

# Freeport Insider

What's going on at Planning Board, Coastal Waters, Sustainability, Council, etc.  
A weekly news source on issues of concern taken up at Town Hall.

## TOWN COUNCIL

No report. Last report 21 September issue.  
Next meeting 3 October.

## CENTRAL CORE DISTRICT WORKING GROUP

Will ask Town Council to hold special October hearing to consider Design Review amendments to:

- shrink Design Review districts,
- streamline Design Review process,
- eliminate the Color Overlay District, and
- possibly eliminate Board of Appeals review.

## COASTAL WATERS

No report. Last report in 18 September issue.  
Next meeting 11 October.

## PLANNING BOARD

No report. Last report in 18 September issue.  
Next meeting 4 October.

## PROJECT REVIEW BOARD

No report. Last report in 21 September issue.  
Next meeting 18 October.

## SOCIAL AND RACIAL EQUITY

Meeting discusses "doing something."

## SUSTAINABILITY

Board discusses data, Climate Action.

## HOUSING

**Interview:** Is the 22 Main Street reversal by the Board of Appeals to blame for the lack of housing projects?

**Freeport Station:** Stalled, along with Depot Square, Harraseeket Ridge, and Whitetail Drive.

## PEOPLE

Kimberly Buck runs for Council in 3<sup>rd</sup> District.

## EVENTS

No report.

## RAILROADS

No report.

**Town calendars September & October**

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## *CENTRAL CORE DISTRICT*

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<https://www.freeportmaine.com/home/events/43071>

**Meetings:** Weekly Wednesdays 12h30.

27 September. ***THE WORKING GROUP CAME TO SUBSTANTIAL AGREEMENT ON THREE***

## FROM THE EDITOR

### Thanks

The support I have received from readers of the newsletter, AND the support I have received from Town officials helping to inform me about what is happening at Town Hall? Both are gratifying.

The support certains me in continuing to publish. By next week I plan to have a subscription model in place with substack.

### Your choice with this issue

Because I am imbued with old-school print journalism, I will write the issue in long-hand on yellow legal pads. Kidding....

Seriously, it will still emerge as a pdf. That's the form in which you received the first two issues. The first issue was a two-column affair, looking like what you would receive in print. The second issue I sent out as a one-column, narrower edition which you could open and read on your cell phone.

This issue, still sent via standard e-mail, will offer both. You will have the choice.

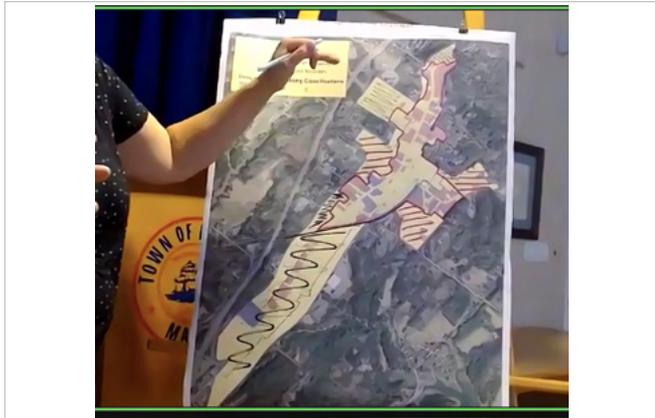
### Tips, rumors, interesting stories, feedback?

E-mail me or call me!

- Chalmers, editor  
new e-mail insider@chalmersh.com

**STEPS** it will recommend to the Town Council. However, members agreed to meet next Wednesday to finalize their recommendations. In order to have their changes take effect this calendar year, the Council must at one meeting announce a public hearing on ordinance changes, and at a second meeting hold the public hearing and then decide

whether to pass the proposed changes. These two meetings, CCWG members reason, must occur before the 7 November Council elections, after which two or possibly three new councilors will take their seats and require time to get up to speed on the need for ordinance changes. Hence the effort to allow the existing Council to enact the changes.



