

Town of Portage Lake
Annual Town Meeting Minutes
Friday March 31, 2023 at 6:30 pm
Town Hall, 20 School St.

AROOSTOOK, s.s.

STATE OF MAINE

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Town Clerk Sarah Bauzenberger. Before the meeting began, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all attending.

There were 29 resident voters and 2 non-voters present.

ART. 1 It was moved and seconded to elect Jodi Page as moderator at the March 30 Town Elections. She was unable to complete her duties as moderator, so she deputized Jordan Beaulier to moderate the open-floor portion of the meeting. Both were sworn into their respective duties.

ART. 2 Elected by secret ballot on Thursday March 30 were:
Bruce Laveway was elected Selectperson for a term of three (3) years with 31 votes. Other candidates were Richard Hoppe with 22 votes and James McAuley with 4 votes.
Leslie Rafford was elected School Board member for a term of three (3) years with 56 votes.

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

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

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

ART. 6 It was moved and seconded to allow a 2% discount on taxes paid within 30 days of the mailing date and set an interest rate of 8%, per 36 MRSA sec 505.4, on unpaid taxes 60 days after the date of tax commitment. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 7 It was moved and seconded to authorize the Tax Collector or Treasurer to accept prepayments of taxes not yet committed, pursuant to 36 M.R.S.A. Sec. 506, and to pay an interest rate of 0% on those prepayments. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 8 It was moved and seconded to authorize the Board of Selectpersons to allow the Treasurer to waive automatic lien foreclosure when a request has been made by the owner before the notice of foreclosure has been executed and it is in the best interest of the Town. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 9 It was moved and seconded to authorize the Municipal Officers to sell or dispose of tax-acquired property for all taxes, fees and interest owed in any manner which they deem to be in the best interests of the Town, after first offering the property to the previous owners, and to bring writs of entry for recovery of any parcels of land that have been acquired by the Town by reason of non-payment of taxes, the time of redemption having expired, *excepting* that the special sale process required by 36 MRSA §943-C for qualifying homestead property be used if they choose to sell it to anyone other than the former owners. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 10 It was moved and seconded to authorize the Selectboard and Treasurer, on behalf of the Town, to advertise the proposed sale of any Town acquired property and Town

owned personal property valued over \$500 under such terms and conditions as they deem advisable. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 11 It was moved and seconded to authorize the Selectpersons to appropriate \$25,000 from surplus to meet emergencies that occur during the calendar year, as they deem advisable. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 12 It was moved and seconded to accept all monies received from the Maine Department of Transportation Local Road Assistance Program for the coming year and deposit it into the Road Reserve account for future use. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 13 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$72,000 from anticipated motor vehicle excise revenue for the Road Reserve account. *Note:* Excise tax was enacted into Maine law in 1925, 36 MRS §1482. It is based on the manufacturer suggested retail price to make the tax fair for everyone. It is levied yearly and the money is typically spent on local road maintenance, construction, and repair. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 14 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$50,000 from anticipated revenue sources for the purpose of reducing the 2023 tax commitment. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 15 It was moved and seconded to appropriate \$25,000 from the 2023 Business Equipment Tax Exemption (BETE) Reimbursement for the following reserve accounts:

Revaluation Account	\$5,000
Portage Lake Fire Department Reserve Account	\$10,000
Public Works Equipment Reserve Account	\$10,000

No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 16 It was moved and seconded to appropriate 20% of the 2023 Homestead Exemption Reimbursement for a new Town Hall Improvement Reserve bank account. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 17 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$3,000 for Scholarships to be given to students graduating in June of 2023 who apply and qualify.

Discussion:

Rick Lyons: How are the students selected who receive the scholarship?

Michelle Eastman: We give a scholarship to any senior that applies from the Town.

Rick Lyons: OK.

Motion carried.

