

2024 Annual Town Meeting Minutes

Friday March 22, 2024 at 6:30 pm

Portage Lake Town Hall, School St.

The Annual Town Meeting was called to order by Town Clerk Kimberly Mapley, who affirmed that voting residents were notified & warned properly per the Warrant to assemble at this day and time to act on the following Articles. Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all attending.

There were 30 resident voters and 4 non-voters present.

ART. 1 It was moved and seconded to nominate Geraldine Condon as Moderator for the election portion of the bi-furcated Town Meeting. She is unable to resume her Moderator duties tonight, so she has appointed Deputy Moderator Jordan Beaulier from Ashland to continue with the rest of the town meeting. Mr. Beaulier is sworn in by the Town Clerk.

ART. 2 To elect by secret ballot the following Officer(s):

Richard A. Lyons was elected Select Board member for a term of three (3) years with 36 votes.

Otis Nelson had 1 vote for Select Board, and there was 1 blank ballot for Select Board.

Melissa S. Boutot was elected School Board member for a term of three (3) years with 38 votes.

ART. 3 It was moved and seconded to authorize the Select Board to appoint all necessary officers not elected by ballot for the ensuing year. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 4 It was moved and seconded to authorize the Select Board to spend an amount not to exceed 3/12 of the budgeted amount in each department of the Town's annual budget during the period from January 1, 2024 to the annual March Town Meeting. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 5 It was moved and seconded to authorize the Select Board to accept on behalf of the Town any gifts, donations, grants and State funding or reimbursements, including Revenue Sharing, Homestead Exemption Reimbursement, Tree Growth Reimbursement, BETE Reimbursement, and Veteran Exemption Reimbursement, and exercise such authority as needed to implement grants. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 6 It was moved and seconded to allow a 2% discount on taxes paid within 30 days of the mailing date and set an interest rate of 8.5% on unpaid taxes 60 days after the date of tax commitment, per 36 MRSA sec 505.4. (Note: 8.5% is the maximum allowable interest to be charged in 2024, as set by the State Treasurer). No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 7 It was moved and seconded to authorize the Tax Collector or Treasurer to accept prepayments of taxes not yet committed, pursuant to 36 M.R.S.A. Sec. 506, and to pay an interest rate of 0% on those prepayments.

Discussion:

Judy Moreau: When you pay your taxes ahead of time, do you still get the 2%, uh... Say you pay a partial payment. Will you still get the 2%...

Michelle Johnson: You leave a portion, Judy. So, like you pre-pay, pre-pay, pre-pay, and then when your tax bill comes out you get the 2% discount

Corrine Routhier: Yes.

Michelle Johnson: Off of anything that's remaining or off of what you've already paid if you've paid them all up.

Motion carried.

- ART. 8 It was moved and seconded to authorize the Board of Selectpersons to allow the Treasurer to waive automatic lien foreclosure when a request has been made by the owner before the notice of foreclosure has been executed and it is in the best interest of the Town. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 9 It was moved and seconded to authorize the Municipal Officers to sell or dispose of tax-acquired property via quitclaim deed by first offering the property to the former owner(s) or if deceased to his/her heirs/devisees/personal representatives within 30 days of the date of automatic foreclosure for a price equal to all taxes, interest, fees and costs owed; then if the former owner does not repurchase the property, the Municipal Officers may sell the property using the process authorized by 30-A MRS §943-C, provided that if the former owner does not request that process or the Board is unable to list or sell the property as required by §943-C(3), the Board may sell the property through a competitive sealed bid process in which a notice advertising sale of the property shall be published at least twice in a newspaper of general circulation in the County. For sales other than to the former owner, excess sale proceeds, as defined in 36 MRS §943-C, shall be returned to the former owner. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 10 It was moved and seconded to authorize the Select Board and Treasurer, on behalf of the Town, to advertise the proposed sale of any Town acquired property and Town owned personal property valued over \$500 under such terms and conditions as they deem advisable. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 11 It was moved and seconded to authorize the Select Board to appropriate \$25,000 from surplus as they deem advisable to meet emergencies that may occur during the calendar year. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 12 It was moved and seconded to accept all monies received from the Maine Department of Transportation Local Road Assistance Program for the coming year and deposit those monies into the Road Reserve savings account for future use. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 13 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$72,000 from anticipated motor vehicle excise revenue for the Road Reserve account. *Note:* Excise tax was enacted into Maine law in 1925, 36 MRS §1482. It is based on the manufacturer suggested retail price to make the tax fair for everyone. It is levied yearly and the money is typically spent on local road maintenance, construction, and repair. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 14 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$55,000 from anticipated revenue sources for the purpose of reducing the 2024 tax commitment. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 15 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$25,000 from the 2024 Business Equipment Tax Exemption (BETE) Reimbursement for the following reserve accounts:
- | | |
|--|----------|
| Revaluation Savings Account | \$5,000 |
| Portage Lake Fire Department Reserve Account | \$10,000 |
| Public Works Equipment Reserve Account | \$10,000 |

Discussion:

Arthur Routhier: When's the next revaluation date?

