

AGENDA
TOWN OF PORTAGE LAKE
Regular Select Board Meeting
January 15, 2025
6:00 P.M.

1. Call Meeting to Order & Attendance
2. Approval of Minutes
December 18, 2024 regular meeting
3. Old Business:
 - a. Contract Proposal with Ashland Ambulance
 - b. Town Assessment: Total Revaluation vs Market Adjustment
 - c. 2024 Town Report Dedication & Cover Photo
4. New Business:
 - a. Town Clerk Resignation—appoint Interim Clerk
 - b. Appoint New Motor Vehicle Agent, Animal Welfare Agent, IF&W Agent
 - c. Appoint Registrar of Voters (2-year appointment)
 - d. Appoint Ballot Clerks for ensuing year
 - e. Appoint Fire Chief for ensuing year
 - f. Abatement Requests Houlton Band of Maliseet —carry over from 2024
 - g. Proposed Uses of State Reimbursements for 2025 Budget
 - h. Municipal Cemetery Fees Increase request
 - i. Municipal Campground Rental fees increase request
 - j. Office Hours Change Request
 - k. Payables Warrants
5. Town Manager's Report
 - a. Our Emergency Mgmt. Dir. Jim McAulay passed away earlier this month. The Board will need to discuss and choose a new EM Director in the near future
 - b. 2025 Budget Draft almost complete, will schedule Budget Committee meeting for first week of February
6. Other Select Board Business
7. Public Comments (as time allows)
8. Adjourn

Next Regular Select Board Meeting: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 @ 6 pm

Upcoming Meetings & Events:

PORTAGE LAKE BOARD OF SELECTPERSONS
Record of Regular Meeting
January 15, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.
Portage Lake Municipal Building Conference Room

Members Present: Michelle Johnson, Bruce Laveway, Rick Lyons.

Members Absent: None.

Others Present: Corrine Routhier, Jodi Page, Kevin Bushey, Sandra Bartlett.

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

Approval of Minutes: Selectboard reviews the minutes from the December 18, 2024, regular meeting.

Motion made by Rick Lyons and seconded by Bruce Laveway to approve the minutes as written.

Motion carries.

OLD BUSINESS

Contract Proposal with Ashland Ambulance: Kevin Bushey, interim Ashland Town Manager, addressed the Selectboard regarding the subsidies we pay and answered their questions. Ashland had a town meeting last night. Their Town Council and Town Manager discussed having some sort of letter or agreement process for the subsidies. Ashland hopes to supply us with the subsidy figures for budget purposes soon.

Town Assessment—Total Revaluation vs. Market Adjustment—Guest Lewis Cousins: Lewis Cousins was unable to attend the meeting. He did provide the Selectboard with an informational letter.

Motion made by Michelle Johnson and seconded by Bruce Laveway to proceed with Lewis's recommendation for a market adjustment. Motion carries.

2024 Town Report Dedication & Cover Photo: The Board reviewed the choices for the cover photo.

Motion made by Bruce Laveway and seconded by Michelle Johnson to go with photo option #4, snowy sunset. Motion carries. The Board discussed options for the Town Report Dedication.

Motion made by Michelle Johnson and seconded by Rick Lyons to dedicate the 2024 Town Report to Bea Cormier. Motion carries.

NEW BUSINESS

Town Clerk Resignation—Appoint Interim Clerk: Motion made by Michelle Johnson and seconded by Bruce Laveway to appoint Corrine Routhier as the interim Town Clerk. Motion carries.

Appoint New Motor Vehicle Agent, Animal Welfare Agent, IF&W Agent: Motion made by Michelle Johnson and seconded by Bruce Laveway to appoint Sue Rogers as the Motor Vehicle Agent, Animal Welfare Agent, IF&W Agent. Motion carries.

Appoint Registrar of Voters (2-year appointment): Motion made by Michelle Johnson and seconded by Rick Lyons to appoint Corrine Routhier as Registrar of Voters. Motion carries.

Appoint Ballot Clerks for ensuing year: Motion made by Rick Lyons and seconded by Michelle Johnson to appoint the list of Ballot Clerks as presented to the Selectboard. They are as follows: Serena Bonville, Jodi Page, Sandy Bartlett, Maggie Pierce, Kim Allen, Joyia Cyr, Carol Gagnon,

Kathrine Gagnon, Jean McPherson, Tracy Snow-Cormier, Nadine Connor, Geraldine Condon, Janice Cyr, Frank Hallett, Pamela Hallett, Kimberly Holmes, Tammy Kenney, Amy Collins, Haleigh Holmes, Calvin Mokler. Motion carries.

