



News About Town

A Message From Our Town Manager

Hello Gray Friends and Neighbors,

These past few years have been very productive as we have worked to implement the community created, Council supported, and voter approved Comprehensive Plan written back in 2020. The plan describes how Gray residents see the future of their town, and ensuring that residents understand how their local government is furthering these goals and visions is of paramount importance to Town leadership. I encourage you to enjoy a cup of coffee or tea while sitting down to read our extensive and informative update in this newsletter.



Nate Rudy, Town Manager

Also, please remember Town government is deep in the process of preparing the fiscal year 2024 budget for voter approval on June 13th. You can follow our budget proceedings on our [website](#), and watch all past budget workshops live on [Gray Community Television](#).

If you have thoughts about the proposed FY2024 budget, I encourage you to come to the Town Council meeting on April 11 when all residents of Gray can provide direct feedback to me and the Town Council. You can make your thoughts known and help us create a brighter, future for our Town.

Thank you,
Nate Rudy



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Upcoming Events ..	2
Comprehensive Plan Update.....	2
Volunteer Awards Open.....	9
FY24 Budget Flyer Mailing	10
Gray Public Library Request Form	10
GHS Gravestone Workshop	11



Town Leadership Updates Residents About Gray's Comprehensive Plan



The goals set forth by the community in 2020 have been priorities for Town leadership.

Hi friends,

I'm pleased to share some exciting updates on major initiatives undertaken by the Town of Gray since 2020, when the Gray community voted in overwhelming majority to approve the current Comprehensive Plan.

As you may know, the Comp Plan was the town's chance to draw a blueprint for life in Gray that will guide Town Council goals and decision-making for the next ten to fifteen years. The members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, aided by Town staff and expert consultants, gathered input from residents on a broad range of subjects, ranging from land use and housing to administration and regional coordination on projects that affect Gray but extend beyond the town limits. The plan was completed by the committee and approved by a high turnout of Gray voters in November 2020. The three top priorities highlighted by our community are:

- Focus on moving people safely through Gray and getting around town via walking, biking, car, or public transportation.
- Protect Gray's rural character and natural resources.
- Invest in the Village and community programs.

Continued until page 8

Upcoming Events

April 4

5:30 p.m.: Gray Town Council Workshop/ Meeting — 24 Main Street and Zoom

7:00 p.m.: Gray Town Council Meeting — 24 Main Street and Zoom

April 11

5:00 p.m.: Gray Town Council Workshop/ Meeting — 24 Main Street and Zoom

Wednesdays + Fridays

10:30 a.m.: Kids Story Time — Gray Public Library

April 13

7 p.m.: Planning Board Meeting — 24 Main Street and Zoom

April 19

1 p.m.: Afternoon Book Club — Gray Public Library

6:30 p.m.: Evening Book Club — Gray Public Library

April 26

7 p.m.: Zoning Board of Appeals — 24 Main Street



Town Leadership Updates Residents About Gray's Comprehensive Plan

Today, I'd like to update you on how we have been making those goals a reality.

We heard that **safe transportation around Gray** is important for many of you. On that front, Council and staff continue to work with regional and state officials to advocate for a transportation system in Gray that meets residents' needs and creates an attractive environment for new business and real estate investment. We are exploring safe corridors to connect the Gray Village to surrounding neighborhood centers including the Gray – New Gloucester Middle and High School campuses. Our advocacy at the State House and collaboration with regional partners like the Greater Portland Council of Governments, the Regional Transportation Program, and the Maine Department of Transportation will help inform transportation-related decisions and bring regional resources to Gray.



Sketch of Potential Gray Village Design |
The Principle Group

Calming traffic through downtown Gray is a major part of the Gray Village revitalization Master Plan, which was informed by our Community Block Party and open design studio in July 2022, hosted by the Town in partnership with our master planning partner, The Principle Group. We held four days of open house and stakeholder meetings about the needs of local businesses, older people, children, and people interested in improving our transportation network. Through this process, we learned specifically what residents would like to see from a redesigned Gray Village. The resulting plans for the Gray Village and the roads leading to and through it include a design that will encourage slower and safer traffic and more parking. I encourage you to visit our [website](#) to learn more about this community-led design process. We will continue to work with The Principle Group in the coming months for the next phase of the Gray Village planning and design work. Some of this work includes partners like the Maine Department of Transportation and the Maine Turnpike Authority, who heard the request from the Gray Town Council to redirect heavy vehicle traffic to the Route 26 bypass, rather than through the neighborhood on Shaker Road, and are installing new signs for that purpose in April.



