

2025 Annual Town Meeting Minutes
Friday March 28, 2025 at 6:30 pm
Portage Lake Town Hall, School St.

AROOSTOOK, s.s.

STATE OF MAINE

The Annual Town Meeting was called to order by Town Clerk Danica Hartman, who affirmed that voting residents were properly notified & warned according to 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 23 resident voters and 2 non-voters present.

ART. 1 It was moved and seconded to nominate Serena Bonville as Moderator for the election portion of the bifurcated Town Meeting on March 27, 2025. She is unable to resume her Moderator duties tonight, so she has appointed Jordan Beaulier from Ashland to assume the duties of Deputy Moderator and to preside over 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):
Michelle Johnson was elected Select Board member for a term of three (3) years with 26 votes.
Trena Soucy was elected School Board member for a term of three (3) years with 17 write-in 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 carries.

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, 2026 to the annual March Town Meeting. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 5 It was moved and seconded to authorize the Select Board to accept on behalf of the Town any gifts, donations, grants and all State funding or reimbursements, and exercise such authority as needed to implement grants. No discussion. Motion carries.

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 7.5% on unpaid taxes 60 days after the date of tax commitment, per 36 MRSA sec 505.4. No discussion. Motion carries.

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. No discussion. Motion carries.

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 carries.

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 carries.

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 carries.

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 carries.

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 account for future use. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 13 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$70,000 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 carries.

ART. 14 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$55,000 from anticipated revenue sources for the purpose of reducing the 2025 tax commitment. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 15 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$25,000 from the 2025 Business Equipment Tax Exemption (BETE) Reimbursement from the State for the following reserve accounts:

Portage Lake Fire Department Reserve Account	\$10,000
Public Works Equipment Reserve Account	\$15,000

No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 16 It was moved and seconded to appropriate 20% of the Homestead Exemption Reimbursement received from the State in 2025 for the Town Hall Improvement Reserve savings account. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 17 It was moved and seconded to appropriate 100% of the Veteran's Exemption Reimbursement from the State for a Veteran's Memorial Maintenance Fund. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 18 It was moved and seconded to appropriate 90% of the Tree Growth Program Reimbursement received from the State in 2025 for the Revaluation Reserve savings account.

Discussion:

Brian Cote: Ah, where's the other 10% go?

Corrine Routhier: Surplus.

Motion carries.

ART. 19 It was moved and seconded raise and appropriate \$1,000 for the Scholarships account for scholarships to Portage Lake students graduating in June of 2025 who apply and qualify.

Discussion:

Brian Cote: How many kids are there applying for that?

Corrine Routhier: Uh, we have 3 potential but we already have \$2,000 in that account so this is just to bring it up to the \$3,000 that we are going to need.

Motion carries.

ART. 20 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$8,310, in addition to \$7,540 carried forward and appropriate \$25,000 from Stumpage for a total budget of \$40,850 for the General Administration operating account, and to allow any other revenues, reimbursements, and fees to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 21 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$100,800 in addition to \$4,000 carried forward for a total budget of \$104,800 for Office Staff payroll and to allow any clerk fees, reimbursements, or other revenues to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 22 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$8,870 in addition to \$460 carried forward for a total budget of \$9,330 for Assessing of Real & Personal Property and Registry of Deeds fees, and to allow any fees from lien costs or other revenues to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 23 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$19,740 in addition to \$3,360 carried forward for a total budget of \$23,100 for Municipal Building operating expenses and to allow the

rental fees, reimbursements, and donations to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carries.

