

Town of Portage Lake
Annual Town Meeting
Thursday September 2, 2010

AROOSTOOK: ss

STATE OF MAINE

There were 49 Resident voters, 9 non-resident voters, three Selectmen, the Town Clerk and the Town manager present.

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. on Thursday, September 2, 2010, then and there to act on the following articles to wit:

Art. 1 To elect a moderator to preside at said meeting.

Greg Cyr is nominated to be moderator of said meeting.

Motion made and seconded to cease nominations. All in favor, motion carries.

Two ballots are cast for Greg Cyr, who is now elected moderator of said meeting. He is sworn in as moderator by Town Clerk Kathy Gagnon.

Then and there the floor was open to the public for the purpose of voting on remaining articles:

Art. 2 To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Selectboard to appoint all necessary officers, not elected by ballot, for the ensuing year.

Motion made in the affirmative, seconded.

Discussion: None.

Motion carries.

Art. 3 To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Selectboard to spend an amount not to exceed the equivalent of three months' worth of the budgeted amount in each budget category of the Town of Portage Lake's half-year budget during the period from January 1, 2011 to the annual 2011 Town Meeting.

Selectboard Recommends

Yes

Motion made in the affirmative, seconded.

Discussion: None

Motion carries.

Art. 4 To see if the town will authorize the Selectboard to accept gifts, donations, and grants on behalf of the Town, should such items become available.

Selectboard recommends

Yes

Motion made in the affirmative, seconded.

Discussion: None

Motion carries.

Art. 5 To see if the Town will vote to allow a 2% discount on taxes paid within 30 days of the mailing date and set an interest rate of 7% on unpaid taxes after November 26, 2010.

Selectboard recommends

Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Amy Collins: November 26. When are we getting our tax bill?

Francis Grey: Mid-September, that's a good estimate.

Greg Cyr: The best calculation at this point is mid-September.

Alice Higgins: Is this for 6 months or a full year?

Greg Cyr: Six months.

Amy Collins: When is the next tax year due?

Francis Grey: Annual town meeting in March, and tax bills sent out immediately after that, so late March or early April. Does that sound right?

Barb Pitcairn: I have a question about the fact that we are voting on two things here, the 2% discount and the 7% unpaid interest. Whether you agree with the two percent, or if you disagree with it...

Greg Cyr: On this one, if you want to make an amendment, amendments are allowed on either one.

Barb Pitcairn: Do we have to vote on it first?

Greg Cyr: If you want to discuss the way it is now, and have a point to make about a different number why don't we discuss that? And then if you think you want to make the motion to amend it, then I will allow the motion.

Barb Pitcairn: This should be two different articles.

Greg Cyr: Either way, you can handle it as one, it could be two next time.

Francis Grey: This follows exactly the same format as the article you did last year, the corresponding article was Article number 11 last year that had a combined article with a 2% discount and an 8% interest rate on unpaid taxes.

Barb Pitcairn: Circumstances have changed, the economy has changed. Why are we giving a 2% discount, especially when Maine Woods gets 2% and we give them half of their money back? Maybe we should be taking that 2% away, and making more money. We don't need to be giving them 14 or 15 thousand dollars a year on a 2% discount.

Greg Cyr: Do we have any more questions on the timing of tax bills?

Alice Higgins: The tax bill in March, is that for 6 months or one year?

Francis Grey: One year.

Alice Higgins: See, we are paying an extra six months. And this is what we have been doing all along, every time it has changed we are paying an extra six months. I paid two years taxes in one year. I don't think it is right.

Francis Grey: This was decided last year at your town meeting in this warrant article, and apparently it was found to be very difficult to try to do an 18 month fiscal year for it to change back.

Alice Higgins: Why are we paying an extra six months?

Francis Grey: I don't know what the rationale was at the time, but this is what you decided at last year's town meeting, article number 53: "To see if the town will vote to change the operating year back to a calendar year for the year 2011" and the article passed.

Amy Collins: We understand, but why are we paying for an extra six months? We should be six months free. We shouldn't be having a bill come out from July to December because we already paid 2010.

Francis Grey: You have to either continue on the same fiscal year, or you have to do an 18 month fiscal period, or you have to do a six month. And if you change your fiscal year to end...To end a calendar year from January 1st to December 31st and right now you are on a fiscal year that goes from July 1 to June 30, how do you propose we get there?

Amy Collins: You guys must have extra money in the budget from the taxes we have already paid.

Danny Higgins: I'll tell you how I propose to get there, do it from December 31st...

Ray Cyr: What you have paid was the year 2009 to 2010 that ended June 30th of this year. The budget we are doing now is from July 1 to Dec 31.

Alice Higgins: What will be the next one?

Ray Cyr: It will be for next year.

Francis Grey: A calendar year, January 1 to December 31.

Alice Higgins: In March?

Ray Cyr: It will be 2011, from January 1 to December 31.

Celia Beaulier: We already paid a year and a half taxes in one year. Why should we be paying six months again now when that half year is already paid? To me you are gaining a whole year's taxes if you do it that way, if you give us a six month bill and put another year on top of it.

Ray Cyr: The budget here ended June 30, the new year 2010 starts July 1 and goes to December 31st. That is what this six month budget is for. 2011 starts January 1 to December 31, that is what the March town meeting will be about and that is the budget you are voting on, the 2011 budget.

Amy Collins: So our next tax bill will be when, the following March?

Ray Cyr: The following March, that is why we are going to March so people won't be getting a tax bill before Christmas.

Celia Beaulier: Will we be getting a six month bill soon? We have already paid a year, that will be a year and a half this year. We have already paid a year and a half before, why should we pay? We need to go back the other way.

Kathy Gagnon: The last tax bill you received ended June 30 of 2010.

Celia Beaulier: It doesn't matter what the dates are, it is what comes out of our pocket books. A year and a half in a year two times is too much.

Greg Cyr: The tax bill you are going to receive in two weeks is a six month tax bill.

Barb Pitcairn: That was wrong.

Greg Cyr: I did *not* do that wrong, young lady, and don't you dare accuse me of anything like that. I know how these things are run. When I am saying "amendment" and "discussion", you need to be talking about it. You were given an opportunity to discuss the \$20,000.

Barb Pitcairn: We voted down the amendment!

Greg Cyr: Yes you did.

Barb Pitcairn: You ask for more discussion now.

Greg Cyr: You voted down the amendment. Your amendment was for \$20,000, you just voted it down!

Francis Grey: Do you want to make a new amendment?

Greg Cyr: Further discussion on the Motion on the floor.

Amy Collins: Can I make an amendment? I'm making a motion for the amendment to be for \$20,000 and used only for emergencies.

Motion to amend seconded.

Discussion on amendment:

Unidentified: Can you define what you consider an emergency?

Greg Cyr: Anything that is not an overdraft of a standard account, evidently, because that is what the other expenditures were last year.

Francis Grey: Is it something that has to do with a threat to life, safety or health? Is that an emergency?

Amy Collins: Yes.

Francis Grey: So what would be considered an emergency?

Amy Collins: If you guys were to get sick, if we have a forest fire, if the fire hydrant blows up.

Francis Grey: Is it a financial emergency, or the thing you are paying for has to be an emergency?

Amy Collins: The thing that you are paying for would have to be an emergency. Something you won't have time for a town meeting for. Like a forest fire.

Ray Cyr: The only thing I want you to keep in mind, on special town meetings we don't get this kind of attendance. That's why I try to hold town meetings down. Here is where we ought to be making those decisions while we have everybody here, a good representation. Special town meetings, not so good.

Judy Moreau: We had a good turn out for the backhoe.

Greg Cyr: Is there any further discussion on the amendment?

Lou Sandy Boutot: Let's say there is a fire, and \$20,000 would not cover it the way things are dry out there, the money can come from overlay without having a special town meeting?

Francis Grey: No, not if it's not appropriated. You can't spend it if it isn't appropriated at a town meeting.

Lou Sandy Boutot: How long does it take to put a special town meeting together?

Greg Cyr: Two weeks.

Judy Moreau: An emergency town meeting can be held in 24 hours if it is posted and it is on the radio, television...

Francis Grey: No, that is incorrect. The warrant has to be posted for 7 days to have a legal town meeting and appropriate money.

Judy Moreau: Not if it is an emergency.

Francis Grey: The special town meeting is subject to the same rules.

Greg Cyr: This is not relevant to the amendment on the floor.

Barb Pitcairn: Even if there is an emergency, people will come to our aid, we don't have to pay them the next day.

Amy Collins: If we did have a forest fire and it did come over \$37,500, we are going to be in the same boat anyway.

Motion to amend carries.

Article 11 now reads: To see what money, if any, the town will vote to authorize the Selectpersons to appropriate from surplus as they deem advisable to meet emergency expenses and emergencies that occur during the period from July 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010 in the amount of \$20,000.

Danny Higgins: Motion.

Greg Cyr: Is there any further discussion based on the main motion now?

Alice Higgins: I think you forgot a couple of words.

Greg Cyr: Which ones?

Alice Higgins: 'Unanticipated'.

Greg Cyr: They changed "unanticipated" to "emergency". Is there any further discussion?

Amended article carries.

Art. 12 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$14,300 for the General Administration Account and allow any reimbursements to be used for the same.

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend

Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.
Discussion: None
Motion carries.

Art. 13 To see if the Town will raise and appropriate \$1,000 for vital record preservation and to allow all the fees collected from vital records requests to be used to defray some of the cost of having the old town records preserved.

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.
Discussion: None.
Motion carries.

Art. 14 To see what sum the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and to expend from anticipated revenues for Town Officers, Town Manager, Town Clerk, and Office Staff.

Selectboard recommends	(from property taxes)	\$34,950
	(From anticipated revenues)	\$1,350
Budget committee recommends	(from property taxes)	\$32,250
	(from anticipated revenues)	\$1,350

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Barb Pitcairn: That was increased by \$2000. Could you tell me why that is increased? Was it for the safety officer? Because he's not in here.

Greg Cyr: Barb is saying that it's been increased by \$2000 without explanation.

Barb Pitcairn: From the original budget.

Greg Cyr: Are you referring to the Budget Committee recommendation?

Barb Pitcairn: Correct.

Francis Grey: It is nothing to do with safety officer, it is to increase hours for the part time office staff. We wrote a late note to the Budget Committee. This would allow for two days per week for part time office staff. So that is increasing hours for the part time office staff.

Barb Pitcairn: What happened to the safety officer's salary?

Francis Grey: It was never considered as part of the budget, it was never entertained.

Barb Pitcairn: We don't have one anymore.

Francis Grey: Have you ever?

Barb Pitcairn: We did for a while.

Amy Collins: So if we don't allow for this \$2000 increase, we aren't going to have the part time help?

Francis Grey: Not as many hours.

Amy Collins: How many hours a week are they putting in now as part time help?

Francis Grey: Very few. Before this increase, was it one day a month?

Amy Collins: And it will go to what?

Francis Grey: Two days a week.

Amy Collins: Two days a week? 8 hours a day, Workmen's Comp., health insurance, the whole deal?

Francis Grey: No. No benefits on it.

Celia Beaulier: How come a few years back they needed one person to run the town, now we have two, and they need still more to help?

Greg Cyr: That is evidently the case, things change fast.

Danny Higgins: My question is, from Washington, down to Augusta, now we are at the local level. Why is the public sector increasing, the private sector is in dire straits. That is my question to you Mr. Town Manager, to the Board, and to anyone else who wants to answer.

Amy Collins: This is one of those funny ones here? So we can make a motion to amend the article here?

Greg Cyr: If you want to make a motion, you have to lower it.

Amy Collins: I make a motion to amend the article to do the budget committee recommendation.

Motion seconded.

Discussion on amendment:

Francis Grey: I guess all I would offer, I felt the Selectboard made this recommendation in an effort to increase or improve the quality of the service in the town office to the townspeople.

Danny Higgins: Mr. Town Manager, could you please answer my question? Why is it from Washington, to Augusta, down the local level, all government is increasing, and the public sector is decreasing? We are asking for more taxes.