The Town Planner shows off her sketching ability. {screenshot from Zoom}

**Eliminate color overlay district**

The sense among CCWG members was that the color overlay district, in which the colors of buildings could be restricted, could be eliminated while retaining the ability of the Town to regulate to some extent the color of buildings.

**Shrink the Design Review districts**

In a second effort to streamline review of proposed projects, the CCWG will recommend tightening the boundaries of the two Design Review districts wherein the PRB is required to closely review elements of project design.

At the meeting, Town Planner Caroline Pelletier quickly sketched the proposed new boundary on a map of the existing Design Review districts. [See version annotated by Insider.]

**Streamline the process**

Sam Kapala, who chairs the CCWG, submitted proposed changes to the

Design Review ordinance.

Some would let staff decide particular design decisions. Others would permit residents to make changes as of right, rather than force them to get an okay from PRB as they do now.

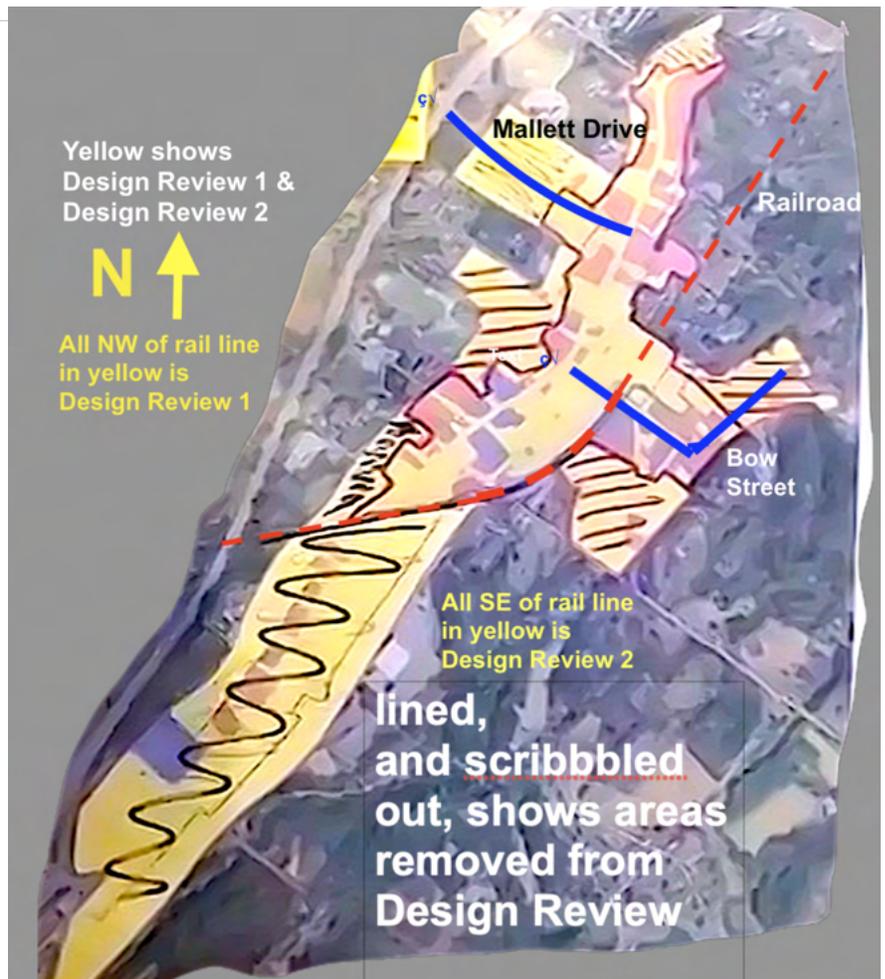
**Reduce subjectivity**

Members debated how to eliminate, or at least reduce, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.”

While members could not find better terms than “visually compatible”, “look and feel”, “established pattern”, or “neighborhood,” they did appear to come to consensus on the distance from the proposed project.