- ART. 24 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$615 in addition to \$485 carried forward for a total budget of \$1,100 for the Planning & Appeals Boards. No discussion. Motion carries.
- ART. 25 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$9,200 in addition to \$12,900 carried forward for a total budget of \$22,100 for Code Enforcement activities, and to allow permit fees, fines, and any other reimbursements to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carries.
- ART. 26 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$16,350 from BETE reimbursement for Discounts on taxes paid within thirty (30) days of the mailing date of tax bills. No discussion. Motion carries.
- ART. 27 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$2,000 from Overlay to cover Abatements approved in the budget year. No discussion. Motion carries.
- ART. 28 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$2,430 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. No discussion. Motion carries.
- ART. 29 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$94,300 for the Insurances & Benefits account, and to allow any reimbursements and dividends to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carries.
- ART. 30 It was moved and seconded to carry forward \$4,670 for the General Assistance account and to allow any reimbursements to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carries.
- ART. 31 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$31,350 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 carries.
- ART. 32 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$1,910 in addition to \$815 carried forward for a total budget of \$2,725 for the Animal Control operating account, and to allow any dog license fees and fines to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carries.
- ART. 33 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$2,650 in addition to \$1,200 carried forward for a total budget of \$3,850 for Contracted Services for grader work, excavator work and miscellaneous expenses related to this account. No discussion. Motion carries.
- ART. 34 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$53,625 in addition to \$20,275 carried forward and to appropriate \$25,000 from Motor Vehicle Excise tax revenues for a total budget of \$98,900 for the Public Works operating account, and to allow any revenues or reimbursements to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carries.
- ART. 35 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$78,020 for Aroostook Valley Solid Waste Disposal District (Ashland Transfer Station).

Discussion:

Arthur Routhier: What was the increase from last year? Or was there one?

Michelle Johnson: There was one. I don't remember the exact amount, but there was one.

Corrine Routhier: It was 3%. Like a 3.8% increase over last year.

Michelle Johnson: And remember last year, halfway through the year we had to pay the lump sum because of their bookkeeping errors?

Arthur Routhier: Yeah, that's why I was just curious.

Corrine Routhier: There is a letter in the front of the book from them for this year that talks about their operating budget. Page 22.

Motion carries.

- ART. 36 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$245 in addition to \$955 carried forward for a total budget of \$1,200 for expenses related to the Portage Lake Transfer Station, including the annual reporting and licensing fees and maintenance of the old dump site.

Discussion:

Brian Cote: Do we get rental money...?

Michelle Johnson: Yes.

Brian Cote: Then why do we have to appropriate money from the town?

Michelle Johnson: We don't have enough.

Corrine Routhier: Because it's only like 50 bucks a month.

Brian Cote: Oh. Ok.

Michelle Johnson: Arthur, it was 3 grand, too. It was 3 grand.

Motion carries.

ART. 37 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$1,780 in addition to \$1,470 carried forward for a total budget of \$3,250 for the maintenance of the Portage Lake Municipal Cemetery, and to allow revenue from lot sales, burial fees, and donations to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 38 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$980 in addition to \$420 carried forward for a total budget of \$1,400 for the Beautification department, and to allow any donations to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 39 It was moved and seconded to carry forward \$1,198 for the Portage Lake Recreation Department and to allow any revenues and donations to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 40 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$13,640 in addition to \$2,010 carried forward for a total budget of \$15,650 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. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 41 It was moved and seconded to carry forward \$3,950 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 carries.

ART. 42 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$7,680 for Street Lights.

Discussion:

Brian Cote: Is this an annual fee? \$7,680? Is that what we pay for our street lights.

Corrine Routhier: Yes. It will be this year because they are raising rates again.

Michelle Johnson: It's not like a fee; it's our electric bill.

Brian Cote: Yup. That's for the year.

Corrine Routhier: Unless they raise them again without telling us.

Motion carries.

ART. 43 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. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 44 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$61,854 for user fees & subsidy to the Town of Ashland for Ambulance services.

Discussion:

Sandra Bartlett: I hate to speak in front of more than 2 people at a time. I've done some research on this. I think Ashland subsidies are way too high. We pay exactly what each citizen pays in Ashland. We are paying for Ashland assets and we have no say on how they are operated or maintained. So, I took, this, the library. Oh. We're not on the library?

Collectively: No.

Sandra Bartlett: Sorry!

Motion carries.

ART. 45 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$20,848 for user fees & subsidy to the Town of Ashland for the use of their Public Library.

Discussion:

Kathryn Hoppe: Go for it, Sandy!

Sandra Bartlett: So, the first thing I did was I called other towns that have libraries to see how they handled outlying towns. They charge user fees. And the largest user fee was Presque Isle, and they charge \$55 for a family at \$45 for single. Some towns didn't even charge non-residents. That was Washburn...

Michelle Johnson: Fort Fairfield, Easton.