What do you want us to do?

Francis Grey: I can't respond on what they do in Washington or Augusta. That is not what we are deciding right now, but you can vote this down if you don't agree with it.

Greg Cyr: Is there any further discussion on the amendment.

Amendment to article carries.

Article 14 now reads: To see what sum the Town will vote to raise and appropriate and to expend from anticipated revenues, for Town Officers, Town Manager, Town Clerk, and Office Staff. The numbers are \$32,250 and \$1,350.

Amended article carries.

Art. 15 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$1,000 and expend \$2,340 from surplus for the purpose of Assessing, updating maps and the Registry fees for deeds and transfers.

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion: None

Motion carries.

Art. 16 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$11,000 for municipal building operating expenses and to allow the rental fees to be used for the same.

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded

Discussion:

Amy Collins: \$11,000 is normal for a 6 month period?

Francis Grey: All of these figures are based on half year figures for what it would be for a full year.

Amy Collins: For a full year, it would include heating and plowing, and all that. We are just voting on July 1 of 2010 to December 31 of 2010, correct?

Francis Grey: Yes, that's correct.

Amy Collins: So we are probably not going to have as many expenses in our six month period as we would have from December 31 to June 1st.

Danny Higgins: Out of that \$11,000, whatever money they don't use gets turned back to the town.

Francis Grey: Okay. We are allowing \$3,000 for electric, \$3,500 for heating fuel, \$1,750 for furnace repairs, \$750 for building repairs, \$150 for boiler certificates, \$150 for equipment rental, \$100 for labor, \$900 for payroll, paying for your bottled water, \$125, \$175 for supplies, \$160 for trash removal, \$60 for fire extinguishers.

Amy Collins: So building repairs come out of the operating expenses?

Barb Pitcairn: That is another article.

Francis Grey: Fixing something when it breaks.

Joanne Nelson: So everything that we have voted on from Article 1 to now is only for 6 months?

Greg Cyr: Yes.

Judy Moreau: I think the entire budget for the town hall last year was \$23,875.

Greg Cyr: It is less than 50% for the 6 month period.

Motion carries.

Art. 17 To see if the Town will vote to expend \$600 from surplus for the Planning & Appeals Boards.

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion: None.

Motion carries.

Art. 18 To see what sum the Town will vote to expend from surplus for Code Enforcement activities, in addition to the plumbing, building permit fees, and fines received in the period from July 1, 2010 to

December 31, 2010.

Selectboard recommends	(from surplus)	\$7,200
Budget Committee recommends	(from surplus)	\$6,000

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Barb Pitcairn: I am seeing a lot of pulling from surplus for decreasing taxes, and our surplus balance is \$311 thousand, and that contains the entire TIF account.

Francis Grey: No that is separate.

Barb Pitcairn: No, we don't have a line item for \$296 thousand.

Francis Grey: TIF is not part of surplus.

Barb Pitcairn: How many times have people said that it is part of surplus? So you are saying there is \$311,000 in surplus that we can pull and reduce our taxes?

Francis Grey: I wouldn't recommend using all of it but you can use some of it.

Barb Pitcairn: Where in this book does it say there is \$296 thousand for the TIF account.

Kathy Gagnon: On page 47, under Katahdin, CEDARS Account 1.

Francis Grey: Account 1, and two down from that, \$54,802.

Greg Cyr: The article is relative to code enforcement, plumbing, building fees.

Amy Collins: **I make a motion to do the Budget Committee recommendation, an amendment.**

Motion to amend seconded.

Discussion on amendment:

Ray Cyr: Our code enforcement officer has been trying to get things straightened out in the code enforcement area, it has been a mess for the last two years, she has worked diligently to fix that. If anyone has had an interface with her, she is very thorough, and she needs more hours in order to catch up. In order to do this she will need more hours. That is why we decided to give her a few more hours per week.

Amy Collins: Nothing against the code enforcement officer, but we are all strapped for money and generally what happens in government, once you raise a certain amount the next year it gets raised again or it stays the same. So I am sticking to my motion.

Francis Grey: This is just through September 30th.

Ray Cyr: This is just for hours through the summer months.

Francis Grey: The increased budget amount is to cover the increase in hours only during the busy season, when it comes to fall and the winter months the hours will decrease.

Amy Collins: Then we shouldn't have to raise more money if the hours are going to decrease later.

Ray Cyr: If you figure her hours now, and what we recommended, that covers our summer period.

Francis Grey: That figure was intended to cover the busy time and the slower time.

Amy Collins: I understand that, but many people who are sitting here do not have a busy time right now. They only work on a fixed income, and there are people working 7 days a week to pay the bills that we have. So I am sticking with my motion to carry what the Budget Committee recommends. I know the young lady who does the code enforcement officer job, and I respect her very much. But a lot of us are already paying a lot of property taxes.

Francis Grey: It is not a personal decision, it is a decision on how many hours you feel should be invested into doing the code enforcement work. Mr. Cyr has made his argument. She is doing a good job, straightening out a lot of things and doing well in the office.

Clayton DeMerchant: Take it out of maintenance, they don't do a lot of work. Take it out of that so she can work a couple of extra hours.

Louie Miller: If she was doing the job and wanted to increase it, if she wasn't able to increase hours, what will happen? Are we going to fall into a place where we won't be to code and be in violation in any way if something goes wrong?

Francis Grey: I think she has the hours available. It is a hypothetical question. I don't know.

Barb Pitcairn: Last year we raised \$14,400 for our code enforcement officer, and we are no longer paying mileage. So I think the \$6000 for the half year and \$12,000 for the full year is enough money.

Danny Higgins: The gentleman that was doing it last year was also the plumbing inspector, and now the plumbing inspector is coming from Mapleton, so when you have to call him he comes from there. Do you follow me?

Judy Moreau: Where does the money come from to pay the plumbing inspector?

Greg Cyr: It is not part of this article.

Judy Moreau: Yes it is.

Greg Cyr: You're right, I'm sorry.

Francis Grey: Out of this money, that's how you pay for it.

Judy Moreau: How many times do you have to call him during the busy months? How many times have you called him this summer?

Danny Higgins: It depends on how many septic systems you put in.

Kathy Gagnon: If Lewis is coming to town, sometimes he is doing work for Winterville, so he doesn't charge us mileage if he is going there. He tries to combine his trips to he isn't hitting us too hard. But when he does a sewer system he has to be here many times.

Judy Moreau: What is he charging for doing this?

Danny Higgins: I can tell you. I paid \$120, then he came back for another \$15.

Kathy Gagnon: Excuse me, that was state fees, not his fees.

Danny Higgins: He told me to make the check out to the Town of Portage.

Kathy Gagnon: That's right, and that's state fees.

Francis Grey: It was a pass through.

Kathy Gagnon: The \$15 is a new state fee they have added on that we are required to pay them.

Danny Higgins: Are we going to try to get Maggie as a plumbing inspector also?

Ray Cyr: She is working on her certification.

Francis Grey: She will take the whole thing over, yes.

Mike Bartlett: What was the total income from building permits and fines last year?

Amy Collins: The point was the extra \$1200 was going to be raised not for plumbing, it was going to be raised for extra hours. So plumbing is already covered, and building permits are already covered. It was just to be raised for extra hours. So all of our plumbing and all that stuff should still be covered with the \$6000.

Francis Grey: Page 49, the LPI is \$529.50.

Kathy Gagnon: Building permits were \$590, plumbing fees for \$529.50, for a total of \$1,119.50 was brought into the CEO account to help pay for whatever that account needed.

Mike Bartlett: And fines?

Kathy Gagnon: I don't know if we had any this year. I believe the fines go to a revenue account, and we can't use it.

Mike Bartlett: That is what the article said.

Kathy Gagnon: You are right, sorry.

Mike Bartlett: So in addition to the amount raised, using last year as an example, you have at least \$1,100 over budget.

Francis Grey: It is about half that for a half year figure, so about \$500.

Mike Bartlett: So we can appropriate \$6,000 and we would end up with \$6,600?

Kathy Gagnon: We are in the winter months, so we probably won't have permits.

Danny Higgins: There is a lot of grant money out there for septic, there are a lot of septic that need repair around the lake. Is there any way you can impress upon Mr. Cousins, the plumbing inspector, to get on with his job in getting that grant money to this town so these faulty septic can be repaired?

Francis Grey: I wasn't aware there was any hold up in that, but certainly.

Danny Higgins: People come to me all the time and ask me why there is a hold up, and I tell them to come to the town hall, and people say "I don't want to bother going there".

Motion to amend article 18 carries.

Article 18 now reads: To see what sum the town will vote to expend from surplus for Code Enforcement activities, in addition to the plumbing, building permit fees and fines received in the period from July 1, 2010 to December 31, 2010, in the amount of \$6,000.

Amended motion carries.

Art. 19 To see if the Town will vote to expend \$2,000 from surplus for Abatements.

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion: None.

Motion carries.

Art. 20 To see if the Town will vote to expend \$7,500 from surplus for discounts on taxes paid within thirty (30) days of the mailing date.

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Brian Cote: Do we put this in surplus because we lose the 2% because people pay early taxes? If everybody in town paid 2% early, that is a loss to the income. So this \$7,500 is to cover the anticipated loss for the people who pay early?

Francis Grey: Yes.

Amy Collins: The \$7500, is that the exact amount you are going to expend, or is it up to \$7500? If we only give a \$3,000 discount this year, are we still going to take out \$7,500 or are we only taking \$3,000?

Francis Grey: Up to.

Amy Collins: So it should read "to expend up to \$7,500 from surplus".

Greg Cyr: That's the way these things work, you set a dollar figure and whatever doesn't get spend goes back to surplus. You don't lose it. I think the meaning is the same. What you are meaning to say is what is happening.

Alice Hayward: I always pay my taxes early so I can get the 2%, but I may as well not since you are taking money out of me by getting the \$7500. That's out of me too.

Greg Cyr: Some of this may be wash anyway, because if you don't pay the taxpayer 2% early, you may have to borrow the money from a bank. In essence what you are doing is paperwork balancing the account.

Barb Pitcairn: I firmly believe the town is not a bank, we shouldn't be giving credit at 2% to anyone who is paying their taxes when they are due anyway. I make a motion to amend this warrant.

Ray Cyr: Do you recall two or three years ago, this was brought up as an article and there was great debate on that. And it passed so now we have to pay 2% on early payments. That was discussed two or three years ago.

Francis Grey: It is optional whether you get discounts or not, but you approved in Art 5 that you were going to allow those discounts. So this article is for the accounting to do what you already approved.

Bea Cormier: It is an incentive for people to pay their taxes early. That's what that 2% amount is.

Danny Higgins: It encourages people to pay taxes early so that the town has money to operate on so they don't have to go....

Barb Pitcairn: Does the \$7500 that we will raise from surplus cover the Maine Woods 2% discount that we give them every year? So we may have to raise a little bit more. You might need to amend this article. Their 2% discount last year was \$15,329.10.

Amy Collins: But we are only doing a half year.

Barb Pitcairn: So we will give them the whole \$7,500 and we will get nothing.

Amy Collins: The 2% discount that we already approved, we can't do anything about that. I have property in a couple different towns, I get my Portage tax bill, say today, you give discount for 30 days, and the bill is due in 31 days.

Correct? I believe the discount ends, hypothetically on the 30th, you pay interest on the 31st. Mapleton, Presque Isle, you get a discount until 30 days and your tax bill still isn't due for 60 days after that. Portage is the only town that I pay taxes in that the bill is due the exact day after the interest is discounted.

Francis Grey: We allow 30 days after the mailing date of the bills for them to get a discount, right?

Amy Collins: Right. And then the 31st day you are going to start paying interest if you don't pay the bill.

Francis Grey: We charge interest rates after November 26, according to article 5.

Amy Collins: Well, that is probably because the bill isn't going to go out until November 1st.

Judy Moreau: If Maine Woods receives their 2% and it is above what this is, what will happen to the rest of us poor souls who pay our taxes on time? We won't have any money.

