



This newsletter is your connection to City of Ellsworth local government updates. Help us connect with people across the City; share the newsletter with your friends, your family and your community. Subscribe to the monthly newsletter at www.ellsworthmaine.gov

CATCH US ON STAR 97.7

On February 19, City Manager Charlie Pearce and Public Works Director Mike Harris joined Paul Dupuis and Sonnie Shepard for the first *City Scene* radio segment! Charlie provided updates on current city happenings and Mike explained our snow removal operations highlighting the work of the Highway Crew to keep the streets clear and accessible.

Do you have a question for the city? Email it to Paul at Paul@star977.com.
Catch *City Scene* each Wednesday at 6:40 a.m. and 8:40 a.m.



Thank you to Paul and his amazing team for the this opportunity to better connect with our community!

EFD ICE WATER RESCUE

On February 21 the Ellsworth Fire Department conducted Ice Water Rescue training on Leonard Lake at Pump Station Point. Firefighters performed various drills and rescue maneuvers in the water and on the ice to grow accustomed to the variety of situations they may encounter in their line of work.



CITY HALL HOURS

Monday - Wednesday: 8 AM - 5 PM
Thursday: 8 AM - 6:30 PM
Friday: 8 AM - 12:30 PM

CITY HALL

1 City Hall Plaza
Ellsworth, ME 04605

NEXT CITY COUNCIL MEETING

March 17 at 6pm in the Council Chamber at City Hall.
Available to stream online through the City of Ellsworth YouTube and Facebook.
Check the City website for the latest updates and meeting agenda.

CHECK OUT THE COMMUNITY TREE STEWARD BLOG

Michael Otwirk, volunteer Community Tree Steward, has launched a blog! He'll share regular updates on his work, including projects in collaboration with the Arbor Commission and upcoming educational events. His latest post is featured below so you can learn more about his work and an upcoming Pruning Workshop.

Hello! I'd like to formally welcome you to my [Community Tree Steward \(CTS\) Blog](#). For those that care to know (or even those that remember), the term "web log" was first used a little over 27 years ago during the early days of the internet. Two years later in 1999, "web log" was shortened to "blog," and thus it is here that we find ourselves.

My name is Michael Otwirk, and I will be running this blog to share updates regarding my service in Ellsworth as your CTS. I've been an Illinois native all my days, and it is only within the last month or so that I have had the pleasure of calling Maine my home. I've moved here alongside my wife Grace – an artist in many mediums – and our cat, Boo.

My service as your CTS will end on November 21st 2025, at which time I will either move away or settle in someplace nearby. It all depends on what Grace and I decide as our time here grows thin. In the meantime, how about I give you the lowdown?

I am a Community Tree Steward, which is a State and National AmeriCorps position within Maine Conservation Corps (MCC). MCC is housed within the State of Maine, Department of Agriculture Conservation and Forestry, and reports to Volunteer Maine the state service commission. This position specifically also reports to the USFS.

My first impressions of Ellsworth were top notch. During my first day, I was greeted by my supervisor, and he gave me a tour of the entire town. We visited the city's green spaces and other important facilities such as the Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Public Works Garage. I met the employees inside those two locations, and they were exceptionally open with their welcomes. Afterwards, I was left to visit employees at City Hall and the reception was much the same. Everyone has a lot to say about trees! Which is a good thing, because trees deserve to be talked about. They lower summertime maximum temperatures, prevent soil erosion, improve water quality, and reduce ultraviolet radiation loads – just to name a few benefits.

Arbor Commission member Mary Blackstone and I met in City Hall's Council Chambers. She introduced me to the other members of the Arbor Commission, and they all brought me up to speed regarding our grant funding and our plans for 2025.

On my second day, I met with the [Arbor Commission](#). It was a joy to meet with this group. Their combined expertise regarding trees, forests, and community conservation was intimidating and inspiring! Feel free to come to the next Arbor Commission meeting. The regular meeting takes place at 8:15 a.m. on the first Monday of each month and are held in the Council Chambers in City Hall. I'd like to hear your thoughts on urban forestry.