Town Leadership Updates Residents About Gray's Comprehensive Plan

On a related note, in January we secured \$15,000 in matching grant money from the Greater Portland Council of Governments to help with the Town's long term investment strategy for the Gray Village. We will continue to expand recreational facilities and outdoor spaces in the Gray Village on the Pennell Hall campus and the seven-acre Village Gateway property across the road from the Town Hall. The Principle Group shared a bold vision for new residential and commercial development at the Village Gateway that will bring new housing and community assets to Gray, and will grow the Town's tax base as part of a long-term fiscal responsibility plan for sustaining Town government and keeping tax property bills in check.

Preserving Gray's rural character and green space is a goal shared by both new residents and long-time members of the Gray community. In pursuit of this goal, Town Council and staff have helped the Royal River Conservation Trust create a forested trail system with public access from a parking area on Ramsdell Road, and connections to the extensive Libby Hill Road trail system. The Town hosted a landowner meeting in January to discuss how best to preserve open space and forested lands, and Town staff toured Little Sebago Lake last fall to learn about surface water protection and land use concerns in the watershed. Town staff are working with lake advocates and regional entities on enhanced local surface water protection standards, and the Gray Open Space Committee completed an [Open Space Plan](#) that was approved by the Town Council.

There are some properties and parcels in Gray that have been slow to redevelop due to concerns about environmental contamination; these lands are called brownfield sites, and Gray also has one known United States Environmental Protection Agency (US-EPA) Superfund site: the former McKin facility on Mayall Road. We are exploring some of these sites, with owner permission, and trying to find others not known to us, to evaluate potential contamination (or lack of it) and get these former commercial spaces, manufacturing facilities, gas stations, dry cleaning businesses, and blighted open spaces back into productive use as green space or as sites for new business and commercial investment. Gray's Brownfields Advisory Committee, a group of invested community members who promote various community social, business, and environmental interests, are working with the Town to guide the use of \$500,000 provided by the US-EPA to assess and plan for remediation of potential Brownfields sites. You can learn more about Brownfields efforts in Gray on our [website](#).



Town Leadership Updates Residents About Gray's Comprehensive Plan

Many of you wanted a **smoother, more accessible process for business owners** who want to open or expand a business in Gray. This long-term fiscal stability goal has been a focus of our Community Development office, which includes the Planning Department, the Town Assessor, and the Code Enforcement Office. I am pleased to report that budding entrepreneurs who need help exploring the nuts and bolts of a business plan can now book an efficient, time-saving appointment with our expert staff for a “pre-development” meeting where all their questions can be addressed in one visit. These meetings will help clarify the permitting process and discuss ordinance considerations before the developer makes costly investments in engineering and construction work. Please contact our [Development Office](#) to learn more about this valuable, no-cost service, which is promoting a positive, welcoming relationship between the Town and those who want to develop business in Gray—we share your interest in Gray becoming the location for your thriving new business.

Having a **diverse business presence in Gray** creates a healthier, more sustainable tax base that eases the property tax burden on homeowners, and offers community assets (like physician’s offices, entertainment and outdoor facilities, local banks and credit unions, retail and commercial businesses, and professional service providers) to Gray citizens. As one of the Town’s top goals, we are fortunate to have help from the [Community Economic Development Committee](#) (CEDC), which is exploring creative ideas to stimulate and support new and sustainable investment in Gray. This means many things – from ensuring that the “first impression” of the Village area is pleasing, to hosting development forums where emerging Gray business owners can engage with Town staff and other business owners in Gray. We’ve worked to improve the Village Center with colorful street banners, and in 2021 we created the Village Green pocket park on Yarmouth Road near Gray Corner. The Town Manager and Planning Director met with business owners to talk about ideas for making new business development easier, and the CEDC hosted two new business forums in 2022 with plans to conduct more business outreach in 2023. These forums are an opportunity to hear directly from the local business community, which is the best way to cultivate a healthy business environment in Gray.

