



FALL 2017
NEWSLETTER

TAX BILLS: Aargh, we can't escape death or taxes, but I think we all have to agree paying taxes is better than the alternative! As you may notice from your enclosed bill, our Mill rate went down; but not all of you will be paying less in taxes. (See the Assessor's section below.)

Please keep in mind that the majority of your taxes are derived from the school assessment. If you think they are too high, you need to contact your school representatives. Union's representatives are Erik Amundsen, Matthew Speno and Robert Williams; their contact information is on the SAD 40 website <http://www.msad40.org/>

Road Information: Suddenly you wake up one day and realize we have some of the best roads in the county or, in my biased opinion, several counties. The bond you approved a few years ago has been fully utilized and you can see the results. We have re-built three of our priority 3 dirt roads and now have them paved. We have been utilizing new procedures to keep our overall cost down and save us hundreds of thousands in the future.

We will be using chip seal the next couple of years quite extensively and will begin our intensive program on ditching and shouldering. As we begin the ditching program, a 10-year program, we will be replacing driveway culverts as needed.

Believe it or not summer passed us! Not sure when it actually arrived, but I am told it is now over and we are headed to the colder weather... **Which brings me to the annual talk about MAILBOXES and how to protect them from snow damage:** if your mailbox has been removed multiple times, you probably have it too close to the road or even in the wrong location. Sometimes just moving it a few feet either way will prevent it from being hit. Either way our Public Works department is more than willing to come out and give you advice and even bring some gravel in, so both the postmaster and the plow drivers can be happy. Please call the PW department at 785-3411 for more information.

- Just for the record, all mailboxes are within the municipality's right-of-way and we do not pay for the replacement of boxes or posts. Good reason to call us first before replacing your box or post.

NEW STAFF-NEW SERVICES: With the recent retirement of long time Clerk Marcy Corwin, we welcome you to come in and meet Stacey Parra who was hired to replace Marcy. Obviously with new staff there is some transition time and learning curves, but with new people come new ideas, and we look forward to

offering those ideas in the near future. A big happy retirement to Marcy, and by now her garden should be totally weed free!

FROM THE ASSESSOR, HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION and SALES MARKET ACTIVITY: Qualified property owners will receive a \$5,000 increase for the Homestead Exemption, making a total of \$20,000. What this simply means is that Homestead Exemption qualified property owners don't pay taxes on \$20,000 of value of their primary residence. The State of Maine does reimburse for a portion of the taxation loss. The other portion of the taxation loss is shifted to all non-Homestead Exemption qualified property owners. So if taxable value reduces, and if budgets stay the same, the tax (Mill) rate must increase to compensate.

However, for the upcoming tax billing there is an increase of about \$20,000,000 in the towns taxable value. As a result taxes will decrease for some property owners.

Valuations were adjusted for approximately 500 property owners. This action was a result for increased market values for mainly but not solely newer, higher quality buildings located in above average locations.

In addition, commercial land values were increased based on the evidence of recent market sales activity. The last commercial land value adjustment was made in 2003 and was long overdue. The goal is to be as fair as possible in the distribution of taxation to all property owners. This is accomplished by verifying that all valuations meet to the best of our abilities the requirements of Maine Law and Constitution. No one likes taxes, but it is the burden of living in the society that we have created.

- *If you have questions about your valuation, please contact Jim Murphy who is onsite Thursdays and occasional Tuesdays.*

TOWN INFORMATION: In today's world just about everything is via e-mail or Facebook, including our newsletters. We only do about two printed and mailed versions each year, mainly due to the extreme cost of mailing. So if you want the latest and greatest news, you either should like us on Facebook or subscribe to our e-mail list serve by going to www.union.maine.gov and follow the appropriate links. You will then receive, via the magic of electronic media, a newsletter directly to your inbox.

SEPTEMBER 21, SCHOOL BOARD MEETING: To keep this short and sweet, on Sept 21 I will be meeting with the school board regarding the additional revenue allotted to our school district. The intent of the legislation was to have 50% of said revenue returned to each town -- about \$43,700 for Union alone!

However there is a quirk in the law that allows them to circumvent the intent and keep all the money! It is just not the right thing to do, and although I do not expect most to be able to attend the meeting, you can call or e-mail your SAD 40 representatives and let them know that money belongs to you!

<http://www.msad40.org/>

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