As far as the existing tree canopy is concerned, Ellsworth has a better start than most of the towns I've visited while living in Illinois. Some places are better off than others, while a handful of roads need a lot of tender loving tree care. More remains to be seen. I'll have a better grasp on the existing canopy when the leaves start to grow and the canopies fully form.

Currently, I am working on a large right of way project and a pruning workshop.

The right of way project relates to forestry objectives in the initial planning phase for tree plantings. Every road in Ellsworth is either owned by the state, by the city, or privately. Knowledge of each street's right of way width is important for urban forestry because then the city knows how much "wobble-room", or grassy area exists on either side of the road for a planting to take place. By accomplishing this research/inventory, it will make the process of talking to public and private landowners that much easier when it comes time to discuss planting permission come summer and fall.

The pruning workshop will happen on Saturday, March 15 from 10 a.m. to noon at Knowlton Park. See details on the city website or email me to learn more. It is open to the public and you are encouraged to attend if you want to become involved as a steward of Ellsworth's trees. This workshop will cover the basics of pruning trees, along with how to differentiate woody plant species from one another. We are aiming for this event to be the first of many workshops when it comes to tree stewardship in Ellsworth.

Stay tuned in! I will share more information and specifics regarding these initiatives as the weeks go by. Reach out to my email below if you'd like to get involved or if you have any questions!

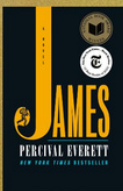
-Michael

Email: treesteward@ellsworthmaine.gov

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY?

JIM AND JAMES

A Literary And Musical Collaboration With **THE GRAND**



20 MARCH 2025 | 6 PM
Ellsworth Public Library
20 State Street | Ellsworth

"BELIEF HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH TRUTH."

DISCUSSION | LIVE: SONGS FROM BIG RIVER | WIN TICKETS TO THE SHOW

Join EPL librarian **Joanna Sands**, The Grand's Executive Director **Nick Turner**, and lead actors **Jeff Ferrell** (Jim) and **Hunter Jones** (Huck Finn) for a discussion on **James** by Percival Everett and the upcoming stage production **Big River** — both inspired by **The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn**.

ellsworthlibrary.net | grandonline.org



2ND ANNUAL SEED SWAP



Calling gardeners and plant lovers of all ages! Join us for the 2nd Annual Seed Swap. Bring your seeds, swap for something new, and grow your garden with surprises!

15 MARCH 2025
SATURDAY | 10 AM - 1 PM
Ellsworth Public Library | 20 State Street
THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



ellsworthlibrary.net | +207-667-6363

Event Highlights:

- Seed Swap
- Master Gardener Advice
- 10 AM - 11 AM: Sleepy Seeds Storytime & Planting Activity
- 10 AM- 12 PM The Friends' Gardening Book Sale

COMPLIMENTARY SEED PACKET FOR EVERY VISITOR!



UPCOMING ROAD WORK

The following local roads have been put out to bid by the City of Ellsworth for road improvements in 2025.

- Foster Street
- Elm Street
- Happytown Road
- Grant Street
- Western Ave.
- Holt Drive
- Argonne Street
- Hancock Street
- Red Bridge Road
- Birch Street
- Maddocks Ave.
- Boggybrook Road
- Bayview Road
- Industrial Road
- Happytown/Winkumpough: City grading & paving up to end of pavement.
- Gary Moore Road
- Harbor Park Parking Lot

Ellsworth's Water Department and Highway Department will also be working along Surry Road this summer upgrading the water main line.

Maine Department of Transportation Work Plans

According to Maine DOT work plans, Ellsworth residents and visitors can expect several road projects in 2025. During the week of April 20 (which coincides with the local school vacation week), MDOT will close a significant portion of Washington Junction Road from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily for culvert work, ditching, and paving. The road will be open only to through traffic.

Additional projects include:

- Improvements at the Y intersection of Surry Road and Bucksport Road
- Milling and resurfacing (Mill & Fill) of High Street
- Paving on Route 3 from Buttermilk toward Trenton
- Other scheduled improvements

To see MDOT's work plan for Ellsworth visit:

<https://www.maine.gov/mdot/projects/workplan/search/> and Select **Ellsworth** from the dropdown list.

