

# College student interning at Rumford Town Office

By  
Bruce Farrin, Rumford Falls Times

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*Victoria Forkus is an intern this summer at the Rumford Town Office. (Bruce Farrin/Rumford Falls Times)*

RUMFORD — A Woodstock woman is interning in town government this summer, working on the downtown water and sewer project and learning about ways to improve the local economy.

"I didn't realize how much I didn't know," said Victoria Forkus, one of 55 students in the Maine Government Summer Internship Program administered by the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center at the University of Maine. She attends University College Dublin in Ireland.

Forkus spent a year in Ireland, two years in AmeriCorps in Buffalo, New York, and Presque Isle, and attended undergraduate school at Washington & Jefferson College, near Pittsburgh.

"I can say confidently, there's no place like western Maine," she said. "I'm excited to bring the skills I've developed and the experience I've gained back to my home state."

Town Manager Linda-Jean Briggs said Forkus, in her first month as an intern, has shadowed her pretty much everywhere.

Moving forward, Briggs said, “We’re going to be more immersed in The Island project,” a \$5 million reconstruction of water and sewer lines in the downtown business district, sidewalk replacements and other improvements.

Forkus and Briggs recently attended the BuildMaine conference in Lewiston, a meeting mainly of architects and developers to strategize ideas on improving economic development in towns and cities.

“I learned a lot about visual merchandising and different strategies we can use to unify the downtown area once the revitalization is finished, such as public art, putting in a mural,” Forkus said. “Little things to help encourage economic development.”

Another speaker emphasized the importance of having an anchor business in the downtown that pulls people in. It could be a movie theater, a brewery, something that people come to see, and then people will go to other shops, she said.

Forkus said Rumford has taken a bold step by exposing students to the benefits of a career in municipal government. Maine needs to develop creative ways to attract young college graduates or just young people in general — regardless of degree or career ambitions, she said.

“I think it’s important to emphasize that the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center Summer Government Internship only awarded a sprinkling of municipal internships — yet careers in local government are the most prevalent” when compared to state or federal careers, Forkus said.

Forkus is scheduled to end her internship Aug. 17.