Somerset County Budget Review FY2009-2010

It's that time of year again and the budget season is upon us. Due to the fiscal year change implemented last year, County Departments began reviewing their 2009-2010 budgets with Administration the beginning of March and are now in the second round of reviews with the Board of Commissioners which began on April 1st. The Commissioners will complete their review of the 2009-2010 budget by April 30th and then turn the estimated budget over to the Budget Committee for their review. The Budget Committee will begin their review in May and prepare a proposed budget which may be increased, decreased or altered as long as explanations of the suggested changes are entered into its minutes. The Budget Committee is then required to hold a Public Hearing on the proposed budget before the end of the County's fiscal year which will be sometime near the end of June and before final adoption. Written notice of the Public Hearing and a copy of the proposed budget will be sent to each town and the town clerk is responsible for notifying the municipal officials of the proposed budget. After the Public Hearing, the Budget Committee shall adopt a final budget and transmit that budget to the Commissioners. The Commissioners may not further increase, decrease or alter the budget except by a unanimous vote; if the budget is changed by the Commissioners, the Budget Committee may reject that change by a 2/3 vote of its membership. The budget then becomes final is not subject to any further action.

SOMERSET COUNTY BUDGET COMMITTEE CAUCUS

On Monday, March 23rd at 7:00 p.m., the County Commissioners held their District Caucus at the Somerset County Courthouse to elect Budget Committee Members whose terms had expired or were vacated due to town elections. The following members were elected: Commissioner District #1 - Mike Cray of Palmira was nominated to fill the Municipal Officer position formerly held by Lloyd Traflon of W. Forks—2 year term; Steve Stewart of Bingham was nominated to fill the Municipal Officer position which had expired—3 year term. Commissioner District #2 — Ed Stevens of Fairfield resigned his position as Municipal Officer; Philip Roy, Jr. of Fairfield was nominated to fill the Municipal Official position formerly held by Glen Mantor of Madison—3 year term; the Municipal Officer position vacated by Ed Stevens is to be filled on April 15th at 6:00 p.m. at a District #2 Caucus; Commissioner District #3 — Ethan Kelley of Detroit was nominated to fill the Municipal Officer position which had expired—3 year term.

There are a total of 9 Budget Committee Members serving on the Budget Committee; three in each Commissioner District two of whom must be Municipal Officers, which are defined as selectmen or councilmen of a town and one that is a Municipal Official which is defined as an elected or appointed official. Members serve a three year term.
“Somerset County Charter Commission Update”

By Elaine Aloe, Charter Commission Member

A County Charter is a citizen approved written guideline on how our county will be managed. Once the Charter is adopted, any amendment must be approved by the voters of our county. Amendments can be proposed by the Commissioners or by citizen petition.

The County Charter Committee has met several times since our formation in January. We started by reviewing the Aroostook County and York County charters. Taking the parts we liked from each of those charters, we developed a preliminary draft that we are now reviewing line by line. At our next meeting on April 13th we are hoping to finalize a draft that we can present at public hearings and get input from the people of the county. We will also be scheduling a meeting with the County department heads and other interested county employees to get their input and suggestions for the Charter. After these meetings we will revise the draft into our final version of the Charter based on the input we receive at our public meetings.

Some of the items of interest in the draft Charter are:

1. Increasing the number of Commissioners from 3 commissions with 4 year terms to 5 commissioners with 3 year terms and reorganizing the county into 5 districts;
2. Retaining all elected positions as elected positions but a county wide vote in the future will allow an elected position to become appointed instead of elected;
3. Allowing the recall of elected officials and giving the procedure governing any recall request;
4. We are undecided on whether elected officials should be elected on a nonpartisan basis or continue as we do it now with primaries for any recognized party's candidates and then any un-enrolled or unrecognized party candidate with enough signatures also being on the ballot. We are especially seeking input on this matter.
5. The Commissioners and Budget Committee will become the Apportionment Committee to review the census data every ten years and reapportion the districts if needed;
6. In the case of vacancy in a Commissioner's position, the municipal officers of the that district will caucus and choose a person to hold that office until December 31st after the next November election;
7. The same procedure will be held for vacancies of the other elected officials except it will be a county wide caucus of municipal officers;
8. Budget Committee will have 2 members from each district, one a municipal officer and one a municipal officer or official;
9. All County Property belongs to the citizens of Somerset County; and
10. This Charter can be amended at any time with a county wide vote.

The Charter will be ready to be voted on by the citizens of our county in November 2009. If the Charter is approved

Somerset County’s Bicentennial Celebration!

Somerset County’s "Kick Off" Bicentennial Ceremony held on Saturday, February 28th at the Skowhegan Opera House was a huge success!!! It all started with an invitational brunch and a Maple Syrup presentation given by Alfred Bolduc, President of Somerset Maine Sugarmakers Association. The maple syrup samples and the maple sugar candy were a delicious surprise! Over 200 citizens from all over Somerset County joined in this Celebration. The Ceremony began with the Invocation given by Rep. Philip Curtis, the Master of Ceremonies, and the Presentation of Colors by the Somerset County Sheriff’s Department. County Commissioner, Lynda Quinn, and her granddaughter Emma York opened the event with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a beautiful Medley of Patriotic Songs sung by the Somerset Singers. Sen.
BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION CONTINUED...