Francis Grey: On page 19, the discount to Maine Woods over the years has ran about \$3000. In 2006 short year it was half that, it was about \$1,600. Whether that is included in this \$7500...

Kathy Gagnon: It is all included in the \$7500.

Celia Beaulier: Why shouldn't there be a couple of months where the taxes will be the same, get your 2% off then a couple of months, then charge interest after 4 months?

Francis Grey: We charge interest after November 26. You get a discount 30 days from when the bills are mailed.

Let's say the bills are mailed September 15, you get a discount until October 15. Then after November 26 you pay interest.

Amy Collins: We all understand that, but what we are saying is usually what happens is we get our bill and have 2% interest for 30 days and on the 31st day we pay interest. Generally that is what happens.

Francis Grey: November 26, Article 5.

Greg Cyr: What we are discussing is this article. The past is gone, we don't want to talk about the past.

Motion carries.

Art. 21 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$1,530 for annual membership dues for:

Northern Maine Development Corp.	\$1,382
Maine Tourism	\$ 145

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Judy Moreau: Northern Maine Development Corp., what have they done for our lovely little town this year? Is there anything they have done to amount to \$1300?

Ray Cyr: They have helped on the elderly housing.

Danny Higgins: But they charged us for it.

Ray Cyr: Yeah, you're right.

Judy Moreau: What else have they done for us?

Francis Grey: They offer free technical assistance if you are updating your zoning ordinance, things of that nature.

Judy Moreau: We have a zoning board, we have a planning board. Don't they have the ability to do that?

Francis Grey: They might benefit from professional assistance.

Mike Bartlett: Are any of these services available through Maine Municipal?

Francis Grey: Not the same things as what they provide.

Mike Bartlett: What do they provide?

Francis Grey: Technical assistance on zoning ordinances, economic development, grant writing, things of that nature, comprehensive plans.

Danny Higgins: Anything NMDC has done for the town of Portage, they have always charged for their service.

Joanne Nelson: I thought we already paid a grant writer.

Jen Curran: I can say that NMDC may not be exactly for the town of Portage, but for all of Aroostook County they do a lot of economic development. They need the funds to run the organization. Yes, Danny, for the housing we paid them and we paid them a boat load and really didn't get a lot out of it, but there is a lot of good that they do. With the Snowmobile Club they helped with mapping of the area and they have a lot of different programs.

Francis Grey: They did a feasibility study for the elderly housing project?

Jen Curran: We paid for that.

Amy Collins: Is this what their normal membership costs, \$1,382. Or is it based on population?

Francis Grey: It is a one year membership, so you won't have to pay it again.

Amy Collins: Where did they come up with \$1,382, it seems like an odd number?

Francis Grey: I think it is based on population.

Amy Collins: Because I just talked to NMDC a couple weeks ago for a young lady to purchase our business, and it was more or less "she ain't got any money for a down payment, so..." I think their attitude is, whatever, too, at times.

Danny Higgins: I have dealt quite a bit with Eastern Maine Development, they have never charged for any services that I have requested and I found them more courteous than Northern Maine.

Joanne Nelson: Why should everything that we voted on already only be for six months, and then this one comes up and this is for a year?

Francis Grey: It's like your county tax, you have to pay it. It just so happens that you pay it once a year, and it is during this six months. Certain payments the town has to pay once a year, but it is during this time period.

Joanne Nelson: I think every article that is up there we should know whether it's for six months or a year.

Barb Pitcairn: NMDC offers the town and individuals a lot of advice if you know where to seek it. We have a new Code Enforcement Officer who needs her license, all of her testing will be done at NMDC for free. It is worth paying for.

Motion carries.

Art. 22 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$2,000 for the general assistance program and allow any reimbursements to be used for the same.

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Amy Collins: What are the reimbursements from?

Francis Grey: The town files for reimbursements after payments are made to a general assistance client, and the state pays 50% up to a certain thresh hold.

Motion carries.

Art. 23 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$28,200 for the following accounts:

Property/Casualty/Liability	\$ 6,500
Unemployment Insurance	\$ 1,917
Payroll Audit	\$ 89
Workers Compensation	\$ 1,490
FICA/MED (employer)	\$ 5,000
Employees Health Ins.	\$12,000

Income protection plan	\$ 900
Volunteer insurance	\$ 300

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Alice Higgins: Under "Employees health insurance" is health insurance paid in full by the town?

Francis Grey: Yes it is.

Alice Higgins: I pay a lot of health insurance out of pocket, and I'm sure a lot of people don't have any health insurance here and if they do they have a big deductible, so why should we be paying for full health insurance?

Amy Collins: Is it just the employee, or is it employee and family or spouse?

Francis Grey: Single employee. One unit.

Amy Collins: And it is \$24,000 a year? Full coverage?

Francis Grey: Yes, I believe so. It is a monthly payment.

Amy Collins: We have how many employees?

Francis Grey: Three that have health insurance.

Wilza Robertson: Are we told by law that we have to pay insurance to full time employees?

Francis Grey: No.

Joanne Nelson: Is this just for the individual employee or their whole family?

Greg Cyr: Individual employee.

Barb Pitcairn: If it is just for the employee, do they have to pay extra for children or anything like that?

Greg Cyr: I'm sure if a spouse or children are added, the employee pays out of their...This pays for the entire premium for the employee only.

Joanne Nelson: This really is \$24,000 a year per person?

Greg Cyr: No, for all three people.

Joanne Nelson: It is still \$24,000 per year?

Barb Pitcairn: Is it 100% or do you have a deductible?

Francis Grey: I believe it is 100%.

Kathy Gagnon: No, there is a deductible.

Barb Pitcairn: I would like to amend this article to read, since we are all in dire straits right now, that the employee health insurance plan is amended or changed so they contribute at least 25%.

Alice Pinette: Isn't FICA taken out of the employees?

Greg Cyr: FICA is Social Security. The employer has to match it.

Lou Sandy Boutot: I know health insurance is \$24,000 per year, but when you break that down for monthly premium it's not a big amount. Most of these employees that don't take insurance, when I worked in banking we were well compensated if we didn't take the insurance. So if this is reduced, maybe it would go into something else like more wages. A lot of people when they negotiate for wages, the insurance is part of the package. If they are not offering them that insurance...

Judy Moreau: Isn't this insurance purchased through the state of Maine?

Francis Grey: Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust.

Judy Moreau: Is it negotiated every year, or do you just get a bill and pay for it without negotiating with them?

Greg Cyr: In my experience, the town of Portage can't negotiate with the insurer. The community as a whole, all of the towns can get together and negotiate.

Alice Pinette: Can't you get another carrier?

Greg Cyr: I am very familiar with the cost of health insurance, and if you can find a policy in Maine for less than \$8,000 it won't even polish your toenails. They won't get the same advantages.

Amy Collins: I know the town of Ashland did what Barb stated, they cut the employee health insurance by 25% when they were in dire straits. It can happen and you don't need to negotiate extra pay or extra benefits to do that. They can just say, we are in dire straits, sorry. You can also lower someone's pay to do that. You don't have to give them extra benefits or anything to do that. Can we vote that in here, or does that have to go through the board of Selectmen or not?

Francis Grey: What was the question?

Amy Collins: Can we vote tonight to take the employees health insurance and mark it down 25%, we pay 75% they pay 25%?

Ray Cyr: Our town employees have not been paid a raise in three years, one of the ways we supplement that is by giving them a good health insurance plan. That's why we are trying to keep that up.

Amy Collins: I'm on COBRA right now, and it is a lot of money.

Joanne Nelson: Last year we paid \$21,000, right? Did we have less employees? If we tripled this figure we are at \$36,000?

Greg Cyr: Last year it was \$22,000, this year for the six month period is \$12,000.

Danny Higgins: For six months it's \$24,000?

Greg Cyr: No, one year. It's \$12,000 for six months.

Amy Collins: I would like to make a motion that the town drops the employee health insurance to 75%. I make an amendment to the motion.

Amendment seconded.

Francis Grey: The amendment would be to reduce the figure of \$12,000 to three quarters of that figure. The implications of that would have to be figured out after that because it hasn't all been considered. I think that is what your motion is.

Greg Cyr: The premium for health insurance would be reduced from \$12,000 to around \$8,000.

Francis Grey: We could just simply cancel all of the health insurance because we don't have any money to pay for them.

Greg Cyr: Is there any other discussion relative to the amendment on the floor?

Francis Grey: You made an offer of employment to me in a letter, so that would be considered a binding contract. It is a binding contract, you offered me a position in a letter, and I wrote you a letter and accepted it.

Greg Cyr: The current labor contracts with the current employees have clauses that say they will pay 100% of the health insurance.

Amy Collins: How many employees do we have a contract with?

Francis Grey: Only one.

Amy Collins: Just one. And he is on probation for how long?

Francis Grey: Six months.

Ray Cyr: We have had a town clerk for 13 years, she makes \$10.38 cents per hour. She has not had a pay increase in three years. I don't think paying this type of insurance premium is too much for people like that.

Gail Gagnon: When you think about the hours that the town people working in the office put in, I think it is a bargain. We don't know how stressful it is, and everything that they have to do, there is a lot of stress there, and I really think it is a bargain.

Paul Nason: How many people are on that insurance?

Greg Cyr: Three.

Ken Fones: I would like to see it stay the way that it is, there is a lot of stress. People don't realize it.

Motion to amend is defeated.

Discussion on original motion:

Bea Cormier: What is income protection plan?

Francis Grey: That is an employee benefit that is offered, an insurance...

Kathy Gagnon: If we weren't able to come to work, we would get a percentage of our paycheck.

Judy Moreau: Aflack?

Original motion carries.

Art. 24 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$2,000, in addition to expending \$1,477 from surplus, for Town hall improvements. (Total budget \$3,477)

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Mike Bartlett: What are these improvements?

Francis Grey: One of the items paid for out of this amount is re-tiling the kitchen floor, paying incidental bills relating to the installation of the new range hood that happened in the change between the fiscal years.

Mike Bartlett: The kitchen has already been re-tiled and you haven't appropriated money yet?

Francis Grey: That is correct.

Motion carries.

Art. 25 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$15,050 for the Portage Lake Fire Department

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend Yes.

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Amy Collins: For what, their payroll?

Francis Grey: The entire Fire Dept. budget for 6 months. \$7,000 for payroll and stipend, \$300 for supplies, \$1,500 for

new gear and equipment, \$400 for training and mileage, \$250 for telephone and pagers, \$1.125 for state police dispatch, \$400 for diesel gas and foam, \$1,000 for equipment testing, \$500 for repairs to equipment, \$1,500 for uniforms and protective gear, \$1,000 for medical, \$50 for miscellaneous.

Brian Cote: I don't know if I'm jumping ahead, Article 27 is to appropriate money for the reserve account. I don't see anything in here for the fire dept reserve account which we normally did have.

Francis Grey: Nothing was proposed. I hate to say this but my initial draft of this budget was prepared by Rita Sinclair as the outgoing town manager, she made many initial recommendations. We made changes from that.

Brian Cote: In last year's book, we appropriated \$10,000 to the reserve account.

Ray Cyr: We are doing that during the annual town meeting in March, we will do this for the whole year.

Motion carries.

Art. 26 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$250 in addition to the balance carried forward of \$193 for the Animal Control Account.

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend

Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Barb Pitcairn: I believe that amount is inaccurate. the math in the book comes to \$37.50 not to \$193.

Kathy Gagnon: When you register your dogs, if you have a dog that has been spayed or neutered, there are three separate fees, three go to the state, two to animal control., and one to the agent fee. The \$193 is the \$2 for animal control that by law is required by us to carry over every year to supplement the animal control account. The \$37.50 you are referring to is what is left over from last year's carry over and what we raised and appropriated last year, plus the overdraft amount that was put into the account.

Barb Pitcairn: This is the first time it has occurred?

Kathy Gagnon: No, it has been law since I've been here.

Francis Grey: So, this is fees, it is not the balance. It is a separate figure than the ending balance.

Wilza Robertson: Is this enough money?