Sandra Bartlett: Yes. And so, that was one thing. And, I called our library to see. They had been told, apparently, to keep track this past year of how many users. There were 55 library cards. So, if you take \$55 times 55, that's \$3,000, as opposed to \$21,000. And, so, they... In my mind there are three things they should be doing. They have three options. They could charge a user fee. Or they could, hang on, I've got find it here... I'm all over the place.

Michael Violette: So, you are saying we are 55 users from Portage?

Sandra Bartlett: Yes. And please ask anything, because that's the only way I'm going to get it out, apparently. But, OK.

Bruce Laveway: So, you have a detailed list here of where it's gone up since 2019. I don't know if that's relevant. (reads from a paper) In 2019, it was \$1,860. Sandy put this together. And now we are up to \$20,848.

Sandra Bartlett: But in 2020 they changed the formula, they went per capita. But in 2020, it was only \$8,785.

Michelle Johnson: In five years, the budget had doubled. Or the subsidy.

Michael Violette: At the time, Ashland had been moving money around to different accounts. And so now they have said specifically they are not moving this money into other accounts.

Michelle Johnson: Correct, Mike. That was determined last year.

Bruce Laveway: But we don't know that. Their town book is the same way it was last year. The revenues are on the end.... we can't really.... We need the audit.

Sandra Bartlett: They could have a change of formula so it's more fair, like Ashland pays 75% and the surrounding towns pay 25% or whatever. Or, if they want to do it this way, I think they need to form a Subsidy Board, Committee... whatever you want to call it. With representation from surrounding towns that have a say in how those programs are run and maintained with an equal vote.

Rick Lyons: Ok. Are you advocating we have an amendment for the motion? What are you advocating? What's your thinking?

Sandra Bartlett: I'm thinking either we vote it down... because for one thing, we have a library. And we are... Portage is eligible for Books by Mail through the Maine State Library as well. And, I mean, that's an endless number of titles. Or we do like Masardis did last year. Let's say they were asking them for \$10,000 and they said "well, we'll give you \$5,000", and that's what they did.

Rick Lyons: Well then take us to your calculations of \$3,000. Are you saying \$3,000 is not enough?

Sandra Bartlett: Uh, I don't know, and I wouldn't say. But I'm just saying \$21,000 and the rate it's going up every year. And that we are paying the same as Ashland we shouldn't be. It's not an asset to us.

Rich Hoppe: Could you go back? You started by saying there's three things we could pay a user fee...

Sandra Bartlett: User fee. Ashland could change the formula so it's more fair. They could pick 75%--I'm just throwing that out there--of the total and then charge or split the rest of the 25% with the surrounding towns. Or they could have a subsidy committee with representation.

Michelle Johnson: Rich, none of those options are things that Ashland has pitched. These are just ideas of Sandy's.

Sandra Bartlett: Right, right.

Arthur Routhier: Are there any other municipalities like Ashland that frames it up the same way to their outlying towns?

Sandra Bartlett: They all have user fees.

Arthur Routhier: So, Ashland's the outlier giving a lump sum...

Michelle Johnson: In the same area.

Arthur Routhier: So, a person in Ashland—which has a population of 3 times of Portage?

Michelle Johnson: About 4.

Arthur Routhier: So, 4 times. We are actually paying more per capita by 75%.

Sandra Bartlett: No.

Arthur Routhier: Yes, if it's per capita. Because a person in Ashland will only be paying \$50 compared to our \$115. How can that be justified?

Michelle Johnson: No, Arthur. No. They pay... it's the same rate. So, they take our population, their population, Garfield, Masardis, add it all together. So, maybe 5,000 and they divide that by their total budget and they come up with their "per person".

Arthur Routhier: So, what does Ashland pay? Do they pay the \$20,000, or...

Sandra Bartlett: No, they pay more. It's the same per person.

Arthur Routhier: Oh, Ok. I misunderstood.

Bruce Laveway: I think if I'm understanding Sandy correctly, they have a.... Their library is an asset, so that's actually... We shouldn't be paying the same amount per capita because they have that asset there in Ashland. You know? That building is theirs. That's a value to that town.

Arthur Routhier: And no value to us.

Sandra Bartlett: And from what I've seen in the past, their line items under these... like under the Rec Center there is the mowing of the cemetery. Would we allow that if we represented on that board? Would be run it that way? Would we approve that? You just have to say...

