

# Board of Selectmen Update

March 26, 2020

Greetings from Scott, Karen, and Owen.

We are using this and every opportunity to communicate with the residents of Roque Bluffs. We thank the assessors for the opportunity to include this one-page update. This current Board has been working together on many issues now for the past 6 months.

**COVID-19** has impacted all of our lives in a relatively short period of time. All of the information we, as selectmen, are getting can be summarized in a few comments. **1.** We will get through this together. Social distancing is a way to stop the steep curve of the contagion of this virus. We can encourage one another by phone. A short phone conversation can lift everyone's spirits. Call it a phone hug—it's safe. **2.** Take precautions when you go to the store—Gloves, masks etc. Always wash your hands and frequently. **3.** When you must be near another person, try to keep 6 feet of distance between you. **4.** Let's keep our children safe. Reassure them and make the precautions fun. **5.** Check in on our elderly neighbors by phone. **6.** Take it one day at a time. This is hard when we do not have an end date for this. What can we focus on to make today better? **7.** Reset expectations so that we can be more patient with each other and with ourselves. Kindness counts so much at this time. Thank the people who are still working in the places that are open. They are at risk. **8.** What this threat has done for so many is to point out what is really important. As your selectmen and as your neighbors, we want everyone to be safe and well. We have closed the Town Hall. The phone is forwarded to Carla and she is working at home. We are staying in touch with her. Some have offered to help get groceries and such. Let Carla or one of the selectmen know the need and we will work on it. Also, all board and committee meetings have been canceled indefinitely. The selectmen are in communication with each other and we will deal with anything that comes up that is urgent. We are under a declared state of emergency both nationally and statewide. Like all of you, we are taking care of ourselves and our families and we encourage you to do the same.

**Communication** continues to be a challenge for us. We will be trying several things to help with that. Updates will go to David Dowley to be sent out on his Community Center email list. If you would like to be added to this form of communication, please text or email David at [dcdowley@gmail.com](mailto:dcdowley@gmail.com). There will be a limited number of hard copies at the town office when it reopens. Also, we will send a page in the tax bill and the assessors update mailing. We are in the process of establishing a Municipal Website which we hope to launch this summer. For the broadband project, there will be a bulletin board in the entry way of the town hall with the latest information when we reopen.

**Feedback:** We have had positive responses for regarding the parking lot at the Schoppee Rd. landing. Ricky Harmon did a great job! Also, the sand and salt shed was repaired in December. Thank you, Ernie Racliffe, for the cost-effective repair work done there! Currently, we are looking to replace burned out lights at the sand and salt shed with LEDs as they are more cost effective to operate.

**Broadband:** The town did receive the USDA Grant. We were notified in December but were asked to wait until the USDA announcement to publicize it. That announcement was made January 30, 2020 in Arrowsic Me. Lisa Hanscom, Linda Wales, Karen and Bob Miller attended. The remarks by Lisa and Karen were well received. We have, since then, worked on completing the environmental assessment. You may have noticed the stakes on Great Cove Road. That had to be done for the State's Department of Environmental Protection as a part of that process. We have documented that this project will not adversely affect the environment. Also, we have been cleared by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife that our project will not have a negative impact on any endangered species. Our project has also been cleared by the Maine Historic Commission. A Federal requirement has been met in that we have notified the Indian Nations in Maine about the environmental and historic studies done for our project. The next step is for Karen Miller as Chair of the Board to be trained by the USDA to administer the grant. That training in the form of webinars took place during the week of March 17-23. There is a great deal of paperwork to accomplish this project, but it is worth it. We do not have to raise \$893,170 in taxes. The grant is a 75% and 25% match. Our portion is \$297,723. The total grant was written for \$1,190,893. In addition, the paperwork has just been submitted to the Reconnect ME authority for the \$50,000 grant that will be coming to help us. The plan is to apply that to the 25% match to reduce what we will have to borrow.

A grant was applied for and received from Island Institute to help with the administrative costs of the USDA grant. It was for \$26,680 and will help with costs associated with running the USDA grant. We hope to know more after the training. We suspect that meeting all the requirements is going to be somewhat slower than we had anticipated. I suspect that the word PATIENCE is going to be much in practice by all who are wanting this project completed. Add to that the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes in place and we will have more patience to practice.

"When is the deadline for signing up with Axiom?" Right now, no deadline has been established. Axiom CEO Mark Ouelette's reply was they like "to keep it open as long as possible. Do keep in mind that the more people who sign up early, the more efficient the build-out plan will be." The Board of Selectmen are more comfortable with making sure there is a 60-day notice before the deadline. The ongoing challenge is determining a flow chart for this process. The project is not yet attached to a real calendar. We cannot do that until we know how to meet the remaining USDA requirements, especially after the inevitable delays from the COVID-19 virus. What we, as a Board, have learned is that it takes longer to get things done than we anticipate.

As the days get longer and we move toward "spring," we hope all is well for you. Remember that we as your Board of Selectmen are always glad to hear from you.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to us in this time of challenge.

Owen, Scott, and Karen

***ROQUE BLUFFS: ONE COMMUNITY, WORKING TOGETHER THROUGH COURTESY, CONSIDERATION, AND CIVILITY.***