

HARPSWELL *BULLETIN*

News for Harpswell Residents & Property Owners from the Town Office – June '11

Town Web Site: www.harpswell.maine.gov

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Voters at the Annual Town Meeting approved a municipal budget of \$4,020,097, up only .3% from the prior year. This budget retains existing service levels within the Town and complies with legislation that limits the amount collected from property taxes for municipal purposes. Revenue sources of \$1,825,000, which offset the amount to be collected from property taxes, are being closely monitored and are currently on track with projected estimates.

- Voters approved setting aside \$200,000 in a reserve account for the future purchase of emergency vehicles (ambulances, fire trucks, tankers, e.g.) that the Town then leases at no cost to one of the three independent fire and rescue departments for their use.
- Voters also authorized the borrowing of \$800,000 for capital road improvements and \$220,000 for the purchase of a public access easement to Cedar Beach on Bailey Island. Engineered plans are being developed for capital road projects on Lane, Lowell's Cove and Little Island Roads on Orr's Island with the intent to bid the projects in late summer and have construction begin in the fall. As for the public access easement to Cedar Beach, the Town will seek grant sources and work with the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust and the Friends of Cedar Beach to see if an agreement can be reached prior to year end.

- Voters approved many land use ordinance amendments including the creation of a 9-acre zone at Mitchell Field for marine related business. In addition, voters gave the Board of Selectmen the authority to enter into a multi-year lease for use of the Mitchell Field Marine Business District on such terms and conditions as the Board of Selectmen deems to be in the best interests of the Town.

JUNE 14, 2011 MUNICIPAL SECRET BALLOT ITEMS

On June 14, not only will the school budget for M.S.A.D. # 75 be voted on, but there will be three secret ballot articles regarding municipal matters. Voting will be held from 9am to 8pm at three sites: Merriconeag Grange for voters on Harpswell Neck and a portion of Great Island along Mountain Road; Orr's Island School house for Orr's and Bailey Island voters and Cundy's Harbor Community Building for all other Great Island voters. Absentee ballots may be obtained from the Town Clerk's Office.



Article on Withdrawal If this article is approved, a four member withdrawal committee will be formed. The Committee will be responsible for developing an agreement that addresses withdrawal from M.S.A.D. # 75 and provides for the future educational needs of Harpswell students. Once the agreement is approved by the Commissioner of Education, another vote is required of Harpswell voters. In order to become effective, the proposed withdrawal agreement must be passed by a 2/3 majority of those casting votes.

Passage of this article authorizes the Board of Selectmen to select three of the withdrawal committee members: one Selectman, one member of the general public and one member from the group filing the petition. The District Directors of M.S.A.D. # 75 representing Harpswell are authorized to select one of their representatives to serve on the withdrawal committee. The withdrawal committee prepares an agreement that includes but is not limited to providing for educational services, transportation, administration, and resolution of financial commitments arising from outstanding bonds, notes and other contractual obligations. The agreement must be submitted to the Commissioner of Education within 90 days after the withdrawal committee is formed, however, extension may be granted by the Commissioner upon the request of the withdrawal committee. If the Commissioner finds that the agreement will provide for appropriate educational services to the students of Harpswell and for the orderly transition of assets, governance and other matters related to Harpswell and M.S.A.D. # 75, then the Commissioner shall set a public hearing to discuss the merits of the proposed withdrawal agreement. Once satisfied with the contents of the agreement, the Commissioner determines the date upon which the vote to withdraw will occur in Harpswell. A 2/3 vote is required before the Town may withdraw.

Following its public meeting with Deputy Commissioner of Education Jim Rier, the Town's Education Advisory Committee has prepared a question and answer document which addresses some of the most frequently asked questions about withdrawal and the Town's possible options should it decide to proceed with withdrawal. The document is accessible on the Town's Web site at harpswell.maine.gov; the meeting with Deputy Commissioner Rier is available for viewing in its entirety at <http://vimeo.com/harpswelltv>.

Article Creating Eagle Island Historic District Passage of this article creates a zone called the Eagle Island Historic District that will encompass all of Eagle Island and enable the construction of a small visitors center on the island. There is no known shoreland zoning on the island now. The Friends of Eagle Island would like to construct a visitors center of not more than 700 square feet. The Historic District would allow for the existing single-family dwelling, museum, water related uses, boat house, wharf, pier and accessory structures related to these uses. The existing structures would be "grandfathered." The Shoreland Zoning Ordinance amendment including the map is available for review at the Town Office and online at harpswell.maine.gov

Article for \$2,400 Appropriation for Environmental Site Assessment of West Harpswell School

On June 14, Harpswell voters will be deciding whether to authorize the expenditure of \$2,400 for a Phase I environmental assessment of the West Harpswell School building. The results of this assessment will help voters decide, in a likely August vote, whether to accept the property from MSAD # 75 or allow the school district itself to dispose of the property. The reason for the environmental assessment at this time is to prevent unforeseen expenses, or remediation responsibilities after title transfer, should the building become town property and an issue be discovered later. This environmental assessment represents appropriate due diligence on the Town's part. The protection it can provide will be applicable regardless of whether the Town uses or sells the school property. In addition, completion of the Phase I assessment could make the Town eligible for federal clean-up funds, should any need for clean up work be determined at a later date.