Thus this working by Kapala might be acceptable with respect to the distance of 500 feet: “Visually Compatible

Design that is visually and architecturally harmonious with the predominate pattern of buildings in the district when viewed from a



Annotations by Insider

public right-of-way. For the purposes of this ordinance, the standard of visual compatibility considers buildings within 500 feet of any new building proposed, or the existing building or buildings seeking a design certificate. If any part of a building within the Design Review District is within 500 feet of any part of the building seeking a design certificate, the entire building shall be considered.”

### Eliminate Board of Appeals review

Some members appeared to agree that asking the Board of Appeals to review decisions of the Project Review Board – even under legal standards for such review – was giving those opposed to a PRB decision “two bites of the apple.” Instead, they advocate for appeal only to Maine superior courts. The group did not reach the issue, though it did spend an extra 30 minutes more than its normal 60-minute meetings.

### Next steps

Pelletier will produce a more formal map of the proposed new boundaries of the Design Review districts. She will also tweak the suggested changes to the ordinances.

Both she will provide to the members before then next CCWG meeting on 4 October. {*Insider* coverage via Zoom}

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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**Meetings:** Last Tuesday of the month, 07h45.

26 September. **THE FEDC HEARD FROM THE CANDIDATES FOR TOWN COUNCIL** [see *People*] at its monthly meeting, held at the Freeport Oyster Bar. {*Insider* discussion with Executive Director Brett Richardson 28.Sept.23}

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## SOCIAL & RACIAL EQUITY

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**Meetings:** 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month.

27 September. **THE COMMITTEE DISCUSSED “ACTUALLY DOING SOMETHING”**, reported member Linda Berger, following the successful anti-hate rally on 22 September.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.wmtw.com/article/freeport-residents-hold-anti-](https://www.wmtw.com/article/freeport-residents-hold-anti-hate-rally-in-response-to-racist-graffiti/45273786)

With 12 to 13 public members and three Committee members plus Councilor John Egan, the group considered: reaching out to local schools to learn what they are doing; drafting an ordinance on graffiti removal; linking to other anti-bias groups in the area; holding workshops; and creating a “brand” for their efforts. {*Insider* discussion with Berger 28.Sept.23}

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## SUSTAINABILITY

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<https://www.freeportmaine.com/freeport-sustainability-advisory-board-0>

**Meetings:** 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays 630PM, check website  
**Agendas:** Posted at website.

25 September. **THE BOARD MADE PROGRESS ON SEVERAL ITEMS** at its regular meeting.

### Emissions data for Freeport

Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) can estimate the amount of emissions generated by transportation in Freeport. Meddy Smith, the sustainability coordinator, said the GPCOG could break down the transportation data monthly for both passenger and commercial and include some origin and destination information. The Board authorized a new contract for this, as GPCOG requested, using \$1,400 out of the FSAB budget.

### Climate Action Plan

The Town Council, per its published agenda, will vote on 3 October to adopt 'Carbon Reduction Limits for the Town of Freeport' drafted by the FSAB.

FSAB members have not decided on when to hold a public workshop to discuss how to reach the limits.

### Actions

'We reviewed a document prepared by GPCOG that listed possible subjects or items about which action could be taken with columns for process steps... We asked that GPCOG be asked to propose actions,' Board member Bob Stevens said.

### Tree Task Force

The Tree Task Force, which meets on the first

[hate-rally-in-response-to-racist-graffiti/45273786](https://www.wmtw.com/article/freeport-residents-hold-anti-hate-rally-in-response-to-racist-graffiti/45273786)

Thursday of each month, is participating with Freeport Community Services, Freeport Historical Society and other concerned parties with studies and consideration of actions to be taken to protect the black ash trees in Freeport from emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*), a wood boring beetle that kills ash trees. Black ash is used by the Wabanaki in their basket making.

