

Energy and Outdoor Dining

Spring is around the corner. Soon Rockland restaurants will be able to move tables outdoors. The City has an ad-hoc committee working on plans to make our downtown more hospitable to businesses and pedestrians and to smooth and calm traffic flow. Some members of the committee were on the Rockland Metro show Wednesday. It was a good discussion, good ideas, and a well-considered plan in progress. What a difference when we put their heads together as thinkers, rather than bashing our heads into each other like angry rams.

Something else is just around the corner: the end of the world. Some say. It is about global warming. I don't think it will be the end of the world, just a big problem - with very bad consequences if we do not act wisely.

Two weeks ago we talked on the Metro about the Summit proposal to pipe natural gas to Rockland. This week saw an abrupt end to the debate. Summit gave up. They had faced loud and righteous opposition. The reason: global warming. Rockland should not be dependent on fossil fuels like oil, and propane, and natural gas. Bringing natural gas to Rockland would set us back years in our effort to end our dependence on fossil fuel.

Ending Rockland's dependence on fossil fuels is a huge challenge. Transportation is not a challenge, we can just live near each other and get around on foot or on bicycles. Lighting is not a problem, with led bulbs and solar panels and batteries we can manage just fine. Ditto for our computers and telephones, no problem. The problem is keeping warm in winter. Despite the progress of global warming, it is likely to be quite a while before we can live without heat.

The Abenaki heated their wigwams with wood. The European settlers burned wood to heat their homes too. The early lime industry in Rockland used wood for fuel. But as we cleared the land, firewood became harder to come by, and coal was cheaper. Not so cheap, though, that paying for fuel was easy. The cost of fuel, especially the cost of fuel for keeping warm in winter, has always been a significant burden on Maine residents.

So what are the options for doing without fossil fuel? We could go back to burning wood. Would this be viable? Perhaps Rockland could have a big wood burning power plant producing both electricity and steam in co-generation, a well known technology. But what about the price of the wood fuel? What about the environmental impact?

Perhaps we could extend the breakwater across to Owls Head and build a tidal power plant. It would be interesting to calculate how much power could be produced in this way and how it compares to the amount of energy we use to heat our homes.

Another interesting calculation would be how

I'm sorry but you'll have to totally rewrite this



Ya? how come ?



A couple of readers are going to be upset with this part for sure....



Doesn't it say on the masthead we comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable ?



That was removed when...



the comfortable started afflicting me !

many acres of solar panels it would take to supply that energy, how we could store that energy so that it would be available at night and on cloudy days, and how much that storage capacity would cost.

Another option might be to import some kind of non-fossil fuel from somewhere else. We have a harbor, so fuel could be brought in by sea. But what would that fuel be? Perhaps firewood from some less populated place, like the Amazon basin, or northern Maine. Perhaps we could use an agriculturally derived fuel, like alcohol from Midwestern corn?

One alternative that has been suggested is that we rely on electricity for heating. We have an electric grid, and access to electricity from non-fossil fuel sources, such as windmills and solar panels, and hydropower from Maine dams and from new dams in Quebec and Labrador. We had been moving away from electric heat, as an inefficient way to use fossil fuel for heat, but modern heat pumps, it is proposed, are more efficient, and we can get electricity from non-fossil sources.

Is greater reliance on electricity a good idea? Could an interruption in the electric supply cause a major disaster in winter when pipes, and people, might freeze? What about the loss of efficiency of air-to-air heat pumps in freezing temperatures? What about the dangers of electricity, which frequently causes fires, including the fire that killed a child in Camden last week?

Another approach, and a parallel one, might be to better insulate our homes, and occupy smaller spaces. How much energy saving could we realistically expect from practical possibilities in this direction?

The more we are concerned about global warming, the more we owe it to ourselves and our community, and our children, to find a way to Rockland energy independence. The rejection of the gas pipeline was motivated by a desire to force this on ourselves now rather than later.

So now is the time.

Joe Steinberger



OUT Maine Connects Queer Artists with LGBTQ+ Teens for the 2021 Virtual Rainbow Ball

The annual Rainbow Ball is going virtual again this year and the lineup is awesome. Thanks to some great organizing work by our staff team and new intern, Christopher Dufour, the workshop list is growing!

The Virtual Rainbow Ball runs from March 10th through mid-May and will be a series of amazing online workshops culminating into virtual variety shows and art exhibits. Dufour has recruited several drag artists to host workshops on makeup and creating illusions. There also will be workshops for theatre and poetry and a virtual Passion Showcase.

The Virtual Rainbow Ball is free and welcomes LGBTQ+ and allied* teens between the ages of 13 and 17. Teens may sign up at www.outmaine.org/programs/youth-programs.

OUT Maine works toward a welcoming and affirming Maine for all rural young people of diverse sexual orientations, gender expressions and gender identities. In partnership with their allies and families, OUT Maine supports, educates and empowers these youth in their journey from adolescence to adulthood. For more information, or to support OUT's critical work on behalf of LGBTQ+ youth, please visit www.outmaine.org.

*Allies are individuals who support LGBTQ+ people and causes.

Hi Joe;

In regards to the scuttling of the proposed natural gas line, of course I am not surprised that Summit pulled out as it was impractical to begin with for the reasons I stated in my comments on Metro Rockland on 2/18/21 and to you in a my 2/17/21 email. They would have saved themselves a lot of time and money if they had thoroughly investigated the physical, economic, customer base and political composition of the midcoast (or just called me for free advice as I don't charge by the hour!). From my field trips and experience in working in Central Maine when Summit was installing the pipelines, I figured it would not work in the midcoast. Also from my work and travels in Central Maine, there was a good customer base and natural gas seems to have spurred much needed economic development from plant closings and but it was not practical in the midcoast; which is entirely different from the Kennebec Valley. Summit is smart to refocus on other areas and not the midcoast.