Corrine Routhier: We don't know yet. Potentially within the next couple of years.

Arthur Routhier: So, what do we have in the savings account for that?

Corrine Routhier: Uh, it is on page, 40-something. There's about \$55,000 in there right now.

Arthur Routhier: What did it cost the last time?

Corrine Routhier: \$52,000.

Michelle Johnson: So, chances are it's gone up.

David Farnum: Is the need for a reval generated by the percentage that we are under valuated, or is it generated by when somebody thinks it ought to be done?

Corrine Routhier (to Moderator): Would you like me to answer that? Percentage.

David Farnum: What is it:

Corrine Routhier: The state ratio, is that what you mean? Our ratio last year, was 82%, and it has dropped significantly because of all of the sales from COVID. It affected every town in the state. So, we are pretty close to the 75% threshold.

Motion carried.

ART. 16 It was moved and seconded to appropriate 20% of the Homestead Exemption Reimbursement received in 2024 for the Town Hall Improvement Reserve savings account. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 17 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$34,335 in addition to \$4,785 carried forward and \$780 from Nashville Plantation for elections and general administrative services for a total budget of \$39,900 for the General Administration operating account, and to allow any other revenues, reimbursements, and fees to be used for the same.

Discussion:

Judy Moreau: The, uh, General Administration operating account. What does that cover?

Corrine Routhier: The Town Office. That's to run the office.

Judy Moreau: So that includes your paper, your staples, your stuff.

Corrine Routhier: Correct.

Judy Moreau: Thank you.

Michelle Johnson: I think stamps are in there.

Corrine Routhier: The accounting software, elections.

Motion carried.

ART. 18 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$70,784 in addition to \$15,316 carried forward and \$4,900 from Nashville Plantation for administrative support fees for a total budget of \$91,000 for Office Staff payroll (Town Manager/Treasurer, Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk). No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 19 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$6,340 in addition to \$1,010 carried forward for a total budget of \$7,350 for Real & Personal Property Assessing and Registry of Deeds fees, and to allow any revenues from lien costs to be used for the same.

Discussion:

Judy Moreau: Who does the Personal Property Assessing in this town?

Corrine Routhier: It's Maggie Pierce, she's our Personal Property assessor. Do you want to know the Real Estate assessor?

Judy Moreau: Yeah.

Corrine Routhier: Lewis Cousins from the County.

Judy Moreau: Ok. So, things have changed. Thank you.

Michelle Johnson: And it might change again, but right now that who does it for us.

Motion carried.

ART. 20 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$10,047 in addition to \$10,953 carried forward for a total budget of \$21,000 for Municipal Building operating expenses and to allow the rental fees, reimbursements, and donations to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 21 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$469 in addition to \$531 carried forward for a total budget of \$1,000 for the Planning & Appeals Boards. No discussion. Motion carried.

- ART. 22 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$15,064 in addition to \$4,036 carried forward for a total budget of \$19,100 for Code Enforcement activities, and to allow permit fees, fines, and any other reimbursements to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 23 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$13,887 in addition to \$113 carried forward for a total budget of \$14,000 for Discounts on taxes paid within thirty (30) days of the mailing date of tax bills, and to carry forward \$717 and appropriate up to \$283 from Overlay for a total budget of \$1,000 for tax Abatements. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 24 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$2,475 for annual membership dues to Maine Municipal Assn., Central Aroostook Chamber of Commerce, Greater Fort Kent Chamber of Commerce and Central Aroostook Soil & Water, and to appropriate up to \$250 from the Designated Tourism Account for Maine Tourism Assn. dues.

Discussion:

Judy Moreau: Yes, sir. This is my very favorite Article. How much are we paying Maine Municipal Association? It's a dirty word. Anybody got any answers?

Corrine Routhier: It's in the book, Judy. I'm trying to find the page. Page 31. \$1,787 last year.

Judy Moreau: Oh, my God. And how did they help this town?

Michelle Johnson: Well, they actually...we called them a lot last year about several things.

Judy Moreau: Did they help?

Michelle Johnson: Yes.

Corrine Routhier: We get trainings through them, um, we get legal advice from them. \$1,700 bucks for what we get from them is not a lot.

Judy Moreau: The legal advice I understand is not quite up to par.

Corrine Routhier: No, they're really good.

Judy Moreau: Ok.

Barry Kenney: I'd just like to add to that, we also buy our salt through them, correct?

Corrine Routhier: Sometimes, yes, if it's cheap enough.

Judy Moreau: Really? That's the first I've heard of this? Thank you very much, Mr. Moderator and Mrs. Town Manager.

Motion carried.

- ART. 25 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$65,213 and to carry forward \$5,587 for a total budget of \$70,800 for the Insurance & Social Security account, and to allow any reimbursements and dividends to be used for the same.

Discussion:

Rick Lyons: What's the insurance account? What does the Insurance Account mean?

Corrine Routhier: It's on page 31.

Rick Lyons: Is it property insurance, for example?

Corrine Routhier: It's property, worker's comp...

