

The Weld Observer

March 2025 -5th Edition

Mushing Through Life

by Jocelyn Bradbury

What got you interested in dog sledding?

I have loved dogs my whole life but got hooked on dogsledding in high school and now, 28 years later, I am still very much involved in the sport. The connection with the dogs is what keeps me going. I love that they LOVE the sport and the connection we have with each other because of our shared interests.

If we have a season in Weld with a good amount of snow, what would a typical day in Weld be like with you and your dogs?

I like to come up with the dogs and run through Mt. Blue State Park and onto Webb Lake. It's so beautiful being out in the middle of the lake with the mountains towering around. It takes me back to when I was a kid on a boat in the summer. Some of the best times of my life involved being out on Webb Lake. In the summer I can also be found hiking any of the numerous trails in the area with my dogs.

Did you grow up in Weld? Where do you live now?

I didn't grow up in Weld, but I spent many summers at our family camp starting in the early 1980s. My Dad and Stepmom now reside on Swett Brook Lane, around the corner from our old camp, and I visit often all year long.



How many years did it take you to learn mushing?

I was hooked immediately and picked up the basics quickly, but there is so much to learn. Even after all the years I have spent running dogs, they always find a way to teach you something new. Making mistakes is the best way to learn and boy have I made a few!

Did you have a mentor?

I started with a family that had a kennel of dogs. I trained and raced with them throughout high school and college. Since then, I have had many folks kind enough to share their knowledge with me.

It goes back to always wanting to learn. Breeding, training, feeding, health are all vital parts of owning dogs and I can never learn enough. I have now turned into the mentor for newer mushers getting into harness sports. I get a lot of enjoyment from

seeing people reach their goals and take pride in my involvement to get them there.

When did you acquire your own pack?

I had my first two sled dogs when I was in high school, but didn't have my own kennel until I graduated college. Once I was out of college and gainfully employed, I started to build my own kennel to train and race. Back then I did 30-mile races which is considered mid-distance in New England. I now have a sprint dog kennel, and we race anywhere from two-to-eight miles. At any one time I generally have around ten adults and five-to-ten puppies that I am raising as the next generation of sled dogs.

Mushing Through Life

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Looking Back With Weld School Students

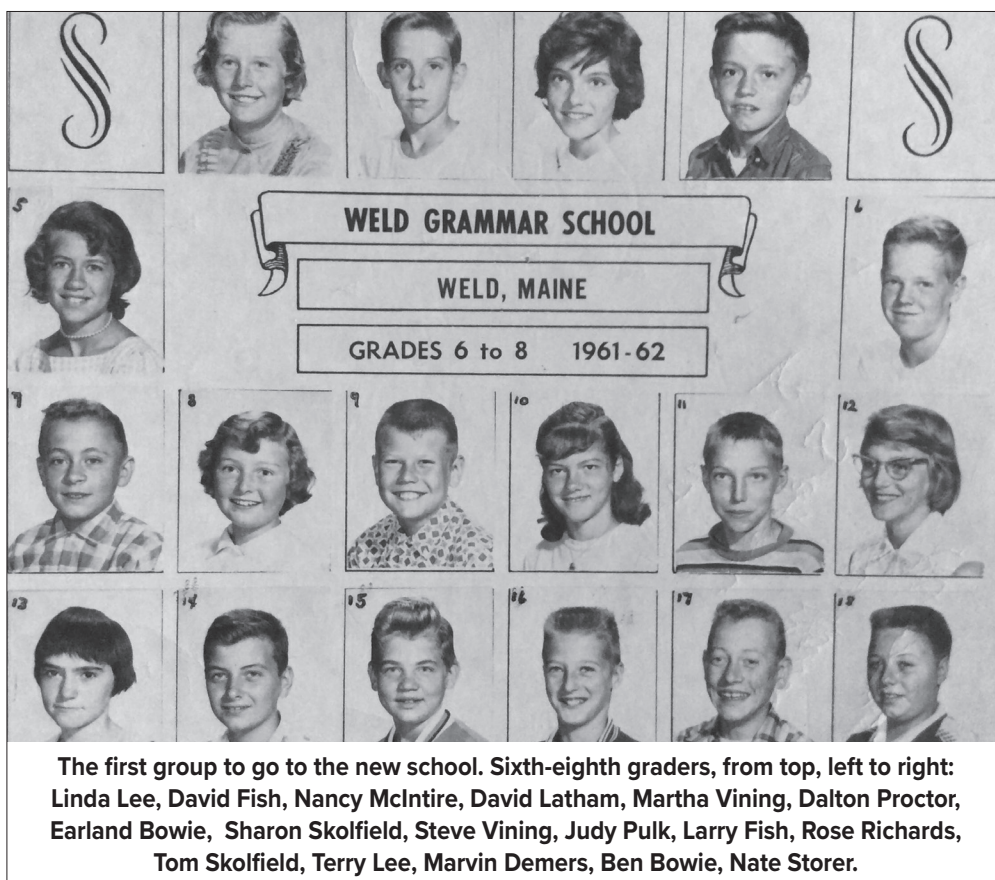
“Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself”
- John Dewey

