



# News About Town

*A Message from our Interim Town Manager*

Hello Friends of Gray,

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday with your loved ones, and were able to reflect on the challenges and accomplishments 2023 brought. Here in Town government, we are steaming ahead into 2024 with our shoulders squared and ambitions high.

I'm happy to report the Town Manager search is going well, and there are a few candidates in the running. More information will be shared when available, but I'm confident we will have a new permanent Town Manager in the coming months – and you all will have a chance to meet this individual, whoever it ends up being – before they take the position. Community input is vital to this selection process.



As we gear up for a new person to join Town staff, I want to bid a fond farewell and happy retirement to Dean Bennett, who you will read about in this newsletter. Dean retired at the end of December after 31 years of Town service, most of that time as Director of Recreation. Dean's contribution to this town is immeasurable, and if you see him out and about, be sure to wish him well.

I look forward to the joys 2024 brings to Gray. Thank you for being part of this amazing community.

Thanks,  
Josh Tiffany  
Interim Town Manager



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## Impactful Town of Gray Employee Retires After 31 Years



L-R: Interim Town Manager Josh Tiffany, Facilities and Parks Supervisor Dean Bennett, and Director of Human Resources Jon Hartt

The Town of Gray can only function as well as its staff, and nowhere is that seen more clearly than Dean Bennett, who is retiring from Town service after an incredible 31 years.

Dean is retiring from his position as Gray's Parks and Facilities Supervisor, a far-reaching job that has taken him to all corners of Gray. In the first 29 years of his career, he was the Town's Director of Recreation, and thus was involved in many changes that have come to Gray, including, but certainly not limited, to:

- The revitalization of Newbegin Gym from a nearly-condemned state to the multi-purpose recreation facility it is today
- Installing and maintaining new athletic fields, such as the volleyball and basketball courts near the Town Office
- Cleaning up and improving the area near Wilkies Beach, so that it may be an accessible, relaxing, and safe destination for Gray residents
- Designing and maintaining a litany of

## Upcoming Events

### January 8

5 p.m.: Resiliency Committee Meeting — Microsoft Teams

### January 10

6 p.m.: Open Space Committee Meeting — 24 Main Street + Microsoft Teams

### January 11

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

### January 11 and 25

1 p.m.: Homeschool Study Hall — Gray Public Library

### January 16

7 p.m.: Town Council Meeting — Microsoft Teams

### January 17

6:30 p.m.: MSAD #15 School Board Meeting — 24 Main Street

### Tuesdays and Saturdays

1 p.m.: Movie Time — Gray Public Library

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## Impactful Town of Gray Employee Retires After 31 Years

Libby Hill Forest trails

- Implementing numerous sports activities, such as men's basketball and football leagues

"One of the greatest things in my career was to connect with Gray businesses and get them involved in many of the special events and programs we offered," Dean recalls. "Many of these businesses were visited by me asking for donations and not once did they say no. Now that's trust and community spirit."



Dean Bennett, pictured with the junior indoor

In his more than three decades of service, Dean worked alongside six town managers, about a dozen G-NG athletic directors, and countless Town staff.

Dean is known for his hard work ethic, and that personality trait shined brightly when he first started working for Gray.

"The first 10 years were labor-intensive, what with starting new programs, making improvements to infrastructure, and getting to know the community," Dean says. "Being a divorced father with three young boys, I had many weekend activities/events and the three of them all tagged along, with the youngest on my hip. I really wanted to create a recreation department I could be proud of."

What does it take to help build a successful recreation department and maintain a great relationship with your co-workers over three decades? Looking at Dean's work history and reputation among the community, he clearly has the answer.

"Being approachable to your staff and your constituents is key, as is working hard, being firm with your convictions, and having a great sense of humor," Dean says.

As he parts ways from his professional relationship with the Town of Gray, Dean seems to know exactly what he wants to do in his retirement.

"I'm going to spend time with family and my new grandchild, work on some longstanding projects at home, and sleep in and make time for lots of fly fishing."



## New Gloucester Residents Sing the Praises of Gray First Responders

The dedication and professionalism provided to our community by first responders is often unsung, so we were thrilled to see a New Gloucester resident recently sing the praises of first responders from Gray and New Gloucester. Check out this letter from two grateful community members who received service from Gray responders Lieutenant Rick Dunbar, Seth Muzichuck, Vaughn Hutchings, Andrew Constantine, and Dustin Carroll, among others.



