

ST. GEORGE NEWSLETTER

July 2020

Election News

The State Primary and St. George MSU Referendum are scheduled for July 14th.

Polls are open 8 AM – 8 PM.

If you are voting absentee, your ballot must be received before the close of balloting on the 14th to count.



Local Municipal Elections

School Board and Select Board

GRRS Language Change

August 17 8 AM-8 PM

Town Meeting

August 18 6 PM

JULY TOWN CALENDAR

Town website: www.stgeorgemaine.com

School website: www.stgeorgemsu.org

JULY 2020

- July 2 Conservation Commission 4 PM
- July 3 Independence Day Observed – Office Closed
- July 6 Select Board 7 PM
- July 14 Planning Board 7 PM
- July 14 Drive Thru Senior Cookout 11:30-12:30
- July 20 Select Board 7 PM
- July 28 Planning Board 7 PM

The St. George Fire Department meets every Wednesday at 7:00 pm at the Tenants Harbor Fire Station.

TOWN INFORMATION

Town Office: 372-6363 **Fax:** 372-8954

Hours: Monday-Thursday 8 am-4 pm

Transfer Station: 372-6451

Hours: Tue, Wed, Fri, Sat 8-4

Select Board and Assessors

| | |
|----------------------|----------|
| Richard Bates, Chair | 372-6904 |
| Tammy Willey | 372-8904 |
| Wayne Sawyer | 372-6489 |
| Jerry Hall | 701-1263 |
| Randy Elwell | 372-0602 |

Parks and Recreation News

The annual Senior Cookout will be a drive-thru event this year July 14. Seniors can stop at the town office from 11:30-12:30 to pick up a burger or hot dog, chips, pickles and a slice of watermelon. If you are a senior in St. George who cannot make it to the town office, but would like a meal delivered to your door, please call the Town Office at 372-6363 and leave your name, number and physical address.

Senior Trips: will not be held this summer. If conditions allow, we will have a boat ride in September and the shopping trip in November. Watch for further announcements.

Summer Recreation: There are informal activities scheduled for July, including hikes and pick up games open to all ages. For more information, the schedule is posted on the P&R calendar or call 701-9754

Recreation Facilities are all open and safe use guidelines have been posted at each one. Thank you for your safe and considerate use of our fields and playgrounds.

P&R News: to get regular recreation news, sign up for our email list on the town website www.stgeorgemaine.com

Conservation Commission

Website

The commission has been working on updating the Conservation Commission content on the town website and the new pages are now active and can be found at this link.

<https://www.stgeorgemaine.com/conservation-commission>

Let us know what you think and if you find any problems let us know about that as well by emailing us at: stgcc@stgeorgemaine.com

Town Trails and Preserves

We hope the resource of open land, wooded areas, fresh air and sunlight will provide some comfort. Outside activity clears the head and is good for the soul. Engaging in outdoor exercise activity is permitted by Governor Mills, Stay Healthy at Home Mandate. Enjoy the trails but heed the COVID-19 Health warnings:

- Stay home if you feel sick!
- Observe social distancing, stay 6ft from other people not in your household
- If necessary, step aside when passing other people on the trail
- Avoid touching signs, kiosks, railings, tables and benches, but recognize that others may have touched them.
- Plan to hike early or later in the day when it is less likely to be busy
- If the parking lot is near full, consider another trail.
- Watch out for ticks...wear light-colored clothing and apply EPA approved bug repellent

Help Maintain the Trails

The Conservation Committee plans to hold a weekly work trip on the trails every Thursday from 9 to 12. If you want to be included in the email list for upcoming work trips, please contact Tom Gorrill at woodencanoebuy@gmail.com. Even making one trip during the year is very helpful to the overall effort. Additional work trips may be held on the weekends if there is sufficient interest from people who cannot attend the regular Thursday session.

Our top priority is keeping folks safe and minimizing the risk of spreading the virus among volunteers. We will be sorting out what the "new" volunteering looks like as the State of Maine restrictions of gatherings evolve and will be following the appropriate social distancing guidelines issued by the CDC

St. George Municipal School Unit Budget

Key Points

- The School Board voted to adopt a [Proposed FY21 St. George MSU Budget](#) for next school year that **reduces the assessment** to the Town by about \$40,000.
- The **Remote School Budget Public Hearing** is scheduled for Tuesday, June 30, and the School Budget Referendum will take place at the Town Office on Tuesday, July 14.
- The proposed budget is part of a **long-term strategy** to protect our district from the financial impacts of the pandemic. This strategy includes controlled expenditures, thoughtful use of the school fund balance, and establishing several reserve accounts.
- We have begun planning for a return to school in the fall. The School Board approved a [St. George MSU Return to School Roadmap](#) to help provide the structure and framework to facilitate that planning.
- **We will remain Dragon Strong.** Check out [Dragon Strong Stories Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#), produced by Kate Montgomery in collaboration with the St. George school community.

Dragon Strong

St. George School is a community-school and the heart and strength of our school is the Town of St. George. Our mission is simple – to do whatever it takes to ensure that every single student thrives and to contribute to the vibrancy and resiliency of the Town of St. George. In times of adversity, like now, we refocus and recommit to that vision. Some things will change as we adapt and overcome the challenges that we currently face. However, who we are – our commitment to our kids, community, and one another – will remain constant. We will remain Dragon Strong.

