

THE BRIDGE

Spring 2024
Norridgewock, Maine

ph (207) 634-2252
www.norridgewock.gov

Voters Approve Wider Distribution, Strong Communication with *The Bridge*

Over the last several years, Town officials have been working to create new and unique ways to enhance communication with the public. Finding a platform that reaches everyone is impossible; the Town website, signboards (electronic and manual), e-mail distributions, flyers, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have all been introduced to improve communication. Recently, a mass text communication system was implemented (learn more in this edition about signing up for alerts!). With the work of Town staff and a handful of volunteers, *The Bridge* newsletter came to fruition and has had a modest yet limited reach to the public. Town Administration requested funding to have the newsletter printed and mailed at a discount, bulk rate to every person in Norridgewock. The Select Board endorsed the request, the Budget Committee supported the funding, and voters backed the same; this is the first newsletter funded under that request.

The Bridge is slated to be issued once per quarter and will be mailed directly to you. This should help reduce obstacles to keeping the public informed of what is happening and increase transparency across all Town operations. We hope you find this newsletter interesting and informative, while providing relevant information about Town business and happenings in the community. Over time, businesses will be featured, non-profit organizations may submit relevant articles, and contributors will offer up interesting articles of general interest to locals. The goal is to create a stronger connection with all members of our community. If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, please let us know. If you are interested in becoming a contributor (on a regular basis or just one time), please stop by the Town Office or email rlabelle@norridgewock.gov. We hope you enjoy the newsletter. ♦

Kayak & Paddleboard Rentals Coming to Oosoola Park This Spring!

Over the winter, the TIF Advisory Committee reviewed a proposal to install a kayak and paddleboard rental opportunity for Oosoola Park. After careful consideration, the committee selected an 8-unit cage that will offer a mix of kayaks and paddleboards for people to enjoy at an affordable hourly rate. The locked storage cages will offer a kayak, paddleboard, and life vests.

Using solar and cellular technology, the cage will unlock at the touch of a button on your device. Users will be able to use an app on their cellular device to secure the rental, complete any necessary liability waivers, and pay electronically for the rental.



KAYAK & PADDLEBOARD RENTALS • A unit similar to the one pictured above will be placed at Oosoola Park as a part of a new, low-cost kayak and paddle-board rental offering.

There have been concerns expressed about the Town maintaining liability; however, the Town is protected through a valid lease agreement, whereby the leasing company maintains liability. The leasing company (Rent!Fun) is also responsible for placing and removing the cage for off-season storage. It is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the cage and equipment inside. The upside for the Town is that it will share in the revenues. The kayak and paddleboard rentals will be offered at an affordable rate, likely with a two-hour minimum. These rentals will support easier river access for those who may not otherwise have watercraft access to get on the river; they will also promote the river to folks in the region or just passing through to stop by and enjoy Norridgewock for some extra time.

We encourage smart and safe boating, whether you're using motorized or non-motorized watercraft. If you are unsure of boating safety, you may want to consider taking an online boating education course. The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife maintains a schedule of trainings, but you can also visit <http://boat.us.org/maine/> for a free online boating safety course. ♦

David Obert Presented Spirit of America Award

At this year's annual Town Meeting, David Obert was recognized with the Town of Norridgewock's Spirit of America Award. The award is celebrated by towns and cities across the state and is presented to individuals and organizations that inspire volunteerism. David Obert is a young member of the community who has gone to great lengths over the last few years to get involved and give back with his time and talent. As a member of the Maine Antique Tractor Club, he is involved in many of their events and activities, giving his time and equipment to improve the club's Norridgewock property. He has shared this passion with the public by offering free hay rides behind his antique tractor during the Norridgewock Holiday Stroll, and he's been a fixture in the lighted tractor parade since its inception.

As part of the family business, DMO Landscaping, David has also been helpful with the Norridgewock Historical Society's Duck Drop. He volunteers to operate the loader to drop the ducks, which supports one of the organization's major annual fundraising efforts. He is also very involved with the Norridgewock Sportsmen Association. He has spent countless hours on trail maintenance and has further stepped up to assume the role of Snowmobile Trailmaster.