Michelle Johnson: It's because Lendell gets paid to mow for the town.

Sandra Bartlett: Yes, but...

Michelle Johnson: I see what you're saying.

Moderator reminds the voters what their options are with this Article.

Corrine Routhier: They can amend it lower. But you'd have to know what figure you'd want.

Sandra Bartlett: And, also, since I called... they say there's 55 cards, but they couldn't tell me who they were. They couldn't give me any names, any last names, nothing. So, I don't know, we don't know, if somebody might have passed away, somebody might have moved.

Arthur Routhier: Or how active they are.

Sandra Bartlett: Right. I haven't been there in a year and half. And I know...

Michelle Johnson: Well, card holders are anyone who's a taxpayer, too. It's not just voting residents. Keep that in mind.

Leslie Laveway: What happens if they are a taxpayer in Ashland and Portage?

Michelle Johnson: Well then, I would hope... Unfortunately those people are paying twice.

Leslie Laveway: Right, but you said a card holder...

Michelle Johnson: Right. But I'm thinking of like a summer resident. So, like, Jim and Leslie Michael. They might have library cards, but they are not voting residents. They don't live here; they don't vote here. They vote in California. But, Teri-Lyn and Chuck; they pay taxes in two places but if you called, Teri-Lyn's card would probably be listed as Ashland because she's a voter there. I don't know why this matters, but I just thought I'd....

Sandra Bartlett: There are four card holders from Castle Hill.

Michelle Johnson: And what do they pay?

Sandra Bartlett: Nothing.

Michael Violette: So, if I do the math, here. Portage probably represents 1/5 of the population, let's say, with Masardis and outlying... So, 1/5 times \$20,000 equals \$100,000. I remember last year, the library and ambulance and rec department, our total bill was around \$130,000. Everything was combined.

Bruce Laveway: Last year it was split up.

Michael Violette: Oh, maybe the year before.

Bruce Laveway: So, you can add it up right here.

Michelle Johnson: The total that we are paying for all three entities is \$101,799. Is that what you just asked? For this year. Last year it was \$72,000 according to Sandy's spreadsheet. Sandy, did you get those numbers from the town book?

Sandra Bartlett: Yes.

Michael Violette: What I'm getting as is, \$100,000 sounds like a lot for a library.

Michelle Johnson: Oh, I'm sorry Mike. \$100,000 is our total subsidy payment.

Michael Violette: Yeah, but we're paying \$20,000 for just the library. And I think we represent maybe 1/5 or 1/4 of the population, so multiple that by... \$100,000 for running a library... We run this whole town hall with all of its employees for \$98,000, I think? It doesn't make sense to me.

Sandra Bartlett: Our total subsidy in 2021 was \$55,000. In 2025 it's \$107,000. I really think it's going to get better, maybe with the new town manager. Some of this stuff is going to be worked out. But we are dealing with this year. And I think we need to make a statement.

Rick Lyons: So, that's some optimism, but we need to vote on an amount tonight or either defeat the bill. So, thinking out loud with you, you indicated at \$55 it was roughly \$3,000. What if we doubled that and supported it for \$6,000.

Michael Violette: That'd be fine.

Bruce Laveway: So, we are giving them double of the most expensive, which was Presque Isle?

Rick Lyons: Right.

Michelle Johnson: What's our justification, other than we feel they are charging us too much? I've got to say this, and I'm trying to be... We have fought with Ashland since I've been on the Board about how they've "had us over

a barrel,” and I don’t disagree with that. I don’t disagree that those amounts are too much. But I feel like if we amend the Warrant and say we are only willing to pay you \$6,000, then I feel we are putting them over a barrel, and I’m not sure that’s the stance we want to have. I know last year I sat here and said Ashland’s being unethical with our money, and I still have that stance, but I also don’t want them to think that we’re being unethical.

Sandra Bartlett: We’re not. That’s not...

Michelle Johnson: I want to make sure we are OK with whatever stance we are making.

Rich Hoppe: Michelle, 55 cards. And what we are paying. And look at what the library charges in all of these other places. That’s not unethical at all.

Michelle Johnson: I just want to make sure we are Ok with whatever decision we’re making.

