**2022 Code Officer Report**

Dear Smithfield Residents

After the absurd building season we saw in 2021 (which set record numbers of building and plumbing permits issued), 2022 was more of a return to normalcy. Whether it was because of rising interest rates, a decline in the economy, or simply everyone getting their building projects out of their systems in 2021, building permits were down roughly 25% from last year. That being said, 15 Shoreland zoning permits were issued in 2022, which is higher than most previous years. The permits break down as follows.

 2 Single Family Dwellings

 4 Accessory Structures

 6 Additions/remodels/foundations

 2 Docks

 1 Driveway

Additionally, two Commercial permits were issued in 2022 (one for a storage facility and one for an expansion at Camp Matoaka)

2022 marks the end of my journey in Smithfield, as I have decided to pass the torch on to another, and pursue other adventures in life.

My tenure with Smithfield started in April of 2012 at the ripe old age of 29. While 29 is “young” in its own right, I’ve always suffered from what I call “curse of the baby face”. Apparently fooled by my curse, I’ve been told that Nicky and Joni were taking bets on how old I actually was when I first started. I think their consensus was somewhere around 16…

As the more astute mathematicians among you will probably have already figured out, April of 2012 to December of 2022 means I made it just over a whopping 10 years before throwing in the towel! To put that into perspective, its 8 to 9 years longer than any of the previous 5 CEO’s that came before me! I feel like that’s award worthy!

During my time in Smithfield, I have had the pleasure of working with countless property owners and contractors, and have met some absolutely extraordinary people along the way.

Likewise, Smithfield is fortunate to have an amazing office staff that truly cares about their Town, and work hard to make it as friendly and helpful as possible. I would not have lasted half as long as I did without their continued help and support, and am forever indebted to them for it. Nicky, Joni, Meredith and Frank, I’m proud to count you as friends, and will miss you all!

Similarly, the Smithfield Selectboard has been great to work with, and has always been supportive of me in my role as CEO. Through thick or thin, the current Board has always done a great job of separating their personal lives from “Town Business”, and never micro-managed the position (which can be a common problem in some towns). Again, their professionalism cannot be understated, and it was appreciated!

Finally, I’ve always respected and worked well with the Planning Board and Board of Appeals (though I only saw the appeals board once every 2 or 3 years!). The Boards have always worked tirelessly to ensure the regulations of Smithfield are applied equally to all, and deserve a hearty “Thank You” for serving their Town so diligently. Keep up the great work!

Alright, with my goodbyes out of the way, it’s time to lighten things up with another story of ridiculousness with this years “don’t do that award”.

While this one goes squarely into the “DUH!” category, it has a moral behind it that I think we all need to remember from time to time.

It all started one December when I received a building application for an undeveloped lot on Great Pond (in Rome). As with all building applications, to verify accuracy of the application I need to physically visit a lot before I can issue any permits. This particular lot was unique though, not just because it was undeveloped (a rarity around the lakes), but also because I had literally just visited the lot earlier that summer when someone else had submitted a different application for it (that application was denied, and the lot had since sold). Imagine my surprise during the second visit when I found that this previously “virgin” lot had a fresh cleared area right next to the lake and a large pile of brush piled up 20’ from the water.

As many of you know, there are strict cutting regulations regarding vegetation removal within the shoreland zone, and especially so within 100’ of the water. Among others, there is a regulation which states that within 100’ of the water, no vegetation under 3’ in height (including the natural forest duff layer), can be “cut, covered or destroyed”. Furthermore, you need at least 5 “saplings” within every 25’x50’ area (a sapling is vegetation taller than 3’, but less than 2” diameter at breast height).

When I questioned the new lot owner about the cutting, they claimed they hadn’t cut anything, and that the brush piles were simply branches that they’d piled up. They went on to explain that this area (which again, was “virgin” literally 6 months earlier) was naturally free of vegetation (despite being heavily vegetated beyond both sides of the new clearing)…

Unfortunately for them, I had pictures of the lot taken from my earlier trip that year, as well as pictures from the water taken in 2011 when Colby College photographed all shorelines in the Belgrade Lakes. Low and behold, both of these sets of images showed there had indeed been lots of vegetation in this area. Go figure!

Lying to the CEO about cutting some vegetation is not exactly a new development, and certainly not worthy of a “don’t do that award” on its own. What the landowner did next though, is!

To fix the situation, I asked the landowner to cease all cutting and replant the area with native saplings. When I went back out to the site the following May, I found 15-20 little hemlocks sticking out of the ground exactly where the replanted trees were supposed to be. Something about the hemlocks just didn’t look right though…they were very “2 dimensional” and had no disturbed soil around their base (where they would have been planted). Pulling up on one gently, I was surprised when it popped out of the ground with almost no effort, and even more surprised to find that they were not actually trees, but simply hemlock branches that had been cut and stabbed into the ground……for real!…..15-20 hemlock branches cut off and stuck into the ground to make it look like they had planted saplings.

