

**Town of Skowhegan
Town Manager's Office
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To: Residents of Skowhegan

From: Donnie Zaluski

Subject: State of Affairs

The municipal government of Skowhegan is comprised of 74 full time employees and 46 seasonal/part time employees. That is 120 individuals that provide services such as Fire/EMS, Police, Tax Assessment, DMV, Passport, Municipal Records, Public Announcements, Local/State/Federal Elections, Economic Development, Code Enforcement, Human Resources, General Assistance, Community Center, Wastewater/Sewer, Plowing/Paving/Road Maintenance and Solid Waste Disposal. We provide services for the health and function of the community with laws and policies created by the community.

We are also a democracy that holds freedom of expression and the ability to formulate ideas together as the necessary function of progress and success. We did not decide to have choice. The people before us recognized that together we are more likely to succeed than we are divided. Democracy is also a system of participation. Every voting member has an equal voice, and every citizen has an opportunity twice a month to change the policies and structure of this government. The choice and decision lay in the hands of the voter. The selectboard is a conduit of the people and the town manager is a conduit of the selectboard.

The difficult part about participation is showing up. The second most difficult part is civil discourse. If we are unable to look our neighbors in the eye and say: "Hello" – If we are unable to wait at a cross walk for twenty seconds for a pedestrian – IF we are unable to hold a conversation and listen to someone we may not agree with: Then what is the point!? Two ideas become a NEW idea that is the fundamental basis of our success. We argue about who will shovel a boardwalk for a river-park while our dams are going to be destroyed over a fish-ladder. A fish-ladder is concrete and steel; we have concrete and steel. We argue over a ballfield while Maine's electricity costs have risen 55% over twenty years. The national average is 9%. When we argue with each other, we take away the ability to formulate and articulate our needs and ability to adapt. When we treat each other without respect, we take away our chances to succeed. If we want to continue to struggle, while others see growth and opportunity, then all we need to do is keep doing what we're doing.

Skowhegan is on a very short list of towns in Maine that still have a major paper manufacturer. Do we want to find out what happens when they leave or do we want to protect jobs? Do we want to be a town that is a pass-through for recreation in other areas or do we want to be the destination for recreation, enjoyment and employment? Do we want to fight or do we want to unite? The choice is presented every day and every time we make a choice. We are the accumulation of our decisions and interactions.

We are a government of laws and policies that we create and we amend. We cannot control someone's personal life. When something goes wrong, we pick ourselves up and we change the way we do things, so it doesn't happen again. Life is difficult but it is more rewarding than difficult when we work together. The only path to success is a path that is led with kindness and unity. Are we going to

tear each other apart or will we unite and face the challenges and obstacles to secure the future success of Skowhegan?

The function and success of this town and its people is the only goal. There are no other goals. I will do everything I can to keep the lights on, fill vacant staff positions and ensure the basic functionality of The Town of Skowhegan. We will post the Town Manager position, and we will take our time. During that time, we will come up with concepts and improvements in the way we review and choose a future leader. I encourage individuals to present ideas. If I choose to continue this role, I will enter into the formal review process that will be amended by the time of the next hiring.

Donnie Zaluski
Interim-Town Manager