ART. 18 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$2,280 for the Designated Legal account for bring the account balance of \$5,000. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 19 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$34,197 in addition to \$2,003 carried forward for a total budget of \$36,200 for the General Administration operating account, and to allow any reimbursements and fees to be used for the same.

Discussion:

Herb McPherson: Where do they come up with that number?

Corrine Routhier: Which number?

Herb McPherson: Well, the whole amount. They carried over \$2,003, but is that just General Assistance? What is that?

Corrine Routhier: That's the office supplies, that's Selectboard, that's election workers...

Herb McPherson: Oh, I misunderstood.

Corrine Routhier: That's the general office operating account.

Motion carried.

ART. 20 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$71,426 in addition to \$13,374 carried forward for a total budget of \$84,800 for Office Staff payroll (Town Manager/Treasurer, Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk). No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 21 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$1,288 in addition to \$731 carried forward and \$4,481 from the Assessing Designated Account for a total budget of \$6,500 for Real & Personal Property Assessing and fees for Registry of Deeds, and to

allow any revenues from lien costs to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 22 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$21,486 in addition to \$1,514 carried forward for a total budget of \$23,000 for Municipal Building operating expenses and to allow the rental fees or reimbursements to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 23 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$895 in addition to \$105 carried forward for a total budget of \$1,000 for the Planning & Appeals Boards.

Discussion:

Brian Cote: Uh, Planning Board and Appeals Board, I thought that was...that's a non-paid position?

Corrine Routhier: It is, but there is also postage, and training, and supplies and other things that come out of that budget.

Brian Cote: Thank you.

Corrine Routhier: You're welcome.

Motion carried.

ART. 24 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$11,427 in addition to \$1,573 carried forward for a total budget of \$13,000 for Code Enforcement activities, and to allow permit fees, fines, and any other reimbursements to be used for the same. No Discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 25 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$12,744 in addition to \$1,256 carried forward for a total budget of \$14,000 for Discounts on taxes paid within thirty (30) days of the mailing date of tax bills, and to raise and appropriate \$435 in addition to \$1,065 carried forward for a total budget of \$1,500 for tax Abatements. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 26 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$2,350 for annual membership dues to Maine Municipal Assn., Central Aroostook Chamber of Commerce, Greater Fort Kent Chamber of Commerce and Central Aroostook Soil & Water, and to expend up to \$250 from the Designated Tourism Account for Maine Tourism Assn. dues. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 27 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$62,085 and to carry forward \$6,915 for a total budget of \$69,000 for the Insurance & Social Security account, and to allow any reimbursements or dividends to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 28 It was moved and seconded to carry forward \$5,265 for the General Assistance account and to allow any reimbursements to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 29 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$19,173 in addition to \$8,127 carried forward for a total budget of \$27,300 for the Portage Lake Fire Department operating account, and to allow any reimbursements to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 30 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$1,843 in addition to \$757 carried forward for a total budget of \$2,600 for the Animal Control operating account, and to allow any dog license fees and fines to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 31 It was moved and seconded to carry forward \$2,068 for specific State or County Police Patrol for the coming year.

Brian Cote: What am I getting for 2,068 bucks?

Barry Kenney: You're getting about 4 years of service because we appropriated \$5,000 three five ago and we've spent \$3,000.

Motion carried.

- ART. 32 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$75,069 in addition to \$7,931 carried forward and to use \$12,000 from Motor Vehicle Excise tax revenues for a total budget of \$95,000 for the Public Works operating account, and to allow any reimbursements to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 33 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$51,705 for Aroostook Valley Solid Waste Disposal District (Ashland Transfer Station). No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 34 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$875 for expenses related to the Portage Lake Transfer Station, including the annual reporting and licensing fees and maintenance of the old dump site.

Discussion:

Brian Cote: I thought we closed that?

Barry Kenney: We did, but...

Brian Cote: To have a licensing fee, is that what it is?

Barry Kenney: Correct. If we don't renew the license fee and we ever decide to fire it back up, we'll never be able to fire it back up. So, we keep it licensed.

