

Passadumkeag talks new town office, comprehensive plan and GOP caucus

By Ben Meiklejohn

PASSADUMKEAG – The Passadumkeag Board of Selectmen discussed renovations of the town's former fire station into a new town office, the development of a comprehensive plan and the Republican caucus, at a Jan. 15 meeting.

The board approved opening an account with Lincoln Maine Federal Credit Union. Treasurer Barb Boyer said she requested the action to open up other opportunities for investment.

Third Selectman Jana Spencer reported that renovations of the town's former fire station, which is being repurposed as a new town office building, is underway and the plumbing and concrete contractors are coordinating their work together.

"That project is moving, like now, like, bang, bang, bang," Spencer said.

The fiscal year 2027 budget is also in development, Spencer said. She then asked attending members of the newly formed planning board how much they would be requesting in the budget to fund development of a comprehensive plan.

Planning Board Chair Sergio Batista reported that the planning board had met with Hope Eye, a regional planner and community impact specialist for Eastern Maine Development Corporation, about the process of developing a comprehensive plan. The corporation can facilitate – for a price – a complete process for establishing a town's comprehensive plan.

Batista said he inquired of Eye as to whether the town could do most of the work, format information into a template the corporation has already created for other towns, and then provide the comprehensive plan draft to the corporation to review and submit to the state – at a pro-rated cost to what the corporation would charge to oversee the full process.

"She agreed to that, or she has implied such," Batista said. "She said she would talk to her boss. They agreed to that, if we do the bulk of the work."

Batista said EMDC can take a year and a half, or more, to devise a comprehensive plan for a town.

"As you know, it doesn't go quickly," he added.

It was suggested by planning board members to the board of selectmen that the town utilize a diversity of forums to promote public meetings. Spencer said she would apply for a grant from Maine Municipal Association to get a digital sign for placement by the town office.

Batista said, "Looking at what is available and not saying we do it – but what EMDC was charging, would pay for itself, just in the grants we'd be eligible for."

"But the reality is, you know, the size of this town – (We) don't have that type of money, so we get it and pull it wherever ourselves and go forward."

"In a short period of time, you've come a long way," said Spencer.

"Like I said, we can't do anything unless we have a comprehensive plan," said Batista.

Spencer reported that the Central Maine Highlands Fire and EMS District No. 1 Board of Directors had discussed at their meeting the week before, trying to purchase the fire station building from the town of Howland.

At the end of the meeting, Spencer promoted that a municipal caucus for Passadumkeag Republicans would be held in Medway on Feb. 21 at 1 p.m. at the Medway Middle School.

"We now have a Passadumkeag Republican caucus," she said. "I mean, I'm a Republican, so I have to do it that way. We could have a Democratic one, but I won't be running that, clearly."

Spencer said she is rooting for Leo Kenney, the Republican candidate for State Senate District 8.

"He is a family man, that's the best way to put that," she said at the end of the selectboard meeting. "He's just common-sense people. I just don't want to put such issues in government that shouldn't be in government – like cat boxes in schools. Like, that shouldn't be a government issue."

Continuing to proselytize for the Republican cause at a public meeting of town government, Spencer said, "Anybody that wants to join the Republican cause, let me know, because the more people we can get together, the more chance that we actually have a vote in Augusta," referring to the Republican Party state convention being held in Augusta in April, at which Passadumkeag is entitled to have five town Republicans attending as delegates.

"We have potential of five people that can go and vote for these things," she said. "If we don't have the people to go, we don't have the vote when we're in Augusta, so that's one of the only reasons I'm rallying troops. We have to have our ideas heard at the state level."

"Think about Massachusetts making all our laws, like everybody in the southern end of the state – that's where all our laws are coming from. Have you seen the new one about how you're going to have to dim your lights? ... Why would they want to control my lights? So, that's your outside light on your barn – you'll have to turn that down, man."

The law, which recently became enacted without Gov. Janet Mills' signature, does not apply to residential properties. The law requires any nonessential outdoor lighting on public properties – lighting that is not intended to improve safety, such as advertisements, signage illumination or landscape lighting – to meet certain dimming standards if installed or replaced after Oct. 1.

"They'll want it for everywhere," Spencer added.

Lowell board discusses road issues, fire district representative steps down

By Trish Aldrich

The Lowell Town Board of Selectmen met on Jan. 13. They first discussed old business. In summary: The office staff is still working on detailed 2023 tax payments. There is a lawyer looking into a foreclosed property and a realtor is having a title company work on the property at 4 Preble Rd. They are still waiting for information about the photocopyer contract.

