

## **A NOTE FROM THE SELECT BOARD**

Dear Fellow Citizens of Bowdoinham:

The town is facing several challenges that we want to bring to your attention if you are not already aware. These challenges are the funding of road maintenance, increased staffing costs, and an ambulance service issue.

### **Road Maintenance**

Historically, the town has been funding its road maintenance exclusively through bond issues versus direct allocations from the annual tax revenues. There are short term benefits to this fiscal strategy, but over time the debt service starts accumulating. The select board is uncomfortable with continuing this method of funding the roadwork and has decided to change this strategy by making the routine road maintenance a line item in the annual town budget. There will be a short-term consequence of higher taxes but there will be a long-term benefit of gradually reducing the town's debt.

### **Staff Attrition and Staffing Costs**

There has been an increased rate of attrition for town employees. To increase staff retention while also maintaining service levels, the select board has agreed to some wage increases to better align the benefits paid to town employees with surrounding municipalities. Additionally, we have changed two part-time positions to full-time with benefits. These changes will have an impact on the annual budget.

### **Ambulance Service Issue**

Bowdoinham has been in a contract with Northeast Mobile Health Services (NEMHS) to provide ambulance service to our community with Topsham providing mutual aid support. Late last fall, NEMHS notified the town that they wanted to terminate the contract. Additionally, Topsham had been answering the vast majority of calls in Bowdoinham and consequently, their administrative leadership did not want to continue providing primary mutual aid support to Bowdoinham. After several meetings, NEMHS agreed to honor its contract obligations, but this agreement ends in June.

The town manager and Fire Chief have been exploring alternatives. The available options have been evaluated along with public workshops held to come to a decision regarding future ambulance support service. Based on this process, the select board is recommending a joint venture between NEMHS and the non-profit organization, Lisbon Emergency, Inc. The Lisbon-based service has already taken over mutual aid support from Topsham and its response times are close to what the town's citizens have been experiencing. There is an added option available with this contract that would provide partial coverage of a first responder in the form of community paramedicine. The base option alone is going to result in approximately a five-fold increase from what the town is presently paying. Adding the community paramedicine component would add a substantial incremental cost as well as require driver support from citizens within the community. We are trying to make the best decisions for the safety of our community while minimizing these cost increases.