

12% of Cars on Main Street are Speeding What Should We Do About It?

by Joe Steinberger

As someone who makes his living in downtown Rockland, and as someone who enjoys walking in town, I have an interest in how fast people drive their cars and trucks down Maine Street. My interest conflicts with the interest of those who want to get through town as quickly as possible. Their interest is perfectly understandable, but for me it is important that people drive slowly. That makes for a safer and more comfortable environment for downtown businesses and pedestrians. I believe this is more important than a few seconds saved by speeders.

Rockland's downtown Maine Street is a half mile long. At 25 miles per hour it takes 72 seconds to drive through town. At 40 mph it takes 45 seconds, a savings of 27 seconds. Some people are willing to risk other people's lives, and disturb the peace, to save those few seconds. Or perhaps they are not motivated so much by saving time as by a desire to show off with the roar of their engines. Either way, I am willing to sacrifice their pleasure and convenience in favor of a more pleasant downtown for the rest of us.

On Main Street across from the ferry terminal the police have installed a radar device with a screen that shows drivers how fast they are going. Walking down the street a few days ago I noticed a police car parked near the screen. I went over and introduced myself to the driver, Sergeant Andrew Redden, and asked if the radar device gives the police a record of how fast people are driving. The answer was yes, and he promised to send me the information, which he did, and for which I am much obliged.

From May 1 through July 27 of this year, 609,555 vehicles - an average of 6,927 per day - drove down Main Street. Their average speed was 20 miles per hour. That is the good news. The bad news is that 12% of the drivers, a total of 73,313 over the 88 days, an average of 833 each day, were speeding.

It is excellent that the police have installed this radar device. It certainly must encourage people to slow down. And it has given us a way to document how fast people are in fact going. The fact turns out to be that more than one in ten people, hundreds of people every day, choose to exceed our 25 mph speed limit, even when the radar sign is flashing at them and telling them that they are breaking the law.

Perhaps we should be doing more to enforce the speed limit on Main Street. What do our representatives on the City Council think about this? And what do you think, dear reader? Perhaps we will have more on this subject in a future issue of the Buzz, or on the Metro Show.

(Reader comments and other contributions are always welcome at the Buzz: email steinberger@gwi.net)



Local Talk Radio (and TV)
With Hosts Joe Steinberger and Steve Carroll
Wednesdays, 5-6 pm on WRFR 93.3 and MCTV Ch. 7

Blueberry Tales on Beech Hill



Coastal Mountains Land Trust and the Camden Public Library will team up for a summertime tradition of storytelling at Beech Hill on **Wednesday, August 4 from 11:00am - 12:00pm**. Children's librarian Miss Amy, will bring a selection of much-loved blueberry stories up to the top of the hill, and will read them aloud as your kiddos munch on our blueberries. Free and open to all ages.

Music Behind The Block Concert series in Thomaston



Playin' Possum

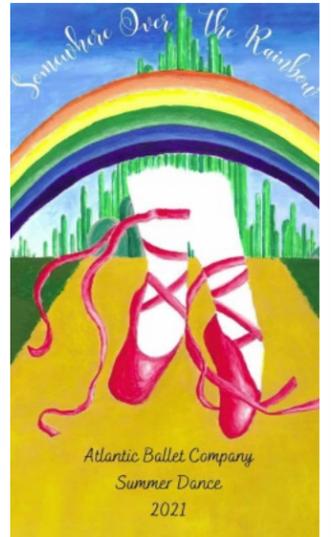
"Music Behind The Block" is a concert series sponsored by Rockland Ford and Lyman-Morse Boatbuilders features local musicians scheduled for each Wednesday in August in Thomaston. Concerts are 6:00 pm - 7:30pm and will happen on the front lawn of the Thomaston Municipal Building. (Watts Hall will be used in the event of inclement weather.)

Music Behind the Block is coordinated by Thomaston Main Street, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the economic and cultural needs of the downtown.

On August 4 at 6:00 pm: Playin' Possum, a local family band from Thomaston featuring David and Gigi Hynd and their sons James and Peter. The band offers great harmonies and enjoys playing songs ranging from country to rock, with a bit of bluegrass.

Somewhere Over the Rainbow

On Wednesday, August 11, at 5:00 pm, the Camden Public Library will host dancers from Camden's Atlantic Ballet Company, for a performance of their original version of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" in the Amphitheatre. Twenty dancers will perform as a culmination of the P2P Dance Center's "Dance your Dream" Summer Camp Program. This production is free and open to the public. Please bring your own seating.



