

Minutes  
Town of Portage Lake Special Town Meeting  
Wednesday September 12, 2018 at 6:30 pm

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County of Aroostook, s.s.

State of Maine

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by the Town Clerk. There were 32 resident voters and 0 non-resident voters present.

Article 1        It was moved and seconded to nominate James Kelley as moderator for tonight's meeting. Two written ballots were cast. Motion carried. Jim was sworn in as moderator.

Article 2        It was moved and seconded to withdraw from the inter-local agreement with Northern Aroostook Solid Waste Association (N.A.S.W.A.), and to enter into an inter-local contract with the Ashland Transfer Station for Portage Lake's garbage disposal.

Discussion:

Wayne Gagnon: Why?

Danny Higgins: To save money.

Wayne Gagnon: How much money?

Danny Higgins: Roughly \$6,000.

David Pierce: To begin with.

Larry Duchette: The first year about \$5,100. The biggest reason we are considering doing this is NASWA is in trouble with DEP and they are going to be doing some fairly large expansions of which we would be responsible for a large percentage of that. Three other towns are also considering withdrawing from them as well. It would be my assumption, pretty well, that NASWA is going away. Everybody up there is going to get their own contract for their own trash-hauling and they won't even be an option anymore. And there is no debt, so it's a good time for us to get out.

Roland Caron: Unfortunately I wasn't able to be at the last meeting here; I was in Portland. But the meeting before that we talked about the options, that basically there were two questions to be determined. One, moving from Eagle Lake to Ashland, being the main question, I think, at issue. And number two, the closing of our local dump and whether or not we could keep the dump open for community members to take their brush and any other cuttings that they had as opposed to having to drag all those out to Ashland. I don't know where we are on that. This, to me, when I read it, it pretty much...and correct me if I'm wrong because I want to support our efforts, here, I don't want to throw a monkey wrench in it...but to me it looks like what we are saying here is we just simply want to move from Eagle Lake to Ashland; sever our ties with Eagle Lake and got to Ashland. Which leaves our dump still up in the air.

David Pierce: What it would amount to is, it doesn't leave....The question is if we are moving to Ashland, which means everything would go to Ashland. And this at the top of the hill will close, and that's our savings. Plus if we tried to mix and match then they would have to turn away stuff that goes to Ashland. Dave {Schroat} was here at the last meeting and he says if someone shows up with brush there, and we take it here, they would have to turn them away. And there was going to be a bunch of issues.

Roberta Belanger: It happens already, Roland. We've had people from Portage who have tried to bring brush in there. We had it happen just last week.

David Pierce: So it's all or nothing. We are either going to go...

Roland Caron: It's not, though. I've talked to people on the Board out there. It's not all or nothing.

David Pierce: Well, before us is all or nothing. There's no other talk about...

Roland Caron: Who has made that decision? The last time we met that decision hadn't been made. I would like to think that everybody here would support us moving from Eagle Lake to Ashland; to continue to get us out of the agreement that Larry is concerned about and move in a positive direction to Ashland. I'm concerned about, you know, totally closing that dump for brush and leaves and things like that for a number of reasons. One, the environment. That is going to encourage everybody to start burning in their back lot. OK? Number two, it's going to also provoke continued concerns with whether or not we are going to be involved locally or not. Now I look at the dump and the brush and the cuttings as, really, a community service. You know, trash and garbage, the way communities handle that is all different. Every community is different. Presque Isle sells bags. But the fact of the matter is, not everybody who comes to Portage for a weekend to clean up around their camp is going to want to take a couple hours to bring their cuttings to Ashland. It's just not right. I think if we are going to have people make that decision, I think it needs to be the community's decision.

David Pierce: Well, it will be. That's why we are here tonight. It seemed to make sense to most people that you would keep it simple, and it's only a few miles to Ashland.

Dan Higgins: You see, Roland, if we take brush, we've got to have somebody up there. Then there is the cost of hiring someone to chip that. Alright? So how are we saving money?

Roland Caron: This should not be about a money savings. IT should be about the environment and community services. And a matter of fact, we talked the last time, at the first meeting I was at, where if we made the move from Eagle Lake to Ashland, and kept the dump open just for brush and little things like that, we would still be saving money.

Danny Higgins: How are we going to be saving money that way?

Roland Caron: Because the cost of running the dump...Larry said we were going to be saving \$5,000 this coming year.

Larry Duchette: Correct.

Roland Caron: OK. The cost of the running of the dump is a little over \$4,000. I'm not saying we should keep the dump open exactly as it is, but I think we need to consider keeping it open for brush, and limbs and leaves. We don't need everybody and their brother having a fire ring around the lake and burning their trash. Because you know what that's going to be; that's going to be a major problem.

