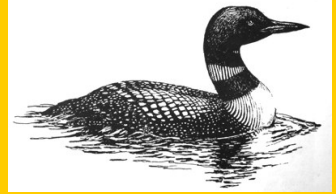


# Town of Mount Vernon Community Newsletter



[www.mtvernonme.org](http://www.mtvernonme.org)

February/March 2022 Edition

## TOWN OFFICE STAFF

### Town Office

Phone: 293-2379  
Fax: 293-3507  
[clerk@mtvernonme.org](mailto:clerk@mtvernonme.org)  
Mon 8am-6pm  
Tue, Wed, & Thu 7am-3pm  
Fri, Sat & Sun - Closed

### Town Clerk & Tax Collector

Heather Wheeler @ 293-2379  
[clerk@mtvernonme.org](mailto:clerk@mtvernonme.org)

### Deputy Clerk

Rachel Meader @ 293-2379  
[deputyclerk@mtvernonme.org](mailto:deputyclerk@mtvernonme.org)

### Treasurer

Kerry Casey @ 293-2379  
[treasurer@mtvernonme.org](mailto:treasurer@mtvernonme.org)  
Mon, Wed 10-12

### Select Board

[selectboard@mtvernonme.org](mailto:selectboard@mtvernonme.org)

Anna Libby @ 951-2385  
[anna@mtvernonme.org](mailto:anna@mtvernonme.org)

Paul Crockett @ 293-3000  
[paul@mtvernonme.org](mailto:paul@mtvernonme.org)

Robert Grenier @ 293-2783  
[bob@mtvernonme.org](mailto:bob@mtvernonme.org)

### Select Board Admin. Assistant

Alice Counts @ 293-1105  
Cell @ 714-403-6076  
[alice@mtvernonme.org](mailto:alice@mtvernonme.org)  
Mon, Tue & Wed 7am-3pm

**Select Board Meetings are held  
every other Monday at the Town  
Hall Office @ 1997 North Road**

Warrant @ 6:30 pm  
Regular Town Business @ 7:00pm

**Planning Board Meetings are  
held the 3rd Tuesday of each  
month at the Dr Shaw Memorial  
Library @ 344 Pond Road**

## TOWN DEPARTMENT STAFF

### Animal Control Officer

Trish Davis @ 491-0410

### Cemetery Sexton

Bob Grenier @ 293-2783  
[bob@mtvernonme.org](mailto:bob@mtvernonme.org)

### Code Enforcement Officer and Plumbing Inspector

Bill Butler Work: @ 293-2636  
Cell: 446-6541  
[mtvernonceo@gmail.com](mailto:mtvernonceo@gmail.com)  
Tuesdays 8am-4pm

### Fire Chief

Jason Beckler @ 293-2114  
(non-emergencies)

### General Assistance

Anna Libby @ 951-2385  
[anna@mtvernonme.org](mailto:anna@mtvernonme.org)

### Health Officer

Daniel K. Onion @ 293-2076

### Rescue Director

Pat Rawson @ 293-2597  
(non-emergencies)

### Road Commissioner

Lee Dunn @ 242-5828

### Tax Assessor

Roger Peppard @ 293-1105  
3rd Thursday of each month  
Call Town Office for Appointment  
[assessor@mtvernonme.org](mailto:assessor@mtvernonme.org)

### Transfer Station

Megan Goucher @ 213-3523  
Sat & Sun 8:30 am - Noon

## **Dr. Shaw Memorial Library 293-2565**

Website: [drshawlibrary.org](http://drshawlibrary.org)  
Email: [librarian@drshawlibrary.org](mailto:librarian@drshawlibrary.org)

Mon 3pm-6pm,  
Wed 9am-12pm & 3pm-7pm  
Sat 10am-3pm

*Masks Required.  
Curbside always available.  
Call or email us in advance.*

## **Mt. Vernon Post Office Hours Retail Window**

Mon-Fri 7am-10am, 11am-2pm  
Sat 9am-11am

## **Newsletter**

All articles to be submitted by 25th  
of each month to

***[alice@mtvernonme.org](mailto:alice@mtvernonme.org)***

## **Paid Business Advertisements**

- ◇ Business Card Size \$15/month
- ◇ 1/4 page \$25/month
- ◇ 1/2 page \$45/month
- ◇ Full page \$90/month

## **Select Board Meeting is now live:**

You can find the link on  
MtVernonME.org under Govern-  
ment. Scroll down to the bottom or  
click on this link: [Mount Vernon,  
Maine LIVE](#)

## **March Dates to Remember:**

- **03-01-22—Women's History Month**
- **03-02-22—Community Center Board of Trustees Meeting via Zoom at 7:00PM**
- **03-02-22—Broadband Committee (Zoom) meeting at 06:30 - 07:30PM**
- **03-07-22—Girl Scouts Meeting in the Community Center at 5:15—6:45PM (see note below\*)**
- **03-07-22—Kick Boxing in the Community Center at 7:00PM (see note below\*)**
- **03-10-22—Public (Zoom) Meeting at 6:30PM for Long Pond Watershed Based Management Plan Draft Review (see info below)**
- **03-13-22—Daylight Savings**
- **03-14-22—Kick Boxing in the Community Center at 7:00PM (see note below\*)**
- **03-14-22—Select Board Meeting in the Town Hall at 7:00PM**
- **03-15-22—Planning Board Meeting in the Dr Shaw Memorial Library at 7:00PM**
- **03-16-22—Mount Vernon Republican Committee in the Community Center at 7:00PM**
- **03-16-22—Broadband Committee (Zoom) meeting at 06:30 - 07:30PM**
- **03-17-22—St Patrick's Day**
- **03-17-22—Tax Assessor is in town. Make your appointment early at 293-2379**
- **03-21-22—Girl Scouts Meeting in the Community Center at 5:15—6:45PM (see note below\*)**
- **03-21-22—Kick Boxing in the Community Center at 7:00PM (see note below\*)**
- **03-28-22—Select Board Meeting in the Town Hall at 7:00PM**
- **03-28-22—Kick Boxing in the Community Center at 7:00PM (see note below\*)**

## **April Dates to Remember:**

- **04-01-22—April Fool's Day**
- **04-01-22—Ridge Riders Snow Mobile Club in the Community Center at 7:00PM**
- **04-04-22—Girl Scouts Meeting in the Community Center at 5:15—6:45PM (see note below\*)**
- **04-04-22—Kick Boxing in the Community Center at 7:00PM (see note below\*)**
- **04-06-22—Community Center Board of Trustees via Zoom at 7:00PM**
- **04-06-22—Broadband Committee (Zoom) meeting at 06:30 - 07:30PM**
- **04-11-22—Select Board Meeting in the Town Hall at 7:00PM**
- **04-11-22—Kick Boxing in the Community Center at 7:00PM (see note below\*)**
- **04-17-22—Easter**
- **04-18-22—Girl Scouts Meeting in the Community Center at 5:15—6:45PM (see note below\*)**
- **04-18-22—Kick Boxing in the Community Center at 7:00PM (see note below\*)**
- **04-19-22—Planning Board Meeting in the Dr Shaw Memorial Library at 7:00PM**
- **04-20-22—Mount Vernon Republican Committee at 7:00PM**
- **04-20-22—Broadband Committee (Zoom) meeting at 06:30 - 07:30 PM**
- **04-21-22—Tax Assessor is in town. Make your appointment early at 293-2379**
- **04-25-22—Select Board Meeting in the Town Hall at 7:00PM**
- **04-25-22—Kick Boxing in the Community Center at 7:00PM (see note below\*)**

\* Activities will resume in the Community Center once the Town lifts the mask mandate.

