

Freeport Insider *Bulletin*

A short news bulletin. More in the weekly *Insider*.

23 October 2023

TOWN COUNCIL HAS SCHEDULED A VOTE ON A NEW TOWN MANAGER and DISCUSSION OF THE POSSIBLE PURCHASE OF 22 MAIN. Meeting 6PM Tuesday 24 October.

NEW TOWN MANAGER

According to the agenda posted on the Town website, and the proposed employment contract:

Sophia L. Wilson is nominated as town manager, to start on 4 December, under a three-year contract paying her \$150,000/year.

A post on the Town website added more detail:

The search considered 104 candidates generated by the executive recruitment firm Baker Tilly. Wilson has served as a town manager for more than twenty-two years, in Orono (2011-2023) and Brownville (2000-2011). She graduated from UMO with a bachelor of social and behavioral science in political science, and a master's in Public Administration. In 2018, she became a certified labor relations professional through the National Public Employers Labor Relations Association. In 2021 she became a senior certified professional through the Society for Human Resource Managers.

She earned the Maine Town, City and County Management Association's Leadership Award in 2015. Presently, Wilson serves on the Association's professional development committee.

Council Chair Dan Piltch noted: "For the past six months, Caroline Pelletier has stepped up to take on the Town Manager responsibilities, in addition to her existing Town Planner duties. She has done an admirable job, and we wholly appreciate the time, energy and passion Caroline has committed to Freeport. We are lucky to have her on the team." {town website}

From 1996 to 2000, Wilson served as community relations coordinator for [Womancare Aegis](#) in Dover-Foxcroft. As a volunteer, she served as a public member of the Maine Board of Overseers of the Bar Grievance Commission from 2017 to 2022.

She also served as a board member (management) of the Maine Workers Compensation Board 2009-2012, and in 2023 joined the board of the Diversity Hiring Coalition of Maine. {LinkedIn profile}

What happened in Orono? Wilson leaving 2 December

On 19 October, Orono's Town Council unanimously approved Wilson's departure as town manager on 2 December during a special meeting. Speakers during the public comment section praised Wilson.

One, former councilor Meghan Gardner, said Orono was lucky to have Wilson leading the town because she was highly regarded and possibly the best manager in the state. "It's a big loss for the town. We are paying out almost \$95,000 in this transaction, and that's a lot of money to the taxpayers. It's worth considering what direction this council is going in."

"Sophie has been a great communicator with the council," said Orono Town Council Chair Geoff Wingard, who declined to say whether she resigned or was fired. "In the course of that communication, we realized that a transition was in order."

Her departure, which is how the agenda and councilors phrased her exit, is the latest in a [string of departures](#) among municipal staff. It will cost Orono about \$95,000: \$89,856 to Wilson and \$5,000 to Bangor law firm Eaton Peabody. {[Valerie Royzman](#) in *Bangor Daily News* 20.Oct.23} [See article for more facts, but no enlightenment as to the problems in Orono. *Editor*]

PURCHASE OF 22 MAIN

The Council agenda is worded thus:

Discussion of property at 22 Main Street and if the Town Council should consider placing an item on a future agenda for public input on pursuing a real estate transaction to possibly purchase the property. (Councilor Bradley)(10 minutes)

This is the parcel for which a proposed 30-unit building generated controversy at the Project Review Board. The Project Review Board's okay was reversed at the Freeport Board of Appeals for failure to meet Design Review guidelines. That reversal led to the creation of the Central Core Working Group. [See *Essay on Housing* in 13 October issue – box.]

Of late, Councilor Bradley, Ford Reiche, and Susan Nourse have explored the purchase by the Town. [See 5 October issue, *Town Council*.]