Rick Lyons: Oh, ok. Got it.

Motion carried.

- ART. 26 It was moved and seconded to carry forward \$4,774 for the General Assistance account and to allow any reimbursements to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.

- ART. 27 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$23,840 in addition to \$3,260 carried forward and \$400 from Nashville Plantation for a total budget of \$27,500 for the Portage Lake Fire Department operating account, and to allow any reimbursements, fees, or donations to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 28 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$1,925 in addition to \$725 carried forward for a total budget of \$2,650 for the Animal Control operating account, and to allow any dog license fees and fines to be used for the same.

Discussion:

Brian Cote: Who's the Animal Control Officer?

Michelle Johnson: Todd Allen.

Motion carried.

ART. 29 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$1,326 in addition to \$2,924 carried forward for a total budget of \$4,250 for Contracted Services for grader work, excavator work and miscellaneous expenses related to this account. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 30 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$65,111 in addition to \$11,489 carried forward and to appropriate \$25,000 from Motor Vehicle Excise tax revenues for a total budget of \$101,600 for the Public Works operating account, and to allow any reimbursements to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 31 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$75,650 for Aroostook Valley Solid Waste Disposal District (Ashland Transfer Station).

Discussion:

Arthur Routhier: How much did the rate change from last year?

Michelle Johnson: It went up. Let me find how much it went up by, but it went up a lot.

Barry Kenney: It went up a lot because they didn't get our summer population right.

Corrine Routhier: Their tipping fees also went up. Everybody's bill for the Transfer Station went up.

Michelle Johnson: Last year we expended \$57,380.58. That's how much was spent last year. But like Beech said, they re-adjusted us in the spring...not the spring, in the fall. Remember? We had to pay an additional amount because of our summer population. So that's why our bill for this year is higher as well. And like she said, they raised the rate. So, like this year our bill should be right. We shouldn't have to appropriate funds in the fall.

Arthur Routhier: Ok. That's what I was looking for.

Judy Moreau: How much was we charged for our summer people.

Michelle Johnson: The same as you are for us...Or no, not the same as for us. It's 1/6th.

Judy Moreau: What was the total charge for the summer people?

Michelle Johnson: Their charged 1/6th of a resident. Does that make sense?

Corrine Routhier: It's like \$420 a person or something like that. I'll get you the figures on Tuesday, Judy. I don't have them in front of me.

Judy Moreau: You're forgiven.

Motion carried.

ART. 32 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$255 in addition to \$745 carried forward for a total budget of \$1,000 for expenses related to the Portage Lake Transfer Station, including the annual reporting and licensing fees and maintenance of the old dump site. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 33 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$153 in addition to \$2,380 carried forward and appropriate 100% of the annual Veteran Exemption Reimbursement for a total budget of \$2,950 for the maintenance of the Portage Lake Municipal Cemetery, and to allow lot sale revenue, fees, and donations to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 34 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$1,200 for the Beautification department, and to allow any donations to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 35 It was moved and seconded to carry forward \$1,335 for the Portage Lake Recreation Department and to allow any revenues and donations to be used for the same.

Discussion:

Rick Lyons: Do we have a Recreation Director?

Michelle Johnson: Not at this time. Not yet.

Judy Moreau: What...if we have a Recreation Director, what do they do? Or when we get one, what will they do?

Michelle Johnson: So, a few years ago we had Lucas and he organized baseball games for the kids, he held activities here in the gym with the kids, movie nights, pickleball that he did with the kids. There was just local events that he did with the children.

Judy Moreau: Ok. So, if the kids from Ashland come, are they charged a fee.

Michelle Johnson: No, they are not.

Judy Moreau: They charge us.

Motion carried.

ART. 36 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$11,050 in addition to \$2,150 carried forward for a total budget of \$13,200 for the maintenance of the Town's Parks, Public Beach, Seaplane Base, and Pavilion, and allow revenues from rentals, reimbursements, and donations to be used for the same.

Discussion:

Arthur Routhier: Has the town kept the license for the Seaplane Base? Is that active?

Corrine Routhier: They don't require one anymore.

Judy Moreau: Ok. So, we have got to take care of the park, the public beach, and the Pavilion. Well, I guess you have to pay a fee to use the Pavilion, don't you? But, the golf course, we don't have to pay for that anymore either. Sorry, I forgot. But the kids from Ashland come here. Right? They use the beach.

Michelle Johnson: Judy, people from Timbuktu come here to use the beach.

Judy Moreau: You know what I'm getting at.

Michelle Johnson: I don't know how you'd charge a fee for the public beach.

Corrine Routhier: We'd hire someone to be there all day.

Judy Moreau: I'll set there. I'll set there and collect all of the nickels. It's not fair.

Motion carried.

ART. 37 It was moved and seconded to carry forward \$3,700 for the maintenance and improvement of the Campground and Boat Landing, and allow revenues from camping permits, boat excise taxes, reimbursements, and donations to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 38 It was moved and seconded to carry forward \$5,000 for continued restorations and improvements to the Seaplane Base.