Francis Grey: Yes.

Motion carries.

Art. 27 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$5,000 for the Public Works Equipment Reserve Account.

Selectboard recommends

Yes

Budget Committee recommends

No

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Joanne Nelson: Can we jump back to Article 25, that money for the Fire Dept, is that for 6 months?

Francis Grey: Yes.

Brian Cote: Public works has a reserve account, how come the fire dept. doesn't?

Greg Cyr: You will get yours in March for the year.

Amy Collins: What is it for?

Francis Grey: To put money aside for future equipment needs.

Barb Pitcairn: Would that be payment on the dump truck or payment on the backhoe?

Francis Grey: No it is not to pay a loan. It is to be put aside for future needs. If it were a loan payment, it would say to pay a loan payment.

Mike Bartlett: Are repairs and operation costs included in this, or just purchase of equipment?

Francis Grey: I believe it is to be used to purchase equipment at some point.

Mike Bartlett: You believe it is, or it is?

Francis Grey: It is.

Amy Collins: Why did the budget committee recommend 'No'. They felt we didn't have the money to do this?

Judy Moreau: We felt it could wait until the annual town meeting.

Amy Collins: If the Budget Committee recommended no, I guess we can wait until the annual town meeting for this.

Mike Bartlett: We currently have two trucks and a backhoe? The backhoe is, how old?

Judy Moreau: Five years old.

(Discussion on the years of the trucks and backhoe)

Brian Cote: If you don't approve the \$5,000 tonight, come the next town meeting it will be \$10,000?

Francis Grey: That is possible it would be the proposal.

Greg Cyr: It could be the proposal, but we don't know.

Francis Grey: They have been asking to raise \$10,000 a year.

Brian Cote: So in March they will ask for another \$5,000 on this account.

Francis Grey: I don't know if that has been decided.

Danny Higgins: After people get this six months' tax will, we will see how they feel about appropriating money in March.

Judy Moreau: Can we make an amendment to the budget committee recommends? You can't do that?

Greg Cyr: You don't need an amendment, you can just defeat it.

Wilza Robertson: Is there any money in the account right now in case the plow breaks?

Francis Grey: This isn't a repair account.

Amy Collins: This is for if they want to buy a new plow or a new backhoe.

Brian Cote: We had \$140 thousand or \$150 thousand in our reserve account for a new fire truck. We bought a new fire truck, it cost a quarter of a million dollars. We had to take out a loan. We appropriated every year, we accumulated it for 15 years and then we spent it for a new truck. So that is what the town is trying to do.

Greg Cyr: And in the case of the fire truck they didn't accumulate enough fast enough.

Barb Pitcairn: On page 46 on the Norstate Equipment Reserve savings, it looks like you are making payments out of this reserve account. Expended for '05 International, backhoe, I mean our reserve account for the equipment is \$2,807. God forbid if the brakes go again. Payments are being pulled out of reserve accounts.

Francis Grey: Look on page 46 then look on page 49, they are the same amounts.

Barb Pitcairn: So that reserve account, those payments shouldn't be coming out of there. Am I correct? The fire truck, they pulled \$12,000 for the fire truck.

Francis Grey: It isn't used for new repair, it is purchasing new equipment.

Barb Pitcairn: So the fire truck is new equipment?

Greg Cyr: Those are loan payments on the fire truck. It appears they didn't establish an account. The reserve account is paying for new equipment but it is paying for it over time.

Danny Higgins: I thought the fire truck came through a grant.

Greg Cyr: We are really trying to talk about this \$5,000 for public works equipment reserve.

Judy Moreau: That is what it is, equipment reserve. Equipment reserve is just that, not to be misinterpreted by equipment spend all, buy all. It is a saving account for the fire truck or the plow truck.

Greg Cyr: I'm not disputing that. It appears as though that is exactly what has been done. It appears as though payments have been made out of the reserve account.

Amy Collins: How much money do we have in the reserve account at the moment, that hypothetically speaking we were going to buy a plow truck tomorrow and we had \$100,000 in that account, wouldn't we pay for the truck if that is what we have the money for?

Greg Cyr: No.

Amy Collins: We would pay interest on a loan?

Greg Cyr: As an example, the fire truck had \$140 thousand but the truck cost \$250 thousand. The extra \$100 thousand is being paid with payments through this account.

Judy Moreau: That came out of surplus.

Francis Grey: \$40,000.

Judy Moreau: Nowhere does it say that you can take money out of equipment reserve for a payment. It is a savings account for equipment, fire truck and/or plow truck.

Francis Grey: A decision was made under authority to purchase this equipment, and the money was used to make the purchase.

Greg Cyr: It probably won't be done like that in the future. Am I right?

Judy Moreau: This is just exactly like the unanticipated expense account. It is there, spend it.

Francis Grey: The purchase wasn't authorized at town meeting, is that what you are saying?

Judy Moreau: Exactly. No. The fire truck, we voted to buy the fire truck, but the money was supposed to be taken out of surplus.

Barb Pitcairn: I think this needs to be determined exactly what these reserve accounts are for. Last year they took payments for the backhoe, payments for the '05 out of the reserve account, and out of the fire truck reserve account they made payments as well. We are reducing these accounts.

Greg Cyr: That is a legitimate point.

Terry Curran: What they are doing, they had say \$50,000 in that account to buy a vehicle, and they are making their payments and they are knocking it down by one payment a year. When that money is gone, they will start over again.

Greg Cyr: Barb and Judy's points are valid, if it is a reserve account they should set up another account to make a payment instead of a reserve. But that is under advisement to the new town manager and the town council.

Motion carries.

Art. 28 To see what sum the Town will vote to raise and appropriate for the Public Works account in addition to any funds reimbursed to that account.

Selectboard recommends	(from property tax)	\$40,000
Budget Committee recommends	(from property tax)	\$37,500

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Amy Collins: I make an amendment to the motion that we go with the budget committee recommendation.

Greg Cyr: Before we go to the amendment, is there anyone who would like to comment on the \$40,000?

Barb Pitcairn: Why was it increased?

Francis Grey: It wasn't increased, that was the original figure. It was \$40,000 and the Budget Committee recommended to reduce it to \$37,500.

Barb Pitcairn: That's because we took out the safety officer's wages.

Francis Grey: It was never included. There was never any figure for that.

Moved and second to amend the article to \$37,500.

Motion to amend carries.

Article 28 now reads: To see what sum the town will vote to raise and appropriate for Public Works Account in addition to any funds reimbursed to that account, \$37,500.

Amended article carries.

Art. 29 To see if the Town will vote to expend \$25,000 from anticipated excise tax revenue in addition to the URIP Funds received, and the balance of \$75,472.42 in the Road Improvement Account, for major road improvements.

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend Yes.

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Lou Sandy Boutot: What does URIP stand for?

Francis Grey: Urban Rural Initiative Program.

Danny Higgins: What is the selectmen's proposal to spend this money on?

Francis Grey: Future paving.

Ray Cyr: Road improvement includes culvert replacement, we will do some patching on the West side, a little bit on the East side. We are doing it with cold patch. If we don't use it, it gets carried over.

Alice Pinette: I would like to know when the culverts are scheduled to be changed over. I have a culvert that has been humped up every winter. I pay my taxes every year, and I want them to do mine.

Ray Cyr: See Francis. We will up the priority.

Alice Pinette: I don't care who ups the priority, you people use my driveway in the winter time to turn around in. It has a hump in it that I have to go over every time. I'm at 418 East Cottage Road.

Ray Cyr: We will make a note of that.

Angie Burton: Does public works think they will spend \$100,000 from now and Dec 31st?

Francis Grey: I don't think so.

Angie Burton: Then why are we asking for it?

Francis Grey: I look at this as a reserve account.

Ray Cyr: If we don't use this, it gets carried over.

Amy Collins: At the August 19 selectmen's meeting, there was a discussion on the cost of the West Road. Have we come to a figure on that cost yet?

Ray Cyr: That cost was having it done by a contractor. We decided to have it done by public works.

Amy Collins: Is it cheaper for us to do it by our own public works?

Christy Dicker: Are you talking about the ditching that was done?

Amy Collins: Yes.

Ray Cyr: I'm talking about hot top.

Amy Collins: I'm talking about ditching, because that is what you said this was for, ditching, culverts, cold patch and that stuff. Are we going to drag our feet, or are we going to get it done?

Ray Cyr: We will get it done.

Amy Collins: We have had a lot of controversy since August on this project on the West Cottage road.

Francis Grey: I'm not aware of that, what is that controversy?

Amy Collins: It is on your August 19 minutes, you should have them.

Christy Dicker: It has been taken care of.

Ray Cyr: We need money to have the road work done, we haven't had a budget approved and we have been working ahead of time in anticipation that this will be approved. Prior to July 1st, we didn't have the money to have our road work done. We anticipated getting some money for road work, so we bought culverts, bought hot top and started replacing culverts. That is what we are doing now.

Barb Pitcairn: Ray, we have two road reserve accounts. We have money, we already had \$75,000. We are voting to raise another \$25,000.

Ray Cyr: Those road improvement accounts are for major road repairs, this is for maintenance.

Brian Cote: Article 29, the last four words say "for major road improvements".

Joanne Nelson: Is this money just for material?

Ray Cyr: Material and labor.

Joanne Nelson: Do we have to pay extra for labor?

Ray Cyr: That includes public works labor. It is money that you have to allow so that you can pay them.

Francis Grey: You don't pay salary out of this.

Kenny Fones: Was that hot top or cold patch?

Greg Cyr: Cold Patch.

Ken Fones: Why are we using cold patch, it isn't worth a darn? Cold patch is temporary improvement, it is a waste of money.

Kathy Holmes: Are they going to do Hathaway Road?

Ray Cyr: Not in the next 6 months.

Kathy Holmes: Out of \$75,000 you can't fix that road? Buffalo is part of Portage.

Danny Higgins: Would they be able to fill in pot holes?

Ray Cyr: We could probably do that.

Judy Moreau: Is this public works or is this road maintenance?

Francis Grey: Major road improvements.

Judy Moreau: Why are we paying public works employees out of...

Ray Cyr: We are not, I miss-spoke. We are not paying salaries out of this.

Amy Collins: So this is materials only?

Francis Grey: Materials, contracting, if you did paving work, fuel.

Amy Collins: Do we really need to raise this amount of money? I'm going to make a motion that we...

Terri DeMerchant: That is for culverts, patching the holes and the roads? Why can't we patch all the roads? If you people walk out there like me, every time they patch that road and I walk over it... it sinks, it's gone. A waste of money and a waste of time. The guy who takes the snow off the road, those are so buckled that no one smooths them out, once the guy cleans off the snow they are gone, they pick the whole thing up and you have another hole. You are going to spend more money fixing the hole then the whole thing. I walk on that road and I hate those roads, I fell twice. That is a waste of money when they don't take the time to flatten them.

Angie Burton: It might be a waste, but Lane Construction gave us an estimate of a half a million dollars to do West Road, the town doesn't have that kind of money. That is why we recommended to turn it down and we go with cold patch.

Ray Cyr: We wanted to have a good fix on a portion of the road, it was turned down. So that is why we went with this. I would like to see it fixed good.

Joanne Nelson: I can't imagine spending all this money every year to put the same culverts back down into the ground.

Judy Moreau: I would like to make a motion to amend this article to read "in total and not to exceed \$50,000".

Francis Grey: But it is only for \$25,000.

Barb Pitcairn: But there is a balance in the road account.

Francis Grey: What is your proposal? I guess I'm confused.

Greg Cyr: The \$75,000 and \$25,000 appear to total \$100,000 and the amendment would be to reduce that total by \$50,000.

Francis Grey: There is a balance of \$75,000 right now.

Judy Moreau: Mr. Moderator, may I change my amendment?

Greg Cyr: Your amendment hasn't been recognized yet.

Judy Moreau: I would like to make a motion to amend this to read zero.

Greg Cyr: Read it to me the way you want it to read.

Judy Moreau: As an amendment, I want the article to read zero.