by Liz Boyle

This month a committee of residents will begin work on a new Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Weld. There hasn't been a Comprehensive Plan since 2007. We can all agree much has changed since 2007. For example, Weld closed its school in 2008. What has this meant for Weld? Could a school thrive here in the future? How might we preserve and expand upon multigenerational traditions and opportunities in Weld?

While meeting State requirements, our committee will try to offer thoughtful suggestions that will be considered and voted upon by Weld residents. I was accepted by the Select Board to be a member specifically because I am a new year-round resident and might bring that perspective to the group.

It's essential to learn about Weld history before deciphering what has made this town so special. As a beginner here, what jumps out at me is the enduring presence of people who grew up here, many of whom were educated in town. Our Franklin County Commissioner Tom Skolfield went to school in Weld. He said to me, “Without your school, you can lose a bit of your core as a town.” Are we at risk of losing our core in Weld? I'm hoping the Comprehensive Plan



The first group to go to the new school. Sixth-eighth graders, from top, left to right: Linda Lee, David Fish, Nancy McIntire, David Latham, Martha Vining, Dalton Proctor, Earland Bowie, Sharon Skolfield, Steve Vining, Judy Pulk, Larry Fish, Rose Richards, Tom Skolfield, Terry Lee, Marvin Demers, Ben Bowie, Nate Storer.

Committee will consider that question.

Recently, I talked to three generations of people who went to school in Weld. Their memories are heartwarming. People associated with the school felt supported here, and from all I've gathered the students were well educated and well prepared to continue their education elsewhere. The importance of their shared experiences can't be underestimated in terms of their positive influence on the values, strengths, and character of Weld today.

For those who don't know it, Weld went from having multiple one-room schoolhouses scattered in different Weld school districts in the 19th and early 20th centuries, to having one central school. The central “Village School,” erected in 1860, mostly operated independently from Franklin County. Some students who lived afar in Weld

boarded with families in town to be able to go to high school. The building was located behind the Skoolhouse Variety site and was condemned and torn down around 1960. Once the school building was gone, students temporarily learned in the Masonic Hall and the Fire Department. (Imagine the flexibility and resilience of those students and teachers!). A replacement school building opened in mid-1962. Weld joined School Administrative District 9 in 1966 and ceased operating independently. Eventually, there were too few students and not enough funds to keep a local school going. mLife changed quite a bit when students had to commute out of town, but that's a separate story.

Weld School Students

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Weld School Students

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Random snippets I've enjoyed during conversations about Weld school life are shared below.

Eleanor Fish went to the old Village School at a time when the desks had inkwells. As a young student, she turned her inkwell into a personal candy holder.

Norm Blodgett attended the old school and remembers the outhouse vividly. Boys went on one side of the building and girls on the other. It was unheated and seemed very far away from the classrooms!

Tom Skolfield began school in the old Village School as a Kindergarten. He learned in the pool hall of the Masonic Lodge between school buildings and was later taught in the beer cooler area of what's now Skoolhouse Variety. Tom appreciated when young and older students were taught in the same classrooms. Even a struggling student could catch on eventually. If you began as a 6th grader, by the time you got to the 8th grade you might have heard some of the teachings two or three times. You had previews of what was coming. Tom remembers **Vera Whitney** who lived down the road and was one of the school cooks. She made chowder in a huge kettle. Strong boys were authorized to leave school and go down to lug the kettle up the hill to school. This was a treat Tom enjoyed. When the new school opened, the State Police came and fingerprinted all children. It was mandatory. He remembers a school-related group called The P.T.F., or Parents, Teachers and Friends. (Isn't it characteristic of Weld to have such a group?)