Discussion:

Judy Moreau: Just do something with it.

Michelle Johnson: It's getting painted.

Corrine Routhier: Yes, we are going to repaint "Portage" on the roof, do some exterior improvements and some interior improvements. We've got plans to maybe use it for a warm-up shack in the winter for ice skating and renting it out in the summer for events.

Judy Moreau: Now for ice skating, why don't you get ahold of Brian with the fire truck to make the lake all nice and smooth so the kids can have a nice smooth ice.

Brian Cote: At one point in December, there was plenty of ice on the lake and there was no snow.

There's not one person for 3 miles on that lake that ice skated.

Arthur Routhier: I went ice skating; Grace and I were down there a half a dozen times. It would be nice to have something like that, but I can see the liability for the Fire Department for doing something like that.

Motion carried.

ART. 39 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$6,319 in addition to \$256 carried forward for a total budget of \$6,575 for street lights.

Discussion:

Judy Moreau: Are you sure you'll have enough money, now, to pay that Versant bill?

Michelle Johnson: We are.

Judy Moreau: You promise.

Michelle Johnson: I promise Judy. And to be honest with you, Versant and I don't get along. So don't worry, we've got enough money to pay that bill.

Judy Moreau: Well you promised the year before that we'd be alright, and you was alright, so I'll take your word for it.

Michelle Johnson: I try.

Motion carried.

ART. 40 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$300 for the Portage Lake School Board stipends, which is equal to a rate of \$25 per member for each meeting that they attend.

Discussion:

Judy Moreau: It's about time.

Motion carried.

ART. 41 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$94,652 for user fees & subsidy to the Town of Ashland to cover our portion of ambulance service (\$59,670.47), recreation department use (\$16,463.36), and public library use (\$18,517.87).

Discussion:

David Farnum: I assume these sheets are...(indicating papers given to voters at the start of the meeting)

Michelle Johnson: Those are from the Ashland town book.

David Farnum: Yeah. Am I to believe that last year their ambulance department had a surplus of \$208,000?

Michelle Johnson: That's based on the figures from their town book.

David Farnum: Where did that money go?

Michelle Johnson: So, from what we gather from reading their town book, at the end of the year whatever they have for left over in their...in each department—the Rec, the Library and the Ambulance—they roll it over into their general fund instead of carrying over directly into that department.

David Farnum: Is that legal? I mean, a certain percentage of that money is ours.

Michelle Johnson: It's legal. So that is one of the things that MMA commented on. It is legal, although they said it's not ethical. But it is legal. In grant terms, we would say they are supplanting their budget. So, they are taking funds that's been given to them and using it to reduce their taxes instead of supplementing, where money should be used to supplement. Meaning, make a bigger pot, kind of. Or pay for additional things.

David Farnum: That's a large percentage. That's what, 35-40%. That means that 35-40% of what we paid we shouldn't have paid.

Michelle Johnson: Correct.

David Farnum: What are we going to do about that?

Michelle Johnson: So, tonight is your time to be heard. So, the Selectboard is making no comment because it is a touchy subject. Based on the fact that we all know ambulance is necessary, right? And if we vote down these things I know the town is concerned about ambulance coverage. So, we have reached out to the state about—if we vote this down tonight, does our ambulance coverage end tomorrow? The answer is no. So, there's an initial 30-day period that the Town of Ashland would ask for public comments based on it, and then they would also after that have to apply to the state for a change in their license to have us removed. And that could be up to 70 days. So, there would be 100 days possible waiting period that they would still cover us. And in that time frame I would hope that we could get together with them and draw up a contract of what the ambulance service would look like for our town. And we would have a contract with them instead of just a yearly bill. That would be the hope if we voted no tonight. That's my hope.

Michael Violette: So, is this something that the other townships would do as well? Masardis, Oxbow?

Michelle Johnson: You mean vote no? Or the contract? I have no say in that. I mean I would...I don't know. I mean, I would want a contract for us. I think that would be beneficial for both parties involved. But I don't know about the other towns.

Rick Lyons: Do we have any statistics on utilization of the Rec Department and the Library?

Michelle Johnson: I do from years prior. Several years ago, I asked about numbers, and we had like 52 library cards.

Corrine Routhier: 30.

Michelle Johnson: 30 now, and as for kids using the Rec. I mean, how many kids do we tuition? Leslie, to the School?

Leslie Rafford: I think there's like 35 kids.

Michelle Johnson: So, we tuition 35 kids to the school. So, I would say those 35 kids have access to the Rec. The three in my home use it.

Corrine Routhier: It's not just kids. They have other stuff there. So, it's hard to quantify the Rec Center. It's easier with the library.

Rick Lyons: So, a follow-up question—have we had any discussion to have the Rec director from there oversee our Rec Department in a cooperative effort?

Corrine Routhier: We have not.

Michelle Johnson: No.

Rick Lyons: It seems to me that might be something...we might want to do a cooperative effort.

David Farnum: It appears that 40% of their budget last year presents, in the area of ambulance, 40% of the \$700,000 is \$280,000, I think. So, they didn't spend 40% of it. Is their budget going up that much this year on ambulance so that we have to go up from \$55,000...

