

AGENDA
TOWN OF PORTAGE LAKE
Regular Select Board Meeting
July 12, 2023
6:00 P.M.

1. Call Meeting to Order & Attendance
2. Approval of Warrant Articles for July 19 Special Town Meeting
3. Oak Point Road
4. Ashland Subsidies
5. Other Select Board Business
6. Public Comments (as time allows)
7. Executive Session per 1 MRSA §405(6)(A) Personnel Matters
8. Adjourn

Next Regular Select Board Meeting: Wednesday, July 19, 2023

Upcoming Meetings & Events:

July 19: Special Town Meeting @ 5:30 pm

August 10-13: Summer Round Up Weekend

PORTAGE LAKE BOARD OF SELECTPERSONS
Record of Special Meeting
July 12, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.
Portage Lake Municipal Building Conference Room

Members Present: Michelle Eastman, Chairperson; Barry "Beech" Kenney, Bruce Laveway.

Members Absent: None.

Others Present: Corrine Routhier, Jodi Page, Glenn Cusack.

Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Michelle Eastman.

Approval of Warrant Articles for July 19 Special Town Meeting: The Board reviewed the Warrant Articles and signed them for approval. Motion made and seconded to accept the Warrant Articles as written. Motion carries.

Oak Point Road: The Town's forester visited the Town land on Oak Point in the area of the logging road to inspect it and found someone had been in there with a backhoe and a possible bulldozer. Photos were taken showing unauthorized work done. There is concern for DEP violations. The Town emailed the DEP and Scott Belair replied back. There are some allowances for maintaining an existing trail, but wetland alterations are regulated. He would like to be proactive to prevent any further damage to the area. The Board would like to have a work session with the property owners and Scott Belair, and would like Scott to visit the property in question before the session. A work session has been scheduled for Monday, July 31st at 6 p.m. Since this all came about because of the fire on Oak Point, the Town is looking into investing in our Fire Department for training, equipment, etc.

Ashland Subsidies: The Board reviewed the response prepared by Cyr Martin. They propose a work session between Corrine and Michelle, Cyr Martin and Dave Milligan, open to the public and recorded.

OTHER SELECTBOARD BUSINESS

- Bruce asked what the Town had decided regarding the abandoned vehicles on Station Road. They are going to be towed, but the Town is going to hold off on doing so until after the paving project is completed.
- Bruce notified the board he has received permission from the Railroad to make a sled trail for local access which would start across the road from his house on Cottage Road and would come out on Station Road where the abandoned vehicles are. He wanted to know if it would be an issue with anyone, but since the property in question is owned by the Railroad, the Town did not have a problem with it.
- Corrine would like the Railroad to take a look at the crossing on the Cottage Road.
- After the Executive session ended and the public portion resumed, Michelle asked that we look at the Personnel Policy concerning paid holidays and make sure it aligns with labor laws.

Comments from the Public (as time allows):

At 6:35 p.m., a motion was made and seconded to enter into Executive Session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. § 405(6)(A) for Personnel Matters. Motion carries. A motion was **made and seconded to end the Executive Session** at 7:17 p.m. The public portion of the meeting resumed at 7:18 p.m.

Next regular Selectboard meeting is Wednesday, July 19, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

Special Selectboard Meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Upcoming Meetings & Events:

- July 19th: Special Town Meeting @ 5:30 p.m.
- August 10th through 13th: Summer Round Up Weekend

We, the undersigned, being Officers of the Portage Lake Board of Selectpersons, do hereby certify that the foregoing meeting is a true and correct record. We hereby consent to confirm, ratify and approve all actions taken at said meeting, all and singular, and the foregoing records thereof, and acknowledge and certify that the same are true and correct records of all the proceedings of said meeting and hereby approve the same.