Motion carried.

- ART. 35 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$1,395 in addition to \$2,405 carried forward for a total budget of \$3,800 for Contracted Services for grader work, excavator work and miscellaneous expenses related to this account. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 36 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$908 in addition to \$1,875 carried forward and 100% of the annual Veteran Exemption Reimbursement for a total budget of \$3,200 for the maintenance of the Portage Lake Municipal Cemetery, and to allow lot sale revenue and fees to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 37 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$333 in addition to \$1,267 carried forward for a total budget of \$1,600 for the Beautification department, and to allow any donations to be used for the same.

Discussion:

Rick Lyons: What is the Beautification Department?

Corrine Routhier: That's our flower barrels in the summer, that's our flags on Main St. Um, Christmas decorations.

Michelle Eastman: Beautiful things, Rick.

(Laughter from public)

Motion carried.

- ART. 38 It was moved and seconded to carry forward \$1,560 for the Portage Lake Recreation Department and to allow any donations to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 39 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$11,492 in addition to \$2,508 carried forward for a total budget of \$14,000 for the maintenance of the Town's Parks, Public Beach, Seaplane Base, and Pavilion, and allow revenues from rentals, donations, and other reimbursements to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 40 It was moved and seconded to carry forward \$6,200 for the maintenance and improvement of the Campground and Boat Landing, and allow revenues from camping permits, boat excise taxes and other reimbursements and donations to be used for the same. No discussion. Motion carried.
- ART. 41 It was moved and seconded to carry forward \$5,000 for continued restorations and improvements to the Seaplane Base.

Discussion:

Otis Nelson: Anything on the schedule for the summer to happen there?

Corrine Routhier: The ceilings need to be replaced inside. And potentially if we can find someone to paint the coordinates back on the roof. I'd like to do that this year. If not, next year.

Otis Nelson: Yea, I'll talk to you later on.

Brian Cote: A new windsock?

Corrine Routhier: Yup, we can do that.

Otis Nelson: Are the docks going in.

Corrine Routhier: Uh, we haven't discussed that.

Barry Kenney: If we have them, they should.

Otis Nelson: Not today.

Michelle Eastman: Not today.

Motion carried.

ART. 42 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$6,191 in addition to \$529 carried forward for a total budget of \$6,720 for street lights. No discussion. Motion carried.

ART. 43 It was moved and seconded to raise and appropriate \$84,202 for subsidy to the Town of Ashland to cover our portion of services for ambulance, recreation department, and the public library.

Discussion:

Brian Cote: Is there any way that we can divide this up separately...ambulance...make an article just for the ambulance, make an article just for recreation...

Michelle Eastman: Rec and Library?

Brian Cote: Do we have to do a lawyer thing on this, or what?

Michelle Eastman: So, the town is offering us those three subsidies in an all or nothing package.

Brian Cote: I realize that, but...

Corrine Routhier: They didn't give us the breakdown. They just gave us that total, so there wasn't a way for us to put it into three different Articles.

Brian Cote: But is there any way we can get a lawyer involved in this and have them break it down?

Michelle Eastman: Oh, we have contacted...

Brian Cote: For each Article, you know, an Article for the Library, an Article for the ambulance?

Michelle Eastman: Yea, so we reached out to a couple of lawyers that didn't want to touch it. Um, Ashland did give us some information saying that their lawyer informed them they don't have to offer us anything, so they are doing their due diligence as they see. Um, we...it's up to the town, Brian to be honest. I mean we don't know how much to appropriate for each subsidy, but if we wanted to, I suppose we could and take our gamble with them not giving us anything if we broke it up and voted things down.

Brian Cote: They just bought a brand-new ambulance, what last year? Year before last? And the amount of money that we pay is population, or maybe valuation for the town?

Michelle Eastman: We are charged by population by them for those subsidies.