Two red maple trees were to be planted on the 27th at the Park and Ride area across from Maine Beer on Route 1 by Earl Gibson and his Public Works crew. The crew will also designate an area for future vegetation planting. {Bob Stevens report 27.Sept.23}

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## HOUSING

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### AD HOC HOUSING TASK FORCE

**Meetings:** Last meeting 13 September cancelled. Future unknown.

The Town Council formed the Task Force in 2022. Its proposal about housing was presented to a Town Council workshop at a 22 August 2023 meeting in the Community Library. That led to the Central Core District Working Group [q.v.] which is moving much of the Task Force mission forward.

*The Freeport Housing Trust, an independent charitable organization, owns and operates several affordable housing estates in Freeport.*

### INTERVIEW: IS THE 22 MAIN STREET REVERSAL TO BLAME FOR THE LACK OF HOUSING PROJECTS?

*In the aftermath of the Board of Appeals reversal of the PRB's approval of the 22 Main Street project [see 21 September issue], some saw it as the reason nothing is getting built in Freeport. Councilor Fournier said at the 25 July Town Council: 'We spent a lot of time and money to come up with a plan to develop our downtown to bring back businesses. He has had people come to him to say that what happened at 22 Main Street will keep them from coming to Freeport.' {text of minutes}*

*The Insider reached out to the point person for the opposition to the design at 22 Main Street, Jay Yilmaz. He responded on 26 September:*

### How do you feel on the Board of Appeals win?

"I am satisfied that the voices of the majority, which were not given proper consideration at the PRB level, were heard at the BOA. Our Town and our citizens came dangerously close to having a building

constructed that would have satisfied some current goals driven by a small group focused on their agenda, without respect to a long-term outlook of the architectural integrity of our Village core which has been tended to carefully over the years.

"That is not to say that mistakes have not been made over the years, but we should learn from those mistakes and make positive changes going forward. If this building were to have been constructed, it could have been a generation or more before the opportunity arose to change it. Each generation should be cognizant of their obligation to be stewards and make wise decisions that our grandchildren can appreciate.

"I feel pride for those who testified to the Project Review Board to raise the material points of concern. I am proud that the Board of Appeals had the courage to say 'no, this does not fit.'

"With any luck, the Town or perhaps some private citizens can work with the property owner to acquire the property for public use. We will look back at this collective effort and understand, despite the short-term discomfort and hard feelings it may have elicited, that we made the right decision for the benefit of future generations."

### Are those who blame the lack of housing on the Town's actions on 22 Main Street correct?

"No. This is nonsense, at best. Please remember, I told the Project Review Board, and the Board of Appeals, that I was not opposed to housing at that location. No one else was opposed to housing, as was the testimony of those opposing the project as it was submitted and designed.

"The end result, both at the PRB, and the BOA, came as part of our Town and democratic process, to which all are entitled. Beyond those boards, there are advanced levels to appeal, if one feels they have not been served with the correct outcome.

"This concept of larger housing projects in the Village is new to Freeport's vision over the past 30 years. It was recently approved, arguably quite hastily, in conjunction with historically high building costs and interest rates which are really creating the headwinds.

"Because larger apartment housing is currently being encouraged to be constructed in the center of Town, we should be extra thoughtful about how we allow it to be developed because a

large part of our Town’s economic value is the quaint, tasteful, well-maintained and well-preserved New England-village. That can be more thoughtfully done with a process that incorporates peer review,

other towns that have worked very hard to keep high standards. This eventually pays dividends from the increased intrinsic value brought to the town.” {Insider e-mail interview 2.Sept.23}



such as having independent architects and planners consult with developers to help the projects fit in many different aspects.

“That might also mean we review and address some of the ordinances, but not a complete overhaul.”

**What would draw more housing to Freeport?**

“If we want unbridled development (to which I would be opposed), then that could happen more easily (in this current economic climate) with lower standards.

“I believe we should not lower or weaken our design standards just for the sake of stimulating development. The unintended consequences of such decisions would leave our Town with results that we would regret for years to come.

