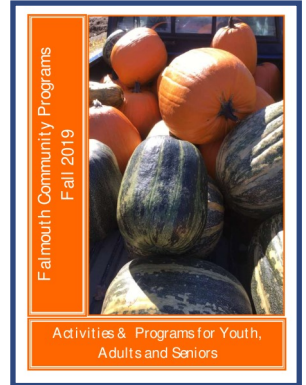
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Let us know what kind of information you want to see in your town newsletter. E-mail feedback to: ecadigan@falmouthme.org

UPCOMING EVENTS, ACTIVITIES & DEADLINES

Registration is now open for all Falmouth Parks and Community Programs fall activities. Register online or in person at the Mason-Motz Activity Center on Middle Road. Visit www.falmouthme.org/parks-and-community-programs for program listings.

Maine’s “hand’s free” law takes effect on September 19. The new law prohibits talking, texting, or using a handheld device while driving, even while temporarily stopped at a stoplight or in stopped traffic. It is already against the law in Maine to text while driving, including instant messaging and sending e-mails. Additionally, drivers under 18 are prohibited from using any mobile device. The new law only allows drivers to use cellphones in hands-free mode. Motorists will face fines of at least \$50 for the first offense and \$250 for subsequent offenses.



Very Merry Falmouth kicks off on Thursday, December 5, with the Annual Community Tree Lighting. Don’t miss the Merry Mix & Mingle and Fireworks on Friday, December 6. Race down Route 1 in the Ugly Sweater 5K & Merry Mile and sample the Hot-In-A-Pot Cook-Off on Saturday, December 7. For more information, visit verymerryfalmouth.com.

THE TOWN OF FALMOUTH

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