If you have a meeting you want to post, please contact Alice Counts at 207-293-1105 or 714-403-6076 or [Alice@MTVernonME.org](mailto:Alice@MTVernonME.org)

## From the Mount Vernon Select Board

Greetings friends and neighbors.

First, I want to draw your attention to the efforts of the broadband committee. By now you've probably received a postcard from that team inviting you to join their Email list. You may have seen their website and articles in this newsletter and on the town website. You may know that there are many year-round residents who have no access to broadband (as defined by the FCC and DSL does not count). Heretofore it has not been economically viable for Spectrum to run wires down roads with fewer than 15 residents per mile to get them *real broadband*. So, our awesome broadband team has been working hard to remedy this issue.

Ironically many of the camp roads such as Teaberry Ln, Russ Point, Cottage, Demariano, Minnehonk Lake Rd (mostly) and others have excellent coverage. So those lacking adequate access for working from home, schooling from home and being entertained at home tend to be year-round residents on many other roads without Spectrum coverage.

On a related note, the town has received our first ARPA installment. These are federal funds intended *specifically for broadband and infrastructure*. Maine Municipal Association has advised us to not take any chances with the federal monies and call a special town meeting for official approval to expend the \$. We intend to make some initial investments on two things:

Engineering work in the Blake Hill Rd bridge. The State is intending to CLOSE THAT BRIDGE as early as this year – ugh!!! So, we must get moving on this one.

Engaging consultants and continuing the communication and engineering phases to get broadband access for all households. This initial investment, paid for by the Federal government and not taxpayers, is to get the project off the ground. It is critical that we get help accessing State, Federal and private grants to make this happen. But, due to the complexity of it all we need to engage professionals to help.

Be looking for the announcement of a special town meeting.

We are, of course starting the annual budgeting work now. I'd like to remind everyone that we have in fact made three consecutive decreases in the tax rate!! In 2019 it was 17.55, then dropped to 17.5 in 2020 and 16.5 in 2021. The good news is that the State is running a surplus and the Governor has put a stake in the ground to restore the full 5% in revenue sharing and 55% education funding.

The not as good news is the town, just like your household, is seeing costs for goods, services and labor rise. So, we are not yet sure if taxes will drop like the last three years, stay the same or go up. We do have some serious infrastructure needs that cannot be ignored. We'll do our best to deliver a thoughtful budget to the voters at town meeting that balances the needs of the community with fiscal responsibility.

Voting this spring is on June 14<sup>th</sup>. While we have not yet set a date for the annual town meeting, it is likely to on June 18<sup>th</sup>. In addition to some potential infrastructure investments, we'll be considering quite a few land use ordinance updates at this year's meeting. It's all "normal" stuff, but we will encourage folks to attend any public hearing that we may have and to educate yourselves prior to voting in-person at our annual town meeting.

On behalf of the Mount Vernon Select Board,

Paul Crockett - Chairman

## BETTER INTERNET FOR MOUNT VERNON?

IN THE SPRING, THE TOWN WILL CONSIDER OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUILDING BETTER BROADBAND INTERNET SERVICES. ALONG WITH THE STATE, SUBSCRIBERS, AND THE TOWN WILL BE ASKED TO INVEST IN SUCH A PROJECT.

There are several models to consider. Each has advantages and disadvantages related to cost, timing, and quality of service. A vote of town citizens will be needed to make key decisions as we select and initiate a project for the town.

This winter your Mount Vernon Broadband Committee has established a website linked to the town's page (<http://www.mtvernonme.org/>). It is also organizing online or face-to-face meetings to answer questions about all things broadband. Email will be a key means of keeping you informed. We want to include you on our mailing list. If you did not receive the post card (below), you can still be added to the list by submitting your name and email address by emailing us or using a sign-up sheet at the town office.



### The MT. VERNON BROADBAND COMMITTEE

(HIGH-QUALITY, AFFORDABLE BROADBAND FOR MT. VERNON)

#### REQUESTS YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS BE ADDED TO THE LIST SO THAT YOU CAN:

- Be informed about options and developments through email notices and zoom video meetings.
- Interact with your Mt. Vernon Broadband Committee with questions and comment.
- Engage in surveys to keep us informed of your needs and priorities.
- Be notified of public meetings to consider projects, and their costs and deadlines

**E-mail your name and email address** to the Broadband Committee at **[mtvbrdbnd@gmail.com](mailto:mtvbrdbnd@gmail.com)**

*(We will not share your information with any outside party, and will delete it immediately if requested.)*

## **BROADBAND COMMITTEE: MARCH 2022**

### **COMMITTEE UPDATES**

- Created a Broadband Committee Website [here](#). The site is linked to the Town website.
- Visit the site to ask question, learn more about Broadband and what the Committee is doing in anticipation of the spring town meeting.
- We are planning to hire the [National Digital Equity Center](#) to help us develop our digital inclusion plan. Digital inclusion focuses on reducing local barriers to using broadband services.
- Participated in the Broadband Coalition and requested (4) network construction proposals for review in March.
- We have selected a Consultant pending Select Board approval. This person will help the Committee evaluating service provider proposals, developing grants and surveying town members.

### **NETWORK UPGRADING TECHNOLOGY OPTIONS**

- Fiber to the Home (FTTH) also seen as Fiber to the Premise (FTTP) - This is a fiber optic cable that is run directly to your home. It uses pulses of light to transmit data over the fiber optic cable.
- Hybrid Fiber Coaxial (HFC) - This is used by the telecommunications industry and is a hybrid system that combines fiber optic cables on the main roads and coaxial cable to the house.
- Fixed Wireless (RedZone) - This is a system that connects two fixed locations via radio waves. In this situation it would be local cell phone towers and your house.

For more details about each type of technology, attend a scheduled Broadband Committee meeting or look for links on the [Broadband Committee Webpage](#). Notice of real time discussion groups will appear soon at this webpage.

### **HOW TO DETERMINE MY HOME'S INTERNET SPEED?**

You can help our community qualify for State funding by reporting your internet speed at: <http://www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org/landing>. Taking the test will help correct state speed measurements that are known to understate the availability of internet services in town, and therefore to shortchange Mt. Vernon when it comes to grants. In addition, you can determine if you are getting the speed for which you are paying.