When I confronted the lot owner about it, they denied any knowledge of the branches being “planted” and said their “sister must have done it”.

Apparently, you’re never too old to blame your siblings...

This ridiculous display of idiocy warranted a legitimate “consent agreement” with the Town, complete with a $500 a fine, a replanting requirement, and a lot of head shaking on my part.

If the lot owner had owned up to the cutting, replanted the area, and moved on, this story wouldn’t be worth the ink it took to print it. Unfortunately, the owner lied, then tried to cheat the system, and then lied again (all the while digging a deeper and deeper hole for themselves).

The moral of the story, and my parting words to you: We all make mistakes. Own them, fix them, and move on. Life will be easier because of it!

Sincerely

Your Departing Code Officer

Andrew Marble

**2022 Plumbing Inspectors Report**

Dear Smithfield Residents

As could be expected from the increasing interest rates, dwindling “Covid Money”, and overall cooling housing market, plumbing permits were also down in 2022 compared to 2021. In total, 20 plumbing permits were issues in 2022, which break down as follows:

11 Internal Plumbing Permits

9 Subsurface Wastewater Permits

As the more astute have probably already figured out based on the permits listed above, “plumbing” is a broad term which includes “internal plumbing” and “subsurface wastewater plumbing” (septic systems).

The distinction between the two types is fairly straight forward, being that “internal plumbing” includes all plumbing within the building itself (as well as within a two-foot perimeter around the building), while “subsurface” plumbing is everything more than 2’ away from the building.

While simple enough, this distinction is important because each type of plumbing has its own set of regulations which govern it. Internal plumbing is regulated under the “Uniform Plumbing Code” (a nationwide code last updated in 2021), while subsurface plumbing is regulated under the “Maine Subsurface Wastewater Regulations” (a Maine-specific code which was last updated in 2015). While the two codes have some overlap between them (such as piping materials allowed, pipe pitch, etc.), the vast majority of the “Subsurface Wastewater Regulations” focuses its attention on the rules around designing septic systems.

For anyone who has ever built a new home, or those who have been unfortunate enough to deal with a malfunctioning septic system, you probably know first hand that before you can install a new septic field, you first need to hire an “expert” to design you one.

But who are these mysterious “experts” who possess ancient knowledge in the “dark art” of subsurface wastewater design? You guessed it, Site Evaluators.

As the only professional allowed in the State of Maine to design “non-engineered” septic systems (which is any system designed to handle less that 2000 gallons per day, or 99.9% of the systems out there), Site Evaluators are a very specific bread. Licensed by the State, Site Evaluators must first pass two lengthy tests to prove that they have extensive knowledge in soil analysis, design practices, and wastewater regulations.

In a nutshell, a Site Evaluator is the resulting love child from a hot and steamy night between a soil scientist and a civil engineer. As you can probably guess, hot and steamy nights between these two professions are extraordinarily rare, and thus, so are Site Evaluators….

Luckily for me, one such steamy night must have occurred in the fall of 2022, as I passed my State examinations, and joined this exclusive group of scientific turd-herders (Site Evaluation License #436)!

I’d love to tell you that after 12 years of being a plumbing inspector, passing the State exam was a piece of cake for me. Unfortunately, this was not the case! As it turns out, while septic regulations might be second nature by now, accurately interpreting “soil classifications”, “parent materials”, and “redoximorphic features” is a bit trickier. Fortunately, we have some extraordinary Site Evaluators in the area who graciously allowed me to tag along behind them, asking (what I’m sure were) countless annoying, redundant and irrelevant questions. Thanks to their patience and mentoring, I was able to squeak past the State exams without the need to resort to bribing or blackmailing State Officials (a first for State Government)!

While I still plan on being a Plumbing Inspector for numerous Towns in the area, now that I’m a licensed Site Evaluator, I hope to start branching out and begin designing septic systems rather than just inspecting them. In fact, since every good business needs a slogan for advertising, I’ve been working on new catch phrases for my septic design business, and think I might have a winner:

“Marble’s Septic Design: I give a crap, so you can take one”.

 It’s a work in progress…..

As always, don’t forget to pump your septic tank once every three or four years, and clean your outlet filter (if you have one) yearly.

Alternatively, you can be lazy and never pump your septic tank. Just make sure you call me to design you a new septic field after yours fails…That’s what I call job security!!!

Respectfully Submitted

Andrew Marble

Licensed Plumbing Inspector #1135

Licensed Site Evaluator #436