Coval Conant went to the Village School through the 8th grade (the old building had four classrooms and four

teachers, educating K-12 students). Coval helped construct the new school building during the summer months as a teenager. He eventually taught students in Weld and remembers kids being driven to school by a man with a station wagon rather than a bus. Because he was teaching various age groups, he had to set up an age-based schedule for reading and math. Social studies and science lessons could be taught to all students simultaneously, although that didn't always work out well. Once during a lesson about birds, he had two eggs going in an incubator. (Children who lived nearby would turn the eggs in the incubator on the weekends.) One egg hatched and the other didn't, so everyone gathered around Coval's desk to understand why. There were feathers and blood involved, and suddenly there was a loud bang in the room. Coval thought one kid had pushed another into a file cabinet, but what happened was one of the youngest kids fainted at the sight of the blood. Coval and Sonya Conant's daughters, **Tammy** and **Mandy** were also students at Weld school. In addition to his regular job, Coval was a Teaching Principal, overseen by an outside Principal who would come to Weld once a week. Coval taught for 30 years (five in Weld). You can find three books written by Coval in The Weld Free Library.

Malcolm Gill was also a teacher here. A story was relayed to me that one day he was asked to return home because he arrived at school smelling like a skunk after he'd been trapping. Malcolm worked with **Jane Vining** who cooked for a time for the school. When Jane died in 2017, Malcolm wrote in *The Daily Bulldog*, "I had the honor of working with Jane Vining for 11 years. She was a wonderful cook and was always ready to show her cooking skills with the preparation of dandelion greens, homemade biscuits, and lots

of cookies! We were like a family."

Naomi McIntire Doughty began Kindergarten in 1964. She learned in what is now the dining room of Skoolhouse Variety. Naomi remembers playing baseball and football behind the school and breaking her elbow on the swings. A teacher recognized the break immediately. One day, the school went on a field trip to Portland. They got to sit on an airplane, visit a mall, and ride an escalator for the first time. This was a big deal. Naomi and Richard Doughty's two children, **Amos** and **Tash** attended the Weld School. As a young mother, Naomi was able to work as an Ed Tech. This led to a District Specialist job focusing on computer systems. There were 30 students when she worked in Weld. She was paid as an hourly worker. Her children went to and from school with her and shared the same holiday breaks.

Holly and Kevin Cochran were students here. Like others, they were active in the 4-H Club. Everyone received individualized attention from teachers and support staff. A music teacher came regularly from out-of-town. Kevin played marbles and baseball but as he got older, he longed for more team sports which were limited here. Their daughter **Lila Haynes** also went to school in Weld for one year in 1995. The Cochrans noted that many Weld school graduates became teachers eventually.

Cindi Proctor's daughters were shy about starting school. **Jaimie Proctor Beauchamp** remembers the comfort offered by her younger sister **Morgan Proctor**. They would be in the same classroom together.

The family atmosphere at the school and the broader connections to the community were perhaps why many in Weld struggled to keep the school open. Thankfully, the benefits of a Weld education still feel present here. That's something to be honored and treasured.

Home School or Public School?

by Dennis Cleasby

What is a school and when does “formal” education truly begin? A school is more than a building, it is also a concept of a place where learning happens. So, isn’t our home our first school? Doesn’t formal education really begin at home? Doesn’t learning values and morals begin at home? So why on one hand does education seem to be lacking the morals and values while the homeschoolers emphasize morals and values. Oddly it may not be that simple of an explanation. Not all home schoolers are doing it for religious reasons. Some feel their child’s individual needs can’t be met in public school. It comes down to why we have a constitution and individual rights. Parents have the ultimate right to raise their children as they see fit.

Franklin County has the largest number of homeschoolers in the state of Maine. While teaching art as a Weld Recreation Committee volunteer, I first met homeschoolers. This interested me as a retired art teacher. I heard through the grape vine that Mary Merwin was doing a homeschool group at Camp Lawroweld and I got involved. There have been as many as twenty toddler students attending. It has been enlightening and humbling to see these little learners. Mary has endless love and enthusiasm to teach young minds. Another Art person from Weld Rec, Julie Jervis, is also on board. I have been recently certified in Art in the State of Maine and looking for new students to teach. I hope to teach the older, middle, and high school students and keep up with the



toddlers as well. But really, I’ll work with children of any age.