David's work is inspiring to anyone who sees it, and it is especially encouraging knowing that he is of the next generation to lead the community. State Representative Jack Ducharme presented David with a Legislative Sentiment co-sponsored by himself and State Senator Brad Farrin. The Town presented David with a framed, commemorative photo of the bridge and the north side of the river in recognition of the award.

To nominate an individual or organization for a future Spirit of America Award recognition, please submit the name and short explanation of why you think they deserve the recognition. Submissions can be emailed to rlabelle@norridgewock.gov or dropped off at the Town Office. ♦



SPIRIT OF AMERICA AWARD • At the annual Town Meeting, David Obert was recognized with the Town's Spirit of America Volunteer Award. He is seen above with the framed photo presented to him by the Town. David was also presented with a Legislative Sentiment co-sponsored by Senator Brad Farrin and Representative Jack Ducharme.

New Burn Permit Regulations Are Now In Effect

Do you enjoy having recreational campfires at your residence, camp, or vacation home? The most common cause of wildfires in Maine are fires that are too large or left unattended and escape. A new law has been enacted to reduce the chance of an escaped fire. It defines the size of a recreational campfire and the need for a burn permit for larger outdoor fires. The new law also makes it unlawful for burning outdoors during a red flag warning.

By definition, a "recreational campfire" means an outdoor fire used for cooking, personal warmth, light, ceremonial, or aesthetic purposes, and that is not part of debris disposal (aka burning brush). A residential fire contained within an outdoor fireplace also falls into this category.

According to new State Law: A person who kindles or uses a recreational campfire **may not allow the recreational campfire to exceed 3 feet in diameter on the ground at the base of the fire or 3 feet in height.** If the fire exceeds that size, then a burn permit is required. Burn permits can be obtained without cost at www.maineburnpermit.com or from the local fire department. ♦



Norridgewock and Mercer residents: If you don't wish to get a permit online, you may do so in person. To get a burn permit during business hours (Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), call the fire station at 634-2208. Outside of those hours, call Somerset County Dispatch at 474-6386. *If you have questions about what you can burn, call the fire station or the Maine Forest Service at 287-2791.*



WASTE MANAGEMENT

*Waste Management is a private business.
As a convenience to residents, we provide their
back gate hours.*

Sun, Mon, Tues Closed
Weds, Thurs, Fri 9:30am – 6:00pm
Sat 7:30am – 4:00pm

**472 Airport Rd.
634-2714**

Why You Should Volunteer in the Community

Have you ever wondered how community events come to life in your town? Well, it all starts with town citizens like you, who want to make our town a little bit better. You might be wondering what volunteers in our town do. If I were to list everything volunteers put a lot of time into, that would be quite a long list. There are many volunteers who serve as first responders, participate in outdoor activities such as ATV clubs and recreation departments, and contribute in many other ways. Some of the tasks that need to be done in our town are small and won't take too much effort or time at all. We just need volunteers to help out.

You might be thinking, what if there weren't any volunteers? Well, if we didn't have numerous volunteers, important events like Oosoola Days and public dinners would not be possible. So, if you would like to join a committee or even just volunteer, please visit our Town Office at 16 Perkins St, Norridgewock, ME 04957, or call them at (207) 634-2252. Filling out a volunteer application is easy. We hope to see you at future events and volunteering around our beautiful town! ♦ AC

Abigail Clair is the Town's youngest active committee member. She serves on the Parks Committee, which is integral to organizing many community events. Ms. Clair also received Norridgewock's 2023 Spirit of America Award for volunteerism.

Town Boards & Committees Regular Meeting Schedule

Most board and committee meetings are held at the Town Office, and many of those meetings are held on a fixed schedule. Many of the meetings are also streamed on Zoom, Facebook Live, and posted to YouTube.

While some boards are elected, many positions are appointed. Some meet often and some sporadically. There's something for every level of commitment. If you are interested in learning more about being a part of a committee or want to apply to be a member, visit the Town Office or visit www.norridgewock.gov/volunteer. ♦

Select Board	1 st & 3 rd Wednesdays, 6:00 p.m.
Planning Board	2 nd Thursday, 6:00 p.m.
TIF Advisory Committee	4 th Tuesday, 5:00 p.m.
Library Board of Trustees	4 th Thursday, 3:30 p.m.

VOLUNTEER

(noun)

[UK] /vol.ən'tɪər/ | [US] /vɑː.lən'tɪr/

A person who does something, especially helping other people, willingly and without being forced or paid to do it.