### **STAY IN TOUCH**

If you need help conducting a speed test, or have any questions about broadband in Mt. Vernon, or would like to sit in on a Mount Vernon Broadband Committee meeting, please do not hesitate to contact us at [mtvbrdbnd@gmail.com](mailto:mtvbrdbnd@gmail.com)

## FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH - MT. VERNON FOOD BANK

As 2021 has come to an end, The First Baptist Church Mt. Vernon Food Bank volunteers would like to thank all those in our community who have so graciously donated throughout the year. Mt. Vernon has always been very generous, caring and thoughtful in helping us support those in our community who are in need and it is greatly appreciated.

The Mt. Vernon Food Bank is located at the First Baptist Church at 321 Pond Road, Mount Vernon. It is open on Saturday mornings from 9:30 to 11:30. Because of COVID, we continue to adapt to changing conditions; while we were able to invite customers into the food bank during the second half of 2021, we began offering curbside only on January 15. We serve the communities of Mount Vernon, Readfield, Fayette, and Vienna. You can reach us on Saturday mornings at 293-2141. If you need a ride to the food bank or would like food picked up, call Neighbors Driving Neighbors at 860-0677.

Thank you, First Baptist Church Mt. Vernon Food Bank Volunteers.

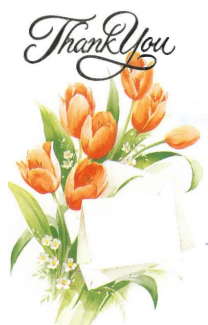
## ART WORK ON DISPLAY!

Art Work from the Mount Vernon Elementary School and Photographic Images provided by Gary Fish at Phish Photography are now on display at the Mount Vernon Town Hall. The 20"x30" images are on sale for \$100 and the 12"x18" images are \$50 and will be on a rotating basis. Come by and check them out!

Please contact Alice Counts in the Selectmen's Office for further information.



## THANK YOU NOTE FROM DOTTIE KENT



Feb. 22, 2022.  
A big "THANK-YOU" to my "Mount Vernon Town" family. What an experience to have in one's life time - being honored by the town for being the oldest person living here. This certainly wasn't on my "bucket list". I and to have a personal visit from one of our Selectmen - Bob Gruenel (I have nice memories of Bob and Lili in the village store) and the artist of my gift. (She also has ties to my family.) - And what a beautiful, personal gift it is! A large framed cut glass picture of the front of

my house with the "Kent Highlights" sign - ready to hang - It was hanging before they left - in the top half of my living room side window. It comes alive every day - early dawn and the window in the house shine - then the sun makes it take on a little different look. - What a gift for growing old in our beautiful Mount Vernon -

Harold and I moved here in April, 1956 - I was only 30-year old then - I thank you and my family. Thanks you too.

## **Mount Vernon Information**

### **Minnehonk Ridge Riders Snow Mobile Club**

Next Meeting: Tuesday 02-01-2022

If you are using any of the Mount Vernon Winter Trails, you have the Ridge Riders to thank. They maintain 12 bridges and 28 miles of trails. Please contribute to this club with your donations and memberships in order to keep our trails safe and clear. These trails are used for snow mobile riders and cross-country skiers. Everyone is invited to our monthly meetings which are normally on the first Tuesday of every month at 700pm in the Community Center.

Membership fees are \$20/yr per individual or \$30/yr per family. Payable at the Town Hall. See Alice Counts.

Cash or Checks made payable to Minnehonk Ridge Riders.

President: John Karabin 207-480-0034

### **Handicap Equipment Available for loan AT NO CHARGE to Mount Vernon Residents:**

Have friends visiting from out of state, have a temporary or long term need?

Mt. Vernon Rescue has a supply of hospital/rehab equipment for anyone to use at no charge. We have a hospital bed, wheel chairs, walkers, commodes, canes, crutches and shower seats. If you have need for any of these, call Pat Rawson, 293-2597 or Leslie Grenier at 293-2783 or Alice Counts (Admin Asst) at office: 207-293-1105, cell: 714-403-6076, [Alice@mtVernonME.org](mailto:Alice@mtVernonME.org)

We ask that you keep these loaner items in the Town of Mount Vernon and return them to the Mt Vernon Rescue when you no longer have the need for them so we can loan them out to the next person.

## **Emergency Management Director**

Hello Mount Vernon community members. My name is Mike Wenzel and I have the honor of being appointed to the position of the town's Emergency Management Director. I am still learning more about the position and making contacts. Most recently I have been in touch with the [Maine Emergency Management Agency](#) (MEMA) and our local officials learning about educational opportunities.

I wanted to recognize what a critical resource each of you play as community in our response to emergencies. First responders are not an unlimited resource, and they may not always be available to help you or your neighbors during a disaster. So, thank you for your daily efforts in making our town a safer place to live!

I am signing up for some courses with MEMA and FEMA to learn better how to serve you and our wonderful community. In the meantime, allow me to share this [link](#) with resources provided by the Maine Emergency Management Agency. Best wishes and stay safe!





# **KEEP A MOUNT VERNON FAMILY WARM THIS WINTER**

## **DONATE TO THE MOUNT VERNON COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP'S FUEL ASSISTANCE FUND**

**TAX  
DEDUCTIBLE**

**AND A  
REALLY NICE  
THING TO DO**

**You may send your checks to the Community Partnership (made out to MVCPC) and mail them to Sandy Wright, 1664 North Road.**

**We work with the Board of Selectmen's General Assistance Manager and the Food Bank\* to help people who need fuel or firewood.**

**(\*People needing fuel assistance must apply to the above before assistance can be given. For more information, contact Sandy at 293-2582 or [scwright@fairpoint.net](mailto:scwright@fairpoint.net).)**



**Mount Vernon Community Partnership Corporation,  
Inc. (CPC)**

**DO YOU LIVE IN MOUNT VERNON AND NEED FUEL ASSISTANCE?** The Community Partnership has a fund that may be able to help. Do the following first: • Contact Anna Libby,



## BS From the TS



Hello from the MTV Transfer Station!!

Well if you are reading this then you know you have survived Maine's bitter cold winter so far.

We have had a few warm days which brought us a muddy mess at the transfer station, so just a heads to be alert of any cones we've placed to avoid the real nasty mud holes.

I love how we have cones up to avoid mud holes and cones in place for a little detour around our frozen gate.

So far everything is up and running. Thanks for being patient while we were DOWN!

The share shack is open. I've been trying to keep it as tidy as possible. Just a reminder, PLEASE NO:

- Stained clothes
- Used pillows
- Mattresses
- Couches
- Televisions
- Printers
- Computers
- Half working toasters...

If it is something you question, is barely used or just doesn't work for you and it's passed the original return policy, please come explain that to one of us. We are very understanding.

**Note:** Televisions, Printers and Computers can be dropped off at the trailer for a small fee.

If you all noticed a new gentleman standing beside me, you aren't seeing things it's the new guy Leo. Welcome to the Crew Leo!!

Thanks all for taking the time to read.

See you at the next dumping. (Literally)

Yours truly,

TS Crew.