Greg Cyr: Read the article to me with the zero where you want it, please.

Judy Moreau: Okay. The zero where the \$25,000 is.

Greg Cyr: So you want to expend no money to repair roads.

Judy Moreau: That's exactly.

Francis Grey: Just defeat the article.

Greg Cyr: Voting no does the same thing.

Francis Grey: Actually, her proposal is preferable because we could still have the authority to spend the URIP funds and the balance of \$75,000.

Greg Cyr: There is an amendment on the floor to change the \$25,000 to \$0.

Motion to amend Art. 29 is seconded.

Discussion on the amendment:

Ray Cyr: If we eliminate the \$25,000 which comes from excise tax revenue, that means that excise tax is sitting in an account.

Judy Moreau: That is good, where it should be saving pennies.

Amendment carries.

Article 29 now reads: To see if the town will vote to expend \$0 from excise tax revenue in addition to the URIP funds received, and the balance of \$75,472.42 in the Road Improvement Account, for major road improvements.

Amended article carries.

Art. 30 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$17,150 for Northern Aroostook Solid Waste Association.

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Mike Bartlett: This is a contracted service?

Francis Grey: It is an interlocal agreement.

Mike Bartlett: How much longer is the contract in effect?

Francis Grey: It is a long term, inter local agreement that the town shares with six other towns. It is an ongoing regional cooperative effort.

Mike Bartlett: Is there any alternative like joining Ashland?

Francis Grey: I believe that was considered a few years ago, but they found the costs for joining Ashland...Ashland would charge us more of their overhead charges because we are not a charter member of their facility. The costs were prohibitive to joining Ashland.

Ray Cyr: We have looked into that, myself and prior town manager Rita attended one of their meetings. They said we could join, but we would have had to pay our portion of their building that they fill up. It was a considerable amount of money that we would have to pay before they would consider us joining.

Danny Higgins: How did we get involved with the checks not being kept...?

Amy Collins: That is the next article.

Barry Kinney: Is this 6 months or a year?

Ray Cyr: We get charged by weight, that is one of the reasons we put the glass crusher here. If it goes to the garbage at the dump, we pay for that.

Francis Grey: I'm not sure what the financial make is on that, but we are reducing our solid waste costs.

Kathy Gagnon: That is why a pamphlet was put into the town reports so everyone would be aware so we can crush the glass and use it for a base under our culverts or whatever we need to use it for.

Judy Moreau: Does the town get paid for white goods, metal and stuff, that goes to our transfer station?

Francis Grey: No. There is no value in it, we would have to pay to dispose of it.

Danny Higgins: I know people who are in the scrap metal business, it is a lucrative business at times. There are certain business people that you call that will come, get the product, and give the town money for it instead of throwing it in the dumpster.

Amy Collins: That is true, I went to the scrap metal place today in Caribou.

Judy Moreau: The person who hauls it away, they take it to the junkyard and they get the money for it. Even if it is \$50, it would help us.

Mike Bartlett: There are some services in Ashland that will come and pay you for it, it would generate money for the town and cut down our cost to Eagle Lake.

Danny Higgins: Last year at the airport, I sold all of that old fence for scrap metal.

Francis Grey: Is all of our metal currently taken by NASWA?

Motion carries.

Art. 31 To see if the Town will vote to expend \$4,675 from surplus for past balances due to Northern Aroostook Solid Waste Association.

Selectboard recommends Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Alice Higgins: I am curious how you would reconcile your bank statement and not know that these checks were outstanding for all of these years? Where did this money go?

Francis Grey: It sat in the town surplus.

Alice Higgins: How did you reconcile the statement?

Lou Sandy Boutot: Do you mean the bank statement? In 2007, I started balancing the statements per request of the auditor to have an outside person do it. These two checks were outstanding, one was outstanding for two years and one was outstanding for one year. I told Rita at this point they would probably never be cashed, so she needed to add that amount back to the checking account. I believe she talked with them, but to my knowledge we never did receive it.

Amy Collins: So the money that the checks were written for went back into surplus. So now we can take the money back out of surplus and pay for them. Are we paying late fees?

Francis Grey: No.

Judy Moreau: How come if that is the case, how come in the past years when these checks were outstanding, the dump account figured out in the town report book every year right to the penny.

Francis Grey: Those payments were made, but never cleared the checking account.

Lou Sandy Boutot: In 2007, when the money was put back into the account, a new check should have been issued, but it was an oversight it never got done, and they never said anything until this past spring. One of those checks had been cashed, but put into a wrong account and we weren't credited with that payment. Yes we were lax, but there is a big issue with them.

Barb Pitcairn: We are not appropriating this money, we aren't raising the money this year?

Francis Grey: You are agreeing to pay it. It has already been raised and appropriated. In a way, you are appropriating it again, you are giving permission to pay it out of surplus. You are appropriating it again because it never went through. It is a housekeeping financial measure.

Judy Moreau: I suggested that on the checks, that the town writes void if not cashed within 90 days or something.

Lou Sandy Boutot: There is a period before they become staledated, some banks honor them up to one year.

Lynn Taylor: I would recommend that we begin using online banking. You can reconcile your accounts daily. You don't need to wait until the end of the month before you reconcile. And you can see what checks have cleared and what haven't, so you can get to a point where you can see if someone hasn't cashed your check, you can call them up.

Motion carries.

Art. 32 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$1,950 for the operation of the Transfer Station.

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Judy Moreau: Why did you have to take an appropriation out of unanticipated expense account for \$1,800 to add to this?

Francis Grey: The decision to purchase the glass crusher was what it was.

Judy Moreau: I thought that came free from the dump man.

Danny Higgins: Nothing is free in this world.

Motion carries.

Art. 33 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$1,000 for the maintenance of the Portage Lake Cemetery.

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Alice Higgins: Is this for mowing?

Francis Grey: It has to be, yes. That is the only article for cemetery expenses in here. That is what it is.

Celia Beaulier: Who is responsible for setting up the stones after they fall over?

Kathy Gagnon: Families of the deceased.

Brian Cote: I was told if you touch the stone you are responsible.

Kathy Gagnon: That is why we don't fix them.

Judy Moreau: It's not a perpetual care cemetery, we don't pay to have things done personally. It is a municipal cemetery. The town is not responsible to take care of the stones. The town takes care of the cemetery, but the town doesn't take care of the family plots.

Joanne Nelson: If we already pay one of our town employees to do what they do, why do we appropriate special money for that?

Francis Grey: This is the article where that budget is provided for this.

Joanne Nelson: That is part of his pay?

Francis Grey: Yes. The person who does mowing has their wages paid out of multiple accounts, sometimes parks account and sometimes cemetery account.

Ken Fones: What if vandals knocked the stones down?

Judy Moreau: It is still families.

Ken Fones: What if they are gone? I'm the lawnmower guy, and if someone needs...

Danny Higgins: In the past I have been asked to fix some of the stones, but only upon request.

Motion carries.

Art. 34 To see if the Town will vote to expend \$12,700 from surplus for the Cemetery Expansion parking lot and sign age.

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend

Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Barb Pitcairn: Signage was paid for and raised last year. What will the parking lot consist of? Are we paving up there?

Francis Grey: We dropped \$1,000 off of it after consultation with Mary Ann (Gagnon). We kept \$500 in there, \$12,000 is for the bid work. It is the second half of a two year project, but when we put this together and dropped the \$1,000 off, we forgot about geotextile fabric. So that is part of it as well that will be paid for as part of the project.

Barb Pitcairn: Why do we need a parking lot? They have been parking up there for the past 100 years. How many cemeteries do you have with a parking lot? This is downtown Portage Lake, Maine, population 300? Why do we need a parking lot at the cemetery?

Ray Cyr: When it is wet, the area where the cars park gets muddy. It is flat. That is why we recommended putting a parking area in there so the people don't make ruts.

Danny Higgins: This bid went out last year as a two part bid. One for the road, one for the parking lot. When it came time to do the parking lot, I was told at the time they didn't have the money, but at the time of the bid I was not told. So for the parking lot, I have already purchased all the material and everything else to do the job because the job was awarded last year but the money wasn't there. It was never told to me at the bid time.

Francis Grey: You originally bid the job as thinking it was to be done in one year.

Amy Collins: Will he still get the job?

Francis Grey: If the funding is approved.

Amy Collins: And again, this is for the parking lot, not the road?

Barb Pitcairn: I also want to make one more note. The Budget Committee recommended this be expended from the TIF, and it is not in here.

Francis Grey: It is not an eligible expense.

Judy Moreau: If Danny won the low bid, and he is eligible to do the work, and the selectmen put the cart ahead of the horse, then I feel that the voters have to approve this \$12,000.

Francis Grey: You don't have to, you can decide from your own conscience. That's why you are here, you are here to decide.

Judy Moreau: If he has already been awarded the bid then he has to have the bid, he has to have the work.

Joanne Nelson: I think Danny ought to be paid for all of the materials that he bought.

Greg Cyr: That is not part of the article.

Amy Collins: Can we amend the article?

Greg Cyr: You can amend anything you want if you do it right.

Amy Collins: This is a two year project, so this is a year thing, not a six month thing.

Greg Cyr: It sounds like it is project specific. So that money is there, even if it takes Danny 5 years to do it he won't get any more money.

Celia Beaulier: There is already a nice sign up there.

Greg Cyr: The sign age refers to exit/entrance signs, not the big signs, its for other signs around the cemetery.

Clayton DeMerchant: When this initially started, Bud Clark's daughter complained about people parking on their land, so he put rocks there, well I think the town did, so now they have to have a parking lot to park.

Ken Fones: The road that was put in last year is a dead end, and the parking lot will extend it. Right now the road

goes to no where unless the parking lot is put in.

Jim Holmes: Is it normal practice to award a contract prior to having money appropriated?

Francis Grey: The practice we are trying to follow is put something out to bid, get the bids, select the low bidder contingent on funding, then go to town meeting and get the funding to go to work.

Gary Hafford: We knew we had enough money for one, we didn't have enough to do it all. The parking lot was contingent on this right here.

Christy Dicker: I believe that was the way that I remember it, that it was intended to be contingent on the money, that is why we asked for a bid for one, then the other, not a bid on both.

Wilza Robertson: I think Danny is owed money, we need to raise it, and we need to pay it. He made his bid in good faith and in good faith we need to pay him.

Motion carries.

Art. 35 To see what sum the Town will vote to expend for Portage Lake Beautification.

Selectboard recommends	(carried over)	\$1,520
Budget Committee recommends	(from surplus)	\$1,000

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Amy Collins: Does the Budget Committee recommend that we only raise \$1,000 from surplus period, or is it in addition to the carry over amount?

Francis Grey: These are two different recommendations, either one or the other, you wouldn't do both.

Greg Cyr: You have an amount of \$1,520 carried over, a line item...

Francis Grey: If they approve it.

Greg Cyr: But you do have the money to be carried over?

Francis Grey: If they approve it.

Greg Cyr: Francis is right, they need to approve the expenditure of it. But the question is, is the recommendation for \$1,520 or for \$2,500? Why is there a recommendation from the Budget Committee to expend money from surplus? If you have money in a reserve account, why would you spend money from surplus?

Judy Moreau: We were not told at the time of the budget that there was \$1,520 carried over.

Francis Grey: That is incorrect. That is what was proposed in the budget, and the Budget Committee said they didn't feel we needed \$1,520, they only needed \$1000.

Amy Collins: **I make a motion to amend to raise \$1000 for the Beautification out of surplus, I recommend what the Budget Committee said. It's not going to be carried over, it is just \$1,000 period. I make an amendment that we will raise \$1,000 period for Beatification.**

Motion to amend seconded.

Christy Dicker: The money that has been carried over previously for the Beautification Committee is a very small part of what the town gets. Their flower plots, Christmas decorations, all the lights...I started this 10 years ago, I fought tooth and nail to get money for the Beautification Committee. I think it is going backward if we don't continue to carry it over. Just because we carry it doesn't mean that we are going to spend it. It is there if we need to repair those lights, get new flags, all of those things. From what I understand, most everybody in this town and those outside appreciate those things. I feel it is a disservice if you just go back to \$1,000. It's not necessarily going to be spent but it is there and it should continue to be carried.

