

TOWN OF SOUTH THOMASTON

Press Release

Voters at South Thomaston's upcoming June 20th Annual Town Meeting will be asked if they wish to authorize the Selectboard to purchase approximately 129 acres of undeveloped land. The land consists of a total of five parcels that abut the nearly 100 acres the Town currently owns on Route 73 where the Town Office and Fire Station are located.

Three parcels, totaling 118 acres, are currently owned by Jeffrey T. Smith of Owls Head. The other two parcels, totaling 11 acres, are owned by Ralph Cline III of St. George. The attached map shows all five parcels in relation to each other and to the Town-owned land.

Smith recently approached the Town's Conservation Commission indicating he would like to see his land remain in some sort of conservation status. The three parcels are valued at \$200,700 for tax assessment purposes. Smith has generously offered to sell all three parcels to the Town for the sum of \$50,000 on the condition that the Town preserve the property in a forever wild state, with limited exceptions. Hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, hunting and snowmobiling as well as the construction and maintenance of walking trails would be permissible. The use of ATV's, motorbikes and similar off-road vehicles or devices would be expressly prohibited.

The Selectboard, Budget Committee and Conservation Commission all recommend the purchase of Smith's parcels for \$50,000.

Cline has inquired if the Town would be interested in purchasing his property which also abuts the Town's current property as well as Smith's property. The Cline property consists of a 10-acre parcel and a 1-acre parcel. The Cline property has been undisturbed for decades (there is currently no road access) and is heavily forested with mature trees. Purchase of the Cline property is not conditioned on the land being conserved, but that is the recommendation of the Conservation Commission.

Cline initially was asking \$35,000 for both parcels, but now indicates \$17,000 would be acceptable. The two parcels are currently valued at \$21,900 for tax assessment purposes.

The Selectboard, Budget Committee and Conservation Commission all recommend the purchase of both Cline parcels, but have not recommended an amount. Consequently, the article in the town meeting warrant regarding the Cline properties is written in an open "to see what sum" form.

It is the Selectboard's intent that funding for one or both of these acquisitions would be from undesignated fund balance (surplus) and from any grants or donations that may be available. The Selectboard, through the Conservation Commission, would actively seek grants and donations to defray costs of the purchase and maintenance of this land.

A public information session regarding these possible land acquisitions and several other items on the Annual Town Meeting warrant will be held at 6:00 PM on Tuesday, May 30th at the Town Office.

The 2023 Annual Town Meeting is scheduled for 7:00 PM on Tuesday, June 20th at the Ash Point School in Owls Head.

For more information contact Town Administrator Terri Baines at terri@souththomaston.me or at 207-596-6584.