## Mount Vernon Select Board Meeting of 01-03-2022

**Board Members Present:** Paul Crockett (Chair), Anna Libby, Robert Grenier

**Support Staff & Guests:** Alice Counts (Administrative Assistant), Mark Gilbert (Ch 7), Kerry Casey (Treasurer), Andy Dube (Diversified Drafting)

**Guests via Zoom:** Ken Elliot, Bill Rosenburg, Keith Coulling

**Select Board Members Signed Weekly Warrant (6:30-7:00)**

### Meeting Called to Order

SB Meeting was Called to Order by SB Crockett at 7:04pm

### Meeting Minutes of 12-20-21

Motion by SB Grenier to accept the meeting minutes, 2<sup>nd</sup> by SB Libby. Motion Carried. Vote was 3-0. **PASS**

### Broadband Committee

Goal is to put something forward by the Town Meeting. The new members to this committee are: Matt Zeh, Dan Works, Ken Elliot, and Keith Coulling.

To prepare implementation plan to provide high quality at reasonable cost to the community.

Finance through grants, private, public or government.

SB Crockett motioned to approve Broadband Committee spending of previously allocated money to include money from ARPA Funds. 2<sup>nd</sup> by SB Libby, Motion Carried, Vote was 3-0. **PASS**

Alice Counts working with Ken Elliot regarding a page on the town website. Alice to contact Nate Savage to set this up.

Article 34 authorized \$2800 of which \$150 has been spent

Article 15 authorized grant money from ARPA Funds.

SB Crockett mentioned that we have a permit for bulk mailing. Bill Rosenberg will check into this to verify the Committee is authorized to use it.

### TRIO

- SB Grenier spoke with Nadine (TRIO). She provided pricing for budgetary and payroll.
- SB Grenier spoke with Belgrade and they are switching to web access this month.
- Only The web version is being updated for Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) going forward.
- Our town server is 9 years old now, so we are pushing the limits
- Web version is approximately \$3700 for budgetary.
- Treasurer Casey mentioned that HR Smith said the Best Way was to have payroll sourced out as it is quite involved.
- SB Grenier stated that all the towns around Maine are using budgetary and payroll.
- Treasurer Casey said that she could still do payroll using Peachtree.
- SB Grenier stated that the web interface is solving a lot of problems.
- SB Grenier asked if we could use some of the \$76,000 we received from Tree Growth Penalty to get this effort going and if not, what about using the Contingency Fund where we have \$36,506
- We need a timeline for going onto the hosted version

## **Mount Vernon Select Board Meeting Minutes of 01-03-22 (Cont.)**

### **TRIO Continued**

- SB Crockett stated that theoretically the Treasurer and Town Clerks could work from home if we were on the hosted version.
- Treasurer Casey mentioned that she has no understanding of how to map/implement budgetary to her Peachtree fields. And, she doesn't have time to do this unless she can work from home.

### **Community Center**

- SB Crockett asked Alice Counts if she was able to locate the Meeting minutes for the Community Center when it was accepted by the town. Alice stated that she is almost done with the initial sort on all the town records but hasn't delved into any specific files yet. Alice has plans to finish the initial sort tomorrow.
- The Community Center wants to know if the Town is going to split any of the operating costs with the Trustees. It has been the practice for the town to cover utilities and the Trustees to cover any improvements and other expenses.
- SB Crockett asked where the funds from their fundraisers and the building space rent goes. It was thought that the money goes into the Special Revenue.

### **Blake Hill Bridge project**

- Andy Dube mentioned that the Town of Wayne used Mainland Development to install an aluminum Bridge by Contech.
- The State of Maine wants to close the Blake Hill Bridge early this year.
- SB Crockett is waiting to hear from the State as to what exactly is going to be required to satisfy them. If the Town has to have the bridge engineered, that will add another \$50,000 to the cost.

### **Town Map Updates**

- Andy Dube needs the Map/Lot/Name index in excel Format. Alice Counts to send via email.

### **COVID Concerns**

- SB Grenier mentioned that the Town Clerks were wondering if the Town Office should be closed to visitors like was done previously due to the rise in COVID related cases. SB Crockett stated that we just need to encourage all visitors to mask up.

### **Other Business**

- Treasurer Casey created a spreadsheet in preparation for the Budget meeting. She needs to have all planned expenditures itemized and listed so they can be properly budgeted.
- Fuel Gas Detectors – Alice Counts asked whether any of the buildings in town need to be equipped with these due to the state requirement that went into effect on Jan 1<sup>st</sup> for any town building or multi-family residence that has propane. SB Crockett said he would check on the library.

### **Executive Session pursuant to 1 MRSA §405(6)(A) Personnel Matters**

- Went into Executive Session at 8:11 PM
- No Action taken

### **Adjourn**

- Motion by SB Grenier to Adjourn at 8:45, 2nd by SB Libby, Motion Carried. Vote was 3-0. **PASS**

## **Mount Vernon Select Board Meeting Minutes of 01-17-2022**

**Board Members Present:** Paul Crockett (Chair), Anna Libby, Robert Grenier

**Support Staff & Guests:** Alice Counts (Administrative Assistant), Mark Gilbert (Ch 7), Kerry Casey (Treasurer)

**Guests via Zoom:** Bill Rosenberg, Chuck Wright

**Select Board Members Signed Weekly Warrant (6:30-7:00)**

### **Meeting Called to Order**

- SB Meeting was Called to Order by SB Crockett at 7:00pm

### **Meeting Minutes of 01-03-2022**

- Motion by SB Libby to accept the meeting minutes, 2nd by SB Grenier. Motion Carried. Vote was 3-0. PASS

### **Broadband Committee**

- Received Bids from Axiom, Matrix and Spectrum
- Coalition Meeting on January 27, 2022
- If Mount Vernon was asked to join inter-local agreement, the town would want the same deal offers to the other members.
- The Committee wants a Trio Extraction of addresses, tax payments, etc of all registered voters
- The Red Zone is a wireless option, however it is still dependent on fiber optics and each tower will have its own generator.
- Treasurer Casey mentioned that the Town of Vienna is working on an article to get town money voted in for Broadband.
- Bill Rosenberg would like to offer up \$500 to other towns to pay part of consulting fees for the evaluation.
- MVBBS request authority to spend up to \$5k of \$6150 balance currently on the books (\$7650 was previously approved less \$1600 approved for postcard mailing) to participate in RZ's proposed next step. Since this amount is covered in a previous vote by the SB, there was no further action that needed to take place.

### **Admin Budget Update**

- Need budget updates from all Departments
- Need to look at Computer Updates, Security Cameras for Town Hall, Propane usage for Transfer Station Swap Shop now that it is open.

### **TRIO**

- The Town needs to sign two contracts in order to reinstate Budgetary.
- SB Grenier motioned to accept and sign the TRIO contract for the Budgetary Module and Upgrade to Web Version for a total of 6221.85 to be taken from Contingency Funds. 2<sup>nd</sup> by SB Libby. Motion Carried, Vote was 3-0. **PASS**
- There are 3 steps for the TRIO integration as follows:
- SQL – which the Town is currently using
- Web Interface – which the Town has now signed a contract with Harris Computer.
- Hosted version – this is the final goal
- Treasurer accounts need to be mapped from Peachtree to TRIO.