Approved: _____

7/19/23

Date

Barry Kenney

Signed: _____

Bruce Laveway

Michelle Eastman, Chairperson



"Gateway to the North Maine Woods"

TOWN OF ASHLAND

PO Box 910, Ashland, ME 04732

Business: 207-435-2311/Fax: 207-435-2005

Email: manager@townofashland.org

Incorporated February 18, 1862

July 5, 2023

Portage Town Council
Portage Town Manager
P.O. Box 255
Portage Lake, ME. 04768

RE: Ashland Annual Subsidies

Greetings

I received your letter about your concerns about the subsidies that you pay to Ashland for certain services. Each town has the ultimate decision of what they want for the residents in that community. Some towns decide that they want a Library, a Recreation Department, a Police Department, and an Ambulance Service. Along with choosing to have these services, comes a cost. The Town of Ashland chose to have all these services. The Ashland Council agreed to offer our services out to the surrounding communities at a fraction of the cost of supplying their own town services. The services have been offered before in the past at a rate that had no formula other than communities that had more money would pay more. It was agreed that the formula should be based on population, which would be not only more practical but give a just and fair subsidy for each community.

Another concern in your letter is that you would like to know the budget proposals earlier before the subsidy request letter goes out. We have tried to do that in the past. The Town of Ashland only starts budget discussions in February and by the first week of March we develop the budget. The budget is approved by the budget committee and the Council. This budget does not get voted on till the 3rd Monday of March every year. The confusion is that you are assuming that you are paying part of our budget for the services you are requesting. This is not entirely true. You are paying a subsidy for us to supply you with a service. This service that we agree to provide you with is based on population but can be increased or decreased at the Council's discretion. This is not a tax; it is a service. There is no "Taxation Without Representation". For example, our communities do not get to voice our opinion on the County Tax bill budget other than attending the budget meetings to find out where the money comes from for the County Tax bill. The bill is sent to us and is not broken down for any services they will be supplying our communities, but we are obligated to pay it. Under your assumption, is this: Taxation Without Representation" as well? As far as discussing Ashland's budget, that is not an option. Just like we have no right to have a representative to discuss your budget.

The all or nothing course of action for the subsidies came about 2 years ago when the subsidies were given to each community, and we requested that they be posted as one warrant not three or four separate warrants to be voted on. This request was not followed. Per our legal counsel it was determined that if the community doesn't want to agree to put it as one warrant, then our only choice was to offer the service at an "All or Nothing" offer. The reason for this is that if the taxpayers of Portage decide not to take the library or recreation there is no doubt in our mind that other community kids and residents will still utilize these programs putting the Recreation Department Director and Librarian in a position where they will have to not allow those residents into the facilities. The small amount of subsidy that Ashland is requesting for both these services is more than justified. However again, the ultimate choice remains with the community taxpayers. This is not done unprofessionally, as you stated, but in hopes of avoiding issues of policing the Library and the Recreation Department for other communities who did not pay a subsidy to use these services and leaving us no choice but to have them leave.

The other concern the letter mentioned is our not listing in our reports what each community pays for what service. This is our choice, no one else's. We are audited yearly and have had no issues with our audits that required us to break things down any more than they already are. There are no laws that dictate that we must break down in any certain line item. The Town of Ashland's reports were fine until the subsidies were increased and now the Town of Ashland is as you quoted, "Nontransparent and not trustworthy". The bottom line is that the Town of Ashland is the only one to decide where the monies go for services rendered from other communities. We are also aware that we have no say on other communities' decisions on how they deal with the budgets or their financials. These are just services with no obligation for any community to take them. We will not sign a contract with a community, nor will we allow any community to just get one service without getting all three or four. We are not bullying anyone nor are we forcing a community to pay for services. Ultimately it is your choice whether you choose to use our services or not.

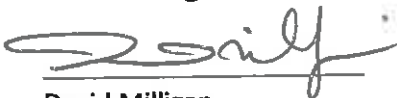
Chairman Dave Milligan and I have agreed to meet here in Ashland with Town Manager Corrine Routhier and Chairperson Michelle Eastman first. Then if deemed after the meeting, we will add you to the August agenda. I look forward to hearing from you on a date that you would like to meet.

Respectfully,



Cyr Martin

Town Manager



David Milligan

Council Chairman