These are not the only ways Town government, partnering with community stakeholders, is guiding Gray to a prosperous and harmonious future. I’m constantly surprised and inspired by what Gray’s community has done in recent years to **invest in and cultivate community programs**. The Gray Public Library continues to serve the educational, recreational, informational, and philosophical



Town Leadership Updates Residents About Gray's Comprehensive Plan

needs of Gray's people, and cultivates community programs that attract visitors from beyond town lines. The Library has many long-standing programs, including book groups, children's story times, and film screenings, as well as special events and activities like author talks, adult summer reading, and the Holiday Ukulele Sing-Along. Additionally, the Library has meeting rooms for organizations to gather and weave community connections. We are working to expand the Library's resource offerings in coming years, including a goal to create a video and audio recording studio so residents have a space to both get and create media. From its new vinyl album collection to a local television and digital media studio, the Gray Public Library is a fabulous community resource and one of Gray's best, worst-kept secrets, right in the heart of the Village Center.

Every August, our community (and many more from far and wide) gather for the Wild Blueberry Festival. The landmark annual event spotlights the small-town charm Gray has to offer as community members celebrate the versatility of blueberries as one of Maine's wild bumper crops. This fun event is not just an economic boon to Gray, thanks to the thousands of festivalgoers who flock to the Village Center, but also a way to spotlight and celebrate Maine's natural resources. We're also planning a new Spring Fest event for April 20 this year.

While the Blueberry Festival is an example of our *major* events, there are many *small-scale* experiences happening in Gray that, when taken together, cultivate community. If you drive or walk around town regularly, you may have seen a power walker with two Nordic poles who has become a fixture of the Gray Village. That *one* walker – Mary, affectionately known around Gray as “the Woman Who Walks” – has in short order cultivated a *community* of walkers. This Nordic Walking Group caught the attention of business leaders and government officials alike, including Gray's Recreation Department, and attracted financial and community support from many groups. Mary's program was recently celebrated at the Maine Recreation and Park Association annual conference, and has inspired other communities to start their own program. The walking group is a real Town of Gray success story – it started with one woman, an idea, and a passion and now helps dozens of community members stay health while enjoying time with new friends. Supporting programs like this only elevates a common community spirit: Gray is a place where residents can feel healthy, supported, happy, and productive.



Town Leadership Updates Residents About Gray's Comprehensive Plan

When I arrived in Gray back in March 2021, I walked into a Pennell Town Hall building that had recently been flooded and was still in duress. There were fans blowing on wet floors, and staff were serving customers from computers set up on makeshift desks and workstations moved to dryer places. Gray's Town staff met the challenge with flexibility and professionalism, and Gray's Town Hall was fully rehabilitated within months, thanks to tremendous efforts and leadership from our Buildings and Grounds Director and staff. Meanwhile, the Gray community was still living with, and learning to adapt



Nordic walkers at Newbegin Gym.

to, the COVID-19 virus pandemic. We learned from these two experiences that Gray Town staff are dedicated and determined public resources, and that we can overcome unimaginable obstacles. We want to invest time and training resources to ensure that we have a solid and tested disaster recovery plan, and the training we need to keep a high standard of service to Gray citizens in case of another emergency.

There's plenty more work to be done to complete our goals and the goals of the Comp Plan, and lots to do to implement our business continuity and resiliency training, but we are well on our way. Already some Gray citizens are seeing how the vision of the Comp Plan is being implemented in Gray, and not just by the Town's staff, but by our incredible Town committee volunteers, who are reaching into the community and pulling from the best Gray has to offer.

You can play an invaluable role in helping your local government fulfill these goals by serving on Town committees. These **committees plant and cultivate the seeds of ideas from the community** that, over time, have helped elevate Gray to a truly special place. Town committee volunteers help to set our goals and make sure they are carried out.

