



News About Town

Gray, Maine – March 2021

GRAY SAYS GOODBYE TO TOWN MANAGER DEBORAH CABANA

In the fourteen years Deborah Cabana has been Gray's Town Manager much has changed. She helped us accomplish a lot and has built a strong foundation for future change. We owe her a great deal.

Deb brought with her years of experience from Cape Elizabeth, Brunswick, and the State of Maine, though she was new to her role of town manager. Gray was looking for something different. In the preceding decade multiple town managers had come and gone. Staff were crammed into our old, outdated town office on Shaker Road and we lacked meeting space. Our library was likewise cramped and small. The town was growing, and a lot of people wanted change but we couldn't agree on what that looked like or the process we should use to move things forward.

Fast forward fourteen years, and we're in a much different place. Deb's guidance enabled the Town to restructure and establish new TIF Districts, and helped the Town address the MeDOT-imposed Urban Compact standards (requiring the town to take over maintenance of State roads closer to the village center). Also under Deb's management, we passed bonds to fund a new Public Works and Transfer Station buildings, an overdue, as well as the renovation of the historic Henry Pennell building into a beautiful town hall, with room for most of the functions of town government under one roof.



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Our financial statements get a clean bill of health from auditors every year, and we enjoy an enviable credit rating on those occasions when we need to borrow money. A brand new solar array has been built on top of our old landfill, which will save the town money on its municipal bills for the next 30 years.

Deb made sure our elections ran like clockwork, even as they became increasingly complex. And in 2020, she and her staff safely managed four elections in the midst of a global pandemic (Gray had a re-vote so we had one extra).

As it did everywhere else, the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily shut down the town office complex and the library. But under Deb's leadership Gray was one of the first towns in Maine to reopen both our town office and our library to in-person visits.

After a year like 2020, Deb must have been hoping to catch her breath in the weeks leading up to her planned retirement in early March. But fresh disaster struck when a month ago we had back-to-back flooding events at our town hall. What a mess! On top of the usual press of daily work and budget season, the building's interior has had to be torn apart and our town clerks are still operating out of a temporary office upstairs at town hall.

Nothing seems to phase Deb at this point. But she sure has gone out with a bang! We wish her a peaceful and fun-filled retirement. She's earned it!

Achieve Peak Performance By Making Healthy Choices

Tip of the Month

Reduces performance potential by as much as 15-30%

- 2x more likely to be injured if you drink
- Slows reaction time and inhibits coordination
- Smoking marijuana or vaping can cause respiratory problems and decrease aerobic capacity

Facts About Drug and Alcohol Use



One night of binge drinking (many drinks at one time) will erase 2 weeks of practice

Alcohol suppresses training hormones for up to 4 days so you won't improve as quickly

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Infrastructure Updates



Successful infrastructure projects start their planning years in advance. This gives the Town time to involve residents and businesses in the planning process, to envision a future that may be different – in all kinds of ways- from where we are now, to complete engineering work, and to obtain other funding in order to reduce costs for Gray taxpayers.

The projects below are examples of this. [Note: While the planning for them pre-dates completion of our new Comprehensive Plan, approved in 2020, all three support its implementation.]

Route 115/Yarmouth Road/Brown Street project:

Both Gray voters and the State of Maine have approved the Town's request to amend the Route 100 TIF district to apply those funds to reconstructing Yarmouth Rd. This project is a collaborative effort with the Gray Water District and the MDOT. We're still working to define the scope, which may involve some or all of the following - reconstruction of the road, improved stormwater drainage, sidewalks, water lines, traffic calming measures, a change in Brown Street intersection, parking, etc. The approximate start point is just beyond Hillcrest off of 115 all the way down to Main Street. The Council held one public forum (prior to COVID) with Yarmouth Rd. residents and will hold others as we continue the planning process. Several workshops have been held with the Water District and the project has been reviewed at a high level with the MDOT. MDOT has indicated interest in this project and they're pleased that Gray has taken the lead on the planning, which will put us in a better position to get what we want from this project.