Roberta Belanger: I think the other issue, is the transfer station for the brush is year round, whereas up here it's only May to October. If you've got brush your cleaning in March or April...You know a lot of people want to get rid of it. And I think that's why they are considering having everything brought out there. And, also, it makes Dave's life a little easier out there, because instead of turning people around...people get very irritated if they come all the way to Ashland from Portage and they have brush and we have to say "sorry, you can't bring it here". Then they say "we pay our taxes, we can dump it here". It causes a lot of trouble with that. I mean, it's totally up to Portage what they are going to do, but...

Roland Caron: I think we ought to act on the first thing, to get rid of Eagle Lake and go with Ashland. Then I think we ought to take a year to change the operation of the dump to handle brush and let's see how it goes. OK? We are going to need time to educate the people relative to what's happening. Because this is just a small minority of the people who live here and come back and forth to the community, whether it's weekends or whatever. There's no rush. The only rush is get out of the Eagle Lake system.

David Pierce: How about saving \$4,000 a year? Isn't that a good incentive as well?

Roland Caron: I don't think \$4,000 is a big savings when you are talking about a community service. We pay \$5,000 to have a county sheriff come to town.

David Pierce: No. We've had that for like four years. We've paid like \$1,000 a year or less. But anyway...

Roland Caron: Well, I've been on the Budget Committee and I've never heard that it was less than \$5,000.

David Pierce: We applied \$5,000 three or four years ago, and we haven't used it up yet. But anyway, they are also proposing that, if need be, opening Ashland for another day. So there will be four days when people could bring stuff year round. So there is a lot of plusses to doing that rather than going a day and a half up here and people having to go...

Roland Caron: You don't have to do a day and a half. You can have it just open Saturdays. Think about the needs are of the people, not necessarily about cost savings. There's not going to be a major cost savings. When it's all said and done there won't be a major cost savings.

David Pierce: Except for the headache to the Ashland facility when people try to bring everything there. It happens all the time.

Roland Caron: It will take at least a year for people to understand that we are closing that one, that the only thing you can bring there is brush, and everything else has to go to Ashland.

David Pierce: If that's closed up it won't take them long to figure it out. The gate will be closed. It won't take them any time to figure it out. And it has been well advertised.

Roland Caron: I think we ought to take our time and not rush into this. Take our time, get out of the agreement that we are in with Eagle Lake, go with Ashland, OK? This is going to be open for another three months regardless; we aren't going to make the official move until January. Am I wrong on that? I don't want to say anything that's wrong.

Larry Duchette: That's correct.

Roland Caron: But we are going to shut that one down anyway, and people will have to understand that after this is shut down they will have to hold on to their brush. People generally don't pick up leaves and brush and do cleaning around their camps in the fall. It's usually done in the spring. And that's when they need that as an avenue.

Moderator: For information for those who may not have been here, we have had two public hearings on this very thing prior to tonight, and tonight we are here to vote on the Article.

David Roy: I would think right now, listening to what Roland is saying, he makes a very valid point and we probably should give that a serious thought. Because it does make sense to leave at least that portion of it as a service. There is a lot more people who use it than you think. If you look at the brush pile up there, it's huge.

Moderator: In response to that, Roland did bring that up at the very first meeting, and that has already been presented to the Selectmen and the Town Manager for their consideration. Obviously, they haven't felt that that's the way to go. But again, we have had two open hearings for this particular Article, and we are here this evening to vote on whether to do it or not. To Roland's point, if you vote not to do it, then we go back to square one. But if you vote to do it, that's what we are going to do this evening.

Roland Caron: I think the townspeople need to be spoken to...

Moderator: I think this is the Townspeople, Roland, because these are the voters. They have been notified and this is a special meeting.

Roland Caron: To be fair, let's do a petition. I'm a...I believe in democracy, you know? I'm a veteran, OK? There are a lot of things that happen that I'm not necessarily in favor of, but I believe in democracy and live within a democracy. If the majority of the people in this town want us to close that dump completely, I'm going to support that 150%.

Arthur Routhier: I think these meetings have been publicized in the town, and those people who want to vote on it are here. It's been publicized in all public places. Go vote.

Moderator: And that was part of what I was trying to say; had we not had any public hearings, then it would be different for this evening. But we've had two public hearings and we are now here to vote on whether to do it or not.

Wayne Gagnon: I think, to me there is nothing wrong with discussing this more so we can understand...for those who couldn't make the other meetings. If we are going to vote on it, we are going

to need to know what to vote on. I think we need to take into consideration people who pay taxes in this town and don't have a vote in this town. There are camp owners around the lake who carry most of the weight in tax base.

Barry Kenney: There were a quite a few camp owners who commented that they aren't able to go to our transfer station on a Saturday and they would like to see some other hours. And there were numerous camp owners who were in favor of going with Ashland, and that's how we came to this point. It's because they are open year round, three days a week right now and possibly going to four.

Otis Nelson: Should the Article have also stated in very plain English for a roofer that it would include the closure of the Portage transfer station? Is that what's included?

Larry Duchette: It is included.

Otis Nelson: Right. It probably should have been stated in here, shouldn't it?

