

# Central Maine Highlands fire board sets FY27 budget

By Ben Meiklejohn

HOWLAND -- The Central Maine Highlands Fire and EMS District No. 1 Board of Directors passed a \$3.55 million budget at its April 9 meeting.

Before getting to the budget, the board addressed other items of business.

Vice President Jeffrey Arrants, who is the fire director for Howland, reported that a golf tournament fundraiser could be scheduled in the last weekend of August.

The district is holding fundraisers to purchase a hyperbaric oxygen chamber for fire district staff to use during their off-time.

President Bob Genest, the fire director for Enfield, provided an update on the building acquisition.

Genest said he had spoken with officials of Machias Savings Bank that confirmed that they would finance the costs of building a new building.

"They said the best way to do it was probably the way they did it with this building -- that you get a bridge loan, it's basically a construction loan, and then in the time of building, and if we had to do it, we'd be far enough down the road that we can go to the Maine Bond Bank and secure a bond at the end of the building project to essentially bond out the building," said Genest.

The president also reported that the board received an invitation from the Howland Board of Selectpersons to participate in a joint workshop on April 29 at 6 p.m. at the Howland Town Office.

Genest also reported that the station is upgrading its internet and phone systems at a cost of approximately \$1,000.

The president additionally reported that he had spoken to a Machias Savings Bank official about financing the purchase of a newer used fire truck.

Genest said the bank could finance a \$350,000 purchase for payments of \$5,000 a month for seven years.

See CMHFD Page 3

Email us at: [news@lincnews.com](mailto:news@lincnews.com)

Genest made a motion to authorize Fire Chief Josh McNally to find a replacement for two vehicles -- the pumper and pumper engine -- up to the amount of \$350,000, which would be financed.

The finance costs would equal \$60,000 in the annual budget, which Arrants proposed be taken from the \$160,000 vehicle reserve line in the draft budget in order to keep the impact on the budget neutral overall.

McNally explained how a purchase of a newer truck would allow the district to unload two of its aging trucks.

"The idea was to try and reduce the fleet as much as we could and still have available gallons of water," he said. "We need to have so much flow over time until we can get help, so that's why if we buy one truck that can possibly do two things, has more water -- you know, we're flowing a 160-gallon-minute line and you have a 750 gallon tank, you're out in a short amount of time.

"So we try to keep enough in our response time out of this house, even given minimum manning, so that we can flow at least until Lincoln gets to us, and that's why we try to keep so many gallons -- you give it what you can when you get there, trying to knock the stuffing out of it, but if you don't, you still need to be able to flow or the BTU's are not going away. They grow and grown and grown until it runs out of fuel or we overcome it with the amount of water.

"That's the difference of losing your neighbor's house as well. ... If we find the right truck, we could comfortably replace one for two."

After discussion, the directors voted Genest's motion down unanimously, instead opting to implement the loan as a budgetary matter during the budget approval vote that occurred later in the evening.

Deputy Chief Cody Smith reported that he had procured a grant of \$34,000 per year for four years to pay for education of the district's staff.

"This year we got four people that will be going to advanced and one for medic, with a possible second for medic," said Smith. "And every year after that, we'll have that \$34,000 until the end of the grant and it can go for edu-

leadership, anything, but we're going to use it to help boost the ranks with EMS licensure."

During budget deliberation, at Genest's recommendation, the board added \$1,200 for a meal delivery to all staff each quarter as a "morale booster," and added \$60,000 for a vehicle purchase loan while decreasing the vehicle reserve line by \$60,000 as was discussed previously in the meeting.

The final \$3.55 million budget that was passed for the 2027 fiscal year, which runs from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027, represents a \$427,493 increase from the current fiscal year budget. However, the 2027 budget also included \$200,000 in additional revenue from this year's budget.

The budget will be supported with \$1.2 million in non-tax-based revenue, with 75% of the budget supported by taxes as follows:

- Burlington, \$232,253, a 6.65% increase of \$14,481.
- Edinburg, \$69,429, a 10% increase of \$6,310.
- Enfield, \$945,672, a 13.67% increase of \$113,691.
- Howland, \$516,333, an 8.12% increase of \$38,794.
- Lowell, \$262,019, a 9.94% increase of \$23,696.
- Maxfield, \$47,244, an 8.33% increase of \$3,633.
- Passadumkeag, \$171,010, a 10.27% increase of \$15,927.
- Seboeis Plantation, \$38,321, a 4.8% increase of \$1,756.
- Penobscot County Unorganized Territory, \$38,321, a 13.65% increase of \$4,603.
- Hancock County Unorganized Territory, \$38,321, a 13.65% increase of \$4,603.

The complete detailed budget is available from the fire district or member town offices.

Genest informed that the district's charter requires the board to evaluate the formula for appropriations by the member towns and counties. Directors didn't express any need to change the formula, which is currently based 50% on population per the 2020 census and 50% on the equalized assessed value as determined by the state.

The board of directors for the fire district meets every second Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. at the Howland Town Office, with the next meeting scheduled for