There are many volunteer opportunities available for Town committees, some with greater time commitments and involvement than others. We all have increasingly busy lives, but there are many shapes and sizes of committee volunteerism that might fit your interests, lifestyle, and availability. It



Town Leadership Updates Residents About Gray's Comprehensive Plan

is through this work that the future of Gray is set, and committee work is a great experience for anyone who might be interested in future service on Gray's Town Council. Please visit our [website](#) to learn more about Gray's various committees and boards, and current vacant positions.

The future is here, and Gray is embracing it. If you would like to learn more about the Town's development plans, or about volunteer opportunities in Gray's Town government, please visit our [website](#), or talk to your favorite [Town Councilor](#).

Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving as your Town Manager.

Respectfully yours,

Nate Rudy



Community input was paramount to assessing goals for Gray's future. Thank you to all who contributed their thoughts during the Comprehensive Plan process.



Volunteer Award Nominations Available

In every town, big or small, volunteering is everything. Gray is fortunate enough to have many people who volunteer their time and effort to make our town a better place. Does somebody come to mind when you think of volunteerism in Gray? Why not nominate that person for an award?

Each year, Gray recognizes and celebrates the folks who are the backbone of the community. **The Gray Town Council encourages and welcomes nominations from Gray citizens who wish to recognize other community members for their volunteer contributions** as they relate to the seven categories of awards. An awards reception in the summer will honor the winners.

The awards are:

- Landowner Appreciation Award
- Spirit of America Award
- Volunteer of the Year
- Committee of the Year
- Organization of the Year
- Lifetime Achievement Award
- Evelyn Morrill Durgin Award

To learn more about nominations for the Town of Gray's various volunteerism awards, including how to submit nominations, please visit our [Nomination](#) page.





Town of Gray Offering Mailings of Budget Flyer

The Town Council annually publishes an informational flyer that succinctly describes what is in the next fiscal year budget. Residents can then use that information to base their vote on Election Day. You can view last year's budget flyer [here](#).

The Town Council is now developing a flyer for the FY2024 budget. Normally, you could only view the flyer online, or by coming into Town Office. This year, we want to know who would like this flyer mailed to them.

Please complete this [form](#) if you would like the FY2024 budget flyer mailed to you.

Remember, you can watch all budget proceedings via [Gray Community Television](#). You can view the budget agenda schedule [here](#).

Request Gray Public Library Items with New Form

The Gray Public Library has an amazing selection of DVDs, Blu-rays, video games, and books, but if you have ever found the library lacking a certain item, you can now request that item be purchased.

Simply complete this [form](#) to alert the library that there's an item you'd like. Please know that requesting an item via this form DOES NOT guarantee the Gray Public Library can fulfill your request. This form is used for the library to learn community interests, and how the library can improve its selection.

If your requested item can be obtained, you will be contacted via the information you provide on the form.



The GPL wants to learn how to better serve you!



Gravestone Preservation Workshop with the Gray Cemetery Association

The Gray Cemetery Association [GCA] is excited to share that the Village Cemetery has been selected to host the [2023 Beginner's Gravestone Preservation Workshop](#), sponsored by the Maine Old Cemetery Association (MOCA). MOCA sponsors only one such workshop each year, hiring professional gravestone conservator Joe Ferrannini of Grave Stone Matters in Hoosick Falls, NY, to lead a group of about 20 workshop participants. Joe offers a unique opportunity to learn about gravestone preservation and acquire and practice essential conservation skills through hands-on experience.



Workshop attendees will learn about gravestone best preservation and conservation skills.