As a public-school teacher, I was surprised at the lack of State of Maine engagement with homeschoolers at first. The State is putting the parents’ rights above the Department of Education’s responsibility to educate young people. The huge mandate of education in public schools seems absent when it comes to homeschoolers. As a certified art teacher, I began to ask how can parents match my years of experience? How can a parent know World cultures and World History? On further investigation I found that

homeschoolers do much better than public school students, especially in the early grades. I met a father of homeschoolers and asked why he was doing the homeschool program and how could a parent do the same as public education? His response was, “The education is as good as the parents.” I admired his dedication and commitment to such a responsibility. The parents of homeschoolers are folks who want a direct hand at raising their children.

Home School

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Home School

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They are disappointed in the public school system, with everything from illicit drugs, bullying, school shootings, and social pressure to follow trends.

But I also ask how a parent can not want their child to be socialized. A big part of education is experiencing socialization in school. Is homeschooling a way to isolate and protect the child too much? Homeschoolers are more interested in religious freedom, social independence, and direct hands-on connection to their children. It seems the home is the most logical place to begin.

I went to meet the Superintendent of Schools of Mount Blue with one question. "How can the State allow parents to fill the department of Education's shoes". But the Superintendent correctly rephrased the question in a diplomatic way. "How is it that public schools have more credibility than parents?" The State recognizes that parents have the primary responsibility and say about their child's education and upbringing.

I attended and taught in both religious schools and public schools. The value of teaching morals, civics, and values to young people should be a beginning point for education, not a reaction to social dysfunction. So, why have the public schools not been able to graduate shinning citizens? They have. Not everything is doom and gloom. Public schools reflect a diverse, complicated society that lacks spiritual awareness and puts more emphasis on material success than inner peace. A wise parent knows that each child is different and may fit in a public setting, or a home setting, best. But also, as a twenty-eight-year veteran of education, I see where parents are not engaged enough. Both home schoolers and public schoolers need a lot of parental input. None of it is easy but it is extremely important.

Serving More Than Meals

by Nancy Pratt

I was trained to work as a cook at the Weld School by the long-time school cook, Jane Vining. I can't say enough about what a great cook she was and how dedicated she was to her job, her co-workers, and the school children of Weld. I followed Jane in 1990 and worked until the school closed for good in 2008.

We all had our individual jobs at the school, but on any given day we all multitasked. I might need to help in one of the two classrooms if something urgent came up that a teacher needed to attend to. The teachers took turns helping me serve lunch, particularly when there were numerous food items to hand out. Sometimes I helped the bus driver/janitor clean up or worked as an aid on field trips. I might need to apply a band aid, all while the food simmered on the stove. Only in Weld could the bus driver/janitor fill in for me as a cook when I needed a week off to go on a moose hunting trip!

Most of the Kindergarten through 5th grade Weld kids ate hot lunch. They said please and thank you and were well mannered and considerate of others. There are so many things I could mention that were special to me about the Weld School. I often think of how lucky I was to be able to say, I love my job.

I have a sign in our kitchen that says: GOOD FOOD, GOOD FRIENDS, GOOD TIMES. That pretty much sums up the Weld School.

Milk and food deliveries were either brought in by school bus or a SAD 9 maintenance truck. (School Administrative District 9 is a regional school district in Franklin

County.) We followed the district school meals program the best we could, but sometimes we had to make substitutions and use what we had available at the time. We didn't have a lot of fresh fruit or vegetables like schools offer today. Most of it came in #10 cans (three quarts each) that had to be opened with a big heavy can opener with a mind of its own. When we did get fresh produce, the kids enjoyed it.

When I first started working at the school, we had a four-burner electric stove. Two burners worked, two didn't. The only dish washer was my own two hands for the entire 18 years that I worked there. The stove never got an upgrade. The mixer I used was the best! It was a Hobart mixer that was like a giant Kitchen Aid on a stand that wheeled around when you needed to move it. On average, we cooked for about 20-30 kids, depending on the year. And of course, as the years went by, the numbers dwindled as the children of Weld were growing up and there were not enough families with small kids to support the school.

My husband Scott went to the Weld School, as did so many of the people in Weld that I know. I have always thought how lucky my two kids were to have gone to this school when they were young. I wish my grandchildren could have gone there as well. For me, it was a sad day when the school closed its doors.

Fun Fact: In 18 years of working 180-day school years, Nancy would have served lunch about 3,240 times.