The assessment will include the following activities performed by an engineering firm:

- Document the environmental history of the property through review of available records;
- Evaluate and document past releases of hazardous materials or petroleum products that may have occurred at the property, as well as their regulatory status;
- Perform a site visit and document observations;
- Review existing asbestos reports including reports associated with the school's compliance with the EPA's Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act; and
- Provide an opinion regarding the current environmental condition of the property and the need, if any, for additional response actions.

TOWN BOUNDARY UPDATE

LD 69 *An Act to Restore the Historical Boundary between Harpswell and Brunswick* was introduced by Representative Kim Olsen in the current legislative session. On February 9, a public hearing was held by the State and Local Government Committee which heard hours of testimony including compelling evidence from members of the Carrying Place Assembly to support restoring Harpswell's boundary to its historic location. A Committee work session followed on February 16 at which Harpswell proposed a compromise: that the historic boundary line be restored while simultaneously allowing the area between the historic boundary line and the 1998 line to remain an area where Brunswick would retain jurisdiction. The Committee asked Harpswell and Brunswick to meet and work out an acceptable solution. The towns met twice and were unable to reach an accord. On May 6, the Committee returned to its work session. After additional input and discussion the majority voted "ought not to pass." A vote of the full Legislature has yet to occur.

NEW ORDINANCE FOR PROPERTY TAX ASSISTANCE

Town Meeting voters approved a local Property Tax Assistance Ordinance to provide relief to income-qualifying households in Harpswell. In order to be eligible for the Town's program, one must have applied and received a benefit from the State of Maine Residents Property Tax and Rent Refund "Circuitbreaker" Program (file online at www.maine.gov/revenue). Assuming the Town's program is fully funded, applicants will receive a 50% match of the State reimbursement up to \$800 as long as the Harpswell applicant has had a homestead for the previous two years and paid taxes in full for the year in which reimbursement is sought. Applications for the program are available at the Town Office or may be downloaded at harpswell.maine.gov.

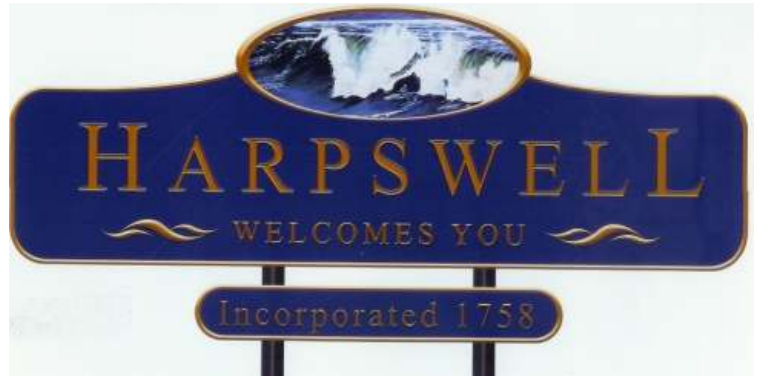
ONLINE INITIATIVES

The Town has created more opportunity for business to be conducted online. Online services include re-registering an automobile or licensing a dog (from October 15 to January 31). The Town also offers a subscription service which allows staff to e-mail Selectmen's agendas, announcements, minutes, the Bulletin and updated calendars with public meeting notices once an e-mail address has been provided. Further upgrades to the Town's Web site are planned. Through the efforts of Harpswell Community Television, videos of Selectmen's Meetings, Planning Board Meetings and other meetings of public interest are available for online viewing at <http://vimeo.com/harpswelltv>. There is a direct link on the Town's homepage to the video site and Wifi is available at the Town Office.



WELCOME TO HARPSWELL SIGN

Throughout 2010, the Town's Design Review Committee solicited ideas for 'Welcome to Harpswell' signs. The Committee narrowed down the final choices to two. These two designs were available for viewing at the 2011 Town Meeting where voters could sign in and cast their votes. The winning design depicting a breaking wave was produced by Justin Bane of Orr's Island. Plans are underway to have the new signage erected at Route 123 and Route 24.



IMPORTANT DATES

June 14—Voting 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM
on School Budget & Municipal Referendum
Items at Three Locations; Absentee Ballots
are now available from the Town Clerk's
Office.

July 6—Non-Resident Taxpayer Meeting,
6:30 PM, Merriconeag Grange,
529 Harpswell Neck Road. This is an
opportunity for non-resident taxpayers to raise
any issues or concerns with the Selectmen.