



Town of South Thomaston, Maine
125 Spruce Head RD
P.O. Box 147
South Thomaston, ME 04858-0147

Budget Committee Meeting
April 26, 2023

Attendees:

Budget Committee

Walter Reitz (Chair)
Sondra Wallace (Co-Secretary)
Linda Maltais
Bob Baines
Pennie Alley

Select Person

Jeff Northgraves

Town Administrator

Terri Baines

Meeting opened at 4:15 PM.

The Select Board on April 25 voted to add articles to the June Town Meeting warrant, asking if the Town would authorize the Select Board to buy the Cline and Smith properties that have been offered for sale. This meeting was for the Budget Committee to decide what, if anything, it would recommend concerning these articles. (The articles are still in draft form, subject to change.)

Discussion

W. Reitz, while recognizing that both open space and affordable housing are in the Comprehensive Plan, queried the justification for a large expenditure, at this time, for conservation land, not for housing or other important needs. J. Northgraves (for the Select Board) and S. Wallace (for the Conservation Commission) both felt that these offers (particularly the Smith offer) are a great opportunity to obtain conservation land; and both were confident that grants and other sources of funds could be found to cover most if not all of the cost. As for timing, the Cline offer is time-limited, and it makes sense to consider both offers at once. J. Northgraves also assured the meeting that the Town should be well able to afford this expenditure from surplus, if needed, particularly since the RSU 13 budget increase is well under his projection.



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W. Reitz also raised a concern about language in the Conservation Commission’s ordinance leaving unclear the Commission’s authority and responsibilities concerning land purchases and development. J. Northgraves and S. Wallace agreed to review the provision; W. Reitz said he would also ask the Town attorney to review it.

The Cline property

The draft warrant article, and Selectboard recommendation, state:

Article 6. To see if the Town will authorize the Selectboard to expend up to \$12,500.00 from undesignated fund balance, and from any grants or donations that may be available, to purchase two parcels of land consisting of 11 acres, more or less, identified on the town’s tax map as Map 008 Lot 002 and Map 008 Lot 003 and as more particularly described in a deed found at Book 5522 Page 198, under other such terms and conditions as the Selectboard deems advisable.

Selectboard: Recommends purchase.

Budget Committee: _____

S. Wallace moved that the article state “The Budget Committee recommends purchase.” L. Maltais seconded. Motion carried 4-1 (B. Baines, L. Maltais, S. Wallace, W. Reitz yes; P. Alley no).

The Smith property

The draft warrant article, and Selectboard recommendation, state:

Article 7. To see if the Town will authorize the Selectboard to expend up to \$50,000 from undesignated fund balance, and from any grants or donations that may be available, to purchase a parcel of land consisting of 118 acres, more or less, identified on the town’s tax map as Map 8 Lot 5, Map 9 Lot 6, Map 13 Lot 6, and as more particularly described in a deed found at Bk 2310 Pg 185, Bk 2310 Pg 185 and Bk 2310 Pg 183 under the restriction imposed by the current owner that the land shall be preserved in forever wild conservation protection with the exception of the construction and maintenance of walking trails. Hunting and snowmobiling would be permissible, no ATV’s would be allowed on the property and under other such terms and conditions as the Selectboard deems advisable.

Selectboard: Recommends purchase at \$50,000.

Budget Committee: _____



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B. Baines moved that the article state “The Budget Committee recommends purchase at up to \$50,000.” L. Maltais seconded.

Discussion: P. Alley explained she was voting “No” on both motions because, since the funding was to come from surplus, grants, or donations, she did not view these proposals as budget matters at all. W. Reitz and J. Northgraves, while conceding that was a defensible view, said it had not been followed elsewhere in the Warrant, and perhaps more important, no recommendation from the Budget Committee would imply a negative view.

Motion was then voted on, and carried 4-1 (B. Baines, L. Maltais, S. Wallace, W. Reitz yes; P. Alley no).

Further discussion

It was agreed that before the next fiscal year’s budget cycle, consideration would be given to the issue of whether the Budget Committee should make recommendations on warrant articles that do not affect taxes.

W. Reitz expressed concern that very few townspeople are aware of these land sale offers, and significant efforts to inform them need to be undertaken before the Annual Town Meeting. J. Northgraves strongly concurred. S. Wallace agreed that the Conservation Commission would take the lead on this effort, including notices to the listserv and a presentation at the Select Board’s May 30 informational meeting.

Without objection, W. Reitz declared the meeting adjourned at 4:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Sondra Wallace

These minutes were approved by the Budget Committee on 4/9/24.