“I am confident that the high cost to build in conjunction with high cost of funds, will still discourage developers. If The Town could raise money (perhaps through a bond if legal and appropriate) to offer a developer lower cost financing, in exchange for a building that fit very closely within a New England village, that would be a great incentive. Think of towns like Greenwich, Connecticut and Georgetown, DC, along with many

**VARNEY HEIGHTS**

*Update in future issue.*

**FREEPORT STATION**

**Background**

This 67-unit, three-story project on Depot Street went before the Project Review Board in three meetings in 2022. David Latulippe of Freeport-based CJ Developers worked with Hilary Rockett of Marblehead (Massachusetts)-based HJR Developers. The PRB approved it at its September 2022 meeting. *For map and rendering see 18 September issue.*

**Why Freeport**

In July, Rockett advised the Board that 'he has not done any projects in Freeport but he has done projects in Topsham and Bath.' The first one he did was the 52-room Brunswick Hotel near the Brunswick Amtrak depot.



*Brunswick Hotel, by HJR Developers. {website}*

Rockett 'started looking in Freeport a couple of years ago and had a study done that came back very positive for marketing apartments for downtown Freeport. He has this property from L.L. Bean and has great ideas and is excited to get started.' {minutes of PRB meeting}

**No start**

Interim Town Manager and Town Planner Caroline Pelletier wrote on 27 September that '[a]s of

September 2023, [the applicant has] not moved forward with meeting any conditions of the approval or applying for permits.' {e-mail to *Insider*}

### Possible problems

Town Councillor John Egan told the CCWG on 27 September that the developers were 'not moving forward financially.'

The current zoning, Village Commercial I, only permitted the three stories proposed. If, Egan suggested, they could do four stories that could make the project feasible. {*Insider* coverage via Zoom}

### DEPOT SQUARE

*For some details, and map of location, see 18 September issue.*

Pelletier noted that Dominic [Perillo] 'came in with conceptual plans and the Board did a site walk but then he never returned to the Board. I am not sure of his plans at this time.' {e-mail to *Insider*}

### OTHER PROPOSED HOUSING

Pelletier noted '[t]here are two housing projects on Route One North that are still in the review process; Whitetail Drive Subdivision and Harraseeket Ridge Subdivision.'

Per plans at the Town Hall website, Whitetail Drive at 1495 US Route One (north) will have four two-unit residences.<sup>2</sup>

Harraseeket Ridge is planned as 'an 80-unit residential open space subdivision on a vacant parcel (approximately 90 acres) on US Route One North. Forty duplex structures and two new road entrances off US Route One are proposed. Each duplex will be about 2,870 sf in size and will each have their own garage and partial basements. The <sup>3</sup>units will all be on common land and condominium style; homeowner's association will be established.' In 2022 the applicant was working toward final approval. {text of Pelletier presentation to PRB 17.Aug.22<sup>4</sup>}

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.freeportmaine.com/sites/g/files/vyhlf4436/f/agendas/whitetail\\_drive\\_subdivision\\_conceptual\\_site\\_plan\\_set\\_06.27.23.pdf](https://www.freeportmaine.com/sites/g/files/vyhlf4436/f/agendas/whitetail_drive_subdivision_conceptual_site_plan_set_06.27.23.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.freeportmaine.com/sites/g/files/vyhlf4436/f/agendas/081722\\_prb\\_staff\\_report\\_w\\_attachments.pdf](https://www.freeportmaine.com/sites/g/files/vyhlf4436/f/agendas/081722_prb_staff_report_w_attachments.pdf)

### COMPARED TO ROCKLAND: SIMILAR

Much of the nation is suffering from a lack of housing and high rents. The City of Rockland (Maine) population grew slightly to crest above 7,000 between 2020 and 2021, but it has lost 1,000 people since 1998 and is smaller now than it was in 1860.

Local real estate agent Martin Cates said: "We need single-family homes, we need single-family rental homes, we need duplexes, triplexes, and there's a market out there that will pay a fair rent, will pay good rent, if it was available."