But this won't happen overnight! The TIF district expires at the end of 2028, and the Town will need to expend the funds by that time or soon after. MDOT will also need to commit funds (which they've indicated a willingness to do, but the timing has not yet been determined). And more planning is needed. The Council held a Jan 19th workshop to determine next steps. Currently, the Town's engineer is preparing estimates for mapping the ledge on the road, updating/finalizing the survey of the road, and engineering. This is a long-overdue project that will dramatically improve bike-pedestrian friendliness of this area of the village, safety for Yarmouth Rd. residents, and stormwater drainage.



FRAME

Focus on Real Aging in Maine Photography Contest



Amateur and professional photographers of all ages are invited to help us **celebrate** the lives of older Mainers!

The **FRAME** photo contest to help **refocus** and **reframe** the way we view older Mainers. Photographs will raise awareness of the positive impact Maine's older residents have on our communities!

Images will celebrate the **diversity** of older people's lives and their **contributions** to Maine towns, economic vitality, and way of life.

Seven exciting prize packages, including contributions to the winner's charity or non-profit of choice, cash awards, and gifts from various Maine businesses!



Jason Paige Smith, a professional photographer and one of our judges will lead two webinars about taking your best possible pictures of people. Informational webinars about the contest:

March 10, 10-11:30AM (amateur photographers)
To register: <http://bit.ly/FRAMEam>

March 10, 12-1:30AM (professional photographers)
To register: <http://bit.ly/FRAMEpm>

For more information about the contest:
mainecenteronaging.umaine.edu/maine-gerontological-society/



Submissions will be accepted from
March 10 — May 9, 2021.



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2021 wild Blueberry Festival Committee volunteers needed

To help ensure the continued success of Gray's family-friendly, wild blueberry festival, the planning committee is looking for 2-3 more residents who are passionate about building community. Planning meetings are currently being held online, once a month, starting the end of March.



As mentioned in the new 2020 Comprehensive Plan, Gray residents and the Town envision more community events like the 5th annual Gray Blueberry Festival, taking place on the 2nd Saturday in August. This is an outdoor event, and will have 6-foot social distancing measures in place.

This fun-filled and educational summer event 'celebrating community and culture' is the result of: our generous local sponsors; the participation by school clubs, community groups, local artists, crafters, day of event volunteers, with a special thank you to the Gray Lion's Club and to our hard working Committee Members:

Rachel Lyn Rumson (2016-2018); Roger Dery (2017-2018); Manny Archibald (2017);
Renee Robbin, Karen Fuller, Cindy Somes (2019);



Ray Poulin, Cookie Begin, Jeannette Carr (2020);
Lacy Antonson (2016-2021);



Town Council Liaison's Bruce Foshay (2018-2020) and Sharon Young (2021);
Town Planner Kathy Tombarelli (2016-2021).
New faces joining the committee so far this year: Jen Servadio and Mikell Perry.

Like/Follow <https://facebook.com/grayblueberryfestival/>

Email blueberryfestival@graymaine.org

Visit <https://www.graymaine.org/blueberry-festival-committee>

Volunteer application can be found at <https://www.graymaine.org/volunteer>



We extended the deadline for Gray's Mural Design Contest until 5/1/21



Each section is /----- ~ 80" -----/ wide

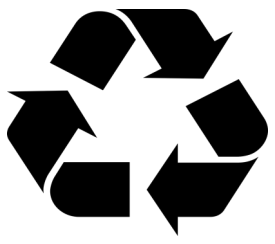
We have our 1st winner ... and looking for three more designs.

- Gray's Community and Economic Development Committee (CEDC) will be awarding up to three additional winning entries to be painted on heavy boards, placed on sections of the wooden fence at Town Hall (shown above) and/or other locations in town, TBA.
- **Suggested themes include: lakes/loons, Maine Wildlife Park animals, pollinators, Pennell Clock, Libby Hill Forest Trails, seasonal image of Gray e.g. ice fishing.**
- We invite residents/students to submit their original designs or conceptual artwork. (Submissions using copyrighted photos, images, or slogans will be disqualified).
- You may submit more than one entry; we look forward to receiving as many entries as possible!!
- **2020/2021 Mural Contest has been extended. New entries will be accepted until May 1, 2021.**
- Winning design(s) will receive **\$100 cash prize**, awarded by the end of May 2021.
- Murals will be painted summer 2021 by winning artist(s) with technical assistance by CEDC and/or other interested community members. CEDC will provide exterior color paint and supplies.
- Please send a **.jpeg** image* of your design to **cedc@graymaine.org** and include your: name, street address, town, phone number, and if applicable parent/guardian contact information and your grade level: elementary, middle school, high school, college. *Contest is open to all ages!!*
- All submissions become property of the Town of Gray CEDC.