Appoint Fire Chief for ensuing year: Motion made by Rick Lyons and seconded by Michelle Johnson to appoint Brian Cote as Fire Chief. Motion carries.

Abatement Requests Houlton Band of Maliseet—carryover from 2024: Motion made by Michelle Johnson and seconded by Rick Lyons to approve the 2 abatement requests for the Houlton Band of Maliseet in the amounts of \$1049.30 and \$503.66. Motion carries.

Proposed Uses of State Reimbursements for 2025 Budget: The Board reviewed the list provided to them by Corrine. The proposed Uses are as follows:

- Veteran Exemption: This year, Corrine proposes appropriating 100% of the annual Veteran Exemption Reimbursement to be saved in a special General Ledger account for new Veteran Memorial Park Panels at the Veteran's Park in the near future.
- Homestead Exemption: Corrine proposes appropriating 20% of Homestead Exemption Reimbursement for the Town Hall Improvements Reserve account. Corrine would also like to move this account out of Key Bank and put it into either County FCU or TD Bank for better interest rates and better options than what Key offers.
- BETE Exemption: Corrine proposes appropriating \$15,000 to the Public Works Equipment Reserve and \$10,000 for the Fire Department Equipment Reserve.
- Tree Growth Reimbursement: Corrine proposes using between 80% to 100% of the Tree Growth Program Reimbursement for the Revaluation Reserve Account. The Board chose to go with using 90% for the Revaluation Reserve Account, with 10% going to Surplus. Corrine would also like to remove this money from Key Bank and put it into another bank that could allow us to earn more interest.

Motion made by Michelle Johnson and seconded by Bruce Laveway to approve all proposed use of State reimbursements for the 2025 budget year. Motion carries.

Municipal Cemetery fees increase request: The Board discussed the proposed fee increase. Corrine proposes changing the Single Plot Sale to \$500, with the same 50/50 split putting half of it into the Perpetual Care fund at Acadia; changing full casket grave opening/closing to \$500; and changing the charges for Cremation opening/closing to \$200. The new rates will be effective May 1st. **Motion made by Rick Lyons and seconded by Michelle Johnson to approve the proposed changes in cemetery fees as presented. Motion carries.**

Municipal Campground rental fees increase request: Corrine proposes increasing the per-night rate to \$25 and monthly rates to \$682 beginning with the 2025 camping season. **Motion made by Bruce Laveway and seconded by Rick Lyons to approve the proposed changes to campground rental fees. Motion carries.**

Office Hours Change Request: Corrine proposes changing office hours to closing at 1 p.m. on Friday and opening earlier on Thursday and Friday, Thursday's hours being 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Friday's hours being 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The consensus was to change the hours, redistributing the 30 hours we are open.

Payables Warrants: The Board reviews the Treasurer's warrants and signs them for approval.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- A. Our Emergency Management Director, Jim McAulay, passed away earlier this month. The Board will need to discuss and choose a new EM Director in the near future.
- B. 2025 Budget Draft almost complete, will schedule Budget Committee meeting for first week of February.

OTHER SELECTBOARD BUSINESS

Michelle addressed the Board regarding a strange letter she and Corrine received in the mail regarding a past taxpayer. She just wanted to warn the Board they may possibly receive a copy of this letter.

Comments from the Public (as time allows):

Next regular Selectboard meeting is Wednesday, February 19, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Regular Selectboard Meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

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: _____

Date

Richard Lyons

Signed: _____

Bruce Laveway

Michelle Johnson, Chairperson

To: Manager Corrine and Portage Selectmen

From: Lewis Cousins, CMA - 4

1/15/25

RE: Market Adjustment / Total Reval

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you my thoughts on what is necessary to bring the assessments in Portage back into the acceptable range to ensure the residents and town receive the full financial benefits of the homestead and reimbursements. I had hoped to be in attendance in person but a meeting that I needed to attend scheduled for the eighth was cancelled and moved to the 15th.

