

Voters can expect two local questions in Nov.

by Mary Grow

China voters can expect at least two local referendum questions when they go to the polls November 2.

At the selectmen's August 30 meeting, board members approved a planning board request, presented by Codes Enforcement Officer Scott Pierz, to ask voters to amend the timetable for planners to act on commercial applications.

China's ordinance now gives the planning board 35 days to approve or deny an application after the board votes the application is complete. Pierz said most complete applications are reviewed at two meetings, using up a month; those that need a third meeting do not meet the ordinance requirement.

Pierz offered to work out wording of a proposed change with town attorney Alton Stevens.

The codes officer also proposed a clarification in the wording of the ordinance section that says landowners not in compliance with other town or state laws or regulations cannot get a new town permit. Selectmen Peter Foote and Paul MacDonald proposed making the ban stronger: applicants not in compliance with other regulations will not even be heard by the planning board.

Their contention was that people who ignore conditions on one permit will disregard new obligations, so there is no point in starting the permitting process.

"If they're not going to clean up the state violation, what makes you think they'll abide by the town rules?" Selectman Peter Foote asked.

Selectmen have already agreed to put on the ballot an ordinance that would make China homeowners and landlords eligible for loans under the state's Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program. Local elections are also November 2; signed nomination papers are due at the town office by 11 a.m. Saturday, September 18.

The August 30 selectmen's meeting was preceded by a second executive-session discussion of the Weeks Mills Fire Station expansion with attorney Stevens. Three firefighters participated in the second half of the discussion.

"Don't ask," department training officer David Herard said as he left.

Selectmen took no action. Town Manager Daniel L'Heureux said the question will be on their September 13 agenda.

According to comments from board members and L'Heureux after the first private discussion two weeks earlier, the issue is the legality of allocating town funds – approved by voters at three successive business meetings – to help enlarge a building owned by the department on land leased from the Weeks Mills Water Company.

In other business, transfer station manager Elwin Higgins joined selectmen for a discussion of checking transfer station stickers. Foote raised the topic, saying he saw several vehicles without

stickers that attendants did not check.

Higgins said he and his staff recognize most vehicles and check as many unfamiliar ones as they can, but they are too busy to spend all their time looking for stickers and questioning drivers. He suggested the town issue a more conspicuous tag to hang from the rearview mirror.

Selectmen unanimously appointed Jennifer Morris as alternate health nurse.

Resident Al Althenn reminded selectmen they voted in May to send the state a letter concerning permits for sucker traps in China Lake tributaries. Board Chairman Irene Belanger accepted responsibility for the delay and promised she and L'Heureux would send a letter by the end of the week.

Althenn has a lot of information on suckers, which are natural to the lake and which he says eat algae. He is also concerned about other human interferences with the ecosystem, including trapping shiners, beaver and muskrat.

"I think any trapping around the lake ought to be curtailed" as part of the effort to restore the lake's health, he said.

L'Heureux announced that summaries of the Thurston Park survey are now available at the town office, and the Thurston Park committee plans to schedule a meeting soon; bids for sidewalks in South China including a walkway across the stream came in high, resulting in a request to the state Department of Transportation for additional grant funds if there is money available; part of Weeks Mills Road has been resurfaced, but the mile or so scheduled to be rebuilt might be postponed to 2011 as transportation department officials are still researching right-of-way limits to find out whether they need to buy land; and that Kennebec Valley Council of Governments has a revolving loan fund for businesses, especially start-ups and expansions.

\$40 million curtailment for K-12 no longer a threat

School districts are no longer facing the possibility of a nearly \$40 million curtailment in spending starting in October since Congress earlier this month passed a bill that covered the lion's share of a deficit in the state's federal Medicaid account. That deficit, which translated into a \$100 million hole in the current state budget, is now down to \$23 million thanks to federal action.

Governor John Baldacci could still issue a curtailment order to fill the \$23-million gap that Congress did not cover, but he is not required to do so by law. Language in the state budget did require a curtailment order if Congress did not act to restore the Medicaid funds.

"No final decision has been made on whether or not to move forward with a curtailment," Finance Commissioner Ellen Schneider told the Appropriations Committee on Monday. She said the governor has until Friday, October 1 to decide. If a \$23-million curtailment is issued, K-12's share would be \$9 million, not the \$39.7 million originally projected.

The Medicaid funding was the second piece of good news for schools this month. As part of the same bill that included the

CURTAILMENT
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The National Drug Enforcement Agency's Prescription Drug Take Back Day is scheduled for Saturday, September 25. The China transfer station will accept unused prescription drugs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., that day. The annual household hazardous waste collection day in Waterville will be Saturday, October 16. More information on the schedule and items accepted will be available at the town office and transfer station.

Winslow class of '55 reunites



On August 21, members of the class of 1955 from Winslow High School had their 55th reunion with a pig roast at the home of Don and Louise Reny, on the Neck Road in China. There were 19 members in attendance, including Gerard Bedard, Larry Paquet, Robert Cunningham, Richard Fortin, Shirley Witham, Marion Kelly, Dorothy Rideout, Geneva Parlin, Richard Plourde, Norbert Poulliot, Donald Reny, Edward Guiski, Edward Shorey, Thomas Vintinner, Gloria Datsis, Ann Wing, Patricia Kindschi, Frederick Lashus and Norma Marra.

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First day of school



Kaylin Brown, of Winslow, heads through the door at Winslow Elementary School on August 31, her first day of the fourth grade. Area schools are now back in session for the year.

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