Annie the Flower Lady

by Anne Agan

*To dig and delve in the
nice clean dirt can do
a mortal little hurt.*

- John K. Bangs

In springtime, when the earth warms enough to tickle it with a hoe, there's nowhere I'd rather be than in a garden. This passion was instilled in me by my father, when I was old enough to distinguish a pea sprout from Creeping Charlie.

My first task was schlepping rocks in a Radio Flyer wagon to a burgeoning stone wall. No complaints—it was a ticket into my father's world. He lost himself in the garden. Working in companionable silence, I lost myself with him.

Dad planted by the "rules"—the rules set by his father, in Wilton: straight rows, no weeds. It was against the *order of things* to have weeds where vegetables and flowers rightfully belonged.

I didn't let on that I favored the alive and out-of-control garden of our neighbor, Caroline, who broke all the rules and regulations, merging vegetables with flowers, with no rhyme or reason. Blood-red dahlias jostled with basil and tomatoes, marigolds wove through the peppers, summer squash spread through cosmos. Sunflowers, hollyhocks and blue delphinium towered over bright red-orange poppies, and nasturtiums crawled over a weather-worn bench: colors that sang.

I often dreamed of having a garden such as Caroline's someday. That dream reached fruition after I married, started a family, and moved to Vermont.



Gradually, the entire yard became much the same as Caroline's, though a bit more in control.

One day a neighbor commented, "Annie, you have so many flowers, you should be selling them." I gave it a shot.

Living on busy Route 7 in a Victorian house surrounded by flower gardens proved to be an excellent location. Within a week after "hanging out my shingle" I was asked to do a wedding, and from then on, life became insanely busy during the growing season. Occasionally I hired help, but for the most part, I flew solo. Thirty years later I realized I'd been devoured by a monster of my own making.

The family camp, closed up for many moons, beckoned. It was time to return, relax and enjoy the quiet otherworldliness of Webb Lake. My husband I had parted ways, both parents had passed away, my brother lived in Scotland, one son worked in California, and the other son had succumbed to cancer. I'd have the place to myself. And a lot of memories.

Turning onto Cottage Lane, I noticed the garden, cultivated by various locals over the years, appeared forsaken. Reclaiming a field of weeds was NOT on the "to do" list that year. The camp needed a lot of TLC, plus I wasn't ready to say goodbye to the flower business. It took another six years before I retired and returned to Weld in earnest.

In late May 2010, I approached Doug Bonney (property owner) about clearing the field and starting "a few vegetables and flowers." Somewhat wary of my motive, he granted permission. The following morning, I walked up to the garden to plan my strategy. It was so quiet I could hear myself breathing. Aside from hosting a private party with swarms of black flies, it felt like heaven.

After weed trimming the area, I began rototilling. Shortly, the tiller ground to a halt; a rock caught in the tines. This happened repeatedly, so I connected with Mike Pratt, who tilled with his tractor the next day. He did a beautiful job working up the soil, inadvertently unearthing a plethora of rocks, scattered on the surface like recently harvested potatoes. I was back to my job as a child, minus the Radio Flyer.

While schlepping rocks, a local woman drove slowly by, pulled to a stop, rolled down her window, and called out, "Are you aware that this is a deer corridor?" I shook my head and responded, "I'll deal with it." I'd dealt with moles, voles, bunnies, coons, woodchucks, skunks, aphids, slugs, and an occasional cow breaking through the barbed wire fence abutting my yard, but never deer.

Annie the Flower Lady

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What's Up Outside - March 2025

by Lise Bofinger

Thursday, March 20, at 5:01a.m., marks the arrival of the Spring or Vernal Equinox. This event occurs when the sun crosses the celestial equator, the imaginary line in the sky that aligns with the Earth's equator. On this day, people around the world can observe the sun rising directly in the east and setting directly in the west. As a winter enthusiast, I have always cherished March; despite the sun's efforts to usher in spring, winter often clings on, generously blanketing the landscape with beautiful snow.

While the snow may linger, the return of the sun signals longer days—an essential sign of the new season. Growing up in the Northeast, I remember many indicators of spring: the buckets (now replaced with plastic tubing) hanging from maple trees, and the delightful sounds of spring peepers in the wetlands. We often view spring as a time of renewal and rebirth; this is especially evident in our woodlands, which come back to life. One of the most fascinating places to witness this revival is in vernal pools.

