

nexed to the town in 1997. A piece of formerly unorganized territory, called Township 2, Range 8, North of the Penobscot River, was annexed by Chester from the state in 1997, adding 8,100 acres to the town's jurisdiction. The annexed land includes a stretch of Access Road adjacent to Interstate-95, which planning board members noted would be an appropriate commercial zone.

Stacy Benjamin, chief planner for the Land Use Planning Commission of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, attended the meeting to provide direction to the planning board on how to get land use regulatory authority over the annexed land transferred from the state to the town.

Benjamin explained at the meeting that a "local land use program has to be not less protective than (the state's), which is why we're

for that area is not less protective than what we had it zoned for.

"That doesn't mean you can't make adjustments and change it and rezone things for development that you want. It just means, particularly for natural resources protection, any wetlands and water bodies, any significant habitats – you have similar protections."

Benjamin further explained that before the commissioner would approve transferring land use authority to the town, the town has to adopt a land use ordinance, zoning maps and a comprehensive plan.

Second Selectman Steven Neff said the town had fulfilled all those requirements but had not submitted the zoning maps to the state.

"And that got sent in, but now the (comprehensive) plan has expired," he said.

Benjamin referred the board to

adopted by residents at a town meeting are more important to the effort than a comprehensive plan, noting that although the town's comprehensive plan is old, "comp plans don't technically expire."

"If you adopt the state minimum from the zoning, you would have to have similar protections to all of these wetlands and water bodies as we do," she added.

After the presentation, planning board members Ellen Caron, Anthony Duhaine and Dewayne Lane discussed their plan to review the comprehensive plan to update it with the town's zoning ordinances. The members discussed coming in early to their next meeting on Feb. 3, to fully review the plan and suggest edits to it.

The Chester Planning Board's next meeting is scheduled to occur Feb. 3 at 6 p.m. at the Chester Town Office.

## Passadumkeag board prepares work for town's first comprehensive plan

By Ben Meiklejohn

PASSADUMKEAG – At a Jan. 8 meeting of the Passadumkeag Planning Board, the newly appointed group focused on the long-term effort of developing the town's first comprehensive plan.

Board Chair Sergio Batista noted in an email to Lincoln News that many state grant and funding programs rely on a comprehensive plan as a basic eligibility requirement "for municipal projects related to housing, land use, infrastructure and community development."

"Beyond eligibility, the plan provides a framework for making thoughtful, locally-driven decisions about the board's future," Batista said.

Hope Eye, senior regional plan-

ner for Eastern Maine Development Corporation was invited to speak to the board about services available to communities undertaking comprehensive planning.

"We felt it was important to learn more about whether their services would be a good fit for Passadumkeag," said Batista.

The board reviewed at the meeting possible timelines and costs of implementing a comprehensive plan.

"Community involvement remains central to the planning board's work," Batista said. "Members are looking ahead to the work of shaping a plan that reflects the needs and priorities of the town."

The planning board recently filled the two open alternate posi-

tions.

"The planning board wants to hear directly from residents about what matters most to them and what they feel is needed to support Passadumkeag moving forward," added Batista. "Community input will be a vital part of the comprehensive plan process and future public outreach opportunities are currently being developed."

Residents interested in the process, or in contributing ideas, may contact the planning board at [passadumkeagplanboard@outlook.com](mailto:passadumkeagplanboard@outlook.com), or attend a future meeting of the planning board, which meets on the second Thursday of the month, the next of which is scheduled to occur Feb. 12 at 6 p.m. at Passadumkeag Town Office.

## Lincoln man arrested for felony charge, eluding officer

By Ben Meiklejohn

LINCOLN – Lincoln Police Department Detective Stewart Jacobs informed Lincoln News on Monday that an arrest was made Jan. 8 regarding an incident involving a crashed vehicle.

Jacobs said William Wise, 56, of Lincoln, was charged with eluding an officer, a Class C felony, criminal operating under the influence, a Class D crime, and operating with a suspended or revoked license and speeding 30 or more miles per hour above the

speed limit, both Class E crimes.

Jacobs said Wise was observed at Big Apple Store on Fleming Street, intoxicated in his vehicle and was advised by an off-duty Lincoln Police Department officer "not to drive."

Wise then took off, driving a sports utility vehicle and was later located on Main Street, Jacobs said.

"He failed to stop, operated at a high rate of speed and ended up crashing in the area of Frost

Street, stuck in a snow bank near the intersection of Main and Frost," he said.