Source: Cambridge Dictionary

Contributors appreciated... Contributors wanted...

The Bridge newsletter is written largely by Town staff but has benefitted greatly from the volunteer submissions by Becky Ketchum (affiliated with the Somerset Grange, Historical Society, Libraries, and more) If you would like to become a regular contributor or just submit an article occasionally, please email Richard at rlabelle@norridgewock.gov.

Articles (and/or photos) may vary in length but will be published space-permitting and with consideration given to the broader interests of the public.



Skowhegan Area High School's 2nd Annual Community Service Day May 21, 2024

Are you a resident of a SAD 54 community?

Do you have a project you need help with (raking, stacking wood, gardening, etc.)? The students can help! To get your project on the

list, scan the QR code below, visit <https://forms.gle/Nt9Gvh8P5eSQMUhTA>, or call the Town Office to get signed up.



*Thank you to Waste Management
for once again sponsoring the
BBQ for the student volunteers*

Town Introduces New Text Alert and Update System

As part of the push to enhance communications between the Town and residents, officials are pleased to introduce a new text notification/alert system for residents to sign up for. Especially in the last couple of years, the weather has created a major need to be able to communicate with a large number of people in a short amount of time. Prior to the December wind and rain storm, the Select Board had already begun exploring opportunities with a text alert system. Unfortunately, it wasn't in place for the storm, but its potential value became remarkably evident.



The new alert and update system went live in early 2024. The Town partnered with CivicReady to introduce the system, which allows officials to communicate with the public in various formats. Residents can sign up to receive alerts via text, voice call, and/or email. You can select emergency updates only or add other notification categories, including general notifications, roadwork/traffic updates, parks and rec, river levels, Town events, recreational trails, fire department updates, election reminders, and libraries.

To sign up, visit www.norridgewock.gov/notify or scan the QR code above. If you don't have access to the Internet, please call the Town Office and staff will help enroll you in the program. ♦

State Makes Changes to Absentee Voting & Voter Registration Processes

The Maine Secretary of State's Office was required by law to implement an online voter registration system. The system went online earlier this year in a push to enroll more eligible voters. You can also use the online system to process changes in contact information (name, address, phone number, etc.) or to change your party enrollment. To use the online voter registration service to register or to modify/update your voter information, visit <https://registertovote.sos.maine.gov>.



The second new law impacting Maine voters is the establishment of an ongoing absentee ballot status. Voters who will be at least 65 years of age by the next election or who self-identify as having a disability may apply for ongoing absentee voter status. A voter who qualifies and enrolls will automatically receive an absentee ballot for each statewide election, town election, and any other election for which the voter is eligible to vote. There won't be a recurring need to complete an absentee ballot request. Voters must complete the application in writing to participate in this program. Applications are available at the Town Office. ♦

NEXT ELECTION IS JUNE 11, 2024

State Primary &
School Budget Referendum Elections
8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
Mill Stream Elementary Gymnasium

Congratulations!

to the following Town employees for their
dedicated years of service

Aimee Robinson
Administration
5 Years

Matt Everett
Fire Department
15 Years

Rodney Grant
Public Works
5 Years

Kyle Mullin
Fire Department
10 Years

Upcoming Town Office Closures



- April 15 – Patriots' Day
- May 21 – Community Service Day
- May 27 – Memorial Day
- June 11 – Primary/School Election
- June 21 – Juneteenth, observed
- July 4-5 – Independence Day

Regular Hours

Mon, Tues, Weds, Fri 8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Thurs 8:30 am – 6:00 pm

**Subject to change, office is open weather-permitting*

News from the Norridgewock Public Library

The Norridgewock Public Library has been abuzz with activity this winter. We offered many community events for all ages, setting record attendance in February.

Speaking of buzzing, we recently had Mark Reifschneider with the Somerset Beekeepers Club speak to our community about beekeeping. He brought some hive boxes, honeycomb, other artifacts, and delicious honey to taste. Other adult and family programming this winter included wreath-making and the restart of our book club.