Vernal pools are small, temporary woodland wetlands. Although they may be modest in size, their ecological significance is sub-



PHOTO BY DINA WALKER

tantial. What sets them apart is what they lack: fish. These pools dry up during the summer months and are not connected to larger bodies of water, making them ideal breeding grounds for amphibians. Many of you may have come across vernal pools while wandering through the woods and thought, “that looks like a large puddle that appears every year.” This year, I encourage you to slow down and take a closer look; you may be pleasantly surprised by the life that thrives there—from salamander and frog egg masses to fairy shrimp, salamanders, frogs, and toads. If you think you hear ducks quacking while wandering through the woods, you are likely hearing wood frogs. Late winter till early spring is the best time to look for and listen for wood frogs. There is a wealth of biodiversity waiting for those willing to explore!

Crackle Top Molasses Cookies

Submitted by Mark Schneider. (From *Cookies*, by Natalie Hartanov, Houghton, HP Books, 1983.) Mark and Dawn's son, Jay, gave this cookbook to his mother for Christmas when he was eight years old.

These are my go-to cookies. Quick, simple, easy clean-up and everyone loves them.

- ½ cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- ¼ cup molasses
- 2 - 2 ½ cup flour (I use ⅓ of total whole wheat)
- 2 tsps. baking soda
- 1 tsp. each, cinnamon and ginger
- ⅓ cup coarse sanding sugar for sprinkling on top (regular sugar disappears, powdered sugar works, but is a poor substitute.) Yield: 30 cookies. I usually do a batch and a half for about 45 cookies. I use 2 eggs small eggs for that.
- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl combine oil and regular sugar, add the egg, molasses, beat well and add remaining dry ingredients. This is a stiff dough, and I use a mixer with the wet ingredients only. The ratio of flour to wet ingredients is variable. When you get it right, all of the dough will form a large ball in the bowl. Then roll a ping-pong sized ball in your hands as a test. You should have almost no dough stuck to your hands. Work in more flour if not.
- Roll into ping-pong sized balls then roll each ball in a small bowl containing the sanding sugar until half the ball is covered. Place this side up on your ungreased cookie sheet. (These tasks go much more quickly with a helper.) This will give you 4 rows of 5 cookies spaced just right on a standard sheet. Bake 10-12 minutes till golden brown. Remove from oven and cool on rack. Yield, 30 cookies.

Editor Note: Molasses can have health benefits because it has antioxidants, iron, calcium, magnesium, potassium, phosphorus, and vitamin B6. (Mark Schneider says this is a great rationalization to justify consuming all that oil, sugar, and white flour!)

Municipal Literacy Corner: Q&A with a Municipal Officer

by Dina Walker

How does the Select Board work to balance maintaining municipal services with keeping fees and taxes low for all residents?

This indeed is the crux of a Selectman's work, in my opinion. Following the money is a huge part of my job as Selectman. Because Weld doesn't employ a Selectboard/Town Manager model of municipal government, much of the work to effectively manage the annual taxes raised so that we can provide all the municipal services promised to the public falls squarely on the shoulders of the Selectboard.

From the expense side, a rigorous review of the town's disbursement and payroll warrants is key to maintaining the budget approved by the town legislature (town residents who attend the town meeting). Understanding the paper trail from (1) the budget approved by the legislature at the annual town meeting, (2) tracking authorizations of disbursements/donations, and (3) understanding and following legal/insurance protocols during our day-to-day running of general government helps the municipality to not waste its tax dollars on avoidable fees, fines, and lawsuits.

Planning ahead is also key. Regardless of how long a Selectboard member plans to serve, one should think beyond their term as to the needs of the municipality. Anticipating what basic services our town will likely require three or five years down the road is a good place to start. The huge cost to repairing our public works (roads and



Richard Doughty, Chair of the Selectboard, has completed his recent term. Thank you, Richard, for your dedication over the past eight years. Your competence, good nature, and generosity have made Weld a better place.

bridges) is what's been keeping me up at night lately – with the amount of storms and floods that Maine has experienced in the last couple of years, it will cost Weld in the six-figures to have all the roads alone restored to their previous conditions – not to mention the bridges that are due for repair in the next couple of years.