Rockland also has some economic issues. A single parent would have to make \$80,000 a year to afford a two-bedroom apartment for \$2,000 per month, noted Becca Gildred, chief development officer for the Knox County Homeless Coalition. Those jobs are in much higher supply in southern Maine, but three-fourths of Rockland residents cannot afford median rent. {Jules Walkup in *Bangor Daily News* 27.Sept.23}

## PEOPLE

**Kimberly Buck** is running against Matt Pillsbury for the 3<sup>rd</sup> District. Buck and other candidates came before the Freeport Economic Development Council at its 26 September meeting. [See FEDC.]

See 21 September issue for other candidates.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
7	28	29	30	31	1
<b>TOWN HALL SEPTEMBER</b>					
	4	5	6	7	8
	Labor Day	Town Council Meeting 5:00pm Library Board of Trustees 6:00pm	Planning Board 6:00pm	Tree Task Force 6:30pm	
0	11	12	13	14	15
	Board of Appeals - Meeting Cancelled 6:30pm	Complete Streets Committee Meeting 7:30am to 9:00am Special Town Council Meeting 2:45pm to 9:00pm Planning Board Meeting 6:00pm Conservation Commission 6:30pm	Central Core District Working Group 12:30pm Coastal Waters Commission 6:00pm Housing Committee Meeting - CANCELLED 6:30pm		
7	18	19	20	21	22
	Police Advisory Committee 6:00pm Winslow Park Commission -Cancelled 6:30pm Freeport Sewer District Board of Trustees 7:00pm	Town Council Meeting 6:00pm	Central Core District Working Group 12:30pm Project Review Board 6:00pm	Shellfish Committee Meeting 6:30pm	Appointments Committee Meeting 8:00am
4	25	26	27	28	29
	Freeport Sustainability Advisory Board 6:30pm to 8:00pm	FEDC Board Meeting 7:45am to 9:00pm	Central Core District Working Group 12:30pm Social and Racial Equity Committee 6:30pm	Special Town Council meeting 8:45am	

<b>TOWN HALL OCTOBER</b>					
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
	2	3	4	5	6
	Board of Appeals -cancelled 6:30pm	Appointments Meeting 4:45pm Town Council Workshop with Shellfish Commission 5:00pm Library Board of Trustees 6:00pm Town Council Meeting 6:00pm	Central Core District Working Group 12:30pm Planning Board 6:00pm	Tree Task Force Meeting 4:30pm Tree Task Force 6:00pm	
	9	10	11	12	13
	Columbus Day Winslow Park Commission 6:30pm	Complete Streets Committee Meeting 7:30am to 9:00am Conservation Commission 6:30pm	Central Core District Working Group 12:30pm Coastal Waters Commission 6:00pm	Shellfish Committee Meeting 6:30pm	
5	16	17	18	19	20
	Police Advisory Committee 6:00pm Freeport Sustainability Advisory Board 6:30pm	Town Council Meeting 6:00pm	Central Core District Working Group 12:30pm Project Review Board 6:00pm		
2	23	24	25	26	27
			Central Core District Working Group 12:30pm Social and Racial Equity Committee 6:30pm		
9	30	31	1	2	3
	Freeport Sustainability Advisory Board (FSAB) 6:30pm	FEDC Board Meeting 7:45am to 9:00pm			

## FREEPORT INSIDER

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Chalmers Hardenbergh, publisher and editor

### Coverage

The newsletter covers official doings of the Town of Freeport, Maine, with other stories the editor is moved to write about.

### Frequency

Weekly

### Pricing

[undecided]

### Advertising

Welcome!

### Copyright notice

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### Purpose

The *Freeport Insider* is founded to present the residents with news from the various Town committees. The editor finds the existing newspaper coverage (*Portland Press Herald*, *Northern Forecaster*) lacking. Sam Smith at *Freeport Notes* (Facebook) provides some announcements and stories, but no coverage of Town Hall.