Then it was on to new business. There was an issue brought up about the Escutarsis Rd. and the Tannery Rd. Road Commissioner Ray Champion was in attendance and able to answer the questions. The issue with the Escutarsis Rd. involved the part the town maintains which is approximately 1/2 mile. The turnaround for the plow truck is past where the town has to maintain so there is extra plowing and sanding to get to the turnaround. After some discussion, selectman Brian Moura introduced the Map Viewer tool on the Department of Transportation website. It shows the extent and width of town roads. Further

discussion included where the trucks could turn around and the difficulty they have been having. Ray said he would be able to sand the spot on the Tannery Rd. until a workable solution is found.

Selectman Brian Moura then announced his intention to step down as the fire district representative. He nominated Mike Gostin as a replacement and asked for a vote. The vote was taken and Mike was approved as the new representative. Brian mentioned that he is also secretary of the fire board so they voted in Elizabeth Pelkey to replace him there. Kerry McIntyre, sexton for the town, was in attendance at the meeting and offered to be an alternate on the board and was so appointed.

They went on to discuss the budget and the changes that needed to be made. It was suggested that a meeting be held before the budget meeting to discuss operational costs. A question was asked about the planning board. The resident wanted to know if the board could revert to three members if no candidates are found. It was confirmed that there is a person interested in the planning board position. The meeting concluded with a motion to adjourn that was seconded.

Lincoln's new ambulance close to service-readiness

By Ben Meiklejohn

LINCOLN – Lincoln Fire Department Capt. Ken Goslin reported to Lincoln News on Monday that the department responded to four fire and 21 emergency medical service calls in the previous week, of little newsworthiness.

"It's feast or famine, it seems," said Goslin.

The department's new ambulance has been lettered with department branding and is now in the process of being licensed by the state and outfitted with equipment, said the captain.

Goslin said in addition to being inspected and registered through the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, EMS vehicles must also be licensed by the Board of Emergency Medical Services, another state agency.

The captain mentioned that the department recently received a used police cruiser – a hand-me-down from the Lincoln Police Department, which can be used

as transportation for trainings.

Goslin said the department could allow staff to drive the car to trainings or for other non-service events, instead of reimbursing staff for mileage for using their personal calls.

A pickup truck the department owns can't be used for non-service trips because the truck has a plow and can be used to transport a fire boat or utility task vehicle, which may be needed for operational purposes in responding to a call, Goslin noted.

"(The car) gives us more options as far as getting people around without limiting ourselves," he said.

Once the ambulance is equipped with radio and lights, grab bars and hardware for a stretcher, and the license obtained by the Board of EMS, the ambulance will be put into service officially, said Goslin – a process that make take several weeks to complete.

Where to Turn to for Help in Navigating Financial Challenges

(StatePoint) Managing your finances can be challenging, especially when you're not sure where to turn for help.

Darlene Goins, head of Philanthropy and Community Impact at Wells Fargo, shares practical tips and lesser-known resources for taking the next step forward at various stages in your financial life.

What's happening: You need guidance and funding to launch your small business.

What you can do now: Securing capital can be especially challenging if you don't qualify for a traditional bank loan. A Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) can help. These specialized lenders provide financing to small businesses, organizations and individuals, and are suited to helping new busi-

ness ideas get off the ground. CDFIs offer such options as term loans, lines of credit, credit cards and real estate financing. Many also provide consulting, coaching, education, connections and financial planning at low or no cost.

Certified by the U.S. Treasury, CDFIs raise low-cost capital through grants and low-interest funds provided by the government and banks like Wells Fargo. The more than 1,000 CDFIs nationwide collectively manage over \$436 billion. Wells Fargo has a long-standing commitment of supporting CDFIs through philanthropic grants and investments that help extend capital to businesses nationwide. CDFI matching services available through the Small Business Resource Navigator are made possible by a dona-

tion from Wells Fargo to Community Reinvestment Fund, USA.

What's happening: You received notice of a rent increase.

What you can do now: Don't assume you have to accept a rent increase. If you're a responsible tenant with a solid rental history, you may have more negotiating power than you think. The best time to start the conversation is one to two months before your lease renewal. Come prepared with research on comparable rental rates, a list of your strengths as a tenant, and a clear ask – such as a lower monthly rate, a longer lease or added amenities. A respectful, well-prepared conversation could lead to tangible savings.

The Wells Fargo Foundation provides grant funding to organi-

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