Corrine Routhier: So, Michelle. I took their numbers from their book, just like I did last year. Their total subsidies they took in last year were \$38,576. And if you subtract their revenues from their expenses—or vice versa—they end up with a surplus in that account of \$38,999. So, they don’t even need the subsidies. They budget enough money to cover their expenses, mostly.

Barry Kenney: And that doesn’t...they’re overlay doesn’t get rolled back into the budget.

Corrine Routhier: Because of the way they put their budget numbers into their system, they put their revenue budget to equal what they are getting so it looks like they are zeroing out. It looks like they don’t have any money going to surplus.

Arthur Routhier: I guess what I would suggest is vote it down and explain to them what Sandy came up with and see what they come back to us with. Maybe they will open their eyes and say “The Town of Portage is right.” I mean Presque Isle at 55 bucks per person is more than reasonable for what they offer. That library really doesn’t have much to offer. Twenty-year-old magazines on the rack. I mean, we’d be better off as a town putting aside \$10,000, if someone wanted a book we’ll get it for you. Have the Maine State Library get it within a day. We’ll buy it from Books.com, or wherever.

Brian Cote: Do we have to make the amendment tonight?

Michelle Johnson: If you are going to amend it, yes.

Moderator explains the voters’ options with this Article at this time.

Michelle Johnson: Last year, we voted it down. And then, remember we had a special town meeting I think in July or June after we had met with them and come up with some stipulations. And then we chose to raise and appropriate the funds.

Rick Lyons: A procedural question: If we vote it down, negatively, and then we negotiate a new fee as some are suggesting, we have to have a special town meeting to approve that fee, correct?

Michelle Johnson: Correct.

Michael Violette: Which is kind of what we did last year.

Bruce Laveway: In my opinion, they did not meet the stipulations that we put forth because we asked them to lay it out in the book correctly and it’s the same way as the year before.

Corrine Routhier: We also asked them for a budget, like for the next year’s budget so we could see where they got their numbers from, and we didn’t get that either.

Leslie Rafford: To go with what Sandy said, they have an asset. We shouldn’t pay equal. They have a building, they have all that there, we don’t get anything from that if they were to sell it all off. We shouldn’t be paying the same as them.

Michelle Johnson: It makes property values in their town higher because they have that entity.

Brian Cote: So, \$20,000 (unintelligible on recording)

Michelle Johnson: No, its supposed to go to the library.

Barry Kenney: But at the end of the year, if it doesn’t get used, it goes into their surplus.

Corrine Routhier: This year we were told that they were going to put it into actual department funds, but it’s not spelled out or included in their town book so we don’t have any proof that it happened.

Michael Bartlett: The town of Ashland plans this summer on building a gazebo in addition to their library.

Corrine Routhier: At the library?

Michael Bartlett: Yes. For the use of library patrons and kids. So, they plan on building an addition this summer.

Michelle Johnson: I believe that’s through a grant.

Michael Bartlett: Possibly.

Michelle Johnson: I think that’s through a grant. I don’t know...

Michael Bartlett: Would that be a grant from Portage? (audience laughter)

Motion denied, Article 45 does not carry.

ART. 46 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$19,098 for user fees & subsidy to the Town of Ashland for the use of their Recreation building and activities.

Discussion:

Brian Cote: Do we have the same issue with this that we do with the library?

Leslie Rafford: It's the same situation. Again, we don't have assets, a building or...

Arthur Routhier: And there's no line item for this money, where it goes, how it's spent.

Corrine Routhier: Only after...they gave us a line item after...what they had spent in '24 but they didn't give us what they are spending it on in '25. So, this amount that we've got here, we don't know exactly what that's for.

Arthur Routhier: So, did their account have a carry-over from last year as well?

Corrine Routhier: I think there was \$1,200 into a general fund reserve account, or something like that.

Arthur Routhier: So again, there was money wasn't carried over but went to general fund.

Corrine Routhier: No, it's...it's a general ledger account, not general fund. It's set aside in a designated account for recreation.

Arthur Routhier: So, it didn't go to general funds?

Corrine Routhier: No. But again, if you take their revenues to expenses that they listed in their town report, they had about \$36,800 remaining from that rec department. Like I said, the way they put their budget in their system, they make their revenues zero out, so it looks like there's only \$2,000 left over from their...They're not accounting for their revenues against their expenses.