Barry Kenney: Well, to answer some of that, a lot of our permit is with NASWA, so if end with NASWA then we are losing our permit to keep that on the hill.

David Pierce: It kind of goes with it. A lot of our stuff, we are committed to going that way, so it's not specifically stated but it's a part of it.

Roland Caron: But the fact of the matter is, people are probably unsure of what to do. I just think, other communities, if you remember all that has gone on in Aroostook County with trash, it's not always been a pretty sight. I am one of the ones who like to keep this community always in the public light in the news. I would hate to urge people to vote no against this tonight just because it's unclear. Because I think, as Larry pointed out, that we have to get out of that agreement with Eagle Lake. And we need to serve them notice that we are getting out of it so he has a good time line to work with. I think that is the only urgent thing we need to vote on tonight. The other thing, the dump, we can manage that. We can have other public hearings to allow people to have input. I'll do a petition around town to see what people want, so see if they want the dump open to handle brush and leaves and things like that. I have no problem with that. My thing is, what does the majority of the people in Portage want for services? If that is a service that they want, then we need to pony up and do it.

Moderator: Roland, I think your point is well taken.

David Pierce: That has been formulated in the last couple of hearings. This is not *our* idea. This has been from two hearings and everybody's input and from Ashland and the whole nine yards. This is not anything new. So we have heard from all of the people who we thought were interested, so it's not like you have to go talk to everybody again to drag it out.

Ray Wakefield: I'd like to address something to Larry. We don't really have a full time landfill, or so called dump, up here?

Larry Duchette: No.

Ray Wakefield: It's open when?

Larry Duchette: Seasonally. May to October or November depending on the weather. It's only open two days, Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings during May, then it goes just down to Saturdays.

Ray Wakefield: So what happens in the winter months?

Larry Duchette: The regular trash gets hauled off and goes to Eagle Lake. We have no opportunity to haul anything elsewhere unless you take it to Eagle Lake yourself.

Judy Moreau: If we keep the transfer station open without NASWA, can the town get a permit from DEP for the brush? Or is one needed?

Larry Duchette: I'd ask Maggie to address that.

Maggie Pierce: First we would have to wait and sever. We are under the umbrella of NASWA right now for licensing it. Our complete permit and licensing is under NASWA, so we would have to sever ties first with NASWA. Then we would have to have a new operations manual and DEP would have to make a site visit. Even though it's in existence, we would have to go through the process over again. Then we would have to testing done and approval to see if our brush site is adequate.

It is not out of the possibilities, but it will be another round of expenses that we don't know what that would be. It's an unknown.

Otis Nelson: So just to clarify, we pull out of NASWA, that severs the permitting and everything for the transfer station in Buffalo. What do we need to do to vote?

Moderator: We have a motion on the floor that has been seconded, we are in discussion, and then we will move for the vote.

Roland Caron: I think it was Judy who brought it up, and I just want to make sure I understand. We do not have a dump. We might think of it as a dump, but it's a transfer station.

Judy Moreau: That's what I said. If we sever ties with NASWA, we will no longer be permitted to use that transfer station for brush because we do not have a permit from DEP. So therefore it's got to go through DEP and all their paperwork and all their time consuming stuff to re-permit it. And it may not be re-permitted. A lot of stuff goes in that brush pile that doesn't belong there. Now, Mr. Moderator I'd like to make a motion please.

Moderator: There is a motion on the floor that has been seconded. We are in discussion period right now. Do you want to make an amendment?

Judy Moreau: No.

Moderator: Then the motion on the floor has to be dealt with first.

Roland Caron: I would like to amend the motion to just deal with pulling out of Eagle Lake and get that done.

Judy Moreau: That's what it says.

Otis Nelson: Once they are saying is, once you sever ties with Eagle Lake, the transfer station is no longer permitted. There is no permits for operations at all whatsoever.

So if we pull out of Eagle Lake our umbrella of covering for the transfer station is gone, and we will have to start over.

Judy Moreau: Call for the vote! I'd like to make a motion to vote...

Moderator: Move the motion.

Judy Moreau: I called for the vote.

Moderator: Move the motion is the correct terminology.

Judy Moreau: Let's vote. OK. Now, I would like to make another motion to...

Moderator: You can't. There is a motion on the floor, it has been moved and seconded and we need to vote on it first. And you moved the motion so we are going to vote. Period. That's it.

Judy Moreau: The motion I wanted to make was to vote on this with a paper ballot.

Danny Higgins: Somebody has to second it.

David Pierce: Do you think we need to?

Judy Moreau: Yes, definitely.

Danny Higgins: I'll second it.

Moderator: **It has been moved and seconded that this be a paper ballot vote.** All in favor of a paper ballot: 9 to vote via paper ballot; 11 to vote via hands. **Motion to vote by paper ballots is defeated.** Moderator re-reads the original Article on the floor. **Motion on original Article carries with majority vote, one opposed.**

Motion made and seconded to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 6:57 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Corrine Routhier