## **Mount Vernon Select Board Meeting Minutes of 01-17-2022 (Cont.)**

### **Other Business**

- Treasurer Casey had an email from Jennifer@MMAUniversity, inquiring if anyone should replace Alex Wright and Mac Hardy on the MMA University. It was decided to take Alex and Mac off the list for now and SB Libby will reach out to Jennifer for more information.
- Newsletter – the Select Board decided to combine the February/March newsletter since Admin Asst, Alice Counts will be on vacation until mid February.
- RHR Smith auditors did not audit the Town last year. The 2019 audit results were incorrectly inserted into the 2020 Report. So the auditors are auditing both 2020 and 2021 at this time. Treasurer Casey indicated that she has submitted data for both audit years recently.
- FEMA – after 5 years, is now asking for proof by way of canceled checks, that the Town actually spent the funds as were indicated.
- Handyman – idea was floated to possibly add a 40 hour, full time, position to perform tasks such as offroad plowing, extra mowing. The library has requested additional mowing. This could also be a contract job, but it was felt that we would first need to have a Town Manager before this would be feasible.

### **Adjourn**

- Motion by SB Libby to Adjourn at 8:28, 2nd by SB Grenier, Motion Carried. Vote was 3-0. **PASS**

## **Mount Vernon Select Board Meeting Minutes of 01-31-22**

**Selectboard Members Present:** Paul Crockett, Bob Grenier, Anna Libby (notetaker)

**Staff and Guests (in person):** Kerry Casey, Tom Ward

**Guests (via Zoom):** Susan Herman, Charlie Baeder, Michelle Pino

### **7:01 - Call to Order**

SB Crockett calls the meeting to order at 7:01. We gathered 6:30 for the warrant.

### **7:01 - Review and Accept Minutes**

Minutes accepted as marked up by Paul. Motion was made by SB Crockett, second by SB Grenier, approved by all.

### **7:02 - Aging in Place Update**

Tom Ward provided an update on the work of the Aging in Place committee. The committee recently received the first \$20,000 of funding for a new grant. It is a two year grant, and we expect another \$30,000 in December for the second year. Ten percent of the funding goes to town for administrative expenses. The remaining funds support the efforts this year, and the main goal is to start a respite adult day program here in Mt. Vernon and the surrounding communities. It will not be a medical respite program, but it will provide day programming for 6-10 older adults facing various challenges such as dementia. The program hopes to be in place for up to 5 days a week for about 6 hours a day and will have games, activities, and many more activities. Locations may include the Community Center, as well as the Grange (Vienna) and Starling Hall (Fayette). The committee hopes to come back to the Selectboard with a job description for staff for this program in late February.

The committee has also been working to organize February Frolix which is about to kick off by distributing activity bags to 60+ households. The calendar of events includes many other fun activities including snowshoe events, chair yoga, skating, sledding, and more. Thank you from the committee to everyone for helping, and thank you especially to those who helped clear the ice on Minnehonk.

The Selectboard appreciates the update and all the great work from this committee.

### **7:18 - 7 Lakes Alliance re: Long Pond update**

Charlie Baeder here with a report and update. The 7 Lakes Alliance is hoping to have town participation in a steering committee which is meeting to coordinate the writing of a Long Pond management plan. Other participants will include other local towns, lake association groups, the DEP, local businesses and more. A major goal of this planning work is to fix erosion issues around the watershed and ensure water quality is maintained. The group will be looking for funding to help support solutions to these challenges. Other solutions might include updates to various town ordinances.

Paul has some documents Charlie sent from last plan, he will forward to Anna and Bob to peruse. The group is looking at the next two to three weeks for initial meeting of the Long Pond Watershed Based Management Plan Steering Committee. Past documents can also be shared on the town website. The group also hopes have a public meeting in about a month.

SB Crockett motions to nominates SB Libby to participate on the committee, SB Grenier seconds. Passes.

## **Mount Vernon Select Board Meeting Minutes of 01-31-22 (Cont.)**

### **7:34 ORC update**

Susan and Michelle are here to update the Selectboard on the work of the Ordinance Review Committee. The committee has had three Zoom meetings and have made a lot of progress. They finished a draft firework ordinance and welcome comments. They plan to have a public hearing on everything underway so far in late March. If there are interim questions, please send them to Susan and the committee.

The committee has also made a lot of progress on the draft solar farm ordinance, and plan to have a draft to send to the Selectboard after their next meeting. Discussion about the work on this ordinance so far and the logistics of considering a moratorium until the ordinance is completed. Bob plans to touch base with Bill on this issue.

Bob also shared that he had discussed the Land Use Ordinance with Alice, who has been working to update formatting and integrate ordinances passed since the last time the document was updated. A draft will go the ORC soon, and Bob is willing to help review it with the committee. The Selectboard also plans to review the fee schedule before the document is finalized.

Thank you to the Ordinance Review Committee for all their work and to Susan and Michelle for this helpful update.

### **8:00 – Broadband Update**

The Selectboard recently received the bill for the RedZone review of the area, it is only \$2000 since other area towns also decided to participate. The whole coalition working on RedZone right now and hoping it works well. Spectrum has also come back with a new offer to consider. The committee is doing phenomenal work and is hoping to come up with a recommendation so an article can be written in time for the warrant.

### **8:10 – Other Business**

Town Lawyer: Paul emailed Tom Carey about being our town attorney and asked if he wanted to meet, will wait to hear back.

Plowing: John is doing a great job with the off road plowing, and Lee and crew are doing a great job with the on road plowing – thank you to all!

Landlocked land issue from last summer: We agreed to consider adding this to the warrant, and need to consider language.



## **Mount Vernon Select Board Meeting Minutes of 01-31-22 (Cont.)**

Audio/video challenges: Paul did some research earlier to try to find potential solutions to the challenges with audio and video from the Selectboard meetings. One potential solution is an item called "the Owl" which is a gadget that is used to help improve meeting quality for those listening from a far. Would appreciate Mark and other's opinions here.

LD1772: This is a bill being considered at the Maine legislature to relax rules for remote meetings moving forward, which could be helpful for many town committees. Bob will reach out to our representatives to let them know we would support this bill.

MMA Zoom on ARPA funds: There is a webinar coming up on March 2<sup>nd</sup> about final rulings on how ARPA funds can be used.

Bridge: We still haven't been billed for the Cottle Hill bridge. Paul will email and ask for the bill. Paul will also email Andy about the Blake Hill Road bridge. We might need to use some ARPA funds to get the engineering work done for this project.

Audit: The audit is underway, and this second piece is remote so Kerry is scanning in materials from 2021. Discussion about how best to format hours for employees on the warrant. We can look at other area towns for inspiration.

Trio Update: Nadine called today and will be calling back soon about schedule for transitions. Discussion about the hosted version which we hope to include in the 2023 budget.

