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Machias Valley News

COUNTY SEAT WEEKLY

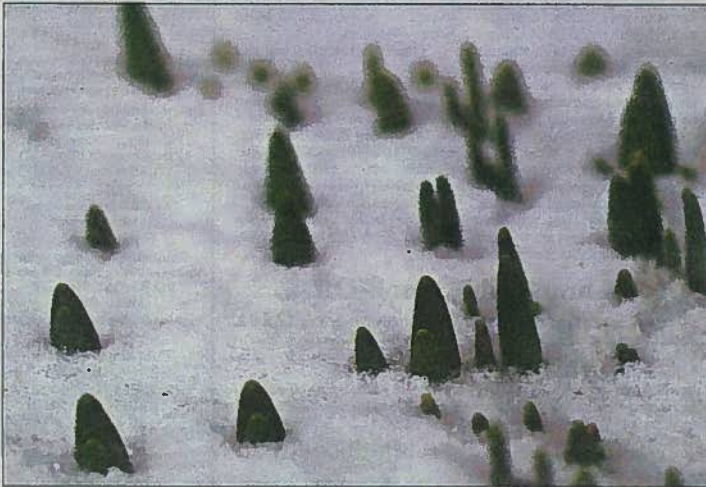
ALL THE HOME NEWS

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If Winter Comes...Can Spring Be Far Behind?

The promise of spring from wild sprouts poking up through the snow.

Brownfields Team Updates, Seeks Input

by Ruth Lenbecker

Providing a substantial update on specific projects, Brownfields principals addressed the community last week, also offering a sneak preview of upcoming action spots.

Todd Coffin, project manager, stressed the importance of the media in fostering dialogue. "Public information outreach is the purpose of this meeting," said Coffin. "Conversations at the community level and grassroots feedback can result in site assessments."

Randall Perry, GEI geologist, and Nick Hodgkins, DEP oil and hazardous materials specialist, also attended the meeting in Machias.

Environmental Protection Agency grant money is presently

funding projects in Washington County all in various investigative stages for redevelopment (See *MVNO* October 21, 2009). Four specific sites were recently cited (See *MVNO* January 5, 2011), with GEI report findings now available online. After the Washington County Council of Governments was awarded its \$400,000 Brownfields Assessment Grant, it selected GEI as the engineering firm to investigate specific properties.

These sites - the Bridge property in Calais, Antone's Triangle in Pembroke, 15 Sea Street in Eastport, Machias Cleaners and Laundry in Machias - have all been deemed prime locations for redevelopment. According to GEI's two-phase

investigative process, there are ample opportunities for suitable site development in each case. According to Coffin, researching site specifics and taking samples and borings are the two phases that must precede a judgment.

"Concerning the Bridge property, there was a substantial building on Main Street, an old service station. So you'd consider batteries, petroleum, abandoned tanks, oils and solvents, potential leakage and dumping. We assessed the potential health risks by what we found in the soil," he said. "Antone's is your classic Route 1 convenience store and gas station. We did well samplings to see if neighboring wells had been impacted. None were. Antone's is in great shape. Good retail space, concrete floor. Redevelopment could be managed very well."

Management risk is a redevelopment scenario in 2011 that always needs to be addressed. A brownfield generally

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Perry Urges Vigilance in Drug Monitoring

by Ruth Lenbecker

Acknowledging too-easy accessibility and too many ways for misuse, Rep. Anne Perry zeroed in on the goals of Maine's Prescription Monitoring Program in Machias last week.

"We must educate the public on the dangers of misuse and abuse," emphasized Perry, a nurse practitioner and term-out legislator, well-known for her medical background and focused involvement in medical issues. "Other goals of the PMP are to improve patient care, to curb the misuse of prescriptions, to ensure those who need their prescriptions will still receive their prescriptions, to get addicts into treatment and to help stop overdoses."

In Washington County,

these are ambitious goals. Sheriff Donnie Smith, who has long held that the greatest drug of abuse - alcohol - is abundantly available for anyone who decides to obtain it, could have an informative discussion with Perry. "Buying cigarettes and alcohol is harder for a minor to do than getting pills," said Perry, in the best testament to the availability of all three.