In January, we hosted Ret and Karen Talbot. Ret Talbot is the co-author of *Chasing Shadows, My Life Tracking the Great White Shark*. Karen Talbot is a scientific illustrator and artist who drew the illustrations for *Chasing Shadows*. Both spoke about their work and the book. Karen's artwork has been on display in the library. Continuing our artist Meet and Greet series, Cheryl Storer will be featuring her art in July. If you want to showcase your artwork, please contact the librarian at 634-2828.

Mark your calendars for this all-natural presentation. Herbalist Dominique Rollins of Seeded Soul will present *Know Before You Mow*, a guide on how to use items in your own yard for health benefits, on April 20.



The Norridgewock Book Club has enjoyed gathering to discuss the monthly book selection. April's current selection is *Apples Never Fall* by Liane Moriarty. The club meets at the library on the last Thursday of the month at 5:00 p.m..

Winter brought many children's activities to the library as well. Our Tadpole Storytime continues every 1st and 3rd Thursday at 10:30 a.m. We gather at the library for a story, craft, or snack and activity twice a month for children ages 2 through preschool (ages are suggested; older or younger children may attend). Join us April 4 & 25, and May 2 & 16.

Our Froglet group (suggested grades Kinder through 3rd) met in December and February to hear a holiday story and craft paper ornaments, love bugs, and cards. Join us on April 9 at 3:00 pm for our last Froglet event of the school year.

Other children's programming included a coding event in February during which patrons helped tell Sammy, the sandwich robot, where to go to meet up with his friends. The library will host a second coding event before the end of the school year.

Also children's author Tamra Wight will be joining us on May 4 at 10:30 a.m.. She will be speaking to children about her books and playing a wildlife fact game.

Also of interest, this year is Smokey the Bear's 80th birthday. We are celebrating by having a reading challenge in April. Participants will read 3-5 books about fire and nature and receive stickers, a stamp, and other small prizes. Be on the lookout for summer programming announcements and our summer reading programs—one for children and one for adults!

As always, we encourage you to come check out our library. Between the community events and the bevy of books, including many bestsellers, we have something for everyone. ♦ KJD



Library Hours

Tuesday & Thursday 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday & Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

40 Mercer Rd., Norridgewock
(207) 634-2828
library@norridgewock.gov

Kelli Dorais, Librarian
Library Trustees: Marnie Bottesch, Ruth Keister,
Becky Ketchum, Jean Lancaster, Jill Lawrence



Music Series Returns to Oosoola Park

Last summer, the Parks Committee organized its first-ever music series to engage everyone in the community, regardless of age or ability. It was a huge success, and each week, so many different people attended. It is with great pleasure that the committee announces the return of the Oosoola Park Music Series in partnership with the premiere sponsor, Franklin Savings Bank! The music series will be Tuesdays from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., weather permitting. It will run for nearly two months—beginning July 9 and going through August 27.

Some of the acts from last summer will return to the park, while some new performers will also join us. Our most successful food trucks from last summer have also committed to joining us once again: *Geeze Louise*, *That's a Wrap*, and *Pork's BBQ*. We're excited for you to join us in the park for nine amazing evenings of family fun, great food, and amazing local musical talent! ♦

Franklin

Savings Bank

Franklin Savings Bank is the proud premiere sponsor of the Oosoola Park Music Series.



MUSIC SERIES • A well-attended evening during the 2023 Oosoola Park Music Series. The two-month event is sure to bring some great excitement to Norridgewock. Plan to join us on Tuesday nights from 5 to 7 p.m., from July 9 through August 27.

July 9	Payton Dawn
July 16	Dom Colizzi & Lee Stetson
July 23	The Shack
July 30	TAOT
August 6	The Song Pirates
August 13	Bella
August 20	Signal 3
August 27	Crooked Bill

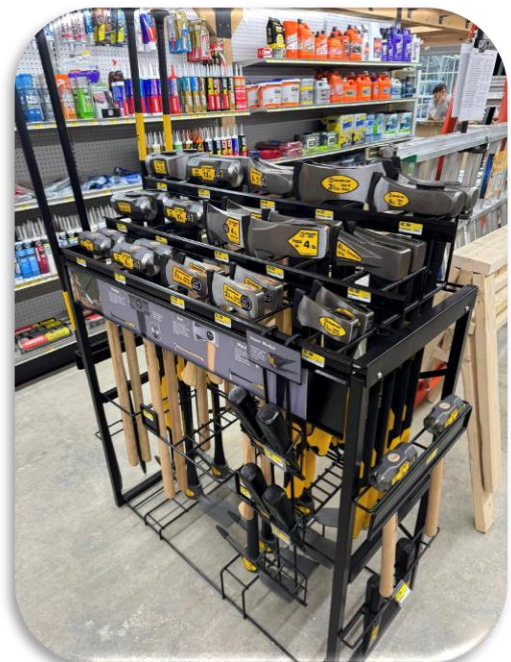
Nickerson Yard Maintenance Opens Hardware Store on Waterville Road