Michelle Johnson: So, they brought in, in subsidies for the Rec Department, \$34,302? And they spent \$88,000.

Corrine Routhier: And they budgeted \$89,000. They had a budget of \$89,000 from their raised and appropriated from taxes. And if you add that against...with the subsidies, and they had other income, it must have been rentals or something...\$125,000 is what they had for revenues for...

Michelle Johnson: They raised and appropriated \$89,000?

Corrine Routhier: That's their budget for their expense...So, like how we raise and appropriate for our General Admin account. They raised that much money to cover their expenses, but then they ask all the towns for a subsidy.

Michelle Johnson: Right. They raise and appropriate this whole amount.

Michael Violette: I think the towns should look at it as a rental agreement. What we pay for should be just usage fees because we don't, um, we're not investing in that property—that's not our property. You know, if they ever turn around and sell it any overages that are raise are re-distributed to the rest of the town. We don't participate in any of that. So, if we look at it as just a user fee, that's how, technically, I think the town should look at it. Any capital improvements they make, for example, doesn't include us in any way. But we pay for them.

Corrine Routhier: They have asked us in the past, like when they put the extension on, each town gave them \$5,000 toward that.

Michael Violette: Right, and then they turn around and sell it....

Corrine Routhier: Maybe we'll get our \$5,000 back?

Barry Kenney: Well, tonight we are concentrating on the building. But this is activities as well.

Corrine Routhier: Right, but like he said—if we paid them what we felt were user fees, then that covers activities. You know. We've been through this for...

Herb McPherson: How to you figure user fees for like all the school activities that they do through the Rec.? We don't have any way of keeping track of that. Plus, everything else that goes on at the Rec. In my opinion, this is nothing compared to the library. I mean, this is not just for our kids.

Michelle Johnson: Herb, are you saying that there's a lot more that goes on at the Rec? Is that what I'm hearing you say?

Herb McPherson: Than the Library, in my opinion. That's a worthy cause.

Michelle Johnson: Well, not to backtrack, but the library does have activities. Like for example, Wednesday after school they have reading club. So, you take your little kids there and they get read to. So, like, we went Wednesday afternoon for an hour and Gloria got read to by a big kid. Um, they have book clubs now once a month that you read the book and you attend. They have tea on Wednesday mornings. I'm just saying there are other activities outside of checking out books that people at the library might go to. So, it's kind of a similar idea. Like people might do more than just...

Corrine Routhier: But for three days a week. They are only open for three days.

Herb McPherson: For all around, this is a lesser amount than what the library is asking.

Michelle Johnson: And we're doing more there.

Herb McPherson: This is... we get more for what we pay than for the library, so I don't...

Kathy Hoppe: So, the accounting for both the Library and the Rec Center are the done the same. So, it's still a mystery. There's still an accounting issue, even if we like the Rec Center. So, we really want Ashland to change their accounting.

Corrine Routhier: I think they're getting there. They, you know, they had a change of administration half way or almost a third through the year. So, I think they are getting there. It's just there are little things that we need to tweak. You know. If we are going to give them money, we want to make sure we are getting what we are asking for.

Kathy Hoppe: And would you say the reason they are "getting there" is because the towns pushed back?

Michelle Johnson: Part of it.

Corrine Routhier: Part of it. Part of it is they have a new town manager, you know, new select board members are going in there. They've got people, you know, who will probably stay on top of it a little better. And maybe rearrange things so that it makes more sense to them and to us, so we won't be asking questions like this every year.

Barry Kenney: So, either way, we're going to have a special town meeting. You're going to have a meeting on the library issue. So, if we push back a little on the Rec Department...I'm not opposed to the Rec Department, but if we want to see a little more accountability, we are going to be here for a special town meeting and we can approve it at that time, correct? It would force their hand a little bit more to sharpen their pencil and show us where the money's spent.

Kathy Hoppe: That's a good point.

Motion denied, Article 46 does not carry.