PUTTING ON A GOOD FACE

Opinion by Steve Carroll

A number of years ago, credit card giant MBNA under the leadership of Charles Cawley established a call center in Rockland's South End. Once an ugly industrial complex and smelly fish processing plant, Cawley had the foresight to turn this gritty south end into a magnificent showplace which included an inviting boardwalk overlooking our harbor. Much like the Carnegie foundation that built libraries all across the US Cawley spent millions to create public spaces in Camden, Belfast and later Rockland that everyone could enjoy. Now Charles Cawley and the credit card firm he founded are both gone, but his works live on. Unfortunately the new owners, lacking his vision have allowed the Boardwalk and surrounding grounds to fall into a state of disrepair. Peeling paint, rotting boards and overgrown grass have now tarnished this shining star. Although many locals still use the harbor walk, summer visitors "from away" coming to town for the first time are greeted with a site that must seem a bit shabby. It is often said: "presentation is everything". It is my opinion, having traveled elsewhere, that the picture we present leaves a lot to be desired. I know the City does not own the boardwalk, but could have influence over its new owners to improve their standards and Rockland does own the Lighthouse another major tourist attraction that is also looking quite tattered and torn. With more cruise ships and boaters arriving each summer and our festivals greeting hundreds of new visitors, shouldn't we be doing a better job "putting on a good face" ?



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WEEK SEVENTY-TWO

COVID-19 RANDOM NOTES WHILE SHELTERING IN PLACE

by Phyllis Merriam

Since I began writing my random notes seventy-two weeks ago, I still have the mindset of sheltering in place even though I've been out in the community more.

Since the Delta Devil Variant is driving the 4th wave of this pandemic, I've returned to wearing masks in stores and avoiding eating in restaurants. Now I'm one of few wearing masks and I get some stares from others unmasked. (Maybe they think I'm one of those anti-Vaxers?) Even though I was fully vaccinated last February, reading about some break through viruses among the vaccinated - even outdoors - I've hunkered down with anxiety. I need to be fully available for my disabled husband.

Friday's heavy downpour included hail about the size of small ball bearings that bounced off our car and porch roofs. Then the mid-summer full moon called a "Buck Moon" by Algonquin people arrived. It was so bright I could read by its light.

More rain. I'm beginning to feel a bit moldy. The last sunny day I hung laundered sheets out to dry. Sleeping on fresh sheets with their indefinable lovely perfume is one of life's essential pleasures. While the perfume is fleeting, a seemingly small, everyday contentment is a gift to be treasured in these unending pandemic days.

A perfect movie to watch during these uncertain times is an English film, "About Time" on Netflix. It captures the joy of family life, love and how to live one's life so that we don't have regrets we'd like to do over when it's already too late.

Our Rockland council's approach to affordable housing in our city seems to be talk and no walk. To walk in the shoes of most locals, the council would need to come to grips with Rockland's housing situation, which is not new news.

The 2021 Maine State Housing Authority's findings:

- 59% of locals cannot afford a home in Rockland's sizzling hot realty market
- The median price of a home in Knox County is now \$337,500
- 62% of locals cannot afford a median rent for a two-bedroom apartment.

City council's only public plans have been twofold: ordinances that allow tiny and accessory housing as pathways to "affordable housing" and another KRT property re-assessment two years running. Tiny houses are not affordable because land and lots have greatly increased in re-assessed values. The lack of adequate, safe housing is a social justice equity issue. Does council even know it's a crisis? The biggest housing crisis is the longstanding plight of our homeless neighbors. It's a national disgrace. (Some wag says we should not be saying "The Homeless." Rather, we should be saying, "The Unhomed" - a strange euphemism to make peoples' lives sound less desperate.) All I know is that it is painful for native Rockland neighbors and friends who struggle to pay their mounting property taxes.

As to the unresolved kerfuffle over our city's building permits for more housing for our homeless or saving fireflies, I thought wetlands were off limits for building new structures. The Maine DEP, which regulates the federal Clean Water Act, oversees wetlands and can, in certain circumstances, grant building permits. How forthcoming will the city council and the planning board be with information?

Had occasion over last weekend to use PenBay's new Walk-in Clinic for non-emergency services and was very pleased with the results. The only temporary glitch was the out-of-service elevator to the clinic's second floor location. Despite that, staff tended to my husband in our car. I did notice a number of people waiting by the locked doors, apparently unaware patients should call ahead from their car: (207) 301-6000 so that staff can triage. This clinic should reduce the extreme pressure PenBay's ED has been experiencing until that department's expansion is completed.