* 1) If your artwork is hand drawn or painted, please keep the original artwork and send us an electronic photo, submitted electronically as a .jpeg file.

2) If your artwork is one of the winning designs, you will need to mail/drop off your original artwork before the prize can be awarded.

Thank you for being part of this CEDC
community beautification project.



March Recycling Corner!



**GNG
COMPOST
COALITION**

Bold Moves toward Composting: Compost Coalition

The Recycling committee is taking action to meet its long-term goal to reduce wet waste in the hopper by ten percent. The target would be a significant savings to taxpayers in both transport tonnage and tipping fees associated with the heavy material. An unknown percent of this waste is compostable kitchen scraps.

The committee knows that it will take nothing short of a cultural change where shifting the value that people place on this material from willing to pay to dispose of it to capturing it from the waste stream for thermophilic digestion by aerobic microbes. --What the heck does that even mean!?-- Nothing to many people. That is why members of the Recycling Committee are teaching both Composting and Permaculture with GNG Adult and Community Education. It is important that people start talking about reducing waste and thinking in systems before we can make the shift we need.

The committee also began organizing a Compost Coalition to renew and support an interactive curriculum-focused and community-service oriented approach to composting programs. The coalition is composed of community volunteers, composting allies and GNG High School teachers. If you would like to get involved, please join the Recycling Committee.

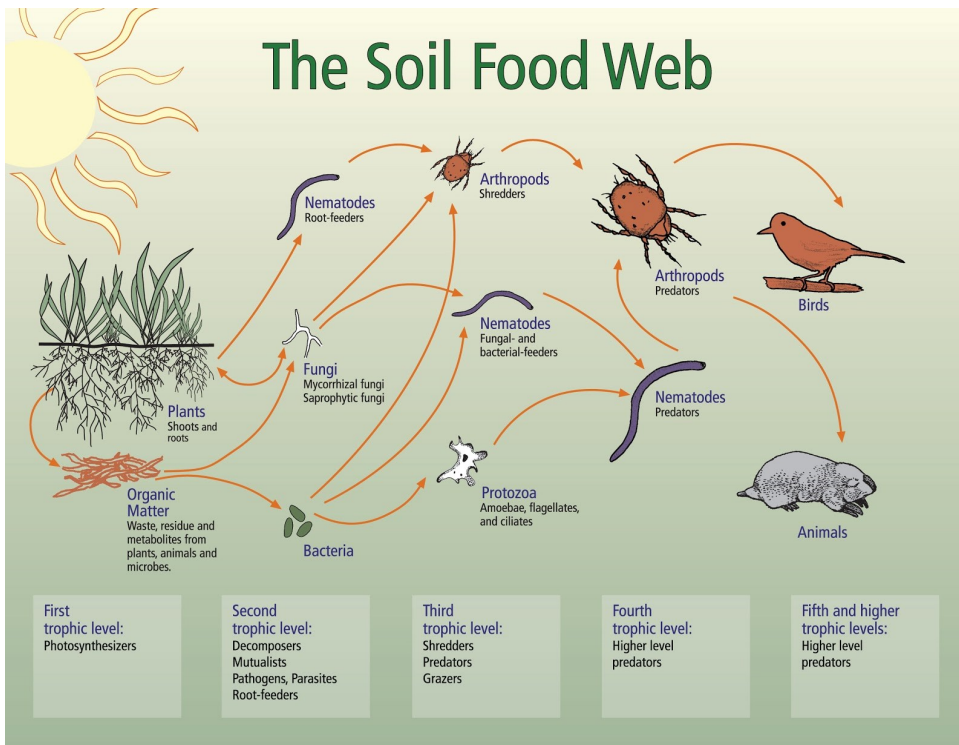
The School District uses a waste management company, not the Town of Gray to process its waste, and since coronavirus emergency responses went into effect, that waste has increased exponentially. The change is due to a dramatic increase in single-use disposable plastic and paper in the lunch program, and a decrease in use of the cafeteria's sanitation systems. It is important to note these facts but an immediate reduction in school food waste, or town waste, is not the direct goal of the Compost Coalition. The group is intent on cultivating an appreciation for compost recipes, pile management, care for the microbiology digesting the material and the aerobic balance that it requires to make rich healthy compost, and to develop the knowledge base and skill set to both produce quality compost and apply it. Applications include agriculture most obviously, but well-run and respected composting programs can offer regenerative athletic field management solutions as well. But let's not get too much ahead of ourselves.