Lincoln Fire Department Capt. Blake Miller reported that the fire department also responded to the call and went to the scene of the accident.

Wise was taken into custody by Officer Mariah Morales, transported to Penobscot Valley Hospital for a blood draw and then brought to Penobscot County Jail.

Jacobs said the department answered 85 other calls last week, including responses to vehicle accidents and wellness checks.

reliable auditors has become widespread problem in the state. The district is contracted with certified public accountant James Wadman.

McNally recommended that the board consider funding paramedic school for employees in next year's budget as part of an effort to retain personnel, noting that paramedic school can cost "somewhere between \$15,000 and \$20,000."

"As it stands, we don't pay for the education, so we'd be asking for the employee to front the money," said McNally. "It's not fair because none of the other towns are doing that. Other departments pay for the class. They pay them overtime to go to class and clinical, and they either give them a vehicle or pay them for mileage."

"It certainly is the future of this district," he added. "If you don't have at least two or three paramedics per shift, they won't last. You're revenue will fall off. The quality of care will decrease."

McNally recommended that the district fund covering the cost of education for one employee each year, with the candidate chosen by the chief according to certain criteria.

"The other thing inside of all of that," said Genest, "would be that from year to year, we have to make sure that our salary structure is commensurate with neighboring and competitive talent because that takes away the initiative that someone wants to become a paramedic and then go make some more money someplace else – that doesn't help us, it doesn't help the district or the citizens of the district."

Paul Froman, who consulted the district as it was being formed, said there are more paramedics leaving the field than entering the field and not enough people are being trained as paramedics to keep pace with the need. Froman said the state produces about 80 paramedics a year.

"People are leaving our industry faster than we're creating (new paramedics)," he said. "The best bang for the buck" said Froman, would be to tuition employees at the Eastern Maine Community College.

McNally said the current policy mandating overtime hours when staff are needed, isn't sustainable and will lead to employee burnout. McNally said he and Deputy Chief Cody Smith often work 120 hours in a week because they are both paramedics.

McNally said transfers that require the services of paramedics get reimbursed at a higher rate from Medicare than basic services, but still not the full cost of the service.

"Quite frankly, the amount of money we bill, if we could collect, you wouldn't have a tax bill," he said.

Genest reported that the district is still waiting to confirm approval for a grant to purchase three new am-

bulances each year until the district acquires new ambulances, he added.

The directors also discussed efforts by the town of Maxfield to proceed with the process of deorganizing as a municipality and how it might impact the district's budget. George Buswell, the director for Penobscot County, said the county would be responsible for paying for Maxfield's assessment should Maxfield become unorganized territory.

Genest raised as a discussion topic the possibility of the fire district buying the fire station building from the town of Howland.

Genest said owning the fire station will eliminate financial uncertainties about lease payments as each lease duration needs to be renegotiated.

Secretary Brian Moura, the director for Lowell said he would like to establish "what's the difference in price between negotiating the long-term lease at a reasonable rate versus refinancing the building at possibly a higher interest rate over the course of 30 years."

Arrants said, "You got to do the math, but at the end of 30 years, the overall cost to the district would significantly drop whereas in the lease, the cost would potentially not drop."

Genest said he didn't know the likelihood of Howland wanting to sell the fire station, but, "if you don't ask, the answer is always, no."

McNally said it's important to explore these discussions early instead of waiting until the current five-year lease nears its end.

Gina Batchelder, who is the alternate fire director for Passadumkeag and the town manager for Enfield, said the stability of owning the building "is huge for the district to continue to maintain operations," but "the cost to buy our payments versus the lease is really important to consider."

"That's going to be important for our residents who pay the bill to know, because they're going to see this in the newspaper and be like, 'Oh my gosh, we can't afford the district.'"

"That's in some of their minds already, because they're not able to pay their tax payments. They're not able to maintain their homes and cover their expenses, but – just to be conscious of how it lands on the (public relations) side of it – can we reasonably make those payments versus the lease that we're committed to right now?"

Genest said he would initiate communication with Howland Town Manager David Lloyd and the board of selectmen to see if the town would take interest in selling the station to the district.

The Central Maine Highlands Fire and EMS District No. 1 Board of Directors meets every second Thursday of the month, with the next meeting scheduled to occur Feb. 12 at 6 p.m. at the Howland Town Office.

Remember, the NEWS' deadline for submissions and advertising is 5 p.m. on Mondays