

Metro Show with Ben Dorr



This week Benjamin Dorr, member of the Rockland City Council, joined us on WRFR's Rockland Metro Show. We had a wide-ranging discussion on local life and politics in the Covid era.

Next week we will continue our series of conversations with local leaders on the virus crisis.

Please join us next Wednesday from 5 to 6 pm for the Rockland Metro show, on 93.3 fm in Rockland, 99.3 fm in Camden, and online at WRFR.org. And call in to 593-0013 to join the conversation.

Visit WRFR.org for more information.



Spring 2020, by Steve Carroll

RSU13: VOTE

by Ryan Minikis

As you all know, nobody and no institution has escaped the impact of COVID-19. This includes public education and the entrenched statutory processes that typically govern it. You may also be aware that our June primary election has been delayed to allow for improved election measures and planning, and god-willing, safe and tremendous turnout at the ballot box. If you don't read another word then PLEASE READ THIS: VOTE!

As it affects Regional School Unit 13 business, this election delay means that Maine School Boards have an extra month to accommodate FY21 budget planning, board ratification and voter referendum processes. This time is well-received, and I applaud RSU13 Board Chair Loren Andrews for redirecting the budget process to take advantage of this extra time. Critical unknowns remain that are material to how we proceed financially; state revenues will decline (up to \$1B

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Down Maine Street with Phil Groce At Power with Herself



A half block west of Maine St. on Summer St, you would see Dr. Theriault's long-standing dental office, though he just retired. Chandni Mahajan bought the practice and set up shop using his same dental and office staff. "I wanted a practice in a small town," she told me, "with a close small-town community."

What with the virus scourging the town, I observed that it must be a challenge opening a practice at this time. She agreed. "It has been hard, but it has given me some downtime. Before that, it was go-go-go. The staff had to adapt, as did I, and I am learning fast about running a business, though I have been in dentistry all along. But we need policies, and especially now, with infection control. It's risky, you know. The mouth contains many germs and the risk is multiplied many times if we are not on the forefront with infection control policies. At the moment, we are only doing emergency procedures."

I asked if she was new at running a business. "My father has a real estate business in New Delhi. Actually, they are all in lock-down right now. He wanted me to join his business. In India dentistry is 4 years after high school with an additional year for a residency. Coming from India to America, we have to attend a "bridging program" for 2-3 years before we can begin practice. That was in Chicago. The first job I had was in a federally qualified practice where I could repay my student loans."

When did you decide to become a dentist? "We had a neighbor who was a dentist, and he had a laboratory next to his home. I could go over there when I was in middle school and see what they did, and I liked it. In high school I liked the sciences and also art—art being a big part of dentistry—at least, that is how I look at it. I want a home life, family life, community life—not big city life. I look forward to having a family myself. Dentistry gives me the work-life balance that I have always wanted."

How did you decide to come to America? "I have one sister, and she spent 12 years in the U.S. working in finance at Barclays Capital; and she became a citizen. But she returned home just as I was getting out of dental training. My mother is a citizen, and we have extended family in the States, mostly coming to the U.S. in the 70's. I thought I could better realize my dreams of a stable dental career in the U.S."

How did you end up in Maine? "I've been a permanent U.S. resident since 2004, and I was practicing in Houston. I married in Houston, but I did not like the big-corporate atmosphere there. There was a dentist in Portland, Maine whose work I greatly admired through Facebook, and I convinced him to allow me to shadow him. So, I came up here, liked it, and got a job in a dental office in Millinocket."

That must have slowed you down a bit. "True. There was much unemployment there, and it was not diverse in any way. But it gave me an opportunity to see more of Maine, to get into the outdoors--Baxter, Chimney Pond--and I later found I liked the mid-coast area. It was more diverse, and I felt more accepted. After that, I got a job in Lincolnville and eventually bought this practice, because I wanted to be in solo-practice in a defined community where I could practice dentistry as I see it."

What kind of practice are you putting together? "I want a family dentistry in an environment where my team makes an effort to educate patients so they can feel comfortable with their questions being heard and answered. We want patients involved in the treatment process so they can trust us and not feel the anxiety that many patients experience in a dental office. We are kid-friendly, and we make an effort to regulate the way we talk to children about their treatment so they can have good feelings about their experience rather than fear."

You have a big independent streak. "My father always said that my sister and I had to be able to support ourselves, notwithstanding what else in going on in our lives. Be our own boss. Education has always been priority for both me and my sister. I thought it would give me the opportunity to help others through my work and community support, especially after my experience with domestic violence in my marriage in Texas. I volunteer myself to help other women. I want to help them to empower themselves, for them to work toward their goals. The playing field should be level. Women are different than men. Many things they can do better than men, and the same for men. But women should be at peace with themselves and at power with themselves."

I think what you are saying is that women are not in competition with men, but should be in competition with themselves, especially since they are biologically different. Correct? "Yes, but they must have equal opportunity. Why should women have to fight for opportunity?" Sounds to me the crux of the problem in so many countries where men are fighting to hold down their historical roles as rulers of women. "We women are a family. Any human right should be a right for all."

How is it going so far in this community of Rockland? "I feel welcomed. I have joined the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club. I mix in the community, especially at the art gatherings. I see a good future.

