

Cont. From Page 1

New Leadership, financial limitations, voted in at Passadumkeag annual meeting

By Ben Melkejohn

PASSADUMKEAG -- The residents of Passadumkeag voted in a new selectman and added financial limitations to the selectboard's authority, at the annual town meeting held March 30.

The Passadumkeag annual town meeting got off to a delayed start as officials tried to determine if the town meeting could begin without a quorum of the selectboard.

Second Selectman Bernie Trombley was the only selectman in attendance at 6 p.m. and Trombley announced to the audience that he was informed Third Selectman Jana Spencer would not be attending and First Selectman Brad McKechnie was on his way but would be 20 minutes late.

Trombley thanked the residents for attending and asked for their patience in waiting. Town Clerk Michelle Share stated that she wasn't sure if the town meeting could legally proceed without a selectboard quorum.

After consulting with Elizabeth Bickford, who was present to serve as a moderator for the town meeting, and who confirmed that she has been part of town meetings in other towns that proceeded with only one selectperson in attendance, Trombley reported to the audience that the meeting would commence.

Elizabeth Bickford, also known as "Betty," was chosen to be the town's moderator.

Share then announced the results of the election for the third selectman position, held by incumbent Spencer, which was held earlier in the day.

No candidates had petitioned to get their names on the ballot and the election was determined entirely by 66 write-in votes.

Chandler Seavey won the election and accepted the position, with 27 votes cast in his favor. Runner-up Elizabeth Batista received 24 votes, Jana Spencer, 6 votes, Kenton Crosby, 3, and Sergio Batista, Lee Dudley, Blaine Marston, Charles Mattram, Sr. and Nicholas Otis each receiving one vote.

In a discussion of Article 9, which asked residents to "authorize municipal officers to receive funds (grants, gifts, donations, etc.) to be used for the purpose stated or if there was no purpose stated, used to offset the mill rate," a motion to amend the article to add at the end, the language, "up to a limit of \$2,500," was approved.

The main article as amended was then also approved.

The residents also voted in a split vote, after significant discussion about the impact of the decision, to favor "a change in the town's fiscal year from the current Feb. 1 to Jan. 30 fiscal year to a July 1 to June 30 fiscal year."

McKechnie said it "would be so much easier" if the town's fiscal year aligned with the fiscal year of other agencies the town works with.

Share noted that the fire district, school district, county and state all work with a July to June fiscal year.

McKechnie said trying to plan the town's budget for the next year without yet knowing what the town will owe to the school and fire districts, makes for a guessing game in budget planning.

Expenditures approved at the town meeting include:

- \$18,000 for capital outlay.
- \$5,000 for Gould's Ridge Cemetery.
- \$161,608 for general government.
- \$10,738 for planning board.
- \$283,400 for public works.
- \$12,400 for social services.
- \$60,000 for waste management.

Notably absent from this year's listings of articles for approval by voters, were articles asking residents for approval of the Central Maine Highlands Fire and EMS District No. 1 tax, and Penobscot County tax.

Central Maine Highlands Fire and EMS District No. 1 is the only taxing agency in the state that can directly increase property taxes without residents having any democracy-based interventions to reign in directors and their taxing authority.

The Penobscot County budget is set by county commissioners who are directly elected by the people. The School Administrative District 31 budget is set by directors

who are also directly elected by the people; as well, the budget must also be approved by a referendum vote of the people.

Last year, all towns in the fire district except Burlington and Enfield, allowed their residents to vote on an article to approve the fire district budget, leaving residents of Burlington and Enfield as the only residents in the state who had their property taxes increased with zero opportunity to register consent or disapproval of the tax via an election of an official or vote on a budget.

Fire District President Bob Genest, who is the fire director for Enfield, vowed last year that he would make sure towns in the district did not allow residents to vote on the fire budget in 2026.

With the exception of Lowell, which did allow residents to discuss and vote on the fire budget, and the county tax, at their annual meeting this year, Genest has largely succeeded in expanding the number of towns in the state who are powerless to a taxing authority that they can neither elect nor vote to approve funding for. Burlington, Enfield, Maxfield and now, Passadumkeag, host the only residents in the state who can be taxed by an agency without any recourse to vote out, or vote in support of, directors, or vote down, or vote in support of, a budget.

Last year, Passadumkeag and Maxfield residents voted unanimously to support the fire budget, raising the question of why fire directors feel it so important to deprive their voters of an opportunity to cast their votes on the fire district's budget.

The next meeting of the Passadumkeag Selectboard, which will be the first board meeting for newly-elected Third Selectman Chandler Seavey, is scheduled to occur April 2 at 6 p.m. at the Passadumkeag Town Office.

able and stressful," wrote Quinella in her resignation letter. "I do know a little bit about stress as a 20-year U.S. Navy retiree who was deployed twice during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. I don't believe councilors should be using social media to discuss employees and their plans to get rid of certain employees.

"I have felt overwhelmed over the last few years and with the current workload and added stress coming due to the attitude of certain members of the council, I felt that I need to step down."

"I have accepted a position that better fits my needs."

Quinella offered to assist the town with its budget development as an hourly-paid consultant "to ensure a smooth transition for the town."

Quinella said she will not be available to attend budget workshops or hearings.

Cont. From Page 1

es, failing to provide the 13-day newspaper notice can result in the vote being declared legally void by a court."

Smith also wrote in the letter, "Improper notification makes any vote null and void and if I have to, I will ask the Superior Court in Bangor to overturn it, unless we do this the correct way."

"I think it dishonest to move against the planning board knowing I was abroad and unable to represent the planning board and its efforts. This is old school thinking and I will have none of this, we all took oaths to do this the correct way."

Robinson said the town's attorney, who is located in Houlton, referred the town to attorney Timothy Pease, in Bangor, to save the town from having to pay the cost of travel from Houlton to Bangor. Robinson reported that he attended a workshop session of the Lincoln Town Council held the night before, and was assured by town officials, including Town Manager Dennis Bullens and several councilors, that the town would honor the three-year contract between the two towns for fire and emergency medical services.

The Lincoln Town Council had earlier in March, discussed a proposal to increase how much Lincoln would charge Chester and Winn for the services, despite that Lincoln is already party to a three-year contract with Winn.

Robinson said Lincoln Council Chair Stephen Clay told him, "We're going to honor the contract, we're not going to bail on you. We're not going to do that. We have a legitimate contract with you folks for three years and we're not going to disturb that."

nd Style Shop

n Road, Lincoln

and 34 years experience

Men's haircuts: \$14.00

Perm: \$65.00 and up / at 794-6061



**Searching for a plumber?
Check out our classified section!**



CARL E. STAPLES

CES Insurance Solutions Inc.
A Helping Hand with your Medicare Plan

Prescriptions and copays too high?

**CALL TODAY FOR A REVIEW!
207-754-0880**

Currently, I represent 6 organizations which offer 54 products
In your area. You can always contact Medicare.gov, 1-800-MEDICARE, or
your local State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) for help with plan choices.



Edmund "Tate"

Ayward formerly of CWA & Lake Street Real Estate is now affiliated with True North Realty Inc. here in the Lincoln office. I can be reached on my cell phone (207) 794-4208 or by email at tate@cwalakestreet.com. Please keep me in mind for all of your real estate service needs.