Amy Collins: Is this 6 months or a year?

Greg Cyr: It's in an account, so if they don't spend it, it will be there in March.

Francis Grey: On December 31, you can decide to carry over the balance into the next fiscal year.

Kathy Gagnon: The flags that people have donated in memory of a loved one are deteriorating, and over half of our flags are in need of being replaced or fixed.

Lou Sandy Boutot: It is nice to have a holiday and see the flags and flowers, people coming into our town see we care about our town. I mean, this is \$1,500. We have spent a lot more on other things here tonight. People come to visit Portage because it's a nice area, a nice little town, and if we can't put out flags, flowers and Christmas lights....I as a towns person appreciate that. It is nice to have a tree in the town square.

Danny Higgins: For years, Alice has purchased Christmas tree lights, which are put downstairs after they are taken down, and year after year we have to buy new ones. We don't come to the town to ask for the money for new ones.

Alice Higgins: The town has purchased some.

Amy Collins: So should we deny that motion, I mean that amendment?

Greg Cyr: Did I get a second on that?

Judy Moreau: Yes.

Greg Cyr: If you want to go back to \$1,500, turn down the amendment.

Danny Higgins: Well I make a motion...

Greg Cyr: You can't. We already have a motion on the floor for an amendment.
Amendment is defeated.
Original motion carries.

Art. 36 To see what sum the Town will vote to expend for parking and improvements for the Centennial Pavilion.

Selectboard recommends	(from TIF funds)	\$4,000
Budget Committee recommends	(from property taxes)	\$ 345.16

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Judy Moreau: The \$4000, at the time of the Budget Committee, was not recommended to come out of the TIF account.

Francis Grey: True. Some good ideas don't happen as quickly as we would like, but it doesn't mean they are not good ideas.

Barb Pitcairn: What is the \$4000 for?

Ray Cyr: We are going to expand the parking lot facing the Pavilion. We are going to take a strip out of there, cut some brush and trees. And where it makes the turn we will have parking in that area also. We will have handicapped parking.

Barb Pitcairn: How many parking areas do we need? One at the cemetery and one at the Pavilion?

Ray Cyr: Well, people have to park. This is one of those items that falls under the TIF.

Barb Pitcairn: What about the water, the old well there?

Francis Grey: What are you talking about?

Barb Pitcairn: Replacing the overhang around the old company pump that is no longer working.

Francis Grey: We will come to that under number 38.

Ken Fones: Why can't the town employees do it? They have the equipment and materials.

Ray Cyr: I think it would be cheaper to do it with a contractor.

Amy Collins: So the parking lot at the cemetery didn't qualify for TIF, but the parking lot at the Pavilion does?

Greg Cyr: Because it is recreation.

Judy Moreau: Didn't Mr. Higgins have the bid for the parking lot also?

Ray Cyr: Yes, he was the one that gave us the estimate and he came in lower.

Greg Cyr: He hasn't been awarded the contract, he just bid.

Grace Nason: My question is, we need improvements on the parking lot in the back of this building, I think this money should be put in a reserve fund because that parking lot is horrendous.

Ray Cyr: This money is available through the TIF, the monies for the parking lot here wouldn't be from TIF.

In favor: 22 Opposed: 14

Motion carries.

Art. 37 To see if the Town will vote to expend up to \$15,388 from TIF funds as matching funds in order to receive a \$34,957 Recreational Trails Program Grant from the Maine Dept. Of Conservation Bureau of Parks and Lands, for the walking trail project.
Also, to authorize the Selectboard to make temporary payments up to \$34,957 for approved grant expenditures from surplus which will later be reimbursed by the Grant.
And also to authorize the Selectboard to contract, as necessary, for services needed to achieve the purpose of the grant, according to Program rules of the Maine Dept. Of Conservation.

Selectboard recommends	Yes
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Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Judy Moreau: How much is this whole thing going to cost, everything together, all done?

Francis Grey: \$50,000. That is the total project.

Judy Moreau: Where is it going to be?

Francis Grey: It goes around the outside perimeter of the town property here. It makes a loop around the town office, the town hall.

Judy Moreau: How many miles is it?

Francis Grey: It is about a half mile.

Judy Moreau: Is it going to be paved?

Francis Grey: Paved, yes.

Judy Moreau: Is it going to be lit?

Francis Grey: I don't know if there are any plans included for lighting, no. I don't believe so.

Judy Moreau: Lets take this money and put it in roads.

Francis Grey: That is not the purpose of the grant so they won't let us spend it on that. It's for non-motorized use.

Kathy Holmes: It is for a walking trail, a half a mile. \$50,000 for half a mile, correct?

Francis Grey: Right.

Jen Curran: I want to mention, too, the \$15,000 that we are asking the town to expend doesn't mean it will actually come out of the town's pocket, a lot of it is in-kind expenses, so it can be and should be a volunteer effort. A lot of the labor can be done by volunteers to go up to the \$15,000, which would mean the town would get \$35,000 in funds from the federal government which would be grant money. We keep harping that we want grant funds in Portage but no body wants to do anything to get them.

Alice Higgins: This is another thing that everyone thinks is free money, it isn't free, it is out of our pocket.

Francis Grey: You have to pay a matching portion.

Ken Fones: Who is the low bid? What contractor has the low bid?

Christy Dicker: We haven't gotten to that part yet.

Ken Fones: Will it be put out to bid?

Francis Grey: There are some projects that will be put out to bid, the paving work will be put out to bid and maybe some other work done on a bid basis. But I don't think all of the decisions have been made yet.

Ken Fones: Are the town works department going to work on it?

Francis Grey: I think they will be called on to work on the project, they will be making a contribution and doing some in-kind matching.

Ken Fones: As volunteers?

Greg Cyr: If they choose to volunteer, then they can. They can't be required to volunteer.

Amy Collins: For one, I would like to apologize to the entire town for the Beach Buffer project, which I was head of many years ago when we had a major goose problem. Had I known back then what I know today, we would have done something different. It was a fantastic idea, we had a lot of volunteers, we got a lot of grant money. But we created a job, a major job, for townspeople to go down there, for the town, the water overflowing and washing out the side walks. So the walking trail is a fantastic idea, but you have to remember it will create another job for someone later on. There were a bunch of us who worked hours and hours on the playground down at the beach, on the bridge and the beach buffer. You get burnt out, and decide you have had enough and don't do it any more. So now it becomes a job for someone else. And I am guilty of that. We left it for dead. Now it is a major burden for townspeople to look at the weeds, to have to fix the overflows from the water. Just remember that this walking trail can become another job that the townspeople will have to pay for later on the down the road. I like the idea, but you have to remember that had I known back then what I know today we would have designed it different so the people wouldn't have a burden for the townspeople to have to pay to fix that every year.

Danny Higgins: When it came time to paint the Catholic church, there were going to be all kinds of volunteers. Do you know how many volunteers showed up? So I paid to have the church painted because no one volunteered. I have been plowing the parking lot for years, and I'm getting tired. I ask people to help plow it, and they ask how much does it pay?

Barb Pitcairn: My thought process with this walking trail as a member of the Budget Committee is that due to the economic issues and the problems we have with our school budget, that we might want to decrease our spending this year. Just this year until we can wrap our brains around what we will do with the school budget. And you have spent considerably more than we recommended. So I'm very disappointed.

Francis Grey: You are not raising any tax money to do this, you are using TIF funds already in the bank. It is money we already have.

Barb Pitcairn: But we are spending \$34,000 from surplus.

Francis Grey: That is money that gets replaced by the grant later. That's the way a grant works. If the town wants to do grants, that's how they are done, on a reimbursement basis. You pay the bills, you show the invoices, then the federal or state government reimburses you the money that you got for the grant. That is how a grant is done. So if you don't want to do this, just say we don't want any grants ever. If that's the way you want to be on it, then we just won't do any grants. We'll just stop.

Wilza Robertson: I would like to make a comment. I can understand what Amy is saying, but this is an entirely different situation. We won't have to weed the walking trail, we don't have to worry about the ice knocking out parts of the whole thing. We really can't compare apples to oranges.

Amy Collins: When the grant money does run out, there will be added expenses later on for this walking trail, some type of maintenance to this.

Judy Moreau: How come, if the \$15,388 is from TIF, why isn't the \$34,957 also from TIF?

Francis Grey: That is the grant money.

Greg Cyr: You spend the \$34,000, then you submit your invoices to the federal government and they reimburse you

for it.

Judy Moreau: I'm aware of that. But the question I'm asking is why isn't both the figures taken from TIF? Why isn't \$34,957 coming out of surplus?

Francis Grey: You are using the TIF money as it says on the development program, in the TIF agreement, it lists eligible uses for the TIF money that you are keeping as captured revenue over all these years that you are retaining from Maine Woods. That development program says what you can spend the money on. We are going to spend some of the TIF money for the matching portion of the project. The other part of it is a grant, you are only paying the bills temporarily, you are not going to spend your own money. You will pay it, then get paid back by the grant.

Greg Cyr: Her question is why use surplus monies to pay the \$34,000, use TIF monies to pay the entire thing then reimburse TIF instead of using surplus. It's an accounting...

Judy Moreau: Lets take it all out of TIF, or nothing out of TIF. One or the other, lets not get things confused. This is for recreation, it's an allowable thing.

Francis Grey: You use TIF for the development program, you can't put it back in. You use it for the development program, you spend it once.

Judy Moreau: Does it make any difference if you take it out and put it back in, there is no darn TIF account in here that tells what is in there.

Francis Grey: The thing about that development program is, you have a specific set of uses that is approved by the State of Maine on your TIF agreement for what you can use that for, so you can only use it for what it says.

Judy Moreau: It is recreation.

Greg Cyr: It is not a significant issue when it comes to do we spend it, allow the town to spend it. It is a bookkeeping issue that the town doesn't need to decide this. The people who run the books need to decide it.

Danny Higgins: I think the town manager was out of order. I'm not saying I'm for the walking trail, I'm not saying I'm against the walking trail. When he mentioned about grant money that if this is denied, then forget about all other grant money...We are not talking about other grant money. We are always seeking grant money, that's the reason we have a grant writer. For you to make that statement was incorrect.

Francis Grey: I was trying to make clear that all grants are done on a reimbursement basis where you pay bills and you get reimbursed for them after showing your invoices.

Danny Higgins: If this grant gets turned down, that doesn't mean we get turned down for other grants.

Francis Grey: It just means if you are not willing to pay the bills and be reimbursed later, then you are not going to be doing any grants.

Motion carries.

Art. 38 To see what sum the Town will vote to raise and appropriate in addition to anticipated income from campground fees for upkeep and maintenance of the public beach, boat landing, seaplane base, and parks.

Selectboard recommends	(from property taxes)	\$4,150
Budget Committee recommends	(from property taxes)	\$3,750

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Judy Moreau: Why is the seaplane base in this when that is a leased building?

Ray Cyr: There isn't going to be any money spent on the seaplane base.

Judy Moreau: Why is it in here? So you can come back next year and say....

Ray Cyr: Things have happened since this has been written.

Francis Grey: This is identical to article 40 of last year.

Barb Pitcairn: I believe this is the section where you said you were going to replace the structure around the old company pump? How much will it cost?

Ray Cyr: \$400.

Barb Pitcairn: \$400 to redo that structure? Our reason for keeping it is...?

Ray Cyr: It an historical structure, some people wanted to keep it.

Amy Collins: Didn't I just read that on the Selectmen's agenda this morning, about the public well?

Ray Cyr: The meeting this morning was cancelled.

Amy Collins: I know, but wasn't it on the agenda? How can we be voting on it at a Selectmen's meeting and at a town meeting.

Ray Cyr: What we planned was, if this gets approved, we were going to schedule when we will do the work.

Amy Collins: The seaplane in here, is the license for the seaplane base paid yet?

Kathy Gagnon: It's not due until December.

