

HARPSWELL BULLETIN

News for Harpswell Residents & Property Owners from the Town Office – August '14
Town Web Site: www.harpswell.maine.gov

2014 TAX RATE

The Selectmen/Assessors set the 2014 tax rate, or mil rate, at \$6.10 for every \$1,000 of assessed value. This is an increase of 5.5% in the tax rate compared to the prior year amounting to \$32 more in property tax for every \$100,000 of assessed value. The increase in the tax rate results largely from a 6.9% increase in the school assessment by SAD #75 (up \$468,000), a 4.8% increase in the Cumberland County assessment (up \$54,000) and a 4.6% increase in the municipal budget (up \$196,000), primarily due to adding round-the-clock paramedic service.

PAYING YOUR PROPERTY TAX BILL

There are several methods available for paying your property tax bill. 1) Cash—stop by and pay in person; 2) Check—in person or via mail; 3) credit or debit cards—in person only with a 2.5% fee assessed for each transaction; and 4) a web-based payment service called AndroPay available through the Town's home page by clicking the online services tab—a \$1 fee will be assessed for each transaction. The first installment of the 2014 tax bill is due on Monday, September 15 with the second installment being due on Monday, December 15. A 6% interest rate will be charged on the unpaid portion of any installment after its due date.

OPEN HOUSE AT NEW EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES BUILDING SATURDAY, AUGUST 23, 8AM TO 2PM

The paramedic service has moved from the Harpswell Town Office to the newly constructed emergency services building near the Recycling Center. The new building provides the paramedics with compact space for office and living quarters and a garage for the paramedic's intercept vehicle. Paramedics respond from this centralized location to emergency medical calls in all areas of the Town. The latest data for the last three months shows that paramedics are getting to the scene of the call in an average time of 9 minutes. The building will be open to the public on Saturday, August 23, from 8am to 2pm. Please stop by to see the building's interior and to meet some of the paramedics who are providing this valuable service. Refreshments will be available.

FEMA MAPPING UPDATE

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has delayed the issuance of its proposed new floodplain maps for Cumberland and York Counties. This delay is a result of FEMA's decision to have a third-party review of issues and methodology arising out of appeals that have been filed in Massachusetts. There has been no indication of how long this review process will take and how it will impact the timeline for the release of the updated flood insurance rate maps that may eventually affect Harpswell. Ultimately, any new maps would have to be adopted by the Town Meeting before being deemed in effect. By previously adopting a Floodplain Ordinance, the Town has chosen to be a participating community in the National Flood Insurance Program. Before any construction or other development begins within existing areas of special flood hazard, a permit must be obtained from the Town. This permit is in addition to any other permits required pursuant to the codes and ordinances of the Town. Questions regarding floodplain issues should be directed to the Code Enforcement Office which is responsible for administering the Floodplain Ordinance in Harpswell.

MARINE RESOURCES CONSULTING SERVICES

The Town has hired Resource Access International (RAI), of Brunswick, led by Darcie Couture, to provide marine resources consulting services to the Town. With a background in Marine Biology, Darcie is well-suited to advise the Town on strategies that will improve the management of our resources, particularly with respect to the soft-shell clam population. Harpswell is one of four communities in Maine given special permission by the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) to conduct a pilot predator control project. The project, under RAI's supervision with involvement from DMR and the Town's Marine Resources Committee, is evaluating the effectiveness of green crab trapping and clam seed protection and enhancement in 14 acres of mudflats in Strawberry Cove. The area is closed to shellfish harvesting and worm digging through December 31, 2014. RAI is also working with the Town to track and document the effects of ocean acidification on our mudflats, to prioritize commercial harvesting areas for shellfish population surveys, to identify optimal areas for shellfish re-seeding projects, and to research and analyze water quality and pollution source data in order to create more access to shellfish flats in Harpswell. To review reports and follow activities of the Marine Resources Consultant, please visit the Town's website where a new section on marine resources has been created. The consultant's monthly report to the Board of Selectmen is posted online.

TOWN OF HARPSWELL FACEBOOK PAGES

The Town's Recreation Department has been a presence on Facebook since December 2012 and liked by more than 200 users. The link to its Facebook page is

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Harpswell-Recreation/331741290266806>

Recreation Director Gina Perow reports that by using this social media site she is able to generate more interest in the Town's recreational programming and offerings. Many parents report that this is a great way to make contact with the Recreation Director and stay informed about what is going on in the recreational community. The Town launched a general Facebook page on July 29 at the following link: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Town-of-Harpswell/534543670006454?ref_type=bookmark It is viewed as an additional tool for communicating with the public and reaching more people who are interested in getting information through a social media source. We will post an assortment of information about what is going on in Town government and plan to keep the page fresh and interesting.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT MITCHELL FIELD

Bandstand by the Sea Concert Series—The Bandstand at Mitchell Field has hosted a number of musical events this summer on Thursday evenings. In August, concerts will continue to be held every Thursday from 6-8pm. New this season will be Sunday afternoon concerts for the month of September from 2-4pm. For more information visit the Town's website. Bring your lawn chair or blanket and come listen to live music with stunning scenery all around.

Community Garden—The Community Garden is thriving with more gardeners than ever participating, including students from Harpswell Coastal Academy. The steps taken to improve drainage and soils are producing stellar results. Under the guidance of Mitchell Field Committee member Jane Covey and Coordinator Kara Douglas, the gardens are having their best yield yet and fostering strong relationships amongst the community of gardeners.

Pasturing of Horses—The Board of Selectmen has given Stone Soup Institute permission to allow the rotational grazing of up to four horses in the upper meadow area of Mitchell Field for the next several months. The horses will be moved from one pasture to another every 3-4 weeks. This is considered a pilot project to assess how this use fits with other uses occurring at the field and whether it is an effective method for controlling the growth of grasses in the upper meadow.