Although there is federal and state aid to help with these costs, reimbursement from such funding won't take place until at least two to three years from the required repair. With floods and storms becoming increasingly more regular in Maine, much of the work done by our public works employees will most likely be in the summer rather

than the Winter. Wages for municipal employees, especially public works personnel, have become increasingly competitive around the State, and hiring qualified people and keeping them has become a major challenge. With these rising costs to providing basic municipal services, taxes may have to increase.

If we know these costs ahead of time and plan accordingly, we can research the best type of funding method (examples include municipal bonds, grants, proper management of existing expenses to avoid unnecessary fees and penalties)

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so that we get “the most bang” from our existing tax dollars while having ample time to obtain alternative funding for our basic services to offset these costs and avoid unnecessary tax increases.

What is the difference between the Select Board and the Planning Board?

Generally speaking, the difference

between the Planning Board and the Selectboard is that each board holds different responsibilities. While the Selectboard, as a body, is charged with the executive and administrative duties of the town, the Planning Board is responsible for reviewing building related applications such as site plans and subdivision applications for compliance with all local, State and Federal land use regulations. The Planning Board can also advise the

Selectboard on any number of land use related issues such as zoning ordinances, land use, and comprehensive planning.

Do you have a question for the Municipal Corner about how our municipal government works?

Send an email to weldrecnews@weld-maine.org. You can also submit questions on paper by dropping them in the Business Box in front of the Town Office, 23 Mill Street.

Mushing Through Life

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What breed of dogs do you have and how many make up your pack?

I currently run sprint races with a hybrid breed of dogs that is made up of varying percentages of Alaskan Husky (different than a Siberian), German and English Pointer, and some greyhound. They are specifically bred to be very fast and powerful in distances under ten miles. I currently have 11 dogs at my house and 14 at my kennel partner's north of Montreal, Quebec. I raise the puppies and get them through basic training. Once they graduate my program, they go to my kennel partner's to be trained for the main race teams.

Do you compete with your dog in races? How does that work?

There are races from October to March all over New England, Eastern Canada and beyond. With the change in weather patterns over the years, Sled Dog clubs have adapted and now have races in the fall on wheels. We call this Dryland Racing. We all still live for snow however and do our snow dances so we can race on sleds from January to March. I will race anything from one-dog classes on bikes or scooters to six-dog sled in the winter. Races are timed and the fastest time wins. If there is more than one heat of a race, the combined fastest time wins.

Are there many Mushers in Maine?

We are a small but mighty crew. I don't know how many live in Maine, but

between those that race (Sprint, Mid-distance and Distance) those that give rides and those that just do it recreationally, there are more than people think. Sadly, with the weather becoming unpredictable, numbers are dropping across the region. I am always working with folks new to mushing to help them get started and reach their own goals in the sport. Having had great mentors as I was starting in the sport, I know the importance of having someone to answer questions and be a sounding board for thoughts and concerns. Getting new people involved in the sport and making it accessible is the only way mushing will survive in the coming years. I have lifelong friends all over the world because we have met through dogs. The sport has truly opened the world for me. Mushing is not “what” I do, it's “who” I am.

Annie the Flower Lady

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Quoting a July 28, 2010 journal entry: Passers-by often stop to admire the garden along Cottage Lane. I've just begun; there's only 1/3 planted. The remaining space will come to life next season. This fall I'll plant garlic, transplant peonies from home and come spring I'll bring more

perennials and wildflower seeds. I know it will be ten times more beautiful next year.

Soon after I penned the above journal entry, I headed up to the garden on foot. Ken Jones hollered from his porch, “Your garden is gorgeous, Annie!”

“It's coming along, Ken, but wait 'til next year, it will be so much better.”

Ken, who hails from Boston, replied, “Yeh, that's what I keep saying about

the Red Sox.”

That was fifteen years ago. I'm not competing against another team, but I feel as if I've won the game, in regard to reviving the long-neglected garden. In retrospect, I've lost something far more important: the freedom to be there alone, to work and “lose myself” in unencumbered solitude. It's a vulnerable location for a private garden, but it sure beats Vermont's Route 7.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN



The Weld Observer

We invite you to contribute content: articles, letters, drawings, cartoons, photographs, and other materials of interest. We publish in black and white. Captions and descriptive information are helpful. Please provide your contact information with your submission.

Via e-mail: weldrecnews@weld-maine.org

or drop your submission in the Weld business box in front of the **Weld Town Office**
located at **23 Mill Street in Weld**. Attention: **Weld Recreation Department**