Arthur Routhier: I guess my only concern...I'm not concerned with the \$85,000 per se, it's the fact that it's not broken down and at the end of the fiscal year is there carry over in any three of those? And where does that carry over go? My tax paying money shouldn't go to Ashland's general fund.

Michelle Eastman: Correct.

Arthur Routhier: And my assumption is that's where it goes.

Michelle Eastman: Arthur, that is correct. And you're not the first person to have that assumption. So, Corrine and I, well Corrine's doing the hard work...I did do a FOAA request to get some information on their town books to see if they had any carry over and where they are funneling their surplus or that carry over money, whether or not it's getting dumped into the general fund. Because they can do that without telling us, and therefore rather than that coming off the top of what we should owe the next year, it's getting used to, you know, pave their roads, or whatever. And so, unfortunately, we didn't think about this until...we just got the information two days ago. So, Corrine is working on seeing...trying to figure out from the books and the information that they gave us from the FOAA

request if our money is getting dumped into a general fund after the end of the year, if there is revenues.

Arthur Routhier: And now, to go along with this, seeing as it's only been a few days since you got the information, do we have to vote on this tonight? Can we postpone this and vote, in say, three weeks once we get the information from Ashland?

Moderator: In accordance with these guidelines, in order to postpone it you have to vote it down.

Rick Lyons: The \$84,202, what's the figure this year?

Corrine Routhier: What we paid in 2022?

Rick Lyons: Yes.

Corrine Routhier: It was a total of \$60,000-something. It's about \$23,000 more total than what we paid last year.

Rick Lyons: Ok, back to the gentleman's question, I think it would be important for us to know why a significant increase of 25%, roughly.

Michelle Eastman: That increase, I mean we don't have the cold hard facts labeled out yet, but according to the town, that increase is due to having a new hire in the ambulance department.

Corrine Routhier: Yes, higher wages and insurance costs is what they've told us.

Sandra Bartlett: Do we have anything in writing? Do we have a contract with them? Should we?

Corrine Routhier: We probably should, yes. We are working on that.

Otis Nelson: Is there any other options? What if you say "no"?

Michelle Eastman: We did look at that. So, the biggest problem is the ambulance, correct? You know, we have to have an ambulance. We can't not have ambulance service. We did call Fort Kent to see if they could offer us ambulance service because they would be the next closest municipality with a hospital. They did say they could offer us ambulance service, but there is a process. So, we actually have to apply to the state in order to go with a different ambulance service. The State has to approve it, and based on geographic location that's our concern, is that the state will say "no" because we have an ambulance service that is 15 miles versus 30 miles.

Arthur Routhier: Have we kept track over the last four or five years their response time from Ashland? I've called several times for the Mill, and I can drive to Ashland in 15 minutes driving the speed limit and it was 45 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes for a man with a smashed his foot. Do we keep track of their response time?

Michelle Eastman: So, I did call, but not for response time, Arthur. Um, I did ask how many runs they have done, so if anyone wants that information, I can give you that. In 2022 they did 45 runs, in 2021 they did 36 runs, and there is no data from any years prior because of a different ambulance head, I guess. But I didn't ask about response time, but I do agree that their response time is about 45 minutes to an hour.

Arthur Routhier: Well, if the State has a problem with us going to Fort Kent...Fort Kent is only, at best, what a 14-mile difference?

Michelle Eastman: And they did give us a response time of ...

Corrine Routhier: It would be approximately 45 minutes if we went with Fort Kent. Fort Kent will require us to have at least two, um, first responders.

Michelle Eastman: In our town, thought

Corrine Routhier: To cover the time for when the ambulance leaves Fort Kent and gets here.

Otis Nelson: That would probably be a challenge, though, because everybody works.

Corrine Routhier: They would be paid by the ambulance service.

Steve Dempster: Does that take into account, say from Portage to Ashland, if the ambulance comes out here, they are going to Presque Isle.

Michelle Eastman: Afterwards, yes.

Steve Dempster: So, you're looking at a lot further distance for a person...