Gray Fire Rescue, located at 125 Shaker Road in Gray

“Nothing quite prepares you for getting that call that unbalances you. For me, it was Mike Poirier from Cumberland County Dispatch (911) telling me that Field was pinned under a tree in our back woods but was going to be ok, rescue was on the way to him. Mike let me know how Field was doing, who was on the way, what to expect once I got to Gloucester Hill Road, and kept me focused on getting home safely. Mike was my first hero of what was a very long day.

Field has two broken bones in his lower right leg. Surgery happened Sunday afternoon at Maine Medical Center. And he’s back home in a splint cast and crutches. And a lot of hanging out for the next two months.

That is the extent of his injuries due to the immediate response from our New Gloucester Community. With Field’s call to Mike at 911, they were able to guide the New Gloucester medical crew to his location in the woods. (Yay for cell phones and carrying them!) Everyone who was needed and might be needed came without hesitation. Field received excellent medical attention from the rescue team while

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## New Gloucester Residents Sing the Praises of Gray First Responders

under the tree. He had a crew figuring out how to get the tree off him. His rescuers pulled him up a steep embankment in a sled and put him on a UTV. From there it was up the path to the waiting ambulance who whisked him away.

Field and I cannot begin to thank our larger community enough for being heroes. While everyone might say they were just doing their jobs, it is really much more than that. Field and I both received kindness, reassurance, and professional attention from all the rescue team, starting with the call to 911. Our neighbors and friends were there to help coordinate getting the tractor up from the woods, the Jeep put away, and our pets well-comforted while we were gone. They too, were there simply to help in any way they could.

It has been incredible to be on the receiving end of such professional service, generosity, and genuine care for us both. We feel extraordinarily lucky to live amongst all of you as neighbors and friends. You all are our heroes. Thank you.

— *Susie Percy and Field Rider*

## **Town of Gray Now Uses Microsoft Teams for Public Meetings**

To enhance our virtual meeting experience while optimizing costs, the Town of Gray is transitioning from Zoom to Microsoft Teams for all our public and non-public virtual meetings.

This positive change means any virtual meetings members of the public have with Town staff will be held via Microsoft Teams. All hybrid meetings that normally utilize Zoom for remote participation, such as Town Council meetings and Planning Board meetings, will now use Microsoft Teams.

If you click on a meeting link, such as the ones posted on all our public meeting agendas, you can either join the meeting as a guest straight from your web browser, or join via the Microsoft Teams application if you have it installed on your computer.

If you have any questions or concerns about this change, please [email](#) the Department of Communications and Information.

## **Veterans Now Don't Need Specific License Plate to Receive Excise Tax Exemption**

Did you know that, historically, veterans must switch to a disabled veteran's plate to receive a vehicle excise tax exemption? However, knowing that many veterans prefer to keep their existing plates, the Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles is collaborating with the Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services (MBVS) to make veterans eligible for the excise tax exemption, as per [36 M.R.S. § 1483\(12\)](#), regardless of their chosen registration plate.

The Maine Bureau of Veterans' Services can help determine eligibility for motor vehicle excise tax exemption; you'll just need proof of total, service-connected disability in the form of a Department of Veterans Affairs benefit summary letter. These letters are provided to veterans in the springtime by the VA, at any time via [ebenefits.va.gov](https://ebenefits.va.gov), or by calling 800-827-1000. MBVS, which you can reach at 207-287-7020, may also have access to summary letters for certain veterans.

# Gray is Looking for Committee Members

*Serve your town by volunteering for these committees!*



Various committee/board members meet for a Leadership Academy in 2022.

- [Wild 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.
- [MSAD #15 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.

To apply to any of these committees, go to [graymaine.org/volunteer](https://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 currently have openings for Transfer Station personnel, an administrative assistant for the Assessing Department, and Assistant Clerk, among others.

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

- You can watch the Town of Gray 2023 [Year in Review](#) on our YouTube channel.
- This newsletter is just one way to stay informed about what's going on in Gray. Check out this [guide](#) for other channels you should follow if you want to stay in the loop.
- The Greater Portland Council of Governments is looking for your input about traffic conditions in select Maine towns, including Gray. Learn more [here](#).

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

Questions can be directed to:  
Kyle Hadyniak  
Interim Director of Comm. and Information  
207-657-3339 x116

Find Us!

