

## Selectman's Letter

2024 was a year of sudden change in Steuben. We've seen a complete change in the personnel in the office, a new Code Enforcement Officer and a new Assessor. We've seen new faces on the Selectboard also. It is important to acknowledge the loss of long-term contributors to the town of Steuben, Nancy Parritt and Maggi Kovacs. These two strong women exemplified the spirit of service and gave Steuben their all.

Damage from the ferocious storms of January 10' and 13th had an immediate and long-lasting impact on the town. Wharves were lost and roads were severely damaged. We're grateful to the quick action of local contractors who sprang to action after the first storm to protect Pigeon Hill Road with over 100 loads of boulders.

Protecting that shoreline consumed nearly half of the amount the town had planned to spend on maintaining the town's roads. This expense meant that some other planned maintenance activities were delayed. Fortunately, after completing a complex FEMA application, 90% of the money that Steuben spent will be reimbursed in 2025.

Because of the large hit to the road budget, the board gathered the town's contractors to get their assessment of the costs necessary to ditch and grade every road in town. With their input, the board has an approximate amount it will take to move forward. We also received multiple estimates for rebuilding and repairing Eastside road. These told us that the work was not possible with the remaining budget.

As part of the close attention we paid to the costs of maintaining roads, the board evaluated the efficiency of Steuben's public works operation. The department is a fixed cost, it only operates efficiently when staffed with two experienced workers, and the work our crew can do is limited by the equipment that the town owns or rents. Based on that, the board recommends returning to a contract-only maintenance program.

Other external events will affect Steuben's taxpayers. Bold Coast Ambulance will need more taxpayer support because the closure of the nursing home in Milbridge will cut revenues to the service. An even larger tax impact will come from an increase in the assessment from Washington County due to revisions in its accounting practices.

Steuben has weathered many challenges 2024. While we don't know what changes the coming year in will bring, Steuben has shown it has the stuff it takes to tackle whatever 2025 brings.