Michelle Eastman: So, we did not apply to the State to change ambulance services, because we wanted to obviously see what you guys had to say tonight. So, we don't know if they will say "no".

They might say, “fine” because the hospital is the same distance, like you’re saying. Um, in fact the hospital in Fort Kent is probably closer.

Arthur Routhier: Ok, now if we did vote for this this evening, give them the \$85,000, is that a contractual thing, or—if we did go to the state and three months down the road the State says “we’ll allow you to take Fort Kent”, can we request a check from Ashland saying we’re done with your services and we want our money back and we’re going to go with Fort Kent?

Corrine Routhier: It’s not contractual, I mean if we...

Arthur Routhier: If it’s not contractual we should...this is an annual bill, correct?

Corrine Routhier: We are in their service license area, which is why.... why we pay their ambulance service. So, if we went to Fort Kent, we would be on Fort Kent’s license so we would pay them the fee. I mean, we would be paying a fee to an ambulance service regardless.

Arthur Routhier: Oh, I understand that, but if three months down the road from this evening, Ashland gets our business, and Fort Kent says we are allowed to do it and can take you on as a client. Can we request a reimbursement from Ashland and go with Fort Kent? Is there a contract on Portage and Ashland?

Michelle Eastman: There’s no contract, Arthur, but when we did look at switching, it could take up to a year for all of that to happen and we need an ambulance. So even if we decide tonight, like if the consensus in the room is “please continue to look forward, we are not opposed to the idea of having you do it through Fort Kent” and we proceed with that, it can take up to a year to get that approval through the State, is what we are saying. So...

Corrine Routhier: It wouldn’t happen this year.

Michelle Eastman: It wouldn’t happen in a month, unfortunately.

Fred Jacobs: Have they ever looked into, like, a per diem set up? I know that Caribou’s had that with some of the area towns, where they had not a full contract for full service, but they charged a flat rate for every call.

Corrine Routhier: That’s kind of what we’ve got.

Fred Jacobs: So, we are paying the \$84 and we are pay for each run?

Corrine Routhier: No, no, no, that’s part of those. The run is...that’s what we pay, it’s based on their budget.

Michelle Eastman: It’s based on the population of the town, so that’s kind of per diem. It’s per person. Like, they take their whole budget and they divide it by the census numbers for all the towns they service and they come up with a number of \$50 a person. Then they use our census number, 359, and they multiply that by whatever it is, \$50 or \$60—they won’t tell us the rate, though. Which, if we did the work, I’m sure we could figure it out. Um, and that’s how we get our total.

Tammy Kenney: If we had Fort Kent, and we had to have the EMTs that are local trained, does Fort Kent do that training?

Corrine Routhier: Yes.

Catherine Hackett: Um, does Fort Kent also have paramedics and ACLS? Because, I mean it might be a difference of the type of care that’s available, too. You don’t want to, you know, contract with Fort Kent and not have that same level of care. I know Ashland has that, the ACLS and the paramedics, and the flights out of TAMC. I don’t know if Fort Kent has that.

Corrine Routhier: Fort Kent does have paramedics because he, he said they would train our First Responders, and if those First Responders wanted to further their education and become paramedic or EMT or whatever, they would also pay for that training as long as they worked for them for a certain number of years. Um, so they do have that and they’ve got two or three...at least two rigs, um, full time staff. Part of the problem with Ashland’s response time is they don’t have the staff, or they claim they don’t have the staff, so if the crew is out already with their rig, Presque Isle is their “on-call” so we are waiting for the rig to come from Presque Isle. Which we don’t know until they show up. We’re not told, you know the people who are calling aren’t told “hey, the Ashland rig is in Oxbow so you have to

wait for the guys to come from Presque Isle”. That’s part of the response time issue with Ashland. They are not always at the base; if they were at the base it would be, you know, fifteen minutes.

Otis Nelson: When’s the last time the Town looked at having their own ambulance service?