Michelle Johnson: Say that again?

David Farnum: Last year, Ashland had a carry-over of 40% of their ambulance budget. They didn't spend 40%.

Michelle Johnson: They didn't carry it over into that budget, though.

David Farnum: No, they didn't. What I'm saying is they didn't spend 40%. But yet they want four more thousand from us this year than they did last year so is their budget for this year going up that much so that not only would we need to spend the 40% that we didn't spend, but we're going to spend another \$5,000 that's another 10%?

Michelle Johnson: But that's where the problem lies, in the fact that the money is not staying in that budget. So, the 40% is already removed. It's been spent, but in other areas. What we've gathered from their town is that it *is* spent, it's been spent, but it was spent in a different fund. It was moved.

David Farnum: Right. What I'm getting at is they asked for \$700,000, are they going to only spend \$433,000 and have \$280,000 carried over again. Why are we paying \$4,000 more when they don't need it because they didn't spend it the first time? Is their budget going up that much in ambulance this year?

Michelle Johnson: According to the letter we received from the Town Manager, it's because of salaries.

David Pierce: The first year this happened, we were told that anything that was not used would be factored in and reflect in the next year's budget. Well, that didn't happen. So, the whole thing is what you see in front of you. It's going into their General Fund and paying their taxes.

Dan Hodgins: If you look at Cyr's letter, he says that they have a \$60,000 deficit because he looks at just the amount that was appropriated initially. He doesn't take into account what we pay, the fees for the...the people who pay the fees if they use the ambulance. It's rather disingenuous, and I think it's clear that he's using this as a way to reduce their taxes and it's on the shoulders of the communities around. And what's legal, isn't always ethical. And he doesn't seem to care.

David Farnum: I guess I really don't get it now. Well, how can he be \$60,000 in the red if he carried over \$280,000?

Michelle Johnson: Because he doesn't factor in any revenues.

David Pierce: It's smoke and mirrors.

Bruce Laveway: They are saying they are providing a service to us, is how they word it, and they can profit off us; off the surrounding towns, is how they're saying it.

Rick Lyons: If I'm following this correctly, Michelle, I think you hit the nail on the head there—supplanting, not supplementing. Would it be appropriate, following this thing correctly, we can approve this but direct the Council to sit and negotiate the conversation...or have the conversation you had

last year similar to the conversation this year, and negotiate that contract, so we're not at the whim of this. If that makes any sense.

Michelle Johnson: So, we can amend the Article. You guys can amend it to approve part of it, or a portion of it. I don't know...can they add a stipulation?

Corrine Routhier: I'm not sure they can. We are willing. We are willing—we've been willing. It's the other end. They have not been willing to negotiate a contract. So, it's one sided.

Judy Moreau: If we can amend it, right, would that not show good faith with the state that yes, we are willing to pay X-number of dollars....

Corrine Routhier: You mean Ashland, not the state?

Judy Moreau: No, you just said the state said that they would have to serve us for 30 days and then...OK? If it goes to the state and we are not willing to pay zero, which if we vote it down tonight this is what we are saying. We are not willing to pay Ashland, right? But if we were to amend this Article to read "just the ambulance service," would that show good faith with the State?

Michelle Johnson: If we amended it to accept the ambulance, then none of this would go to the State, Judy, because we accepted the ambulance. And furthermore, my personal, or my concern, is that if we accept the ambulance and vote down the other two, the main stickler is the over charge.... We're being over charged on all of them, but I think the main stickler is a contract needed for the ambulance. And if we accept the ambulance as is, then we are accepting it on the terms that we've already been given. Meaning a contract would be out of negotiation, I assume.

Arthur Routhier: I guess, what I would say would be...if we could amend it and set them a price of less the 40% we got swindled this year, say \$27,000 take it or leave it. You guys already swindled 40-something out of us last year. And, never mind the other two, the Library and the Rec Center. It shouldn't be one or none, or all three or none. I mean, it should be three different amendments to those three payments rather than just one.

Dan Hodgins: So, I guess I made a parliamentary gaff here. Would the appropriate thing be to vote this down, and then direct the Council to enter into negotiations to address the situation. Is that appropriate?

Moderator: Your options are you can vote down Article 41, then your Board can go into negotiations with Ashland. Or you can pass an amended Article to change the numbers, but then you're at the will of Ashland.

Michelle Johnson: The 70-day thing is only if we vote down the ambulance. I don't want people to be...the State does not care if we don't buy in to Ashland's Rec and Library. That 70-day timeline, well the 30 days with the 70 days, only applies to the ambulance, and specifically Ashland changing of their license—taking us off of that.

Corrine Routhier: The State also doesn't care how we pay for it. They don't care what we pay for it. So, the money part of it, they have nothing to do with it. It's the licensing. We're in their service area.

Denise Garnett: My question is, it's \$59,000 for ambulance.

Michelle Johnson: \$94,000 total for all of them.

