



# Town Manager's Report

September 22, 2025



**Dock  
Assessments:  
What Residents  
Need to Know**



**PRIMEX  
Training —  
Managing  
Employee  
Performance**



**Employee  
Appreciation  
& One Year as  
Town Manager**

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**To:** Salem Town Council  
**From:** Joseph Devine, Town Manager  
**Date:** September 22, 2025  
**Re:** Town Manager's Report



# MEMORANDUM



## **News and Noteworthy:**

### **Assessing of Docks**

At the September 8th Town Council meeting, the topic of assessing permanent docks was raised. This has understandably generated discussion in the community, and I want to provide residents with clear information on the issue.

### *What the Law Says*

Under New Hampshire law, permanent docks are considered taxable property. A permanent dock is generally one that remains in place year-round, is affixed to the land, and typically requires a state permit. In contrast, temporary or seasonal docks, such as floating docks or those that are placed on blocks or removed from the water each winter, are not considered permanent structures still require a permit and are therefore not taxable.

This distinction is supported by the Board of Tax and Land Appeals (BTLA). In a notable case involving the Town of Stoddard, the BTLA ruled that a blanket policy of not taxing docks was unlawful and contrary to statute. The decision emphasized that permanent docks must be treated as taxable property. Other BTLA rulings have consistently supported this approach.

### *Why This Matters*

The Town of Salem, like all municipalities, has a legal obligation to assess taxable property fairly and consistently. Failing to do so could expose the Town to legal challenges and orders for revaluation. In short, the Town does not have discretion to exclude permanent docks from assessment.

### *What Residents Can Expect*

Permanent docks are now being assessed, and these assessments will appear on the December tax bill. To ensure fairness, residents who believe their dock is not permanent will have the opportunity to apply for an abatement after receiving their bill.

To assist with this process, the Town will be mailing a letter to all property owners with docks that are being assessed. That mailing will also include an abatement application form and instructions for submitting a request.

### *Next Steps*

- Permanent docks will continue to be assessed, consistent with state law and BTLA rulings.
- Temporary or seasonal docks will not be taxed.

- Property owners who disagree with the assessment of their dock will be able to apply for an abatement after the December tax bills are issued.
- Clear communication, including a mailed letter and application form, will be provided to all affected property owners.

We recognize this is a new and important issue for many residents. The Town is committed to following the law while also giving property owners a clear and fair process to challenge an assessment they believe is incorrect.

## **Budget Calendar**

Updated Town Meeting/Budget Schedule: Below is an updated budget schedule and important Town Meeting dates. Please mark these in your calendars:

Tuesday, July 15, 2025	Department Head Budget Review
Wednesday, August 6, 2025	Department Head Budget Due
Monday, August 25, 2025	Town Manager Begins Budget Review
Monday, September 29, 2025	Town Manager Delivers Budget to Town Council
Wednesday, October 1, 2025	Town Manager Presentation of 2026 Budget
Wednesday, October 8, 2025	Town Council Budget Workshop
Wednesday, October 15, 2025	Town Council Vote on 2026 Operating Budget
Wednesday, November 5, 2025	Preliminary Discussion on Budget with Budget Committee
Wednesday, November 12, 2025	Budget Committee Public Hearing on 2026 Operating Budget
Monday, November 17, 2025	Proposed Charter Amendments
Monday, December 1, 2025	Public Hearing Charter Amendments/Discussion 2026 Warrant Articles
Monday, December 15, 2025	Vote on 2026 Warrant Articles
Tuesday, January 13, 2026	Deadline for Citizen Petitions
Wednesday, January 14, 2026	Town Council/Budget Committee Public Hearing on Bonds/Vote on Citizen Petitions
Wednesday, January 21, 2026	Opening Day to Declare Candidacy for Elected Public Office
Thursday, January 22, 2026	Last Day for Budget Committee to Approve a Budget
Friday, January 30, 2026	Last Day to File Candidacy for Office
Saturday, January 31, 2026	Deliberative Session
Tuesday, March 10, 2026	Election Day

## **PRIMEX Training – Managing Employee Performance and the Law**

I have been working with PRIMEX to coordinate a training session for our department heads and their deputies titled “Managing Employee Performance and the Law.” This training will take place on November 5th.

The program is designed to strengthen our performance management practices by going beyond the traditional once-a-year performance review. Instead, it focuses on creating a system that encourages employee growth, connects individual roles to organizational goals, and builds a culture of clarity and trust.