GCA has a "short list" of responsibilities for the workshop, and encourages any residents or business who can provide for the following to be in contact with us early in the planning process:

- Lodging for gravestone conservator, Joe Ferrannini, and his wife, Anne. They are flexible, but prefer to be on their own as opposed to being hosted in someone's home. Typically, they will need five nights lodging - Thurs., Fri., Sat., Sun., Mon.
- Clean live sand (also known as "play sand"), ideally screened. Sand with rocks would need to be sifted, thus less work can be done. Cannot be sand stored in the salt shed, as salt is harmful to marble. [1/2 - 1 cubic yard, delivered to Gray Village Cemetery]
- Small pea stone or small crushed stone [1/2 - 1 cubic yard, delivered to Gray Village Cemetery]
- If rain is predicted, a number of folding canopies to protect workshop participants and their workspace.

During the four-day workshop, several gravestones will be addressed. Descendants of cemetery "residents" should be in contact about whether their ancestor's stone(s) may be cleaned and/or repaired or if they choose to opt out.

All inquiries for the upcoming workshop should be directed to [Debi Curry](#) of the GCA.



Gray is Looking for Committee Members

Serve your town by volunteering for these committees!

- **Blueberry Festival Committee**: Celebrates and promotes local businesses, community and school organizations, and the Pennell Complex.
- **Community Economic Development Committee**: Promotes community and cultural connections in Gray and supports established businesses.
- **Community Television Advisory Committee**: Makes recommendations regarding broadcast options for Gray, and recommends improvements to public, educational, and governmental programming.
- **Dry Mills School House Committee**: Preserves the rich history of the Dry Mills School House.
- **Open Space Committee**: Makes recommendations to the Town Council to help secure access to land/corridors through acquisitions, easements, land swaps, and other forms of agreements.
- **Planning Board**: Reviews and approves subdivision plans, site plans, conditional uses, and Shoreland Zoning applications in accordance with State Statutes and Town Ordinances.
- **Resiliency Committee**: Promotes climate action planning and influences the path our community will take toward climate resilience, energy efficiency, waste management and renewable energy.
- **Zoning Board of Appeals Committee**: Hears and decides administrative appeals where it is alleged there is an error in any order, requirement, decision, or determination by the Code Enforcement Officer.
- **MSAD15 School Board**: Shapes the functioning of the Gray-New Gloucester school system.
- **Recreation Committee**: Advises and recommends to the Town Council on recreational and public parks matters, such as: programs, policies, development, and leisure time activities.



Mary volunteers on the Recreation Committee, and leads a walking group she started.

"Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in."

- Sue Premo, Volunteer Coordinator, Green Bay, WI

To apply to any of these committees, go to graymaine.org/volunteer.



The Town of Gray is Hiring!

We hire great people from a variety of backgrounds to do the town's important work. If you are looking for a career opportunity, check out our [Employment page](#) to see if there's an opening that's right for you! We are currently hiring for Town Clerk, Firefighters, Snow Plow Drivers, and a Head of Circulation at the Gray Public Library, just to name a few.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

- The Town of Gray is posting all statutorily required public notices in the Portland Press Herald daily newspaper. Notices will no longer appear in the Lakes Region Weekly newspaper. All Gray public notices will appear in the print edition of the Press Herald and online at www.MaineNotices.com.
- The Gray Historical Society has scheduled their 2023 Annual Dinner & Member Meeting for Tuesday, April 25 from 6-8 p.m. at the American Legion. Invitations will be mailed in early April, with RSVP no later than April 17, 2023. Members will choose either turkey breast or prime rib meal options, with pie for dessert. Questions may be submitted to debi.curry@grayhistorical.org.
- The Maine Wildlife Park is seeking volunteers for the 2023 season. The park needs snack shack attendants and admission gate attendants. To learn more, [email](#) Maine Wildlife Park or visit mainewildlifepark.com.
- The Town of Gray, Maine is seeking proposals from qualified Certified Public Accounting Firms to audit its financial statements for the fiscal year ending June 30 for three years from 2023 through 2025. Learn more [here](#).
- The Gray Wild Blueberry Festival Committee is accepting applications for booth space as they prepare for the 7th annual Gray Wild Blueberry Festival on August 12, 2023. For more information and to receive an application, email blueberryfestival@graymaine.org.

If you have an idea for a newsletter submission, please fill out this [form](#).

Questions can be directed to:
 Kyle Hadyniak
 Digital Media Coordinator
 207-657-3339 x116