Proposed Budget for the 2020/21 School Year

When the pandemic struck in March, the School Board – working with staff and administration and in consultation with town officials – reworked the proposed budget for the 2020/21 school year. As we revised the proposed budget through March, April, and May to account for the still uncertain effects of the pandemic, several things became clearer.

First, next school year will look different as we adapt to a “new normal” that incorporates social distancing and other steps to mitigate the spread of the virus. This, in turn, could require increased costs in certain areas (e.g., more regular and intensive cleanings of the school building and buses, smaller class sizes, outdoor learning areas, etc.). **Second**, as a school-community, we will need to address students’ academic and health/wellness needs arising from this pandemic. Some [studies](#) show “that students could return in the fall having

progressed only 70 percent of a grade in reading and less than 50 percent of a grade in math during the 2019-20 school year.” In addition, many students will return with increased social-emotional and health/wellness needs due to extended school closures, stay-at-home orders, economic hardship, and the stress of living through a global pandemic. **Third**, the pandemic will impact our state and local economies. Due to projected state revenue shortfalls caused by the pandemic, there is a risk that school districts could see a reduction, or “curtailment,” in state subsidy. To address these challenges – the uncertainty of next year, increased student and family needs, and the financial impact of the pandemic – the School Board voted to adopt a Proposed FY21 St. George MSU Budget for next school year that **reduces the assessment** to the Town by about \$40,000 and **adopts a longer-term strategy** to prepare for the financial uncertainty that may extend beyond next year.

By reducing expenditures by about \$23,000 and utilizing money from the school’s fund balance (i.e., money left over from past budgets), we were able to cut our anticipated state subsidy by 20% *and* reduce the assessment to the Town by about \$40,000. This means we are less reliant on state subsidy and better able to adapt if, later this summer or in the fall, the state reduces funding for public education. The budget approved by the School Board also establishes several reserve funds to cover unanticipated costs that could arise as we continue to prepare for next year. If these funds are not needed, they will be available to help offset costs in future budget years.

Through controlled expenditures, responsible use of the school’s fund balance, and the establishment of reserve accounts, the proposed FY21 budget addresses known, immediate needs; accounts for unanticipated needs; prepares for the uncertainty of upcoming fiscal years; and keeps the local assessment down. There will be a [remote public hearing](#) on the school budget on Tuesday, June 30 at 6:30 p.m. and the [School Budget Referendum](#) will be held at the Town Office on Tuesday, July 14.

More information about the proposed FY21 school budget is available on the [school website](#). If you have any questions about the budget, please contact Superintendent Mike Felton (m.felton@stgeorgemsu.org) or Business Manager Cassie Kilbride (c.kilbride@stgeorgemsu.org).

Planning for the 2020/21 School Year

There have been an increasing number of reports and articles in the media discussing what school will look like in the fall. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control published [guidance](#) for

schools on when and how to reopen and the Maine Department of Education (DOE) recently released a [Working Draft: Return to Classroom Instruction Framework](#). These documents provide guidelines and recommendations. At this moment, it appears that most decisions about what school will look like next year will be made by Maine's local school districts. And that - while overwhelming at times - gives me hope because I've seen what we can accomplish together - students, families, staff, community, St. George Education Association, and School Board. We are fortunate that, compared to other areas of the state and country, the number of Covid-19 cases in Knox County has been limited so far. It is imperative that we – **together, as a school-community** – begin working now to develop a plan for next year that is (1) tailored to our school community's needs and (2) informed by educators and school staff, families, community members and organizations, town officials, public health officials, medical providers, and state and federal requirements and recommendations.

The School Board adopted a [St. George MSU Return to School Roadmap](#), which is modeled on a document developed through an [Opportunity Labs Initiative](#). As part of our roadmap, **six working groups** are focusing on the following key areas as we plan for next year: (1) Facilities & Transportation, (2) Operations & Communications, (3) Instruction, (4) High School & Postsecondary, (5) Technology, and (6) Wellness. Each working group will elect a representative to sit on the **Return to School Committee**, which will coordinate the work of the subcommittees and develop a comprehensive return-to-school plan for the School Board's review and approval. If you would like to learn more about the process or discuss ways to get involved, please contact me through email (m.felton@stgeorgemsu.org) or phone (372.6312) This will be a community effort. We will need to make difficult decisions that consider student, staff, and community health; the costs, benefits, and potential disruption resulting from social distancing and other strategies to mitigate the risk of viral spread during the school day; and the importance of classroom-based learning to students' academic growth, social development, and overall health and wellbeing. We have a long way to go. However, we should also take a moment and reflect on all that we've accomplished together. Some things will look different in the fall. However, some things will remain the same. Who we are – our commitment to our kids, community, and one another – will remain constant. We will remain Dragon Strong.

Sincerely,

Mike Felton, St. George MSU Superintendent



During the coronavirus quarantine,
Neighbor to Neighbor
cannot transport riders. BUT...we have
"PICKUP AND DELIVERY SERVICE" of pre-paid
grocery or pharmacy needs.

Please Call us 207-691-7069
And we can explain how that will work.

**Stay safe, wear a face covering and wash
your hands!!!**

Town of St. George
P O Box 131
Tenants Harbor, ME 04860