Denise Garnett: Yes, well I'm just talking about the ambulance. You all have fire departments here. Why not take some of this money that they want us to give them and train some of our fire fighters to be First Responders and EMTs?

Brian Cote: I have no comment.

Denise Garnett: I mean, when I lived in Florida for the last 4 years, that's what I was trained as.

Michelle Johnson: It would cost a lot. It would actually cost more, and we would have to have our own vehicle and staff.

Corrine Routhier: And added insurance.

Michelle Johnson: Trust me, at the Select Board meetings it's not something we haven't discussed. We've talked about what would it look like if we bought our own ambulance and our own thing. What would it look like if reached out to some surrounding communities and went in to a collaborative....

Denise Garnett: I mean you have that golden hour that's already cut short coming from Ashland to here.

Michelle Johnson: Right. So, it was a discussion, but at this time it was deemed unrealistic for our budget.

David Farnum: If you want to raise the money on an Article, can you do that?

Corrine Routhier: No. You can only go down.

Michael Violette: So, it looks like to summarize, we will need to vote this Article down, and then provide another Article that authorizes the Board to negotiate on the Town's behalf.

Corrine Routhier: You can't add an Article once your Warrant is posted.

Judy Moreau: The thing that I don't like is them telling us how we have to vote. All or nothing? No. We should be able to pick and choose what we want to vote on. This is our town. Just because we have Ashland ambulance, you know. And besides it's against my Constitutional rights to have somebody tell me how to vote. Thank you.

Rick Lyons: Just for clarification, if the Article is defeated, does that terminate the ambulance service.

Michelle Johnson: No. Not tomorrow. There's a 30 day for public comment, and then they have to apply to the State to have their area changed, and the State told us that could take up to 70 days. So, the hope would be that in that time frame, we would meet with them and drum up a contract we could come to terms on.

Judy Moreau: Who's going to have the public hearing? Here in town, or do we have to go to Ashland.

Corrine Routhier: It's a 30-day.... they call it a public hearing, but it's not an actual one day. It's 30 days you submit your testimony to them in writing. It's not like a meeting here, in a public forum. It's 30 days to get your voice heard.

Motion defeated.

ART. 42 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$3,070 in addition to \$100 carried forward for a total budget of \$3,170 for the following requested financial social services assistance:

American Red Cross	\$500
Aroostook Agency on Aging	\$300
Aroostook County Action Program	\$156
Ashland Food Pantry	\$525
Catholic Charities of Maine	\$100
Homeless Services of Aroostook	\$628.25
Life Flight Foundation	\$359
Maine Families Aroostook	\$200
Maine Public Broadcasting Corp.	\$100
Martha & Mary's Food Kitchen	\$100
Northern Maine Veteran's Cemetery	\$200

Discussion:

Arthur Routhier: Who comes up with the figures for the entities.

Michelle Johnson: They ask for it.

Corrine Routhier: It's from them. A lot of them are per capita, that's why some of them are weird figures.

Arthur Routhier: I only ask that because Maine Public Broadcasting is only \$100 and I feel that is a very good project to donate to.

Motion carried.

ART. 43 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$1,000 from anticipated boat excise tax revenue for the Town's share of matching funds for the Portage Lake Association's cost share grant to aid in the identification and education of invasive aquatic plants in, or on, Portage Lake.

Discussion:

Brian Cote: How come Budget Committee, all the other years we've been doing this, the Budget Committee always recommended something on an event. Or on an Article. There's only 2 in the book. You got an answer?

Corrine Routhier: Yeah. At the start of the Warrant Articles, it says that they are in affirmative unless otherwise noted.

Brian Cote: Oh, Ok. Thank you.

Motion carried.

- ART. 44 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$2,500 for the Portage Lake Historical Society (pursuant to Title 30A, Ch 223, Sub Ch. 4, §5726(6)). No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 45 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$2,500 for the Portage Lake Snowmobile Club for the purpose of aiding in the maintenance of local snowmobile trails for public use, and to pay to the Portage Lake Snowmobile Club all snowmobile fees reimbursed to the Town from the State of Maine in the coming year. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 46 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$2,500 for the Portage Lakers ATV Club for aiding in the maintenance of the local ATV trail system for public use. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 47 It was moved and seconded to allow expenditures from the Designated Summer Round-Up account and Designated Fireworks account as needed for the purpose of hosting the annual Summer Round-Up weekend. (Note: These two accounts are funded entirely with donations and fund raisers; no taxes are raised for the purpose of funding them). No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 48 It was moved and seconded to appropriate up to \$77,900 from Road Reserve for the purpose of sealing cracks in the pavement on West Rd. and Cottage Rd. as preventative maintenance and damage control.

Discussion:

Herb McPherson: Are they going to do any more than what the State does, with the little rubber strip up the road that falls out?

Barry Kenney: Nope.

Herb McPherson: Same thing?

Corrine Routhier: Well, our roads aren't as heavily trafficked as Route 11, or Route 161, or Route whatever. So, it will more likely stay in longer than they would on the highways.

Michelle Johnson: Hopefully.