It has been proven that the town's certified ratio has slipped below the 91% level, as found by Me Revenue using the sales prices of properties sold in the past few years. The goal of the town is to bring those assessed value back into the range necessary to ensure equitable assessments across the range of differing properties in town. Waterfront, newer construction, camp, and off lake residences are all appreciating in value at various levels.

The question is whether the town should have a full re-valuation where every property is visited with a new set of cards, pictures, and sketches or a market adjustment using the cards and data currently in place.

For the past few years, I have been involved with the assessments in Portage where we look at every property that has a building permit and pick up the new construction. There have been very few surprises when we visit properties where we find the card data is not accurate. Portage has done a thorough job managing permitting in the town and it does show when we are in the field. In other words, the card data has been well maintained since the last re-valuation and remains quite accurate.

The other major consideration is that this market still has not settled out to a point where values are holding year after year. The increases have slightly moderated but are still above normal rates. Until these increases do in fact moderate a full re-valuation will not hold up over the short term and will need to be re-done in just a few years.

To do a proper market adjustment the same process is used to determine what the proper values need to be as is done for a full re-valuation. Sales are studied and land and building pricing is calculated to match what the market is dictating as current in either case. The only difference is the existing card data remains in use, opposed to re-writing every card with a new photo and sketch.

At this time, it is my opinion that your card data has been maintained to the degree necessary to support a new pricing schedule based on a current sales analysis, which I can do properly.

The other method of factoring every property up five, ten, or fifteen percent is not something I would recommend and a market adjustment as I support is not comparable to that method in any way.

It is my opinion that based on the current card data, current market conditions, and particularly the cost difference, the needs of the town are best suited to the market adjustment properly performed, opposed to a full re-valuation. The result will be nearly identical in either case.

December 20, 2024

Dear Corrine & SelectBoard Members,

I am writing to inform you of my formal resignation as Town Clerk for Portage Lake & Nashville Plantation effective January 15, 2025. It has been a pleasure to serve the communities this last year; I have learned a lot and met some wonderful people along the way.

I am thankful to have had the opportunity to work with you and wish you all the best in the future.

Sincerely,


Kimberly Mapley


All approved
1/15/2025

January 7, 2025

Please appoint the following Election Clerks for the Town of Portage Lake for the 2025 Election Year:

Serena Bonville (U) Jodi Page (U) Sandy Bartlett (U) Maggie Pierce (U) Kim Allen (U)
Joyia Cyr (D) Carol Gagnon (D) Kathrine Gagnon (D) Jean McPherson (D) Tracy Snow-Cormier (D) Nadine Connor (D)
Geraldine Condon (R) Janice Cyr (R) Frank Hallett (R) Pamela Hallett (R) Kimberly Holmes (R) Tammy Kenney (R) Amy Collins (R)
Haleigh Homes (G) Calvin Mokler (G)

Thank you,


Kimberly Mapley
Town Clerk

Proposed Use of State Reimbursements for 2025 budget year

For the last 2 years, the Select Board & Town has approved using some of our state reimbursements for direct use toward some of our municipal budget items and to put into reserves for future use. These proposed uses were voted on and approved at the annual Town Meeting. Using these reimbursements decreased what we needed to raise and appropriate as part our Municipal Budget by over \$32,000. I would like to continue this practice, with some minor changes, for 2025.

Veteran Exemption:

In prior years, we approved using the Veteran Exemption reimbursement to offset the Cemetery Department budget. However, we will need new panels at the Veteran's Park soon, so this year **I propose appropriating 100% of the annual Veteran Exemption Reimbursement to be saved in a special General Ledger account for new Veteran Memorial Panels at the Veteran's Park in the near future.**

Homestead Exemption:

I propose appropriating 20% of Homestead Exemption Reimbursement for the Town Hall Improvements Reserve account. Our building is getting older, and repairs are becoming more expensive. By designating a reserve account, we may have enough to make significant improvements to the municipal building when/if the time comes. In just the last 2 years, we have deposited over \$14,100 into this Reserve account held at Key Bank. As with prior years, the remainder of the Homestead Exemption Reimbursement will close to Surplus at the end of the year. I also would like to move this account out of Key Bank and put it into either County FCU or TD Bank for better interest rates and better options than what Key offers (savings, CD, etc).