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VOTE, continued from Page 1

by some estimates) and the extent to which the Federal government may intervene with the states to 'bail-out' public education - as they did in 2008 - is as yet undetermined. In addition to revenue uncertainties, there are likely to be emerging mandates and costs associated with recovery/restart creating similar uncertainties in expenditures.

I avoid the business of future-telling as a rule, whether for myself or others, but these days it's hard not to plan, replan and then vet the plan again. How do I get food? How do I care for and enrich my school age children? How do I apply for unemployment? How long will the government check last? Is it safe to touch the gas pump? Do I have a will and account beneficiaries designated in case of the worst? Is it safe to go to work? Are my neighbors ok, and if not, how can I safely help them? How do I get to the toilet paper aisle without getting closer than 6ft to a stranger, and will my paupers quest yield the spoils? Will I ever be able to retire? When will I get to hug my newborn grandson? Will I lose my home? These are all terrifyingly real quandaries that we're unthinkable only 7 weeks ago, and every one of them I or someone I love has faced in that span of time. They all require some measure of planning or recourse, and in one view of things, there are few good plans to be had...if the measure of a plan is by its satisfactory and uncompromising outcome.

Like everyone and every institution, RSU13 needed a plan. First it was meals, then learning continuity (no new content), and most recently emergency learning (including new content). Next we'll see graduation remediation plans, summer program continuity plans, and ultimately a plan to restart classroom instruction. This is not to mention all of the staff accommodation, altered building access and schedules, and tremendous logistical complexities that were rightly and swiftly affected. I'm proud of what our administration and staff have accomplished and will no doubt continue to achieve in the coming weeks and months. They have done it all with little more than cheering on from the board, and that is as it should be for a high-performing team with a great cause. Kudos and thanks.

But the budget...the one onus solely lain upon the School Board. One board colleague's view has been that the federal government will come to our rescue in the face of a state revenue dearth. The rationale is that they have done it before and public education is "too big to fail" for a multitude of reasons. It follows that we should delay the budget process as long as possible, lean out expenditures to the extent possible and hope for good news to emerge on the revenue front. I've considered this position, and under a typical recession circumstance I might tend to agree. But this is not a typical recession and we don't have typical federal leadership.

As with this pandemic from the start, true leadership can and will come from states, counties and municipalities. Their efforts will be bolstered by local institutions like hospitals, school districts, food banks, shelters, YMCAs, churches, chambers of commerce and community philanthropic organizations. Those that assume responsibility, take matters into their own hands, and prescribe action informed by science, the invaluable nature of human life, and basic human decency will best weather the storm. This philosophy of accountability and compassion with a bias to action will guide me as a School Board member, a husband, a son, and a voter. It is quite literally the least I can do, and I invite you to join me from the confines of your home, the front lines of essential businesses, and wherever else this ordeal finds you.

Now please go order that absentee ballot for the July 14 Maine primary and VOTE!

(Ryan Minicus is a RSU13 School Board Member for South Thomaston)

2020 SHELTERING IN PLACE NOTES: (Written With Wryness in Mind)

by Phyllis Merriam

Sometimes its hard to tell one day from another if there is no notable event, say like Trash Day...or the kitty litter box needs cleaning. I once had a client who trained her cat to use the toilet. Would that I had such animal-trainer skills.

I remain either uninformed or need a specialized class to grasp the difference between the usages of its and it's. Grammar check always does the job for me. Yet, this one remains a mysterious and unfulfilled personal skill that can't be hidden.

This month I did our federal and state income tax preps/returns and filings. This first sentence sounds like I know what I'm doing. Actually, I used robotax.com for the first time. It was, however, annoying to have to come up with yet another user ID and password. (I have a folder of passwords, which, if I lose, will be catastrophic because then I'll have to invent replacement passwords.) Robo's coaching and simple explanations matched my primitive skill level and are reportedly confidential. Not that I'm convinced governmental confidentiality exists in much of a trustworthy manner these days, in particular. After all, I was a '60's activist.

I have to limit my US and world news to dietary levels of no brain weight gain. Otherwise, I'd face plant into my cereal bowl from all the accumulating bad news and fake science emanating from non-professional poseurs.

I am doing daily squats in an attempt to fend off atrophy. My 5 lb. free weights can hardly compare to the Y's weight machines. But they're better than nothing. I muse about all the super-fit people I saw at the Y. They must be anxious about losing muscle tone, too. Maybe when the Y re-opens, we'll all be unrecognizable.

Have been lazy about finishing the spring yard cleanup. It's still too nippy outside to be comfortable for very long. Maybe that says something about not laboring hard enough to work up a sweat...A huge branch from a tree fell from the terrific howling winds. It's a good thing I put off going to the mulch pile with offerings.

I would either have incurred a traumatic brain injury - or worse. This time lack of motivation had an unintended positive consequence.

I did a complete downstairs bathroom cleansing the other day, including washing the ceiling and the walls.

The ceiling and walls didn't looking any different afterward. Not sure that's a measurement of my motivation or the bathroom wasn't really dirty. Now that the bathroom is pristine clean, it feels invasive to even use it.

Just noticed two women walking by our house, side-by-side chatting, with one wearing what looks to be an authentic N95 mask while her companion wore none. How did the woman find a N95 and are they field-testing its effectiveness?



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