Corrine Routhier: Oh, you don’t want to get into that.

Brian Cote: Food for thought, it’s called the Golden Hour. Fort Kent is going to be a minimum of one hour. Ashland is going to be a maximum of 45 minutes to an hour and a half. So, just something to think about.

Corrine Routhier: Well, that’s why...that’s why Fort Kent says if we are going to go with them, they are going to require us to have at least one, if not two, um, First Responders in town to cover.

Richard Hoppe: I think, I really believe, this is a type of blackmail that Ashland is doing here. There is no way on Earth to have all of this lumped in, one shot. That’s ridiculous. We should be able to divide that up. Obviously, emergency, we need that. We need an ambulance. But the recreation and library...come on. Now, how many people will use the library over a year? How about a card system?

Michelle Eastman: There’s 36 library cards. Thirty-six residents have library cards for the town of Ashland.

Corrine Routhier: There isn’t a membership fee.

Richard Hoppe: So, in the Town of Ashland, there are 36 people who have cards?

Michelle Eastman: Thirty-six Portage.

Richard Hoppe: Ok. So, I really believe that...I understand they’ve got some consultants or some lawyers involved in this, but what is with them telling Ashland—I mean, they’re part of MMA, too.

Michelle Eastman: Correct.

Richard Hoppe: And, let’s look into perhaps, uh, you know we may have to get another lawyer, somebody that knows a little more about this, that has dealt with town governments.

Michelle Eastman: We’re working on it. We’re trying, um, to find a lawyer, that A., has information on this. Like, you know, expertise in this area and that will take it on. So, that is something we are working on. We’ve outsourced, we’ve looked into, we’re researching some more trying to find one to give us some information.

Richard Hoppe: If you consider the percentage of the recreation and the library, I mean that’s quite a bit. That’s astronomical for us for what they are offering. And is it a public library?

Michelle Eastman: Yes

Otis Nelson: And public rec department. Uh, I mean it sounds like the Town’s got you over a proverbial barrel. You ain’t got any option.

Barry Kenney: To quote one lawyer, he said it’s unethical but it’s not illegal.

Otis Nelson: And they are within their legal rights to do that? I mean, seriously, if you don’t get approval what’s the option? You’re not going to have an ambulance, you’re not going to have a rec department for the students in Ashland, and you’re not going to have a library.

Michael Violette: I had a question about the carry over when you look at last year’s budget, their budget, in their Articles...

Michelle Eastman: That’s what I have.

Barry Kenney: The trouble is, they don’t carry a town book like ours. It’s all in their constitution. So, they can... we carry forward our budgets, and they don’t carry forward—if you look at their town book—they don’t carry forward anything. Anything that’s carry forward goes into their general account and they start over from scratch on all of their Warrant Articles. That’s how they do it. I’m not saying it’s right.

Michelle Eastman: We tried to figure this out using their Town Book and numbers from last year, and we couldn’t. And that is when the FOAA request came in to place, because we realized based on their town book we didn’t have enough information.

Arthur Routhier: Seeing as how we are paying toward this, toward the Ashland funds, can we ask for an open audit to be done? Even if we have to pay for it?

Michelle Eastman: Isn’t it different? Because I brought that up, didn’t I say have the auditors...

Corrine Routhier: It's a forensic audit, you would have to still...

Arthur Routhier: A forensic audit? I mean, I'd pay for half of it out of my own pocket!

Otis Nelson: Is this something that...I mean I'm not saying that they'll ever push the issue. Ashland could call up and say we're no longer offering the services, good day. Then what do you do?

Corrine Routhier: The thing with that, though, is Ashland keeps saying "you have 30 days". There's a process, like when we talked about going with Fort Kent? There's a 30-day public hearing process. Just the public hearing for the residents of both towns to give their back and forth of what they think. Then it goes to the State, and we know how long the State takes for a lot of things. So, it isn't gonna be a 30-day thing.

