

## Notes on the 2023 Town Meeting Warrant

Art. 4. To nominate and elect a Third Selectperson for a term of three years.

In past years we have included the stipend for the office holder in the same motion as the nomination and election. We have put the stipend into a second motion and moved it to the portion of the warrant dealing with finances (Art. 25).

Art. 40. To see if the Town will authorize the Select Board to expend funds awarded by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and other state, federal, or on-governmental institutions concerned with environmental protection to improve a portion of the South Road where it crosses over an unnamed stream feeding into Olney Brook and to improve storm water management in the vicinity of the crossing. Work is dependent on the awarding of at least \$135,000 in grant awards. Select Board recommends \$135,000 from grants and an additional \$5,000, only if needed, from surplus.

The Conservation Commission has been working on this project for more than a year, and has been successful in securing the \$135,000. Preliminary design work was done as part of the grant application process, and bids are ready to go out the week of March 20 should this article pass. This project will expand the size of the culvert to better accommodate increased flooding and prevent the road from washing out in heavy rains. The brook and adjacent wetland is important wildlife habitat.

Art. 41. To see if the Town will authorize the Select Board to expend grant funds awarded by the State of Maine Community Resilience Partnership for the following projects. All expenditures are dependent on confirmation of the awarding of the grants. Tax money will not be used for any of these projects. Select Board recommends:

A) \$5,000 to develop and fund a Town Volunteer Corps.

B) \$25,000 to install an emergency generator, auxiliary heating, broadband internet, and other improvements to the town's FEMA-designated emergency public shelter (the Gold Crest Riders Snowmobile Club building).

C) \$20,000 to begin a long-range plan to identify and provide funding for Capital Improvements to storm water management and roadbed systems throughout the town, and other infrastructure from climate-caused damage, including management of vegetation along roadways to protect the utility infrastructure from storm damage

The town is in the process of applying for these grants. The Volunteer project was outlined on the town Facebook page. It's designed to help older and disabled residents with small project they cannot handle themselves, such as clearing snow off roofs.

The projects involving the snowmobile club is designed to make it more suitable to use as an emergency heating or cooling center. It is currently designed as the emergency shelter under the town's Emergency management plan, but has two major limitations – the lack of a generator for when the power is out, and the fact the room is heated with a wood stove, which means it cannot be used as sleeping area. The addition of heat pumps would solve that problem as well as provide cooling during summer heat waves. The town has had a long-standing arrangement with the club for use of the building, and that arrangement will be formalized so that the town can receive these funds.

The third aspect of the grant is to provide funds to have the James W. Sewall Company do an assessment of all the gravel roads in town with an eye towards better ditching, grading, and roadbed composition in order to alleviate some of the springtime mud issues. Sewall will also make recommendations on areas that would be better paved than kept as gravel.

Art. 42 To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Select Board, or a majority thereof, to expend an additional amount for paving of the North Road and/or Miles Road beyond what is budgeted if the Board can negotiate a better price per mile by extending the length of road to be paved. Funds will come from a loan (not to exceed \$100,000), surplus, and/or savings (Capital Improvement Roads Account, Savings CD, Savings Reserve)

The state is planning to repave Route 143 this summer. We have arranged with the state to hire the same contractor as who gets the state bid to do additional paving on Miles and North Road, both of which run off Route 143. We anticipate this will be a better price than we could get by bidding the job out on our own.

Art. 43. To see if the Town will adopt the "Dixmont Mining Ordinance" dated March 18, 2023, as prepared by the Dixmont Planning Board.

Concerns about large gravel mining operations might affect the town, a moratorium on all mining was passed at a special town meeting in Dec. 14, 2022, and the Planning Board began work on a mining ordinance. Following a public hearing the draft ordinance Planning Board heard some suggestions on how to improve the ordinance it had drafted. Recognizing there was not enough time to make changes to the draft and hold another public hearing prior to the 2023 Town Meeting, the Board faced two options, either

-- pass it as written and pass amendments at a later date, to be voted on at a special town meeting., or

-- table it, keep the existing moratorium in place, and work to weave the suggestions into the ordinance and vote on an improved ordinance at a special town meeting at later date.

The consensus at the hearing was this was tabling the ordinance the best option, since the things that might be mined will still be there and the things that need protection will be better identified and protected when the ordinance is revised. The Conservation Commission will work closely with the Planning Board on making these improvements.

That vote on a revised ordinance could come either at a special town meeting or at the 2024 town meeting. A public hearing will be scheduled far enough in advance of a vote to allow for additional suggestions from the public to be fairly considered. The initial moratorium was put in place by vote at a special town meeting on Dec. 14, 2022, and absent passage of a replacing ordinance remains in effect until June 14, 2023. The moratorium may be renewed twice, with only Select Board action required, for two additional six-month periods, meaning a final ordinance would have to be in place by June 14, 2024.

So at the Town Meeting on March 18, 2023, when Article 43, the last article, comes up there will be a motion made to table it until a later date and to continue with the moratorium.