ART. 47 Motion made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$3,311 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	\$577.50
Catholic Charities of Maine	\$100
Homeless Services of Aroostook	\$718
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

No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 48 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$1,000 from anticipated boat excise tax revenue for the Portage Lake Association for the Town's share of matching funds for a grant to aid in the identification and education of invasive aquatic plants in, or on, Portage Lake. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 49 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$2,500 from Homestead Exemption Reimbursement for the Portage Lake Historical Society (pursuant to Title 30A, Ch 223, Sub Ch. 4, §5726(6)).

Discussion:

Barry Kenney: I would just like to say, if nobody has been to the Historical Society they really should. They've done an excellent job there, and its money well spent.

Motion carries.

ART. 50 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$2,500 from Homestead Exemption Reimbursement for the Portage Lake Snowmobile Club for aiding in the maintenance of public-use local snowmobile trails, and to pay 100% of the snowmobile registration fees reimbursement from the State in 2025 to the Portage Lake Snowmobile Club.

Discussion:

Michael Violette: I would just like to say that they've done a wonderful job at the Snowmobile Club and their work is well appreciated.

Susan Rogers: I just want to say, I've been doing the grants for the Snowmobile Club for almost 30 years now, and this year we invested in trail counters to see how much traffic comes to town. I would love everybody to take a crazy guess, and I'm just going to tell you if you're wrong because we are going to disclose the information at our meeting next Friday at our Groomer Shed—and anybody is welcome to come join. But would anybody like to take a guess? In a six-week season...

Barry Kenney: I know the answer!

Susan Rogers: You hush! In a six-week season, how many people passed through our town.

(multiple guesses said aloud)

Susan Rogers: Let's put it this way—higher than 13,000 by a decent amount, and we had a very short season with marginal snow.

Barry Kenney: That's just in our town.

Susan Rogers: That's just our trail system. So, I know the past two seasons we haven't had a lot of snow, but three seasons ago...I mean, because we've always snowmobiled up here. It was crazy. I bet we probably had three to four times the traffic we had this year alone.

Michelle Johnson: Money well spent.

Susan Rogers: So, it is. Absolutely. Anyway, I just wanted to point that out.

Motion carries.

ART. 51 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$2,500 from Homestead Exemption Reimbursement for the Portage Lakers ATV Club for aiding in the maintenance of public-use local ATV trails.

Discussion:

Brian Cote: Sue, are you keeping track of this one?

(laughter from attendees)

Susan Rogers: No, but they're trying to con me into it! I keep telling them I'm semi-retired, I'm not doing it.

Barry Kenney: I would say, their first meeting is tomorrow night, so show up.

Corrine Routhier: Next week.

Motion carries.

ART. 52 It was moved and seconded to allow expenditures from the Summer Round-Up account and Fireworks Fund 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 this purpose).

Discussion:

Brian Cote: If we put money in from taxes, do we get a better display?

(laughter from attendees)

Michelle Johnson: Well, if we voted to raise and appropriate tax money, yeah.

Brian Cote: Yeah, I mean you do \$2,500 for the ATV Club....

Corrine Routhier: The fireworks fund is...Fireworks are going to cost about \$5,000 this year for the same size snow that we had last year. Which was 11 minutes long.

Kathy Hoppe: How much was last year?

Corrine Routhier: \$4,000.

Brian Cote: I was attending a show in the '70's...

Michelle Johnson: Well, that was the '70's.

Corrine Routhier: 50 years ago.

Brian Cote: The show was an hour long.

Corrine Routhier: Well, we're not going to do that.

Barry Kenney: Brian, if it was in the 1900s it don't count.

(laughter from attendees)

Motion carries.

ART. 53 It was moved and seconded to appropriate 20% of the Ministerial School Lot reserve balance as of December 31, 2024, to help pay for the 2025-2026 School Commitment, pursuant to MRS 13, §3167.

Discussion:

Arthur Routhier: What's 20% of the balance?

Corrine Routhier: It is about \$13,000.

ART. 54 It was moved and seconded to appropriate up to \$2,800 from Public Works Equipment Reserve to purchase a smaller bucket for the backhoe for use at the Municipal Cemetery. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 55 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$14,000 from the Revaluation Reserve account to complete a market adjustment on property assessments in the coming year. No discussion. Motion carries.

At this time Trena Soucy and Michelle Johnson are brought forth to take their oaths for School Board and Select Board, respectively.

Meeting adjourned at 7:31 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Corrine Routhier