Spirit of America Award: We have a name in mind.

MMA University: We can sign up for this with current personnel after they swap systems if we wish.

### **8:30 – Adjourn**

Motion to adjourn from SB Grenier, second from SB Crockett. Passes.

## Mount Vernon Select Board Meeting Minutes of 02-14-22

**Selectboard Members Present:** Paul Crockett, Bob Grenier, Anna Libby (notetaker)

**Staff and Guests (in person):** Kerry Casey

**Guests (via Zoom):** Bill Rosenberg, Ken Elliot

### **7:01 Call to Order**

SB Crockett calls the meeting to order at 7:01. We gathered 6:30 for the warrant.

### **7:02 Review and Accept Minutes**

SB Grenier moves to accept the minutes as amended by Paul, SB Libby seconds. Passes.

### **7:02 Broadband Update**

Bill and Ken join us to give an update on the work of the Broadband committee. In the coming weeks, they are expecting to receive proposals from several groups (Axiom, Matrix, Spectrum) who had submitted proposals to the WKLCBA as part of the RFP process. We will also be getting a proposal from RedZone. The RedZone proposal will be presented to the entire coalition as a final meeting when it is ready.

We are also waiting for a proposal from Mission Broadband Associates (looked at several other possibilities and these folks got good recommendations) and expect that we will sign a letter of agreement with them. This group is to help us get grant money and help evaluate proposals as needed.

The coalition that we have been a part of for the past three years has voted to dissolve itself. Though there has been benefit gained from working together, like the analysis from Casco Bay that we rely on, the RFP process brought out the differences between the towns (in terms of current infrastructure) and the difficulties in finding a proposal that works well for all the towns uniformly. There may be some limited financials to wrap up as part of this process.

The National Digital Equity met with the committee recently and shared some compelling data about the demographics of family in town, like the median income. We are operating under the idea that broadband is essential, and this proposal helps share ideas about how to connect families who are low income to these resources. The NDEC has sent in a proposal for \$2500. As part of the proposal we would gain a lot of knowledge about affordable broadband, affordable equipment, digital literacy, and public computer access. Potential benefits also include free educational courses and potential connections to free laptops and equipment. The selectboard will review the proposal before the next meeting. The committee will connect with other towns who have worked with this group. Kerry will look at where we are with the current budget.

The Broadband Committee has a communications working group. Chuck is working on an email mailing list. The broadband website is now linked to the town website (still in the pilot phase and looking for feedback). They also plan to host some discussions, like the one Vienna is hosting this week. The committee is hoping to bring proposals and options to the town and get a sense what the citizens of the town are interested in. There is the potential of having some choices at the town meeting, with various budget numbers attached.

## Mount Vernon Select Board Meeting Minutes of 02-14-22 (Cont.)

### **7:41 Updates on Trio, Audit, Etc.**

Trio – Trio will get back to SB Grenier about training. They have recorded classes that can be accessed.

Audit – Kerry spent a lot of time on this project last week. The auditors are working both 2020 and 2021. We will need to reserve more space in the town report to include information from both years.

### **7:45 Other Business**

Bridge – SB Crockett reached out to another company that had been suggested at a recent meeting about engineering work for the Blake Hill Bridget, but it is outside of the usual scope of their work. We need to decide how to move on, as it is fairly urgent.

We don't have a specific proposal on the table, but we are estimating around \$50,000 for the engineering (we will use ARPA money). Engineering is required for the State to pay their share of the proposal. Discussion about putting the engineering out to bid. We do not have the expertise on the Board to develop the RFP specs to put out to bid without engineering work being done first.

Motion by SB Grenier for Paul to work with WPA design – Steve Govani - to develop the engineering and RFP specs for this project using up to \$50,000 from ARPA money, second by SB Libby. Passes. We are asking for this work so we can put the bridge out to bid.

The next batch of ARPA funds likely won't arrive until the next fiscal year.

Plaque – We updated the plaque with the new oldest citizen – Dorothy Kent! SB Grenier presented her with beautiful stained glass artwork by Kristen Jiorle.

Tom Carey – We have invited him to the next meeting to interview him in executive session. There are no current legal issues, but we want to have time in case he wants to discuss past happenings etc.

Streetlights – FYI to residents, the streetlights are now LED streetlights, and the bill has gone down slightly. We are in a 15 year contract for these.

Tom Ward Request – Maine Community Foundation letter as submitted by Tom needs to be signed to include in a grant application. SB Crockett motions to sign and send in letter, SB Grenier seconds. All are in favor.

Water quality at the library – There were concerns about water quality at the library. SB Crockett donated a test, and the test results arrived back that the water is safe to drink.

Trish Davis – Trish is doing a great job, and recently gave us a very helpful report. Thank you Trish!

Letter from town employee - One town employee sent a letter to the Board asking about how some towns gave out bonuses to employees for Covid relief. We are planning to use the funds for other purposes.

Minutes on website – The minutes haven't been being added to the website. The most recent ones are from October. The minutes missing from 2020 have also not yet been added. Kerry became aware because they are needed for the audit. SB Crockett will ask Alice to get those updated.

Website refresher – We will add to another agenda soon. We need a new one that is mobile friendly.

## Mount Vernon Select Board Meeting Minutes of 02-14-22 (Cont.)

Ordinance Updates – SB Grenier will check in with Alice when she's back so that they can wrap this up and get it to the ORC.

Fee schedule – SB Crockett will check in with Bill about the fee schedule in case we want to update these to make sure we are covering expenses. Some towns pay the code enforcement officer out of those funds.

Road construction – Readfield took out a bond several years ago and fixed all their roads at once. SB Grenier would like to discuss with them how it worked. Various roads in Mt. Vernon need upkeep. Various dirt roads are lacking in gravel and need a refresh. Various tar roads also need updates. Lee is hoping to do Dunn's Corner Road this next year which has been in rough shape. Bean Road has some rough pieces as well. Other roads under consideration for work include Desert Pond and Mooar Hill. These costs can add up quickly. Kerry mentions that Androscoggin has a good rate right now. SB Grenier will discuss with the town of Readfield and report back.

Road manual check in – Bob was reading the road manual and it mentions that if you have traffic controlling devices you need to have an ordinance – though it specifies in the manual speed bumps, humps, and tables. Bob will check in with MMA about this.

Long Pond Steering Committee – SB Libby has been attending meetings. They hope to have a draft action plan to review at a community meeting soon.

Budget – we need to work on this more at upcoming meetings. Potential expenses for next year include computers and other tech (including a larger monitor for Kerry). We also need to upgrade some various email related items (approved in current budget) which SB Crockett will work on. We also need to check in with Nate and Scott to see what they are thinking/planning for computer support and work next year.

Once some upgrades are made, we will be able to all work on the same budget sheet at once.

We will need to send emails to various boards asking them to send their budgets to use.

Fire Department Card – SB Crockett will check in with Jason about the debit card. Kerry reports that Androscoggin says it can be a challenge because expenses need to be approved on the warrant before spending money.