Amy Collins: Okay, and it comes out of this account here?

Kathy Gagnon: The license? I believe we usually have an article that it comes out the lease money, but since that

article isn't here it will come out of this article.

Francis Grey: You didn't have an article like that last year because I used last year's warrant as my model to come up with these warrant articles. But in the past you probably did.

Amy Collins: So the license is due December 31, or the lease is due December 31?

Kathy Gagnon: It will be due in 2011, the license expires December 31st 2010.

Amy Collins: Okay, because when I talked to you the other day you said it hadn't been paid.

Kathy Gagnon: It was an oversight, the bill had been misplaced. I didn't think of it with all of the other bills that I have coming it. It wasn't in my office, it was in the town manager's office unfortunately.

Amy Collins: Has the license since been paid?

Kathy Gagnon: The license is being paid in the AP I'm trying to do tomorrow.

Danny Higgins: I'm very much in favor of fixing that building up. I would just like their opinion, because I remember when that well used to run. Have they discussed amongst themselves about redrilling it down to get it to run again?

Ray Cyr: No, we have not.

Christy Dicker: The only reason this came up is because of me. It looks terrible and I said we either need to fix it, or tear it down. Whatever you guys want to do, that's what we are going to do.

Danny Higgins: The only thing I would like to say, in all honesty, is I remember years ago when it ran.

Judy Moreau: I just wanted to say that is not the original company pump, the original one was over a little bit. The town paid Michaud, and they drilled the well where it is now. But that is *not* the original company pump. I would like to make an amendment to the article to read what the budget committee recommends.

Seconded.

Lou Sandy Boutot: If we vote that, it means the roof doesn't get fixed?

Ray Cyr: That's correct.

Lou Sandy Boutot: And that building will have to be torn down?

Greg Cyr: There is no money to tear it down.

Lou Sandy Boutot: Well I just think it is a part of history, even if it isn't the original one, and the town of Portage has destroyed every historical building it ever had.

Amendment is defeated.

Original motion carries.

Art. 39 To see if the Town will vote to expend all money received from state reimbursement for snowmobile registrations to the Portage Lakers Snowmobile Club for the purpose of maintaing and improving trails for use by the public.

Selectboard recommends

Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Judy: How much?

Francis: \$529.60, page 49.

Motion carries.

Art. 40 To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Municipal Officers to apply for and accept Snowmobile Trail Grant Funds on behalf of the Portage Lakers Snowmobile Club for the purpose of maintaining and improving trails for use by the public.

Selectboard recommends

Yes

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion: None.

Motion carries.

Art. 41 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$2,500 for the Portage lakers Snowmobile Club for the propose of aiding to maintain local Snowmobile trails for public use.

Selectboard and Budget Committee make no recommendation

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Wilza Robertson: I approve of this article, but there is something that tells me this is not quite fair. We have another

club in town that is doing their best to maintain trails as well, shouldn't we be helping them also?

Francis Grey: They have to make a request to put it on the warrant.

Amy Collins: Jen, is this \$2,500 in order for you guys to get paid from the state?

Jen Curran: It is understood that the money we get to groom every year, we have to turn in our expenses for the year. This previous season we had allowable expenses of \$30,000, we submitted that and they sent us back through the town a check for \$20,000, with the understanding that the town picks up that 30%. That is why our club tries to have as many fund raisers as we can. On page 34 there is a breakdown of our biggest fund raisers to show what we did. If we don't get the \$2,500 from the town, if the state audited us and we didn't meet the numbers, we wouldn't get funding at all.

Motion carries.

Art. 42 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$4,500 for street lights.

Selectboard and Budget Committee recommend

Yes

Motion made in the positive and seconded.

Discussion: None.

Motion carries.

Art. 43 To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$14,433 for Ashland User Fees. (Ambulance service: \$11,555; Library, \$1,358; Recreation, \$1,520)

Selectboard recommends

Yes

Budget Committee makes no recommendation

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Barb Pitcairn: I have a question for the selectmen, why don't we charge Ashland for using some of our facilities? You can go to the beach any day of the summer and there's not a car from Portage, they are all from Ashland. You can go to the boat landing and there are at least 15 boats going into the lake all from Ashland. Why are we not charging them Portage User Fees?

Francis Grey: Do you propose that we charge admission?

Barb Pitcairn: No. I have never been to their library. We don't pay Presque Isle user fees and I use their library.

Francis Grey: We have a right to get a library card, right?

Barb Pitcairn: Let's not get sarcastic.

Francis Grey: This is not sarcastic, this is a serious answer. That is what you are paying for. You can have your library card and use the library.

Amy Collins: I have a Mark Turner library card from Presque Isle and I didn't pay anything for it.

Danny Higgins: According to that monstrosity we built out there, there is supposed to be a free library out there. Why are we paying for a library when we got a library in that new county home there?

Barb Pitcairn: **I make a motion that we amend this, and the motion is going to state: Ambulance service, one-half of the \$11,555, zero to the library and one half to the recreation dept.**

Seconded.

Discussion on the amendment:

Judy Moreau: I am willing to cut the library and recreation, but the ambulance is a touchy, sticky wicket.

Barb Pitcairn: We pay for it anyway.

Lou Sandy Boutot: Then they will have to come from Presque Isle.

Francis Grey: It is going to be crying time when you need an ambulance.

Judy Moreau: If you cut the ambulance they won't come.

Barb Pitcairn: Our insurance pays for the ambulance.

Greg: Cyr: It doesn't pay for the overhead, it pays for the pick up but it doesn't pay to have people in Ashland waiting to get you. That's what this money is for.

Barb Pitcairn: Can I amend my amendment? **I make a motion that we amend this, keep the ambulance, and get rid of the library, and the recreation should be cut in half.**

Francis Grey: Don't you have to vote on the original amendment?

Greg Cyr: No, I didn't get a second.

Danny Higgins: I seconded the motion.

Greg Cyr: I didn't accept it.

Discussion on second amendment:

Otis Nelson: As a taxpayer in this town who has three kids who use the library in Ashland all the time when the

school is closed, it think it would be a shame. That is a small thing out of the money we have wasted here tonight.
Wilza Robertson: I think we should keep the Ashland library because at \$2.88 cents a gallon, it is a long way to Presque Isle.

Ray Chasse: It is a privilege to have access to all of the things they are asking for.

Jimmy Lane: The recreation, is that for the Rec. Dept in Ashland?

Greg Cyr: Yes.

Jimmy Lane: But they won't come out and pick up our kids.

Greg Cyr: No, but the kids have the opportunity to use the building and whatever else is available through the Rec. Department.

Amendment is defeated.

Original motion carries.

Art. 44 To see if the Town, after discussion, will take a non-binding poll to advise the Selectboard members whether the voters are in favor of changing the regularly scheduled Selectboard meetings from daytime hours to evening hours.

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion:

Betty Benson: **I make a motion we do a secret ballot.**

Seconded.

Discussion:

Barb Pitcairn: We are going to go to secret ballot without discussion?

Greg Cyr: You are going to vote on a motion to go to secret ballot, and then we are going to have discussion.

Motion to go to secret ballot defeated.

Discussion on original article.

Ray Cyr: I want to make sure you understand the reason behind our decision to hold a 9 a.m. meeting. The reason we went to a 9 a.m. meeting was that we were getting little attendance during our evening meetings. Very rarely did someone, who was employed during daytime hours, attend our meetings. After several meetings without anybody from the public present, we decided we could do much better work during daytime hours. The change to daytime hours was made to improve our job performance. Why would you want to vote to prevent us from doing our best work? The public can attend our meetings at their leisure and can leave if they get tired in the evening, we have to attend each meeting and stay to the end of the meeting no matter how tired we get, even if there is nobody present. Since changing our hours, we have had requests from two individuals asking us to change back to evening hours. Their reasoning being that working people cannot attend our meetings. One of these individuals is employed, but the other is not. We did not consider a request from one employed person sufficient justification for changing back to the evening hours, because there is another avenue open to get a person's concerns addressed. For those people that work and cannot attend our meeting, but have an issue they would like to have the Selectmen address, all that person has to do is to call the Town Manager and, if the issue is reasonable, it will be placed on the agenda for the next Selectmen's meeting. It is at the discretion of the Chairman of the Board in conjunction with the Town Manager to determine if a person's request will be placed as an agenda item. A person does not have to be present to have their concerns addressed. Our Municipal Officers Manual and state law allows Selectmen to set the time and date for their meetings (MOM pg. 26, regular or special meetings). After consulting with an attorney with Maine Municipal Association recently, it was reaffirmed that the Select Board members have the legal discretion to set their meeting times. Keep in mind that these are Selectmen's meeting for the Selectmen to take care of town business. Selectmen do not have to take public comments during their meetings unless it is a Public Hearing (MOM pg 26, public participation). Article 45, as written, is far too restrictive. If this article passes, regular Selectmen's meetings can only be held on Thursdays at 6:30 p.m. Currently, our meetings start at 9 a.m. and usually last well into the noon hour. But, we are not opposed to staying into the afternoon if necessary. This has occurred several times and we stay until our business has been completed. We get periodic updates from our Code Enforcement Officer. These updates can be done during our regular daytime hours without having to pay her to come in at night. We can do a much better job taking care of town affairs during the daytime as opposed to late night hours. Speaking for myself, Selectmen's meetings are not the only meeting that I attend. I also attend most Planning and Appeals Board meetings, Elderly Housing meetings, Forestry Group meetings, School Board meetings in Ashland, and occasionally Fire Department meetings to answer any questions they may have or issues they want the Selectmen to address. Last year, I attended numerous planning meetings for the Centennial celebrations. All these meetings are held in the evening. The other Selectmen also attend evening meetings. So we attend our share of evening meetings.

Barb Pitcairn: Oh my God, time limit here!

Greg Cyr: When you get the floor you get to talk, when he's got the floor he gets to talk.

Ray Cyr: Thank you. I'm usually up at 5 a.m. and by 9 p.m. I'm starting to shut down. I shut down about a half hour ago. I'm tired. When I retired 16 years ago, the furthest thing on my mind was moving to Portage and run for

Selectman. Prior to moving to Portage, I had served on several committees in our former town. I served on the School Board, Planning Board, Budget Committee, Fire Department, and as an EMT on the volunteer ambulance service. I thought that with this experience, along with my 35 years as a manager at two nuclear power plants, I might be able to help the town by running for Selectmen's position. Although frustrating at times, I'm not sorry that I did. We have done a lot of improvements in the Municipal Building since I have been on the Board. A lot of this work was done by the Selectmen, on their own time, and other than paying for material, the work was done at no cost to the town. Our next project is to repair the old well house on the Pavilion side of the Cottage Road. This building has deteriorated such that if it's not repaired soon, snow will knock it down. Again, this is a voluntary job to be performed by the three Selectmen. The only cost to the town will be for the materials. The following comments are not about people that have real, legitimate concerns. When we get concerns from the public, we try our best to resolve them. We are also open to good suggestions and ideas. But, we have a few detractors and antagonists who like to discredit us by finding fault with most everything that the Selectmen do. This is a real problem. It keeps people away from wanting to run for the Selectmen position. I have asked several younger people why they don't run for office. Their answer, 100% of the time, is because of all the adversity and B.S. we have to take from some of the people that are behind this petition, and that my friends, is sad. When Selectmen positions open, we should have more than one person running for that position. We also have difficulty getting people to serve on various town committees such as Appeals Board, Planning Board, and Budget Committees because of this adversity. We need fresh faces on these committees. I have been waiting some time to say this, so please bear with me. We should not be intimidated by a handful of people. I have been called a snake for returning to Portage. I have been called a thief, a liar, a crook, threatened with lawsuits and even been accused of not being very smart.

Judy Moreau: Call for the question!

Otis Nelson: You know what? This guy right here has put in a lot of time for this town and I think you guys interrupting him is extremely disrespectful and you guys ought to be ashamed. He is working for us, doing the work for us because we don't have time. He gets paid to do it, and I don't think anybody should say another word until he's through.