Herb McPherson: Can you keep the trucks off the Posted Roads?

Michelle Johnson: I stood and yelled at them the other day, Herb, and they still drove on them. So, I did my civil vigilance to keep the trucks off the road.

Herb McPherson: I called Houlton and I wasn't the first one.

Brian Cote: I have a comment. I called the Weigh Wagon...

Corrine Routhier: Wait. A comment on this Article or a comment on the trucks on Posted Roads?

Brian Cote: Trucks on posted roads.

Corrine Routhier: Ok. No. That's not what we're talking about.

Motion carried.

- ART. 49 It was moved and seconded to appropriate up to \$3,200 from Surplus to purchase a new welder and cart for the Public Works Department. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 50 It was moved and seconded to appropriate up to \$600 from Surplus to complete the eaves and trim on the new sand shed lean-to. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 51 It was moved and seconded to appropriate up to \$2,200 from Surplus to re-surface the Municipal Cemetery parking lot with gravel. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 52 It was moved and seconded to appropriate up to \$4,000 from Surplus for purchase a 4-drawer, letter-sized fire proof filing cabinet for the Town Office to protect permanent records and town reports.

Discussion:

Arthur Routhier: How many more filing cabinets do we need to cover all of the records?

Corrine Routhier: Probably 2.

Arthur Routhier: I say we buy them right now and get it over with.

Corrine Routhier: Each one is like \$3,500.

Michelle Johnson: We can't increase it. And this is also...there's a possibility that we might be able to buy 2 for this price as well.

Arthur Routhier: The longer the records stay out of these fireproof cabinets, the more opportunity they get to be destroyed. That's all I'm saying.

Rick Lyons: Are you moving to digitize the records?

Corrine Routhier: Some of them are digitized, some of them they can't be because they are old, old records. And a lot of our town reports are currently in just a regular filing cabinet.

Judy Moreau: The question I had was answered.

Brian Cote: Fire proof cabinets are not fire proof. They are not heat resistant.

Corrine Routhier: They are better than what our town reports are in right now.

Brian Cote: But you still could lose your records in a fire if it was in 3500 degrees sitting in the basement. You're gonna lose them.

Motion carried.

ART. 53 It was moved and seconded to appropriate up to \$1,100 from Surplus to upgrade the Town's website to a new platform software. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 54 It was moved and seconded to appropriate the remaining funds in the ARPA Reserve account and appropriate \$415 from Surplus to upgrade the main receipting computer in the Town Office to a higher capacity server. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 55 It was moved and seconded to appropriate up to \$5,800 from the Silviculture Reserve to pay Irving Woodlands to herbicide a portion of town forest in the Oak Point area that was replanted in 2021.

Discussion:

David Farnum: Who's idea what is to use herbicide, the Select Board or Irving?

Corrine Routhier: Irving.

Michelle Johnson: Well Town Forest.

Barry Kenney: The Town Forest Council.

David Farnum: I know that Irving sprays everything. And I know that not everybody desires to spray. I just wondered if Portage would move away from spraying our forests, especially that close to the lake.

David Pierce: Dave, the piece of ground that they are referring to, there was a bunch of poplar and fir that was blowing down. And the Forest Committee agreed to clear cut it and replace it with faster growing spruce. So that's...that's the background.

Judy Moreau: How many acres?

David Pierce: I can't remember. I think it was 177.

Denise Garnett: Hi everyone, my name is Denise. I'm Judge Judy's daughter (laughter). I was born and raised here and enjoyed the lake almost every day as a kid. I moved away and then I came back about nine months ago. I look forward to enjoying the lake this summer, especially the Floating Islands and all of their beauty. I was told years ago that the Northeastern lobe of Portage Lake is bordered by an extensive mosaic of wetlands, including rich bays, shrub bogs, forested swamps, and emergent marsh that constitutes an un-patterned ecosystem. It's large diversity of wetland types,

rare bird habitat, and relatively in-tact condition make this system one of the most significant wetland ecosystems in the northern half of the state. Additionally, more than 1,600 acres of wetland and shoreline around the northern and western lobes of Portage Lake, to include Oak Point, have been mapped as significant water fowl and wading bird habitat. The black tern is just one of the birds that are on the endangered list, and they are out there. Eagles are another bird that are extremely sensitive during their mating season, March 1 through August 31. Any activities near their nest may cause nest failure. The lake is also home to a rare fish called the Arctic Carr, which is only found in a few other places in Maine. Other species include the Lapland Buttercup, it is threatened; live sedge, special concern; pygmy water lily, threatened; swamp birch, special concern; swamp fly honeysuckle, special concern; water star grass, special concern, and circumneutral phen(?) is in peril in the state of Maine. And last, but I think the most important, is the rare flightless copper butterfly. It takes one year to complete their life-cycle. The eggs are laid in August on the underside of center foil leaves, usually near the top of the smaller plants. Leaves and eggs drop to the ground in autumn and over winter. In spring they crawl back up on the plant and feed on its leaves. In 1997, it was listed as endangered in Maine because of its limited availability of its habitat and its near epidemic status in Maine. Threats to the host plant, also threaten the butterfly. Forest secession is often one of the most serious threats to both upland and wetland sites, and several of the existing locations are in need of management ensuring continued stability for the butterfly and the host plant. By the spraying of glysohate, it will kill the shrubbery, thus killing the butterfly. It is also contributing to a decline in the modern butterfly population along the deforestation and adverse weather conditions. I truly believe that by spraying near our beautiful lake it will cause more eutheization of our lake. Please take this into consideration when allowing someone to spray.