Rachel Lyn Rumson, the current Recycling Committee Chair and Compost Coalition organizer wrote a successful grant application for a 2020 EcoMaine grant in October. The funds were received last month and have afforded the school, one new shadowing microscope with camera for live remote work, a compost tea brewer system, a sew shed, a rain barrel daisy chain plumbing kit for blue barrels, materials for compost bins, a compost thermometer and a moisture meter. They are still looking for a leaf shredder, quality pitch folks, four blue barrels (intact and clean) and some materials like humic acid, kelp meal, and fish hydrolysate for some of the tea recipes. In a few weeks students in Mr Reaman's Environmental Science classes are starting on the new Soil Food Web curriculum which will include both research and compost practicum. Both Rachel Lyn, and Lena Ives will be guest teachers in the Compost Units of Mr.Reamans Class.

The school has composted in the past and the new greenhouse promises some exciting new applications for a collaborative interdisciplinary, and inter community, composting program that connects students and teachers in Microbiology, Environmental Science, and Expanded Choices for Every Learner (ExCEL). Additionally, the student's findings will benefit community learning as well. Stay tuned for that though Gray's New community media station, GCTV streaming, and the Patriot Express. Partnership with New Gloucester Environmental Protection Committee is in development at the time of this article as well.

March Recycling Corner Continued...

The Composting Coalition is timely as the Portland Press Herald reported today of a Healthy Soils Initiative being launched by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Conservation. See that story here: [“Our View: A strong Maine farming industry starts with healthy soil”](#).



The Approach

Not all compost is the same.

The Compost Coalition hopes to introduce the students and the community at large to a biological method of composting that sequesters carbon and improves production in agriculture. As a bonus, they are also aiming to eliminate the need for chemical fertilizer and chemical pest management, both of which add compaction to soil. This is harmful to beneficial biology and inviting bad bacteria and fungi, by way of anaerobic soil conditions. The biological approach ensures conditions are aerobic, and beneficial bacteria and fungi are given jobs.

We have waste management, a composting process that creates

anaerobic conditions where bad microbiology, and pathogens can out-compete the beneficial species. Organisms like root-feeding nematodes can thrive in anaerobic conditions and bring harm to plants in your garden. Commercial products that are bagged up can also host predatory microbes in the low oxygen environment. Finally, the cooperative extension services recommend turning practices that damage the developing fungal hyphae of developing beneficial fungi, which is not ideal for late certain applications, like orchards and food forests.

The biological approach, coupled with building literacy around the microbiology in the soil and the nutrient cycle, will help the community make the shift. Students' course work will document the species that are present in the compost and what jobs they are doing, from forming soil aggregates (structure), to making organic compounds bioavailable to plants, to forming symbiotic relationships with plant roots to transport nutrients on demand.

Some students have anxiety about climate change and carbon sequestration. Composting to sequester carbon can build their confidence to solve problems that are bigger than themselves. Having science education opportunities that connect them to their own diet and environment is a good thing. We can give students a platform and substance for designing their own experiments. In turn, they can teach the community what the microbes do to regenerate the soil and feed the cycle of life.

If you are interested in working with the Composting Coalition, contact the Recycling Committee today.