The first bill she ever introduced in the Maine Legislature (in 2003) led to the formation of the PMP. "I'm very proud of that," she says, "but there aren't enough treatment centers in Maine. And non-medical use of drugs in the 18-25 age bracket is just too high."

See *Drug Monitoring*... page 21

Regulatory Reform Committee to Hold Washington County Hearing

Senate President Raye Urges Downeast Businesses to Participate in Machias Session

Maine Senate President Kevin L. Raye (R-Perry) is encouraging Down East businesses to participate in a Washington County field hearing of the Legislature's newly-formed Joint Select Committee on Regulatory Fairness and Reform. The public hearing is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. on Monday, January 31st, at the University of Maine at Machias Performing Arts Center.

"It is rare that the Maine Legislature holds hearings outside of Augusta," said Raye. "This is a unique opportunity for Down East residents to weigh in on a critically important issue without making the long trip to the state capitol."

I hope that people will turn out to let committee members know first-hand about the regulatory obstacles they encounter, and help us work toward creating a healthier business climate, more jobs and increased prosperity."

The Joint Select Committee on Regulatory Fairness and Reform was created by a joint order sponsored by Raye and House Speaker Robert Nutting (R-Oakland). The Machias session is one of seven legislative field hearings being held across the state to take testimony on ideas to improve

See *Reform*... page 11



The Icy Face of Winter

As snow falls, temperatures plummet and smogging weather settles in for awhile, there are many signs of the season all over town. This is but one, the dribbling, frozen tears of a holiday wreath toughing it out at the entrance to the Machias Town Office.

Ruth Lenbecker photo

Brownfields

Continued from Page 1

refers to a vacant site with a potentially adverse environmental history. Networking, records, existing documentation, all can serve to verify many suspicions. Or not. "Our job is to identify such sites, or find them free of contaminants," says Coffin, "so that redevelopment projects can move forward."

"Development plans are well advanced for 15 Sea Street. This is 1.2 acres, a former seacoast cannery, once adjacent to a railroad yard. The next step for the cannery building is looking optimistic," said Coffin, who works for Falmouth-based GEI Consultants.

In the case of the Machias Drycleaning site, the GEI team considered the variety of uses doing business at the location since the 1800s. "A lot of thought is revolving around the Machias Cleaners. We collected samples beneath the building and outside," said Coffin. "There were some concentrations of gas inside, and drycleaning vapor in the soil. A lot of things are being considered, which would work very well. Mixed use, parking and landscaping for Burnham Tavern. Possibly a tavern gift shop."

There is no shortage of ideas in the works, but as Coffin is quick to point out, "Sometimes we have to wait for the economy to catch up to the project and the vision."

Other brownfields projects moving to the forefront include an old gas station in Harrington, a second project in Eastport, an old garage in Baring and Schoppee's deteriorating garage on Route 1 in Jonesboro. "We need to do our homework on these in order to move ahead," said Coffin.

Whyne Peters questioned how Gov. Paul LePage's promise to remove impediments to small business could potentially affect future brownfields projects.

Coffin admitted that he does have misgivings and uncertainty connected with this. "Really, LePage's desire to trim government is a double-edged sword," he said. "One that could slow these efforts."

Reform

Continued from Page 1

Maine's regulatory system. The Committee is beginning its work by considering LD 1 "An Act to Ensure Regulatory Fairness and Reform", a concept bill introduced by Raye and Nutting.

"LD 1 is intended as a vehicle to provide a significant down payment toward establishing Maine as a welcoming place for business, jobs and opportunity," said Raye. "Governor LePage held a series of 'Red Tape Audits' to help identify the areas that need work and establish his suggested priorities for this bill. Now it is the Legislature's turn to hear from Maine's business community. This statewide public hearing tour will enable job creators to share their challenges with Maine's regulatory environment, and suggest proposed solutions to legislators."

See Reformpage 19

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