David Pierce: I'm not a big fan of herbicide either. I think it's way over-used. But where this particular proposal is, it's a few miles from the lake. It's not like we are spraying on any of that stuff.

Michelle Johnson: I just said to Beech that I feel like this Warrant mis-represents what's actually being sprayed. And that's why I sent Corrine to get a map of what's actually being sprayed. And what's being sprayed is two... (using hand gestures) over here and way back here. So, this is actually a mis-represented Article. I wish we had worded it differently and I guess we didn't think about it initially. But after hearing from you guys, I just looked at Beach and I said "it's not really the Oak Point area," and that's why I sent Corrine to get the map.

Denise Garnett: So, what was planted in 2021? What area?

Barry Kenney: It's town ground.

Michelle Johnson: It's on town ground, but it's not Oak Point.

David Pierce: It's nowhere near the lake. It's not *on* Oak Point.

Judy Moreau: So, Michelle, if you're over here and up here...If you're up here, you're not even in the town.

Michelle Johnson: Well, you are. The maps' coming I promise. It's outside Mosquito Brook.

Denise Garnett: Yet another marshy area.

Judy Moreau: This is supposedly 100% town owned land, right?

Michelle Johnson: Dave, this is 100% on town land, correct?

David Pierce: I think it's joint owned. Don't hold me to that. I can look it up, but I can't tell you right off the top of my head.

Michelle Johnson: (showing map) So, this is Portage Lake and this is where it's being sprayed.

Denise Garnett: That doesn't even look like Portage Lake, I'm sorry.

Corrine Routhier: Does anyone else want a map? I've got 3 copies.

Arthur Routhier: Do you know if it's going to be aerial, by helicopter or plane, or if it's going to be ground application?

David Pierce: I'm pretty sure it's helicopter.

(residents present look over copies of the map of the proposed spraying area)

Judy Moreau: So, the Article seems to say that it's on a portion of town forest. It is. But it should say on joint-owned land. If it's on joint-owned land, why should we use \$5,600 from Silviculture to pay part of what they own? How much are they going to pay?

Barry Kenney: I'm sure they are kicking in their share.

David Pierce: They would pay their 50% or whatever. Part of this is joint-owned, and part of this is 100%.

Judy Moreau: There's 960 acres in the northwest corner.

David Pierce: Alright. I'm not going to argue. The way I understand it, and maybe I'm wrong, I think this is joint owned, and the lot here is town owned. Pretty sure (indicating map).

Judy Moreau: Well, now you're saying this is going to be sprayed, and this is going to be sprayed (pointing to map).

Michelle Johnson: The key that is on the bottom of the map that Matt [Stedman] made, says the top portion is joint owned, and the bottom portion is us.

Denise Garnett: So, this is what they are going to spray, this glyso- whatever it is.

Michelle Johnson: Yes.

Denise Garnett: This goes on to say that the glyso-phate formulas is more toxic to fish and amphibians than glyso-phate alone.

David Pierce: Where did that come from?

Michelle Johnson: Wikipedia. So, this is town forest. We profit off the trees that are cut down in there. Irving helps us manage it, along with our Forestry Committee. It has been recommended that we spray in order to have larger tree growth in order to have more of a profit. That's where this is coming from. If we vote this down and we don't spray, and according to the Committee and according to our tree growth guy, our trees just won't grow as quick. That's standard forest management. That's...it's 50/50. It's not going to hurt us. Well, it might hurt us, but it's....

Judy Moreau: It might hurt ya? You're darn straight it's gonna hurt ya. Now you listen to this. You own property on the lake.

Michelle Johnson: I do own property on the lake.

Judy Moreau: You pay heavy duty taxes because you own property around the lake. And you want a beautiful lawn. You cannot put fertilizer on your lawn because it is against rules and regulations. Not only for this town, but the State. Ok? So, and you people are all sitting there and thinking that this Round-Up is so wonderful and it's great and its gonna kill the leaf trees. They are going to kill the leaf trees, the hardwood trees. Just like the Great Northern tried to do years ago. But look at now. Maine Woods over there is hungry for hardwood. The chip plants are hungry for chip hardwood. Right?

David Pierce: No. The market is so low right now. They are not hungry.

Rick Lyons: This is a recommendation of a committee, correct?

Michelle Johnson: A recommendation from the Forest Committee.

Motion carried.

Richard Lyons is sworn in as new Select Board member by the Town Clerk.

Barry "Beech" Kenney is thanked for his 10 years of service on the Select Board.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Corrine Routhier