Michelle Eastman: For the ambulance.

Corrine Routhier: For the ambulance.

Michelle Eastman: They can cut us out of the Rec and the Library tomorrow, if they wanted to.

Corrine Routhier: But the ambulance, they can't just say "you're not getting ambulance service in 30 days".

Tammy Kenney: Even when we refuse it?

Corrine Routhier: If we are part of their license, they cannot.

James McAulay: Just point of information, I've used their ambulance twice in the last few years. Even though my insurance paid it, the fees for the ambulance from Cottage Road to Presque Isle was only \$1,800. Ok? And that was a full-blown emergency, in the middle of winter and everything else. And if you divide that \$1,800 as an average into what we paid and what they charged us, you're gonna get an average cost of whatever runs they had last year. That's number one. Number two, I think right now, we need to get you as a Selectboard—and I'll make a motion to the effect—if we approve this tonight with the contingency that you continue researching a better means of doing business.

Otis Nelson: Well, that's in the works.

Kathy Hoppe: Can we amend this so that we approve raising the funds, and that would allow...so it doesn't dedicate it to Ashland but it allows the board...It raises the money at the town meeting to go to ambulance service and possibly the other things, and allows the Selectmen to continue to work on finding a solution. So, we aren't tied to Ashland, but we've raised the money.

Corrine Routhier: I don't think you can change what it's going for.

Kathy Hoppe: It's not changing what it's going for, but to who. We would raise the money for ambulance, recreation and whatever, but we are...

Corrine Routhier: I think the cleanest way to do it, is if you don't want to do Ashland then vote it down and we'll have another town meeting. Or, vote this in and we'll go with Ashland this year. We already planned on looking at...We are in the process of talking to...of finding other solutions. So, it's not like we are going to forget about it tomorrow. It's something we are already working on.

Kathy Hoppe: I just thought I'd give you ammunition by saying "The Town has already raised the money, but we didn't say we had to work with you!"

Corrine Routhier: But the other side of it, if any of you are worried about, like, this really affecting how our mil rate is gonna go up or down, or whatever, it's minimal. The extra \$23,000...our mil rate is probably going to go up but not astronomically. So, you know, if that's what everybody... if that's another concern of people that this went up by so much and are taxes going to go up by so much. It's not.

Kathy Hoppe: It's the principle

Corrine Routhier: It's the principle of the thing, yeah.

James McAulay: I think, and I'm speaking for myself, if you have decent insurance, some of your insurance for Senior Citizens like Medicare will pick up a lot of those fees. Because they tried to bill me after the fact for another \$1,000. I don't think the Town should be held liable for those that they can't collect. And I can speak from past experience that you've been over charged by three times of what you should be.

Herb McPherson: But this stipend that we give the Town of Ashland, that doesn't cover their per-call to each individual. You still have to pay that no matter who you are. So, this lump sum here is just to have the service here in town. You're still gonna have that \$1,800 bill. That has nothing to do with this money that we're raising tonight.

Otis Nelson: Yeah, this here is like equipment, insurance, payroll. That's got nothing to do with the actual call.

James McAulay: But it's all factored into that.

Michelle Eastman: But it should be. So that's why we did the FOIA request. Because for example, any revenue that they get for the ambulance should go into the ambulance fund and then be used to lower the budget the following year. Just like we put in our town books "and any revenue". So, for example, if they made \$1,800 off of "every run they made to Portage", well even if we rounded that down to \$1,000, they had 45 runs last year in 2022. So, revenue of \$45,000. So, we are trying to find where that is going in Ashland books to figure out if they are taking the revenue and just dumping into their General Account. Or, because their books are as laid out as us, are they subtracting all of their revenue and saying they have a budget of "X" and dividing it. That's what's not clear. We don't know if they are using the revenue the way it should be used or if it's going somewhere else.

Motion carries.