After months of anticipation, Nickerson Yard Maintenance opened up a brand new landscape supply and hardware store at the corner of Waterville and Bigelow Hill Roads in Norridgewock. Friday, March 8 was their first day open; each day since, they have added to their inventory, helping to meet the needs of Norridgewock and the surrounding communities.

The family-owned business is situated on Route 139 headed towards Fairfield and Waterville, just a little over a mile beyond Dunkin. As a True Value distributor, they stock a wide variety of items including nuts and bolts, nails and screws, hand and power tools, paint supplies, garden tools and equipment, electrical supplies, ladders, plumbing supplies, and more! Stop in to meet the family and see what they've got to offer.

The store is open six days a week. Monday through Friday, they're open 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Saturdays open 8:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.; they're closed on Sundays.

Congratulations and thank you to the Nickerson Family for their investment in Norridgewock. This is just another great example of local, family-owned businesses helping to build our local economy. ♦



This newsletter is brought to you by the
Town of Norridgewock.

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Kelli Dorais, Librarian
Abigail Clair
Becky Ketchum

Revolving Loan Fund To Help Local Small Businesses

The TIF Advisory Committee has been working with officials from Somerset Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) to create a revolving loan fund for small businesses. The loan fund will be managed by SEDC and they will also be responsible for the management of the fund. The loan program will be funded with a \$100,000 initial investment from the TIF account, which is money that comes from Summit Natural Gas and is intended for economic development initiatives. When the program was initially set up in 2014, up to \$600,000 was authorized to be used in this manner.

So, what does this mean for Norridgewock businesses? If you are looking for loan funding and may not be able to secure the full amount under traditional methods, your project or plan may still be viable. You can contact SEDC and apply for a loan, ranging in amounts from \$5,000 to \$25,000, with a favorable rate of 5 percent. The term of these notes will not exceed 5 years. Call them today to learn more!

The loan fund is intended to provide economic opportunities for small businesses and should be able to loan out additional funds when loans are paid back and/or refinanced. The TIF Committee has requested quarterly reports from SEDC about the program and will continue to monitor its success, with great consideration given to the applicant experience. The Select Board approved the creation of this fund at their regular meeting on April 3.

To learn more about this funding opportunity and other small business financing opportunities, visit www.somerseteconomicdevelopment.com or call 474-0166.

About SEDC. The Skowhegan-based organization is led by Executive Director Christian Savage and operates under the authority of Somerset County. The SEDC mission is to improve the economic condition and quality of life for all residents of Somerset County. Norridgewock resident Jeff McGown serves on the Board of Directors. ♦



Picture yourself here... Advertise with us!

Advertise your business, organization, event, etc.

* Reach nearly 2,000 households

* Mailed once per quarter

* Full-color ad

Half Page
\$200.00

Full Page
\$375.00

Block Ad 4.0" x 4.0"
\$80.00

Business Card (3.5" x 2.0")
\$40.00

For more information or to advertise in the
next newsletter, call the Town Office (634-
2252) or email rlabelle@norridgewock.gov

Town of Norridgewock
PO Box 7
Norridgewock, ME 04957

Norridgewock’s Somerset Grange to Celebrate 150th Anniversary

The Somerset Grange is pleased to welcome everyone, near and far, to an open house celebrating the organization’s 150th anniversary. The open house will be held at The Grange on Saturday, April 27, 2024, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. No RSVP is required. See photo histories and share your memories about the Grange. Enjoy a wonderful anniversary cake, music, and more. The event is free to the public. Come and mingle with old friends– or meet new ones.

For more information on the event and/or if you have photos or memorabilia to share, please email rketchum1@aol.com; put “Grange” in the subject line. ♦ RFK



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facebook.com/NorridgewockMaine



www.norridgewock.gov