

China selectmen discuss many issues; make few decisions

by Mary Grow

China selectmen discussed a variety of issues at their May 10 meeting, making decisions on a few of them.

By unanimous votes, they agreed to approve the warrant for the June 8 special town meeting, at which voters will decide by written ballot an election for the Regional School Unit 18 board and five questions dealing with town ordinances: and request a state Department of Transportation study of Dirigo Road traffic, to see if the speed limit should be lowered from the current 45 miles an hour. Board member Paul MacDonald said heavy truck traffic is chewing up the road, especially the curvy part south of McLellan Road.

They also unanimously voted to accept the low bid for repaving town roads this summer, \$69 a ton from Marriner's. Town Manager Daniel L'Heureux said the price is \$1.30 a ton higher than in 2009, but lower than was forecast earlier this year.

The May 10 meeting was preceded by a public hearing on the ordinance questions to be decided June 8. They ask voters if they will amend the shoreland and resource protection provisions in the land use ordinance and the land use map, adopt revised standards for signs and approve a new ordinance, "The Town of China Senior Citizen Volunteer Work Program." Codes Enforcement Officer Scott Pierz agreed with an audience member who thinks the ordinance changes move toward more regulation. However, he said, they are required by the state; if town voters reject the changes, he expects state regulators will impose most of them, including the expanded resource protection areas that have generated controversy. Helping offset the stricter regulations is an amendment that will allow up to 30 percent expansion of residences in resource protection areas, Pierz said. Under the current ordinance, which remains in force if the amendments are rejected, no expansion is allowed in a resource protection area.

Selectman Neil Farrington,

who proposed the volunteer program to let senior citizens work off part of their taxes, said if voters approve the idea, selectmen will work out details. As of now, a senior citizen is tentatively defined as someone 65 or older; the amount each eligible participant can earn as a credit against taxes is capped at \$750; and the program has a \$5,000 annual ceiling.

There are two candidates for one seat on the RSU 18 board: former China School Committee Chairman Charles Clark and incumbent Deanne Pizzo.

On June 8, China polls will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., in the town office meeting room. Absentee ballots are available at the town office.

China voters will also go to the polls Thursday, May 20, for the annual school budget validation referendum, to accept or reject the budget adopted at the May 13 open meeting of voters from Belgrade, China, Oakland, Rome and Sidney. Polls will be open from noon to 8 p.m., in the town office meeting room. Because of the short interval between first and second decisions, there will be no absentee ballots for the May 20 vote, Town Manager Daniel L'Heureux said.

The May 10 meeting included a presentation by David Landry on the China Region Lakes Alliance, winner of the 2009 Conservation Organization of the Year award from the Maine Association of Conservation Districts. Landry said between 1999 and 2009, the CRLA garnered more than \$550,000 in federal water quality grants and collected more than \$700,000 from landowners whose properties were improved, resulting in more than \$5 spent for each \$1 China voters donated. The Tarybelu Lane project, which involved paving the private road off Lakeview Drive and redirecting runoff, was the largest project in Maine funded with water quality funds under the federal 319 program (named after the section of the law creating it).

CRLA has employed 162 local students. China's Youth Conservation Corps, established

May 22 set for RSU budget vote in Palermo

by Mary Grow

Voters from Palermo and the other Sheepscot Valley Regional School Unit towns will gather at 10 a.m., Saturday, May 22, at Windsor School to vote on the proposed 2010-2011 school budget. Town Clerk Sheila McCarty announced the meeting date at the May 6 selectmen's

meeting. Sheepscot Valley RSU member towns are Alna, Chelsea, Palermo, Somerville, Westport Island, Whitefield, Windsor and Wiscasset.

The budget approved at the May 22 open meeting will be subject to a written-ballot referendum vote in each town Tuesday, June 8. McCarty said Palermo's polls will be open from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., June 8 for state primary elections and referendum questions and the RSU budget vote. Absentee ballots are available at the Palermo town office as of May 8.

Selectmen dealt with several issues related to land use during their May 6 meeting. They reviewed additional information on remediating land use violations on Sheepscot Lake with Elliott Thayer, the engineer representing Laure and Real Robidoux. Thayer said the Robidouxes have agreed to plant 25 red maples at least two and a half inches caliper and 50 balsam firs six to seven feet tall. They will do additional restoration in wetlands, and will access the shore by a four-foot-wide elevated walkway. Selectmen did not have the final draft of a proposed consent agreement with the Robidouxes. Board Chairman Sophia Glidden said they intend to impose a \$15,000 monetary penalty, divided between the landowners and their contractor.

Glidden said the Waldo County hazard mitigation plan proposes assisting Palermo in three ways: providing a generator for the fire station, seeking state and federal funds to reconstruct Marden Hill Road and distributing emergency preparedness information to town residents. Selectmen do not know how Marden Hill Road was cho-

sen as the neediest road in town. Selectman Paul Cowing called a road advisory committee meeting for May 12 to consider nominating other roads.

Michael Gerassi joined selectmen and attorney Matthew Evans to discuss an easement to allow the town to construct a 30-by-50-foot school bus turnaround on his Cain Hill Road property. Gerassi said he was happy with the draft, but would like his own attorney to review it. Selectmen voted unanimously to reimburse him if the attorney charges a fee for the review. The proposed agreement should "alleviate a lot of problems for everybody," Gerassi said.

Ray Taylor from Friends and Neighbors ATV Club brought papers for selectmen to sign to formalize their March 25 decision to let ATVs use short stretches of Boots and Saddle and Level Hill roads that connect ATV trail sections. Board members specified the trail along the edge of the roads is to be no more than five feet wide. They prohibited cutting trees more than two inches in diameter. Taylor said club members generally ask landowners before doing any clearing anyway.

In other business, selectmen appointed Edward Robert "Bob" Temple deputy codes enforcement officer, to act in Darryl McKenney's absence. McCarty said Dale McKenney is the new planning board chairman; Paul Sennett is the secretary. Alternate planning board member Millard Sabans added that the board rejected a proposed four-lot Plummer Road subdivision at its April 28 meeting.

The next Palermo selectmen's meeting is scheduled for Thursday evening, May 20.

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