

The Arrowsic Arrow

Vol. 14, No. 4

June 15, 1999

Dear Reader,

Here we go again! The poppies, iris, peonies and lupine (etc., etc.) are all in bloom and town meeting is this Thursday, June 17 at 6:30 in the evening. As one of my neighbors recently said, time flies whether you are having fun or not.

On Wednesday, June 9 a public hearing was held at the Town Hall to discuss several issues. Somewhere in the neighborhood of 20 or 30 people came and took part in a lively discussion. We thought it would be a good idea to present the facts and opinions that were aired that evening so that you can have a chance to consider them before Town Meeting.

For Your Consideration

Superintendent Bob Young, along with Nancy Brown Stump, Eloise Vitelli and Wendy Briggs (our School Committee) presented the first subject of the evening: Schooling. Mr. Young told us that Part II of the legislative budget contains 20 million dollars for public schools. This is not nearly the full amount he had hoped for, but he said, every dollar helps and it's 20 million more that we might have gotten. As a result of this funding, our local commitment will decrease in 1999-2000 by 4%. Our legislators are committed to an ideal funding level of 55%, we are currently at 43%.

The Bath Middle School is undergoing extensive renovation. The 5.6 million dollar project will add programming space for the arts, a foreign language lab and 3 new computer labs. The project will double the size of the library and the cafeteria, and will provide space for Physical Education programs. Eloise Vitelli is on the Middle School project committee.

All that having been said, Mr. Young asks, "Does it make sense to keep the middle school in Bath, or should Union 47 build our own?" Financially, the answer is that we should build our own. It would cost less in the long run than tuitioning our students to Bath. However, is it

possible to get the five towns in Union 47 to move in one direction? Not so far. We do need to do something: Woolwich is maxed out and in need of about 5 million dollars' work.

Other news included Georgetown moving to a 5 day week for Kindergarten (from 4 days) and the ongoing accreditation efforts at the high school. Nancy Brown Stump is on the accreditation committee. When the subject of tuition came up, Mr. Young mentioned that all public high schools in Maine are tuitioned the same: this year tuition is \$5110.00 per student. Elementary and middle schools are variable. A questioner asked whether we might go to year-round schooling as other states have and Mr. Young said he really did not see that happening.

Wendy Briggs explained the breakdown of budget numbers to be voted on at town meeting, noting that our local appropriation is down 5.25% from last year. We will end this year with a large (\$50,000.) surplus because some families moved out of town and the state did not spend as much as it had anticipated. As a result of our not having spent as much as we had expected, Nancy Brown Stump announced that the school committee would like to establish a dedicated scholarship fund. At town meeting, we will vote on whether to appropriate \$20,000. from surplus to start this fund. The

committee felt that if we had such a fund, perhaps it would be the sort of thing that people could make (tax-free) donations toward. As time goes by, we could grow the fund to the point of using the earned interest to offer scholarship money.

Ms Brown Stump reminded us that in the next three years we have 7, 11, and 14 seniors graduating and the school committee would like to continue to support our graduates in the same way we have in the past. A questioner asked whether we should make our scholarships need-based, and Ms. Brown Stump had a two-fold answer: we don't really have the resources to be checking our neighbors' financial wherewithal, and in any case, the point of the money is a kind of support, a blessing to our children from the people of Arrowsic as we send them off into the world. The committee would like to be able to offer such a gift to any senior who submits a formal letter of request.

Other suggestions from folks at the meeting included a town-sponsored graduation event, a party for the graduates that could be held in town (perhaps the day after town meeting) and publishing photos of our graduating seniors in the town report every year.

For information on school matters, contact Eloise Vitelli at 443-4660 or Nancy Brown Stump at 442-7527.

Town Property Management

Next up at the meeting was Bob Ater speaking on behalf of the Town Property Management Committee. The bulk of Mr. Ater's discussion was in regard to the Berry property, located adjacent to the Town Hall. After the Berry's house was destroyed by fire last fall, the committee approached the Berrys to see if they were interested in selling. As it turns out, the Berry's were interested and the selectmen negotiated a selling price of \$32,000. This price would buy the town 1.7 acres of property, a well that was drilled in 1975 (200 feet deep, flowing at 2 gals/ minute), a septic system built in 1996, power to the property and a driveway. If purchased, the town would have to remove the existing destroyed house (we would remove the shingles and the fire department could burn the structure, or we could pay someone to remove it). Estimated costs to improve an unimproved lot were listed as \$3500. for a well, \$5000. for a foundation, and \$10,000 for a septic system.

A questioner asked about the other piece of property the town owns on Rt. 127. Some options that were mentioned were selling it (to fund building projects at the

Town Hall site) or keeping it and maybe building a ball field, or finding other recreational uses.

Bob Ater has arranged a time for any who would like to walk the property: Tuesday June 15 at 4:00. Apologies for such short notice, but it is the only available time between now and town meeting. Please meet at the Town Hall parking lot at 4:00 Tuesday if you are interested.

Also, while we are on the subject of Town Property Management, please see the notice from the Selectmen below.

Sewall Pond Conservation Area

The last subject on the agenda was presented by Bill Blaiklock speaking on behalf of the Conservation Commission. Mr. Blaiklock mentioned that the town was given the gift of public access to Sewall Pond by Dr. Holt in 1981, but that gift was not unconditional. The town is bound by rules governing our pond access which include NO ACCESS AFTER DARK, NO OVERNIGHT PARKING, NO OPEN FIRES AND ACCESS IS LIMITED TO PASSIVE NON-MOTORIZED TRAFFIC. Efforts have been made to make the public aware of these rules: the wooden sign at the entrance; various barriers from the

road to the entrance trail; parking signs...but largely to no avail. The trail is badly eroded, motorcycles and in some cases 4WD cars have been seen on the path, open bonfires are not uncommon sights in the summer.

It has been the Conservation Commission's charge to oversee the town's use of the pond and its surrounds. Recently, the Holt Foundation inquired as to whether we are meeting the requirements of our deed. To this end, Mr. Blaiklock has drafted amendments to our present ordinances for us to vote on at Town Meeting. They include adding an enforcement article to the Town's Parking Ordinance, clarifying responsibility, delineating acceptable parking locations and adding a penalty section for unlawful activity to the Sewall Pond Conservation Area Article.

Several ideas were mentioned as possible ways to lighten the public impact on the area: building a small off-road parking area, rehabilitating the soil erosion by re-establishing native plant growth, adding wood chips and/or water bars to the existing trail, rerouting the trail, or (someone suggested only a little in jest) planting poison ivy.

From The Selectmen

Greg Guckenburg, Selectman

In regards to Article 11 on this year's Town Meeting Warrant, the Selectmen feel that Fire Chief Brian Scott's proposal for a new Station and the acquisition of a new truck requires much more thought and preparation for discussion than Town Meeting would allow. Total tax and personal impact could be very large. We feel that we haven't had enough time to prepare a proper discussion for the Town.

We propose that the motion be tabled and that the Selectmen schedule a series of public hearings to discuss the idea and/or competing ideas. We can then come to the 2000 Town Meeting with proposals that fully explain the plans and their potential impact on the town.

The Next Issue of The Arrow will be published near the end of June. Any announcements, letters, news, welcome contributions, etc. should be left at the Town Hall addressed to The Arrow; left in my mailbox on the Old Stage Road; or sent via email to: paolds@javanet.com. Please have all submissions for this next issue to me by Sunday, June 27. Thanks! Patty Olds 443-4764