DOWNTOWN FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The City of Ellsworth is accepting applications for the Downtown Façade Improvement Grant Program. This program is intended to assist with projects that improve or rehabilitate commercial building exteriors to their original character or make ADA improvements in conjunction with entrance improvements. The program is available to property owners and/or tenants (with the property owner's permission) in the **grant area** for buildings that are at least 50 years old. All proposed projects undergo consultation review by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and are required to follow the City's building ordinance.

The Downtown Façade Improvement Program advisory committee will review applications and make award decisions.

Do you have questions about a potential project? Want to learn more? Let's talk! Reach out to the Program Administrators who are available to answer your questions and guide you through this process.

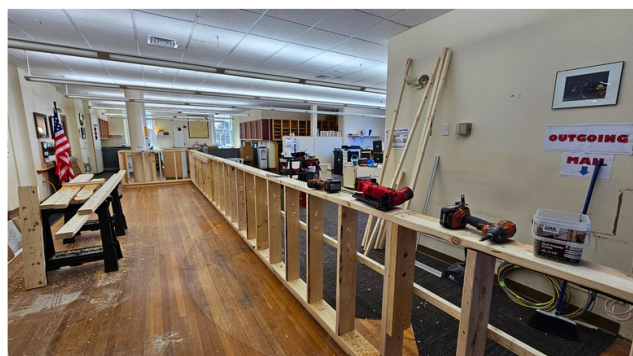
Application Deadline is March 14, 2025 at 12:30 PM.

Key Program Details

- Grants are available for up to \$25,000 and require at least a 3:1 match (the city was awarded a total of \$100,000 from CDBG).
- This is a reimbursement grant. After being awarded and authorized to commence work, the applicant submits invoices to the Program Administrators for reimbursement.
- No improvements begun prior to award notification will be eligible for reimbursement.
- Buildings must be at least 50 years old.
- Tenants must submit building owner permission and provide copies of lease agreements.
- This grant cannot be used for work that has already been started or has already been completed.

LEARN MORE AT: ellsworthmaine.gov/facade

1ST FLOOR COUNTER UPDATE



Our Facilities Manager, Jim McLean, has been hard at work updating the City Clerk and Tax Office counters! He's removed the old counters, built a new frame, and will soon repurpose the existing cabinets. Our IT team is also getting in on the construction fun by running new cables for computers and equipment.

While the project was originally planned to be complete by the end of February, other priorities have kept Jim busy. We appreciate your patience as this project wraps up in the next two weeks. In the meantime, staff are available in the second-floor auditorium for all City Clerk and Tax Office services. Until then have your calendars marked. We are planning an reopening on March 17!

FROM THE ASSESSING OFFICE: TAX EXEMPTIONS - DEADLINE APRIL 1

The Homestead Exemption is open to all homeowners who have owned their property for more than a year and could save residents up to \$400. There is no income requirement. The exemption can provide up to a \$25,000 reduction in the assessed value of the home for taxation purposes. The exemption is permanent for as long as the property owner maintains ownership of the property and maintains permanent residence in Maine.

The Veterans Exemption is also available to those 62 and older who served in the military during wartime. Widows, widowers, a minor child or a widowed parent of a veteran are eligible to apply. If the veteran is receiving full disability, the age restriction is waived. The Veterans Exemption saves roughly \$100 annually.

Non-retail owners are also eligible for a Business Equipment Tax Exemption (BETE program) and for retail business equipment the Business Equipment Tax Reimbursement (BETR program).

Citizens could qualify for a number of relief programs, including a statewide tax deferral program for residents over the age of 65 or disabled, the annual Homestead program, or the Veterans Exemption.