Key elements of the training will include:

- Conducting fair and impartial evaluations and appraisals
- Goal setting and aligning with organizational priorities

- One-on-one discussions and ongoing feedback
- Navigating difficult conversations
- Understanding the role of supervisors and HR in performance management
- Reviewing relevant state and federal employment laws that impact supervision

The session will be interactive, giving participants the opportunity to engage in real-world discussions, while also providing practical tools and samples they can use moving forward in their careers.

This effort reflects our continued commitment to supporting professional growth for our leadership team and ensuring that we manage employee performance in a way that is consistent, fair, and legally sound.

### **Quarterly New Employee Welcome Lunch**



On Tuesday, September 9th, I hosted our quarterly lunch to welcome the newest members of the Town of Salem team. These lunches are a great opportunity to personally greet our new employees, introduce them to colleagues from across the organization, and share a little bit about our culture and community values.

In the above photos (left to right), please join me in welcoming the following new employees:

- Firefighters: Noah Souther, Tyler Burgoyne, Travis Bounsy, and William Willette
- Deputy Town Clerk: Meghan Grubbs
- SCTV Community Program Manager: Mya Girouard
- Police Officer: Laura Jimenez
- Administrative Assistant – Municipal Services: Lisa Perry
- Municipal Services Director: Wayne Amaral

We are excited to have them join our team and look forward to the energy, dedication, and skills they will bring to serving our community.

### **Employee Appreciation BBQ – Thursday, September 25**

The Town of Salem will be holding its annual Employee Appreciation BBQ on Thursday, September 25, 2025, to recognize and thank our staff for their hard work and dedication throughout the year. Please let me know if you would like to assist in any way at the BBQ.

To allow all employees the opportunity to participate, the Town Hall, Transfer Station and the Ingram Senior Center will be closing at 12:30 PM on that day. We appreciate the public's understanding and support as we take this time to celebrate our team. Normal operations will resume on the following business day.

### **One Year as Town Manager**

This month marks my first year serving as Salem's Town Manager. Over the past twelve months, I've had the privilege of working alongside the Town Council, our dedicated staff, and the residents of Salem to move our community forward in meaningful and lasting ways.

In just one year, we advanced several major infrastructure projects, including the rehabilitation of the Millville Lake Dam, completion of the Butler Street Pump Station, and the extension of the Rail Trail. We adopted the Town-Wide Master Plan and began new planning efforts for open space, recreation, and Depot Village. On the financial side, we issued a \$24.67 million bond to support critical priorities, introduced new budgeting software to modernize our process, and secured more than \$6 million in grants to offset local costs — all while maintaining Salem's AAA bond rating.

I have also made it a priority to strengthen our workplace culture. Over the past year, I have introduced and expanded employee engagement initiatives that bring recognition, connection, and appreciation into our organization. I host quarterly lunches to welcome new employees, and we launched the Employee of the Month program to highlight outstanding contributions across the Town. We also introduced a 90-day check-in process with all new hires to ensure they feel supported, began succession planning with department heads to prepare for the future, and held our now annual Employee Appreciation BBQ. In addition, I've enjoyed surprising staff with smaller, informal gestures — from cooking breakfast to casual appreciation events — that help foster pride and camaraderie across our workforce.

This year has also brought recognition for the progressive work happening here in Salem. The Town was recognized by the State of New Hampshire as a Housing Champion for our efforts to expand affordable housing. We officially launched Community Power, giving residents and businesses more choice and control over their electricity supply. And our proactive efforts to address cyanobacteria in Arlington Mill Reservoir earned Salem recognition from the State for Source Water Protection. These milestones highlight the strength of our staff and community partners and position Salem as a leader at the state level in housing, energy, and environmental stewardship.

Transparency has been another central focus of my first year. We launched Salem Speaks, a new platform that allows residents to ask questions directly and receive clear, factual answers from the Town — helping to dispel misinformation and improve communication. We've also expanded opportunities for face-to-face engagement with events like coffee hours and ice cream socials with the Council, library forums, and other community gatherings. These efforts are about more than just sharing information; they are about building trust and creating meaningful dialogue with the people we serve.

This first year has been both rewarding and humbling. I want to thank the Town Council for their guidance, our employees for their dedication, and our residents for their trust and support. Salem is moving forward with energy and vision, and I am excited to continue building on this strong foundation in the years ahead.

**Items Signed on Behalf of the Town Council Since Last Update:**

- Payment Check Register (09-03-25) - \$4,738,513.30
- Payment Check Register (09-09-25) - \$307,602.20
- Payroll Register No. 37 (09-08-25) - \$361,758.28
- Payroll Register No. 38 (09-15-25) - \$375,822.89
- Payment Check Register (09-16-25) - \$4,402,391.93
- Payment Check Register (VOID) (09-16-25) - \$1,644.22
- Payroll Register Week No. 38 - \$375,822.89