Rodney Lynch, Rockland

Rescheduled:



March 28th 5-6 pm:
Strand on the Air

gives the internet the business

Quit doomscrolling and start laughing – with the Strand On The Air’s “Don’t Let The Internet Get You Down!” Edition, broadcasting over WRFR on Sunday February 28th at 5 PM! Join your house manager Liz McLeod, musical director Brittany Parker, announcer Dan Bookham, those ever-popular bytes of fun the Strand Family Players, and our special musical guests Freya, for a full hour of laughs and tunes! You’ll hear a special “All Things Rescinded” examination of the Internet’s impact on a pandemic-weary public, featuring an exclusive first-time-ever interview with the actual Internet itself! And down in Abysmal Point, listen in as Mrs. Grunden and Lilita intervene to convince Gertie Crummett not to believe everything she sees on You Tube!

Guest stars Freya are vocalist Gretchen Haggard and guitarist Catherine Smith, both of whom followed a childhood fascination with music into adulthood, along a path that eventually led them to the Midcoast Music Academy, where they first worked together in MCMA’s adult band “Better Late.” They began working as a duo in 2020, entertaining at outdoor venues around the area and branch now into the broadcast medium with their Strand On The Air performance. They can’t wait for the warmer weather so they can again bring their upbeat melodies to outdoor audiences!

The Strand On The Air, presented by the Strand Theatre in Rockland, Maine is written and directed by Liz McLeod.

Check it out on WRFR: 93.3 fm in Rockland, 99.3 fm in Camden, and streaming worldwide at wrfr.org

Broken Wing is the faithful crow for morning breakfast. She lets me get as close as 6 feet distancing but doesn’t wear a mask. I find if I spread the offerings wide, she can dine without the seagulls gobbling up everything. I’ve grown quite fond of her spirit.

This morning’s bright azure sky and clouds look like an Eric Hopkins painting.

In perusing politico.com for its weekly political cartoons, I came across one of the best commentaries about the 500,000 Covid deaths. It was Matt Weuker’s take on this national tragedy: “If we had a National Covid Cemetery, it would have to be larger than Arlington National Cemetery.”

There haven’t been paper product shortages for many weeks. But cat owners must be hoarding canned cat food. Or feline adoptions have soared. I haven’t been able to find 12 packs for weeks; just a few random cans are available. I’ve read there has been an upsurge in pet adoptions during this fall and Covid winter as people try to stay sane during these unending pandemic days by acquiring furry comfort beings.

19 year-old BigBoi certainly is our cat comfort. He’s in good health but has what his vet calls, “old man’s teeth.” Despite that, its remarkable he still has all his teeth. Most cats his age are usually “gumming it”, as we say in Maine.

City council is again steamrolling tiny houses and small accessory dwelling units into law. Is there an invisible fan base to which council caters, since opponents’ views and compliance with the city’s Comprehensive Plan, as required by law, are ignored? This is turning into a “From-Away-Counselors’/Native Rocklander’s battle of wills. Not to mention the Planning Board/City Council’s cell tower kerfuffle’s legal fees that taxpayers are funding behind the scenes. And who knew city council could use public monies to landscape private companies’ properties?

This sunny, biting cold day with high winds make going outside a polar adventure. It’s the sort of a late winter day that inspires soup making. I made split pea and ham soup, chicken vegetable soup. Now I’m starting on a creamy mushroom. I also made cornbread using Abenaki flint organic cornmeal grown on Songbird Farm in Unity. Its slightly sweet, nutty flavor is the best I’ve ever had. The Good Tern carries it.



Paid Ag Internship for Teens at Erickson Fields

ROCKPORT – Maine Coast Heritage Trust, a state-wide land conservation organization, is offering teens ages 14-18 paid internships through the Teen Ag Crew program at Erickson Fields Preserve, located at 164 West Street in Rockport. Interns will gain hands-on experience in sustainable agricultural practices and learn about their local food system from food production, processing and distribution to consumption and waste management. The produce they raise will supply food pantries, public schools and restaurants. The internship will be part-time and offered during three sessions: Spring (4/20-6/17), Summer (6/21-8/27), and Fall (9/7 - 10/29). Interns will receive training for COVID-19 safety protocols and be provided PPE.

MCMT’s Teen Ag Crew has been an open door for many teens entering the workforce. No previous farming experience is required, just a desire to be outdoors, work hard in a team and learn new skills. The work is both challenging and rewarding and contributes to the midcoast community by partnering with Good Shepherd Food Bank and other hunger relief agencies to address food insecurity. Last year, the Teen Ag Crew distributed more than 20,500 lbs. of produce from their 4-acre garden.

“Teen Ag Crew is a great first-time job,” remarked Aaron Englander, Erickson Farm Manager. “It gives teens the opportunity to make a positive impact on their community, develop their resumes, and expand their social circles beyond the walls of their schools.”

The application deadline is Friday, March 26. Interested teens may apply online at aldermere.org/teen-ag-crew or call 236-2739 to request a paper application.

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The Buzz is composed and printed by the Fellows of The Old School at the WRFR studios, 20 Gay Street, Rockland. Email: wrfr93.3@gmail.com