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Voter approved ordinance updates go into effect in Deer Isle

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BY JACK BEAUDOIN



DEER ISLE—With a flourish of the pen that would have made John Hancock proud, Select Board Chair Ronald Eaton, at the board's March 12 meeting, signed four ordinance revisions that were approved by voters at Deer Isle's March 2 town meeting. Superficial changes to the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, Site Plan Review Ordinance and the Shellfish Ordinance—and a more substantive update that officially authorized the Planning Board 60 years after the fact—all became municipal law with immediate effect.

The measures had gained easy voter approval at the annual town meeting, generating only a few questions and some funny one-liners. According to Planning Board Chair Bill Wiegmann, a missing word ("no") in the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, for example, meant that certain buildings in Deer Isle "must be more than 40 feet high."

Meanwhile, the planning board has been operating as an elected body in Deer Isle since the 1970s, but the original ordinance establishing it has been lost. At a public hearing before the town meeting, Town Manager Jim Fisher said that the remaining documentation from its original founding failed to provide key information such as the number of members required.

With enactment of the ordinance reauthorizing the planning board and spelling out all the particulars about the size and composition of the board, the current process will continue normally.

Third time a charm?

In other business, the select board authorized Fisher and Fire Chief Brent Morey to submit an application for \$2.5 million in congressional directed spending to partially fund a new fire station. It will be the third consecutive cycle of funding requests in which the town has sought money for construction of the building. Fisher said he's actually lowered the requested amount by \$500,000 in hopes that Sen. Angus King or Sen. Susan Collins will advance the proposal as part of the next federal spending plan.

Current estimates place the total cost of construction at \$7.8 million, meaning that even if the project gets a congressional earmark, the town will still have to figure out how to pay for the remaining \$5.3 million.

"It's going to cost \$10 million by the time it's down," Select Board Member Patricia Oliver said. She wondered if the project's total cost, when compared to recent fire station construction in towns of similar size, was working against the Deer Isle proposal.

Fisher said that the \$2.5 million request "is within the norm, but maybe it's on the upper end of that." But he attributed the two previous rejections on other considerations.

"One of the things that makes it harder for them to give us money is (the perception) that we've already recently received \$20 million for the causeway," he said, noting that the causeway project was a Maine Department of Transportation funding request and not the town's. "And other towns that have been successful in getting these funds ... well, we're relatively better off than most of them."

In any case, Fisher will have to move quickly to complete the funding request application. He said Sen. Collins' deadline for the proposals was March 18, while Sen. King's deadline is March 22. "We'll send it to both of them and they'll decide who puts it forward," Fisher said.

The select board also voted 3-0 to award a \$700 Harrison Southworth Grant to the Adam Vickerson Little League Field.

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