Ray Cyr: Thank you. I have been called a thief, a liar a crook, threatened with lawsuits. And I have been accused of not being very smart. Now, after getting a college degree and working as a manager at a couple of nuclear plants for 35 years, I'm sure that my former bosses would disagree with that analysis. In addition to the name calling, I have received very disrespectful and derogatory letters and email messages. And for what? I've never done anything personally to these people. They show no respect for us personally or for the position that we hold. When they talk to us they are usually loud and rude. They seem to relish and enjoy controversy. They spread rumors that we are spending town money foolishly, and some people actually believe them. I don't know of any past or present selectmen who didn't have the best interest of the town in mind while serving as Selectman. Selectmen spend many hours attending to town affairs. Sometimes we do things that are not quite to everyone's liking, but we were elected to make decisions for the town. We should be thankful to them instead of criticizing them. It is time that we stand up to these antagonists and put a stop to their spreading of hate. Even if you signed this petition, you should make up your mind as to whether or not to vote us back to evening hours. All that we are asking is for understanding and a little compassion to do the job at a more reasonable time of the day, when we are well rested and in a better mind set to manage the town. Don't tie our hands by approving article 45. We are trying to do the best job we can, but we need your support. It is interesting to note that all Portage households received notification by mail informing them that the School Board meeting to approve the 2010-2011 school budget was to be held on May 4, 2010. The school budget is the town's largest expenditure, yet only 5 or 6 people from Portage attended this meeting. The people from Portage in attendance voted against almost all of the proposed budget items, but we were out voted. However, had there been 30 or more people from Portage voting, just think of the message we could have sent to the school board and the school superintendent. These meetings were held at 7 o'clock in the evening. Again, I ask you to support our selectmen by voting to allow us to hold Selectmen's meetings at our discretion as allowed by our Selectmen's manual and State statutes. Thank you for listening.

Amy Collins: I would like to thank you people for doing the job you guys do. And Ray, I am going to slap your hand a little bit, here, because you made me technically an antagonist because I provided you guys with a petition. The reason why I provided a petition, which you might like to tell the town about, was because you lied to me. You told me that we were going to discuss the seaplane base here at the town meeting with the Donnie Everett episode. That did not happen, it's not in the book. That's number one. The last meeting August 19, and the meeting this morning, was not posted to the public seven days in advance. So the August 19 meeting was illegal. Is that correct or not? Okay. So this is the 9 a.m. meeting that you are talking about that you guys do your best work? We are now in a lawsuit with Donnie Everett for the seaplane base due to the 9 a.m. meetings, we are posting illegal meetings due to the 9 a.m. meetings. And the other thing that I don't agree with is that the Chairperson and Town Manager are the only two, that if I bring in a complaint, or I bring in any topic that I want to speak to the rest of the board, you are the only two who agree that this will go on the agenda? So the other two people really don't count.

Francis Grey: Isn't it illegal to identify a point of contact so things are organized, so you don't just go to anyone?
Amy Collins: I'm talking about the board itself.

Francis Grey: We are just identifying a point of contact.

Amy Collins: Right. So if I have an issue, then...

Francis Grey: I don't think he was talking about the petition you are talking about. I think he was talking about the petition about changing the selectmen's meeting times. I don't think he was trying to single you out.

Amy Collins: He said I was one of them.

Ray Cyr: I didn't say that, and in fact you are not.

Amy Collins: I would like to thank you for your job, because I used to be on the Board and I understand what it is all about. And it is a lot of hard work and frustrating. There are times when we leave work, like this morning that when I came to a non-posted meeting, for what? Oh, we made a mistake today. So you lose a few hours of work to come to a meeting that you can't do anything at, because we are doing our 9 a.m. meeting.

Danny Higgins: I want to thank the Board. I served for 15 years where you people are sitting. And it's like I explained to each of you. The first year, 50% love you, 50% hate you, the second year the 50% that hated you, they now love you. After 15 years everybody hates you. My point is, what happens when a Selectmen runs that is working?

Ray Cyr: Then you would have to go back on nights.

Danny Higgins: Do you understand my question? When I served with Christy we used to have them at night. The only other thing I have, and then I'm going to sit down, when we were at the Budget Committee, the most important thing to me...I went to see Rita for 3 years and the school figures and told her our state valuation was out of whack. I took my own time, and I went and got those figures after three trips to see that Wall Street tycoon we got. And now at the Budget Committee the town manager said that he would place his greatest emphasis on solving our most difficult problem that we have concerning the school and the misappropriation of Portage paying \$15,000 per student and Ashland paying \$3,000. The other towns are all paying \$9,000. Is that correct, sir?

Francis Grey: I believe that is an issue that is worthy of spending time working on.

Danny Higgins: I told you I would be willing to help you. Is that correct?

Francis Grey: It would be worthy of finding time to find a solution.

Danny Higgins: It is a lousy job, but somebody's got to do it. But the Appeals Board job is a lousy job too.

Barb Pitcairn: I want to thank you as well, absolutely, for the job you do, but I find it offensive that you haven't taken the town into consideration because these are the people that voted for you. It's not about you, it is about the town.

That's what you ran for. It's not about Ray, who can't stay awake past 8 o'clock.

Ray Cyr: It is about me, when somebody calls me a liar and a thief.

Barb Pitcairn: Don't accuse me of that Ray. You are the dissertation master.

Ray Cyr: People call me a liar and a thief, threaten me with lawsuits. People have sent me emails and letters that are offensive. They're the ones I'm talking about.

Barb Pitcairn: We are the working class, I care about this town, I really do. And I want to help with the school issue as well. There is something that needs to be addressed and we have options, we need to explore those options.

We're going to be defeated if we keep going the rate we are going especially next year when all of the money is gone at the state level. But you can't not listen to us, because we do care about this town and we do want to attend your meetings. And every one I've ever attended, it's always been a positive response. I just can't take the time off work to do it.

Gary Hafford: If this is voted for change, how many of you will be at our next meeting? So we will have a communication with the townspeople because you will all be here, right?

Judy Moreau: I think the selectmen do a good job, but I think the Selectmen need to have their meetings in the evening at 6:30, or if you think 6:30 is too restrictive then have it at 7. We elected 3 to serve us, am I correct? You cannot serve the people if you cannot hear the people. How many times have you been asked at the Selectmen's meetings to please change the meetings, not only by me, I believe Mrs. Robertson was one and several others who were not named, to change the meeting times so everybody can come. It is an untrue statement for anybody to say that you had better attendance in the morning than you did at night. I suggest you go back and check your Selectmen's records for the attendance list.

Ray Cyr: A lot of times there are people who attend our nighttime meetings, but then they get tired and leave, so by 8:30 or 9 o'clock we are by ourselves.

Judy Moreau: Hey, if you can't stand the heat get out of the kitchen.

Ray Chasse: I started out on the Planning Board 30 years, and I have done it all, Selectman, Budget Committee, and it's not easy to do. You aren't in it for the money, I know that.

Mike Bartlett: I have been involved both with the town of Portage and the town of Ashland., it's odd that the Selectmen in Portage would feel that way because in Ashland, the school board, the board of the Town of Ashland, all of the Ashland committees find it beneficial to hold meetings in the evening.

Ray Cyr: I attended a couple of Ashland Selectmen meetings, and they had no body in attendance.

Mike Bartlett: So what? They had the option to attend, you are preventing that option.

Jen Curran: Where are we at right now?

Greg Cyr: We are still on 44, which gives us the right to take a poll, but I am going to shut off some of the discussion on 45 because it encompasses the idea on 45. So if you have something more to say, say it now.

Amy Collins: My only question was when you were elected were the meetings at night?

Ray Cyr: Yes.

Amy Collins: So you knew that the meetings were going to be at night when you were elected, and you chose to be on the ballot to be elected with the evening meetings. It's a yes or no question.

Ray Cyr: We have the option of setting our own times, our Manual and state statutes promises to do that.

Barb Pitcairn: Well we are discussing the fact that you don't want evening hours. I want everyone to understand, what an unbinding poll means. No matter how you vote, they are not bound by it. If it was a binding poll, then they would be.

Greg Cyr: Barb, 44 doesn't ...

Barb Pitcairn: I'm talking!

Greg Cyr: I'm the chair. Sit down!

Barb Pitcairn: No! You gave me the floor, I'm talking.

Greg Cyr: I'll decide to the people what the votes mean. 44 means nothing. 45 is the important one, it is the decider.

Barb Pitcairn: 44 is unbinding.

Greg Cyr: I told you just a second ago, we are going to have the discussion about 45 now, because when we get there we are not going to repeat everything we have been saying for the last hour. 44 doesn't mean anything, you are absolutely right.

Francis Grey: We need to act on the article.

Greg Cyr: That is what I'm going to do. We will act on it, but it is a non-binding poll. If they decide to take a poll, we are going to take a poll. But if they decide not to take a poll... Yes we are going to act on it and we are going to do whatever the outcome is. But the discussion now should be centered on are you going to tell them to have their meetings in the morning, or are you going to tell them to have them at night, because that is what 45 is about, and I'm not going to let everybody have a say all over again. You are already having your say right now. That is my point.

Lou Sandy Boutot: What is the purpose of this, of 44?

Greg Cyr: I don't know why the article is in there. It's to make a poll to find out what people want, if they want morning meetings or night meetings.

Francis Grey: They are two completely different articles.

Judy Moreau: 44 is only an advisory poll for the selectmen, if the poll is in the affirmative....

Greg Cyr: If the poll is in the affirmative, it's a poll. It's a non-binding poll. Is there any other discussion? At article 45 we won't do this again. If you want to say anything about morning meetings and night meetings, say it now.

Judy Moreau: All of the other meetings that the three attend, the Housing meetings, Mr Cyr is the chairperson for that, and they are posted for 6:30. He attends the Planning Board meetings and they are at 7 o'clock. There he can get up and leave any time, at the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals meeting, but I doubt very much that he can leave his Housing meeting. So which is more important? I think what you are mad at is the petition. And we asked and asked, please change the meetings to evening meetings. I can show you in your Selectmen's minutes.

Grace Nason: I call for the vote.

Francis Grey: Can we get a secret ballot?

Greg Cyr: They voted it down. They already voted down the amendment for secret ballot. That motion was made and it was voted down.

Motion defeated.

Art. 45 To see if the Town will vote to change regularly scheduled Selectboard meetings currently being held at 9 a.m. in the morning to a more working resident friendly time of 6:30 p.m. in the evening.

Motion made in the positive, seconded.

Discussion.

Francis Grey: So they are not going to take a poll?

Greg Cyr: They are not going to take a poll.

Francis Grey: And that is what the article demands to act on?

Greg Cyr: The article demands that if they approve it but they turned it down. They turned down the taking of a poll, and now they will vote on...

Judy Moreau: **May I make an amendment for 45 please, to have it as a secret ballot? I make a motion to have a secret ballot on this article.**

Motion for secret ballot defeated.

Discussion:

Francis Grey: So you are not having any discussion on 45 at this point?

Greg Cyr: I had all the discussion on 44. Didn't you hear me?

Francis Grey: So you aren't going to allow discussion on 45?

Greg Cyr: We had it all on 44.

Francis Grey: Did you read the article?

Greg Cyr: Yes I did.

Francis Grey: So a 7 o'clock meeting is illegal?

Greg Cyr: We haven't taken a vote yet.

Francis Grey: If approved?

Greg Cyr: If approved, yes.

Francis Grey: How about 6 p.m.? Is that illegal?

Greg Cyr: The article states 6:30 p.m.

Francis Grey: So a 6 p.m. meeting is illegal, and a 7 p.m. is illegal. Isn't that overly restrictive?

Barb Pitcairn: Then amend it.

Greg Cyr: The chair will open the motion up for discussion again.

Mike Bartlett: I thought discussion was done and we were voting.

Vote on original Article 45:

In Favor: 15 Opposed: 15

Second vote:

In favor: 14 Opposed: 17

Motion defeated.

Meeting adjourned at 10:46 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Corrine Routhier
Resident of Town of Portage Lake