The Property Tax Deferral program applies to residents over the age of 65 or who are unable to work due to a disability. The program allows qualifying residents to defer their tax payments until they sell their property, they move, or they are deceased. Qualifying disabilities must be recognized by the state as being a permanent or total impairment, or a condition that prevents the individual from being employed. To qualify, applicants must also have an income of less than \$40,000, and liquid assets, such as bank and investment accounts, life insurance policies, stocks and bonds, lump-sum payments and inheritances, of less than \$50,000 for individuals (\$75,000 for joint filers). The properties must not have any limitation on the owner's ability to sell, and the individual must not be receiving deferral of taxes from a municipal program.

UTILITIES BILLS ONLINE PAYMENTS RETURN

Online payments are now available again following a software transition to a new servicing platform. To make a payment, visit the **City of Ellsworth website**, select **Online Services** from the left sidebar, and click **Utilities Bills**. From there, you can make a one-time payment or log in/create an account. Setting up an account allows you to enroll in automatic bill pay. Please have your account number ready when accessing your online bill.

Online payments by debit/credit card and eCheck will be charged a service fee by a third-party company, GovernmentWindow, LLC to cover the cost of the service.

The screenshot shows the City of Ellsworth website. On the left sidebar, the 'Online Services' link is circled in yellow. The main content area is titled 'Online Services' and lists various services. The 'Utilities Bills (Water/Sewer)' link is circled in yellow. Below it, the text reads: 'Print bill copies and look up bill balances for water and sewer bills. An Online Utility Billing Account is required for access to Utility Bill information. This feature has returned as of February 19, 2025.'

BUDGET WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

These workshop meetings of the Ellsworth City Council will be held at 6:00 p.m. in the Ellsworth City Hall Council Chambers. Broadcasting will be available.

All budget workshops will be broadcast in the same manner as a regular council meeting. As a reminder, these are workshops. No votes or decisions will be made during these meetings. Councilors are encouraged to make comments, or suggestions on revisions they would recommend, if any, to the department heads presenting during each session.

March 13th (6:00 PM) – First Budget Workshop:

City Clerk, Finance, Tax, County Tax, General Assistance, Assessing, Communications, Human Resources and Library

March 20th (6:00 PM) – Second Budget Workshop:

Police Department, Fire Department, Code Enforcement, City Manager, Planning, IT, and Economic Development/TIF

March 25th (6:00 PM) – School Budget Workshop

School Department

March 27th (6:00 PM) – Third Budget Workshop:

Public Works Administrative, Public Works, Harbor, Water, Water Supply, Capital Improvement, Wastewater and Facilities

April 3rd (6:00 PM) – Final Budget Workshop:

Social Services (WIC, Hospice, Friends in Action, Emmaus, Downeast Transportation, etc.), Recreation (Parks, Trees, and Cemeteries, Arbor Commission, Historic Preservation, Recreation Commission) and anything else outstanding

For budget updates and to learn more about the budget process visit: <https://www.ellsworthmaine.gov/budget/>

2025 CITY REGULAR MEETING SCHEDULES

City Council - Regular meetings are the 3rd Monday of each month at 6 PM in the Council Chamber.

JANUARY 21* JULY 21

FEBRUARY 18* AUGUST 18

MARCH 17 SEPTEMBER 15

APRIL 21 OCTOBER 20

MAY 19 NOVEMBER 17

JUNE 16 DECEMBER 15

*January and February meetings will be held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month due to the observance of holidays on the regularly scheduled 3rd Monday of the month.

Finance Committee - 8 AM every Friday.

BIG FINANCE FRIDAY - 2nd Friday of each month at 8 AM

Planning Board - 1st Wednesday of each month at 5:30 PM.

Board of Appeals - 4th Monday of each month at 6:30 PM, held as necessary.

Recreation Commission - 3rd Tuesday of each month at 8:30 AM.

Historic Preservation Commission - 3rd Wednesday of each month at 4 PM.

Arbor Commission - 1st Monday of each month at 8:15 AM.

Harbor Commission - 4th Wednesday of each month at 6 PM.

School Board - 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6 PM (except June).

School Board Workshops - 4th Tuesday of each month at 6 PM.

Library Board of Trustees - 3rd Wednesday of each month at 6:30 PM at the Library.

Visit the City of Ellsworth website or call City Hall for the most up-to-date information on meetings and to learn of changes or cancellations.