ART. 44 Motion made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$2,942 in addition to \$100 carried forward for a total budget of \$3,042 for the following requested financial social services assistance:

American Red Cross	\$500
Aroostook Agency on Aging	\$300
Aroostook County Action Program	\$144
Ashland Food Pantry	\$500
Catholic Charities of Maine	\$100
Homeless Services of Aroostook	\$538.50
Life Flight Foundation	\$359
Maine Families Aroostook	\$200
Maine Public Broadcasting Corp.	\$100
Martha & Mary's Food Kitchen	\$100
Northern Maine Veteran's Cemetery	\$200

Discussion:

Brian Cote: Does the American Red Cross say "I need \$500"? Does the Northern Maine Veteran's Cemetery say "I need \$200"?

Corrine Routhier: These are all requested from them.

James McAulay: That's what my concern with ACAP, because I know there's a lot of people in the community who receive a lot more than \$100.

Corrine Routhier: ACAP does it on per capita, so that was their request.

Motion carries.

ART. 45 Motion made and seconded to appropriate \$1,000 from anticipated boat excise tax revenue for the Town's share of matching funds for the Portage Lake Association's cost share grant to aid in the identification and education of invasive aquatic plants in, or on, Portage Lake.

Discussion:

Fred Jacobs: Are there just new signs, is that what this is for?

Corrine Routhier: No, they get a grant every year to help stem... Well, Jim, can you help answer that?

James McAulay: Yes. We get a grant from, I forget what it is now, probably from Island Fisheries, I believe what it's called, who helped us with the signs. So, we take them up and put them down every season.

Corrine Routhier: But it's not just for the signs. I think he's talking about what the money is going for.

James McAulay: Oh, I'm sorry. The money is goes partial for our education because we have to train other people to monitor and do boat inspections that we don't get reimbursed from through that grant. Motion carries.

ART. 46 Motion made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$2,500 for the Portage Lake Historical Society (pursuant to Title 30A, Ch 223, Sub Ch. 4, §5726(6)). No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 47 Motion made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$2,500 for the Portage Lake Snowmobile Club for the purpose of aiding in the maintenance of local snowmobile trails for public use, and to pay to the Portage Lake Snowmobile Club all snowmobile fees reimbursed to the Town from the State of Maine in the coming year. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 48 Motion made and seconded to raise and appropriate \$2,500 for the Portage Lakers ATV Club for aiding in the maintenance of the local ATV trail system for public use.

Discussion:

Fred Jacobs: Is there a reason the ATV fees aren't added on like they are on snowmobile?

Corrine Routhier: Yes, because the State doesn't give ATV fees back.

Fred Jacobs: Ok.

Corrine Routhier: And when they start doing it, then we'll pass it on.

Motion carries.

ART. 49 Motion made and seconded to compensate the Portage Lake School Board members at a rate of \$25 per member for each meeting that they attend, and to raise and appropriate \$300 for that purpose. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 50 Motion made and seconded to appropriate up to \$1,000 from Surplus for the renovation of the small bathroom in the Manager's office at the Town Hall. No discussion. Motion carries.

ART. 51 Motion made and seconded to appropriate up to \$7,000 from Surplus to refurbish the "Welcome to Portage Lake" signs on Route 11.

Discussion:

James McAulay: Are we renovating the signs that exist or are we putting signs in like Nashville Plantation, Ashland, and a few others around the area.

Corrine Routhier: IT will look different than the one that's there, but it will still say "Welcome to Portage". It incorporates what's there and it will have the Town logo on it.

Motion carries.

ART. 52 Motion made and seconded appropriate up to \$8,000 from Surplus to build a lean-to off of the Town's sand shed for storage of Public Works and Parks equipment.

Discussion:

Otis Nelson: Have any dimensions or anything been drawn up for the build on that?

Corrine Routhier. No. Because there's too much snow.

Otis Nelson: Well, \$8,000 ain't gonna go very far.

Corrine Routhier: Well, it will do what we need to do this year.

Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned at 7:24 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Corrine Routhier