Zoom – We have limited storage on our account so we can't record meetings. We may want to consider an upgraded account. SB Grenier will check in with Eric about their strategy around this.

### **8:26 – Adjourn**

SB Grenier motions to adjourn at 8:26, SB Libby seconds. All in favor.

8:00pm      Adjourn

## FREE INCOME TAX SERVICES

The AARP Tax-Aide program provides free Federal and State tax return services. Tax-Aide volunteers are trained, tested and certified by the IRS to prepare returns for low and moderate income taxpayers, with particular focus on those over 60, but all are welcome!

Low income taxpayers should note that the only way they can receive the Maine Property Tax Fairness Credit and the Sales Tax Fairness Credit is to file a Maine Income Tax return. Even if you pay no income tax you may be eligible for these credits. These may be worth several hundreds of dollars, depending on your circumstances.

Covid-19 measures will be in effect at all sites. Taxpayers may be asked health-related questions. Masks will be required. Social distancing will be maintained as much as possible.

The free tax services are provided by appointment only by calling January 4<sup>th</sup> or later and are available at the following sites:

- The Dr. Shaw Memorial Library in Mount Vernon (call 293-2565 when the library is open on Saturdays, Mondays and Wednesdays). Tax dates are Tuesdays, March 1, March 15 and March 29, with April 12 as an additional day if needed. This site is intended primarily for Mount Vernon and Vienna residents.
- The Cohen Community Center in Hallowell (call 377-8840 or 626-7777 Monday through Friday, 11:00 am – 6:00 pm). Tax dates are Wednesdays and Thursdays, February 2 through April 14.
- The Muskie Center in Waterville (873-4745).
- United Way of Tri-County in Farmington also offers assistance (778-5048).
- A good site for all sorts of social service assistance and information is 211. Their website is <https://211maine.org>. You can also just dial 211, or 1-866-811-5695. Their email is [info@211maine.org](mailto:info@211maine.org)

The available slots for our Tax Help days with David and Christine are now full. Please call us if you still need help with taxes. We are so thankful to our wonderful AARP volunteers David & Christine for their hard work and commitment to this service.

## ORDINANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

At the request of the Select Board, the Ordinance Review Committee has prepared draft ordinances relating to Fireworks and Solar Farms. We are continuing to tweak the drafts and plan to hold a public hearing soon, likely in late March or April. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the current working draft, please contact Susan Herman, Chair of the Ordinance Review Committee at [gscherman@fairpoint.net](mailto:gscherman@fairpoint.net). We have been meeting remotely and our meetings are posted on the town website and at the Town Hall, Town Library and Flying Pond Store. The ORC will be meeting on March 24, 2002 via ZOOM at 6:30 pm. The sign on information for the Zoom meeting will be posted shortly. Our agenda will include discussion of the proposed Solar Farm Ordinance and we have made arrangements to have a member of the Readfield Planning Board who was instrumental in drafting the Readfield Solar Farm Ordinance participate in our meeting.

Susan P. Herman

## BROADBAND COMMITTEE UPDATE

### *How much internet do I need?*

In 2022, Mt Vernon voters will be asked to select a project to provide every location in Mt. Vernon *access to high quality, affordable internet (broadband)*. This article focuses on the aspect of internet “quality” that our survey told us was most important to them: **the speed of service**. Future articles will address other elements of quality as well as cost.

The “speed” of an internet connection is the volume of information that can flow both coming down to your devices (download) and going back up to the internet (upload). Speed is measured in megabytes per second (mbps) or gigabytes per second (gbps). Measuring internet speed is important because:

- Internet subscriber fees are based on internet speed;
- Subscribers’ satisfaction with internet service depends largely on the adequacy of down/up speed to support the way your household or business uses the service (e.g., email, streaming, games, etc.); and,
- The State of Maine determines eligibility for substantial grants to towns based on the speed available to each location (and those grants will reduce future subscriber fees and/or real estate taxes)

Today the State defines “underserved” as access to less than 50 mbps download speed and 10 mbps upload (often abbreviated “50/10”). If you get internet access from Consolidated Communications, your speed is probably less than 50/10 and you can help Mt. Vernon qualify for State and Federal grant funds by documenting the speed you get.

### HOW TO DOCUMENT MY SPEED?

You can help our community qualify for State funding by reporting your internet speed at: <http://www.mainebroadbandcoalition.org/landing>. Taking the test will help correct state speed measurements that are known to understate the availability of internet services in town, and therefore to shortchange Mt. Vernon when it comes to grants. In addition, you can determine if you are getting the speed for which you are paying.

### HOW MUCH DO I REALLY NEED?

A tool at <https://www.hightspeedinternet.com/how-much-internet-speed-do-i-need> allows you to enter specific information on how many devices you have, and how you use internet. With this input, the tool will estimate how much internet download speed you need for it to work well in your home *today*. (Note: all experts agree that tomorrow’s need will be much greater.) [A Consumer Reports article, How Much Internet Speed Do You Need?](#) Is also a good resource.

### STAY IN TOUCH

If you need help conducting a speed test, or have any questions about broadband in Mt. Vernon, or would like to sit in on a Mount Vernon Broadband Committee meeting, please do not hesitate to contact us by calling Alice Counts at 293-1105. Alice will have a Committee

**Dr. Shaw Memorial Library**  
**March 2022**  
Submitted by Mary Anne Libby

“Books were only one type of receptacle where we stored a lot of things we were afraid we might forget. There is nothing magical in them, at all. The magic is only in what books say, how they stitched the patches of the universe together into one garment for us.”

Ray Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451

We still offer “curbside” service for anyone who wants something to read but must remain isolated. Just call or email us and we’ll try to assemble an assortment of books, and we’ll arrange pick up (outside the door, in the parking area) with you during hours when we are open.

Alice will record another story on video, to post on our Facebook page during March, and she will put together a Take&Make on a related theme for our young patrons. Please let us know if you would like a Take&Make for any of your kids! You can message us on our Facebook page, email us at librari-an@drshawlibrary.org , leave a message on our phone, or just sign up at the library. We’ll let you know when the kits are ready to be picked up.

Local yoga instructor Ann Parker will present a session on **Yoga for Bone Health on Saturday, March 19, at 9AM, at the Mt. Vernon Community Center. for us. There will be a limit of 12 people, so please call us at the library or email us, to let us know you would like to attend.** Ann teaches yoga at Maine General, and is great at instruction for gentle yoga and movement that helps us all stay more nimble and balanced as we age. Ann tell us that yoga can be an effective tool in improving and maintaining bone health as we age. We’ll vary traditional postures for individual ability whether you’re new to yoga or experienced. This low-impact weight-bearing practice emphasizes safe movement for those with bone density loss as well as those wishing to prevent it. Learn the risk factors for osteoporosis and how our choices can contribute to stronger, healthier bones. Please note, getting down to and up from the floor at least once will be an option if you would like to bring a yoga mat.