Snowe provided video’s giving tribute to the Honorable Margaret Chase Smith and congratulating Somerset County on its 200th Birthday. These videos are available for viewing on our County website. Rep. Michael Michaud presented a letter of congratulations and the Maine Senate and House of Representatives provided Somerset County with a congratulatory plaque recognizing its Bicentennial. Gerard Forge, a historian in Somerset County, gave a presentation on the establishment of Counties in Maine; Earle Shuttleworth, Director of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, provided several slides of historic places in Somerset County and intrigued the audience with each picture’s story. Gretchen Clark, a student at Skowhegan Middle School, gave a reading on the Red Paint Native Americans in Somerset County providing us all with a bit of their heritage. Rita Ready, from the Maine Education Scholarship Foundation, announced a new Scholarship Program founded by the Richard H. Pierce Family Foundation, more information can be obtained by visiting our website; several historians in Somerset County shared stories on their town’s history; Certificates of Recognition and flowers were presented to Boston Pose Cane Recipients throughout the County and County Proclamations were given to each Municipality in recognition of their Incorporation. The day ended with a spectacular concert given by the COLONIAL BRASS QUINTET - U.S.A.F. BAND OF LIBERTY of HANSON AIR BASE, MA. It was a wonderful day of Celebration!

The Bicentennial Planning Committee continues to meet regularly. If you are interested in becoming a part of the planning activities please call us 474-9861 or email: Somerset@somersetcounty-me.org. We would like to thank all our many sponsors who made this event possible giving special recognition to: HIGHTS, BANGOR SAVINGS BANK and SOMERSET MAINE SUGARMAKERS ASSOCIATION. We extend a special “thank you” to the Town of Skowhegan for use of the Opera House/Municipal Building, our Planning Committee and others who dedicated their time and efforts in helping us set up for the event. A special “Thank You” goes out to all those who graciously participated.

SOMERSET COUNTY JAIL IMPLEMENTS A GED PROGRAM

Somerset County Jail recently had its first GED Graduate. Mr. Harley Wyman completed his GED testing while at the Somerset County Jail and received his GED certificate through Skowhegan Adult Education which works in partnership with the jail to provide educational services to the jail population. Mr. Wyman has completed a major step in his life and is to be congratulated.

Sheriff Barry DeLong—Left
Harley Wyman—Right

The GED program is but one of many educational programs that were put into place by Sheriff Barry DeLong and is being run at the Somerset County Jail. Education progression has proven to be a major factor in preventing offenders from returning to jail.

SOMERSET COUNTY JAIL IMPLEMENTS THE “POD DOG” PROGRAM

Sheriff Barry DeLong and the Somerset County Jail implemented the Jail “Pod Dog” program on Wednesday, February 19, 2009, with the placement of Officer Max into the jail. Max is an adult, curly haired, Golden Retriever from an animal shelter. Max went through a rigorous selection process evaluating health, temperament, and demeanor. Max has been placed into a jail housing pod as a pet for the inmate population. Max is already a hit with the inmates. He acts like he has been a resident of D Pod forever. He waits patiently for doors, “locks-in” when ordered, and is a kind soul to all. The eventual goal is to have a Pod Dog in each of the general population housing areas but for now Max is a welcome addition to the jail population.

Pod Dog Program: Inmates sign-up to be Pod Dog Handlers and are scheduled for a week at a time with the purpose of learning basic pet handling responsibilities. Responsibilities include: walking, cleaning of shelter, feeding, watering, grooming, and cleaning up after. The Pod Dog follows the facility schedule as to eating, locking-in and recreation.
Somerset County Courthouse
41 Court Street
Skowhegan, ME 04976
Phone: 474-9861—Fax: 474-7405
Email: somerset@somersetcounty-me.org

About our Website:
At www.somersetcountycommissioners.com you will find links to all County Departments and their web sites; Commissioner meeting schedule, agendas, and minutes; Budget Committee information; Charter Commission Committee information; Request for proposals; and Employment opportunities; and other upcoming events.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU:

Departmental Address & Phone Directory

Located at 41 Court St, Skowhegan
County Administrator - 474-9861
County Treasurer/Finance - 474-5776
Registry of Deeds - 474-3421
Registry of Probate - 474-9861
Economic Development - 474-0166
District Attorney’s Office - 474-2423
Somerset Technical Services - 858-4261

Located at 8 County Drive, Skowhegan
Emergency Management - 474-6788
Telecommunications - 474-6386

Located at 131 East Madison RD, Madison
Somerset County Jail - 474-9591
Sheriff’s Department - 474-9591

Check Somerset County’s website for more detailed information—www.somersetcountycommissioners.com