BETE Exemption:

I propose appropriating the following amounts from the BETE Reimbursement:
\$15,000 to the Public Works Equipment Reserve
\$10,000 for the Fire Department Equipment Reserve

The Two Equipment Reserve accounts are designated for the purchase of trucks or large mobile equipment (like a backhoe) in the future. Using the BETE Reimbursement in this way does not burden the taxpayers. I've increased the "ask" for Public Works equipment only because we know we'll be looking to purchase a new plow within the next 3 years or so.

Tree Growth Reimbursement:

In the past, we have used a part of the BETE Reimbursement for the Revaluation account. There are two problems with this, one being we don't get that reimbursement until the last 10 days of the budget year, which makes it a slight hardship receipting the money then cutting a check and driving to Key Bank to deposit it, making sure it gets recorded in our budget year. And the amount we typically put in has been rather low. **For 2025, I propose using between 80% to 100% of the Tree Growth Program Reimbursement for the Revaluation Reserve account.** This would more than double the amount put in each year, and would alleviate the urgency at the end of the year and

Proposal to increase Cemetery Fees

Current Cemetery Fees:

Single Plot Sale: \$300 (\$150 stays with operating acct, other \$150 gets deposited into the Perpetual Care fund at Acadia). Single plot size is 5X10.

Charges for full casket grave Opening/closing: \$300

Charges for Cremation Open/Close: \$75

These fees have not been updated for several years, especially the cremation charges, and we have been told by almost all the funeral homes in the area that our rates are the lowest anywhere.

I propose the following changes:

Single Plot Sale: \$500, with the same 50/50 split putting half of it into the Perpetual Care fund at Acadia.

Charges for Opening/Closing full casket graves: \$500

Charges for Cremation Open/Close: \$200

The charges for opening/closing are revenues that offset the Cemetery operating account for preparing the graves for burials and maintaining them afterward.

The Perpetual Care account is a State mandate, and we are only allowed to use the interest revenue from this account to offset our operating account. To date, we haven't garnered enough interest in that account to make it worth the hassle of transferring the money.

Proposal for increased Camping Rates at the Municipal Campground

2025

Selectboard Members:

The Town has 7 sites with electricity at the Municipal campground. Tenting is not allowed according to our permit from the State. Our campsite is open from mid-May to usually the first week of November. There is no dump station, but we do have an outhouse.

Currently the Town charges \$20 per night to stay at the town's Campground, with a 9% lodging tax per Maine Revenue Services, so a total night stay for someone is \$21.80 a night. The Town does offer monthly rates (based on 31 days) at a discounted rate of \$17 per night or \$527/month, with \$47.43 in lodging tax.

I would like to propose increasing the per-night rate to \$25 and monthly rates to \$682 (or \$22/night) beginning with the 2025 camping season. This would be a total of \$27.25 per night with the 9% lodging tax. The last increase in rates was in 2019. With the increased cost in electricity, its time for another increase in rates.

I feel the rate changes aren't going to deter people from using the campsite, but it will definitely help offset the expense budget for the Campground.

I'd like to try this rate out for 2 years, then re-assess and see if another increase is warranted due to potential rising costs.

Thank you,

Corrine Routhier, Manager & Deputy Treasurer

Office Hours Change Request

With the increased use of online services, the office staff have noticed a decline in customers/transactions on Friday afternoons, specifically between 1 and 2 pm.

We would like to eliminate that hour on Friday afternoon, ending our work day at 1 pm, and open a half hour earlier on Thursdays and Fridays so that no available hours are lost. We will still be open 30 hours a week for customers.

Current Hours:

Monday: Closed

Tuesday: 8-4:30

Wednesday: 8-4:30

Thursday: 8-4:30

Friday: 8-2

Proposed Hours:

Monday: Closed

Tuesday: 8-4:30

Wednesday: 8-4:30

Thursday: 7:30-4:30

Friday: 7:30-1

TRANSACTIONS ON FRIDAYS

Month	12:00 pm - 2:00 pm	1:00 pm - 2:00 pm
Jan-24	35.00	16.00
Feb-24	11.00	5.00
Mar-24	8.00	6.00
Apr-24	11.00	7.00
May-24	40.00	27.00
Jun-24	25.00	16.00
Jul-24	71.00	12.00
Aug-24	17.00	15.00
Sep-24	15.00	10.00
Oct-24	8.00	7.00
Nov-24	3.00	0.00
Dec-24	15.00	9.00
	259.00	130.00