

year to help with next year's budget.

"My educated guess is I think we're going to be OK, but we're

## SAD 31 sets budget vote dates

By Ben Meiklejohn

HOWLAND -- The School Administrative District 31 Board of Directors at an April 15 meeting, hired administrators and set the dates for district residents to vote on the school's fiscal year 2027 budget.

Enfield Station School Principal Sharon Haskell reported that about 100 families participated in a spring fair book and family night on April 2.

On April 8, students had the opportunity to go inside of a life-sized humpback whale replica, courtesy of a generous donor, said Haskell.

The principal reported that enrollment at the elementary school had increased to 228 and that next year's kindergarten class is projected to have about 40 students.

Highborn Middle School and Penobscot Valley High School Principal Shane Yardley reported that students were preparing for Community Day on May 29, when the students volunteer in the community.

Yardley also reported that juniors took the New Meridian Science Assessment test the week before and that Advanced Placement testing, New Meridian Science Assessment testing for eighth graders, three-year assessments and finals would be upcoming in the remainder of the school year.

Business Manager Jeff Hartung reported that the financial audit is still outstanding and the district has received an extension from the state to May 31 to complete the audit.

Transportation and Maintenance Director John Leighton reported that the district passed at 100% a quarterly inspection on sprinklers, fire alarms, piping and electrical systems.

Leighton also reported that drivers would be participating in a day-long training in Farmington on April 23.

Superintendent Matt Arsenault reported that the district had used

to finalize a proposed budget for fiscal year 2027, which they agreed to do on May 5, at 4 p.m. at the Lowell Town Office.

four snow days, putting the last day of school at June 15. Student enrollment is at 450, including three additions last month.

"That's a good thing," Arsenault said. "Not many schools north of Bangor can say that they're seeing a positive trend in that respect, so I'm excited to get more kids."

Arsenault said he wants to work with Leighton to propose a 5-year plan to meet maintenance and facility upkeep needs.

The superintendent also reported that the Essential Programs and Services education funding model was amended for the first time in 20 years, by passage of a legislative bill, and the changes to the formula would help with funding for rural schools.

The board unanimously voted to set a district budget meeting on May 20 and budget validation referendum election on June 9, both of which district residents may participate and vote in.

The board held a first reading of policies on family care leave, family medical leave and earned paid leave for non-unionized employees.

The board unanimously approved a senior class trip to North Conway, New Hampshire as part of the class's Project Graduation activity.

The board unanimously voted to enter executive session to discuss the appointment of a director of special services, and upon return to public session, unanimously approved the appointment of David Wilcox for the position, starting July 1.

The board then returned to executive session to discuss the appointment of a director of food services, and upon return to public session, unanimously approved the appointment of Darcy Milliard for the position.

The board of directors will hold a special meeting on April 29 at 5 p.m. at the Jim Currie Library Media Center in Penobscot Valley High School to finalize the budget proposal for next year in preparation of the May 20 and June 9 votes by district residents.

## New ambulance boosts performance for Lee emergency responders

By Trish Aldrich

LEE -- The town's new ambulance, delivered last Thursday, April 9 is already proving its worth. Purchased new—a 2024 Ford F550 XLT Demers MXP-170E—the ambulance is the department's

first brand-new apparatus and was acquired to address rising call volume and local road conditions.

Jay Crocker, Lee Fire Chief, said the vehicle has seen extensive early use — with about 15 people transported since its arrival — and has handled multiple calls effectively. Crew members praised its smooth ride and fluid suspension

## Maxfield fire director resigns over lack of ADA accommodations

By Ben Meiklejohn

MAXFIELD -- The Maxfield fire director for Central Maine Highlands Fire and EMS District No. 1 resigned April 17 citing lack of accommodation for "medically necessary use of closed captioning."

Valerie Harper said in her resignation letter that the use of closed captioning in video meetings "is a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act."

"Despite clearly communicating this need to board leadership -- and while I appreciate Jeff (Arrants') efforts to support me -- there have been repeated instances where closed captioning

has been removed during meetings," wrote Harper. "As a result I have often been forced to piece together discussions in real time and rely afterward on automated summaries and meeting minutes to understand what I missed. This is not an equitable or sustainable way to participate as a board member."

Harper stated that during the April 9 meeting, closed captioning was interrupted on three separate occasions and "this issue was further compounded by a direct wearing a face mask, which limited my ability to lip-read -- a secondary strategy I rely on.

"At that point, I was no longer able to effectively follow the

## Lincoln Fire knocks out wildfires

By Ben Meiklejohn

LINCOLN -- Lincoln Fire Lt. Donnie Olsen informed Lincoln News on Monday that the department responded to 26 fire and 75 emergency medical service calls in the previous two weeks.

Olsen said it was a quieter several weeks with a few small wildland fires -- a campfire that rekindled off of West Broadway, and at Prospect Avenue, something burning in the mulch.

On April 12, the department responded to a wildlands fire at 933 Enfield Road.

Olsen said, "We had a wildlands fire, just a fire that got away when it ran across the field into the woods. We stopped it pretty

were able to knock it down pretty fast. It was about two and a half acres of fire."

Right after the field fire, Olsen said the department responded to a furnace malfunction in Chester that had filled a house with smoke.

The town's EMS responded to a vehicle crash with personal injury in Chester on April 11.

In another incident, the town responded to a vehicle crash on Prospect Ridge Road involving a woman who had stopped to clean ice on her windshield and whose vehicle was hit by another driver who was blinded by bright sunlight.

A female patient was transported with minor knee scrapes and hand pain, said Olsen.

The lieutenant informed that