Please wear clothing that will allow you to stretch and move comfortably. Non-slip footwear such as sneakers are a safe alternative to bare feet if you’d prefer to keep shoes on. This will be a free introductory class. All are welcome.

Last summer we had someone from the Bicycle Coalition of Maine come to do a bike repair workshop with local folks. It was a popular event. The Coalition has offered to follow up with another workshop this year. We are planning it for May 2<sup>nd</sup>, up in the library parking lot. We will have more information soon. Meanwhile, put it on your calendar! Those Coalition folks are so knowledgeable and helpful.

The online streaming service we subscribe to, Hoopla, has now added various popular magazines to the many types of materials you can borrow from them and read online. Go to their website and see what’s new!

We have a growing supply of board games and jigsaw puzzles to lend. Come see what might be of interest, and you can take one home for a couple of weeks. Games provide such good, engaging entertainment for us during the winter months! Meanwhile, many of us around the Metroplex have started playing the online game Wordle. A new five-letter word is posted each day, and you get six chances to come up with the correct word. It is not competitive, just a fun, quiet way to challenge yourself. Here’s the link if you want to try it: <https://www.powerlanguage.co.uk/wordle/>



**Dr. Shaw Memorial Library**  
**March 2022**  
Submitted by Mary Anne Libby

**Some online resources to help with basic needs:**

Burn permits are now accepted online through the Maine Forest Service. You can get information on when burn permits are allowed, and there is a link to getting the burn permit here: <https://www.maine.gov/dacf/about/news/news.shtml?id=5786166>

At home Covid tests can still be requested through the US Postal Service, here:

[https://special.usps.com/testkits?utm\\_source=fark&utm\\_medium=website&utm\\_content=link&ICID=ref\\_fark](https://special.usps.com/testkits?utm_source=fark&utm_medium=website&utm_content=link&ICID=ref_fark)

And there is information from the US government website about the tests at this site: <https://www.covidtests.gov/>

If you need to use a computer or need a bit of help navigating these sites, please come in to see us when we are open, and we will be glad to help you get set up!

What I'm reading: I just finished Talk Radio, a new book by Ham Martin – a Maine author I've never read before, and the latest Louise Erdrich novel, The Sentence – one of the main characters is a ghost, and it is set in a bookstore. Currently I'm enjoying a middle-grade novel, When the World Turned Upside Down, by K. Iburg. It is about a group of kids contending with the start of the pandemic, and how they keep connections and learn more about themselves and the issues they face. What are you reading or watching or listening to, to get through the cold winter?

Is the Covid Pandemic Really Getting Better?

Feb 23, 2022

Dan Onion, MD, MPH

Mt. Vernon/Vienna/Fayette Health Officer

293-2076; [dkonion@gmail.com](mailto:dkonion@gmail.com)

Everybody seems to be ecstatically deciding it's time to celebrate by throwing masks in the wind and quitting all other Covid precautions. There are indeed some indications that the pandemic from both the Delta and the Omicron variant that replaced it in late December and January here, is subsiding. On the other hand, the Omicron strain #2 has not yet been found in Maine but is zipping through Europe and starting to be found in the US. It is even more transmissible than the Omicron #1 strain.

However, the pandemic outcome measures are only relatively better and there is reason to fear that we could see those measures go up again in yet another surge, starting a week or two into March. The public's fervent but perhaps premature hope, with the abandonment of precautions, the appearance of yet another, even more infectious Omicron strain, coming on fast in the US, increased transmissions during the February school vacations and basketball tournaments, and our March town meetings, could all coalesce to bring us one heck of a new surge in late March.

Granted, the recent improvements of Maine wastewater Covid loads, hospitalizations and severe disease as reflected in ICU/ventilator use, could well be permanent, but they could also still be only a transient change. I'd like to see us achieve real community immunity, with over 80% of the population fully immunized by then. We are close now, at 73.4% of all, and 77% of eligible people (i.e. age 5 and over),

If all those worries are still diminishing through the end of March, maybe further opening up will be reasonable. But the older you are, the greater the risk. Since January 2021 to today, almost half the Covid deaths are in those 70 and older. I, for one, plan to get any boosters for which I am eligible, and to stay masked with good KN95s, N95s, or doubled surgical and cloth masks when indoors with people not recently tested and negative for Covid, for several more months, no matter further pandemic easing here in Maine. Please be Covid-careful for yourself and your family!

It all flows  
downstream  
Protecting the  
water quality of the  
Belgrade Lakes  
(with a case study  
for Long Pond)

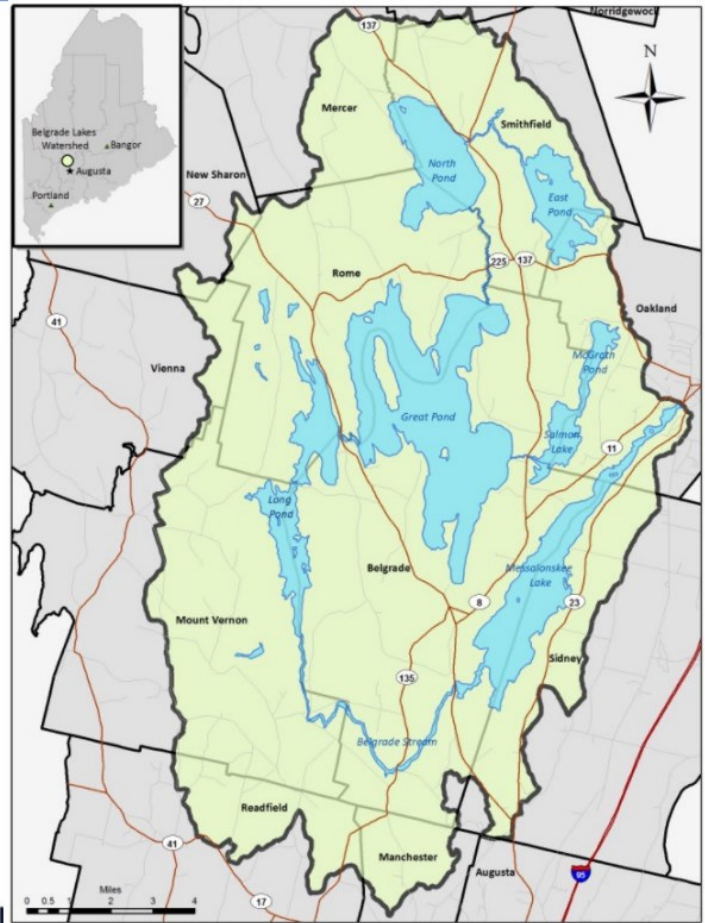
Public Meeting  
March 10, 2022

6:30 pm

Visit [www.7lakesalliance.org](http://www.7lakesalliance.org) for  
Zoom information



ecological  
instincts  
Environmental Consulting & Ecodeign



Come learn about the state of the lakes and  
provide feedback!



Dr Jenn Cotone  
The Big White Barn  
169 South Road  
Readfield ME 04355  
207-620-2078

Cotonefamilychiro@gmail.com