

## **Board of Selectmen Sidelines**

### **November 25, 2020**

#### **Submitted by the Board**

It is clear that in this country we have "Freedom of Speech." We think that it is being abused when neighbors unduly criticize each other on Facebook, emails and otherwise. Of course, everyone is entitled to his or her opinion. The Board of Selectmen has committed to its communication being "kind, clear & direct" and has made great strides toward that goal. Let us look towards solutions and problem solving, not making each other wrong for our views and opinions.

We request that all parties stop the attack language. We understand we have just experienced a controversial vote on the sidewalks, and feelings can be raw. If we cannot stop the unkind words, could we at least take a break for the holidays? Let's all take time to heal and be grateful for what we have in this lovely small town of exceptional beauty.

#### **Submitted by Martha Johnston-Nash**

Since this is our first newsletter since the election, I would like to publicly acknowledge how smoothly things went in the town voting process. Thanks to the staff and everyone who made this possible.

I'd like to invite everyone, on behalf of the Union Area Chamber, to the tree lighting on the Common on Sunday, December 6 at 6:30 p.m. It will be a little different this year, as is everything. There won't be the usual bonfire, cocoa and carols, but we are in the process of setting up the trees so the lighting will be all ready to go. After a brief welcome and blessing, the tree lights will be plugged in. As soon as the trees are lit, carols will be broadcast from Peoples United Methodist Church. There will be limited parking around the Common; we're working on the plan but would like to have everyone drive in, park, and remain in their vehicles for the event so we don't have to be concerned about controlling social distancing. There will be members of the Chamber on foot to make sure the lights work properly, and to be ready to distribute the cookies. The cookies will be given out in a drive-through. As cars leave the lighting ceremony, they will be directed to take one of two routes through the Common where elves and helpers will hand out the prepackaged individual or family packs. Baking and packaging will all be done under COVID guidelines. The Chamber members felt very strongly that the trees needed to be lighting up the Common this year, as witnessed by their deep

generosity in tree sponsorship. Many thanks to them and the community members who are helping make the event a success.

At the Board meeting last week, we waived the requirement of nonprofits to collect signatures for this coming year. They will still be required to present their requests and seek approval from the Board.

**Submitted by Bill Lombardi**

*Roads Workshop* - Thank you to all that contributed via email and on the Zoom call. There was a great discussion, and many contributions were made during and before our first workshop. The Board of Selectmen feels a need to continue the conversation. We will have our second workshop on Tuesday, January 12 at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. Provide us with input before then and we will do our best to address all submissions.

One of the topics on a lot of folk's minds was and is the issue of paving gravel roads. What follows are my thoughts on gravel roads.

When a gravel road is dangerous, has persistent issues, is not cost effective to be maintained, it ought to be paved. There are probably a few other good reasons for paving as well.

In the past your Board of Selectmen voted to pave all gravel roads.

The Maine Department of Transportation has guidance regarding the paving of gravel roads. It is worth reading. (You may need to copy and paste this link to your browser.)

[https://www1.maine.gov/mdot/mlrc/docs/technical/2018/When Should I Pave Gravel Road.indd \(maine.gov\)](https://www1.maine.gov/mdot/mlrc/docs/technical/2018/When%20Should%20I%20Pave%20Gravel%20Road.indd%20(maine.gov))

The conclusion of this article, “Although politics will invariably influence decisions, focusing on traffic weights and volume, safety design and relative costs will provide an informed decision.”

I have recommended that we rescind the prior mandate to pave all gravel roads. I think it will work best if we reprioritize and schedule roads to be worked on and to accomplish as much as we can based on available funds.

*Aging in Place in Union* – The Aging in Place Committee was formed in 2017. It is charged by Town Manager Jay Feyler to look at the unique needs of Union's senior population.

Its mission is identified as *the ability for Union seniors to stay in your home safely as you age*. Its vision is *Union is an age friendly community. We are a community that helps meet the changing needs of its aging residents by connecting them with services that support and allow them to stay in their own homes*.

The committee meets the first Monday of each month via Zoom.

The committee also organizes luncheons for seniors. In the past these have provided socialization and the distribution of information resources for seniors. Recently they have been takeout. An updated Community Resource Guide put together by the committee is available through the town office.

We are looking for new committee members. If you are interested in learning more about Aging in Place, please contact the town office.

Aging in Place in Union Committee: Wanda Gamage-Wyman (Co-chair), Lorain Francis (Co-chair), Anita Brown (Secretary), Carol Waiter, Robert Williams, Dorothy Williams, Marcy Corwin, Katie Tarbox, Phil Groce, Jay Feyler (Town Manager) and myself, Bill Lombardi.

**Wishing all a safe and Happy Thanksgiving!**