

# Bayside to seek water rate hike

By Toni Mailloux

The overseers of the Northport Village Corporation, commonly known as Bayside, voted unanimously Sunday to begin the process of applying for a water rate increase from the Maine Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

Currently, the base rate is \$380 per year. An increase of \$46 to bring the base rate to \$426

will be sought.

Overseer David Crofoot, who is also chairman of the utility committee, said residents were warned of a possible increase when the deep-water extension for the Bluff and Shore roads was approved at the annual town meeting. He said the group was told the cost would be around

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\$50 per year for the long term to pay off the bond and still the extension was approved nearly unanimously.

Crofoot said the committee felt the prudent thing to do would be to start the process of applying for the rate increase with the PUC and then present the figures to residents at the August annual meeting. He said even if approved the increase would not go into effect until 2006.

He said the projected 2005 shortfall, which the village will have to subsidize, is figured into the rate increase request.

Jo Huntoon, president of the village corporation, said his figures, done separately from the utility committee calculations, indicated an increase of around \$42 per year would be needed.

"We wanted it (the base rate) divisible by three," said Crofoot.

The overseers also approved the water and sewer budgets for 2005. The shortfall in the water budget is estimated at \$6,000 if there is a 100 percent payment rate and around \$12,000 if 5 percent of the bills aren't paid. And that doesn't include additional phase 3 costs that may be incurred in 2005. The sewer budget is projected to be \$9,800 in the black.

Crofoot said committee members met with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in December. He said the DEP expressed some dissatisfaction with the report done by Woodward and Curran for Bayside and wanted more work done. Crofoot said it is estimated that further refinement of the stage 2 plan will cost \$9,900.

However, he said he also believes the DEP now understands that with so few customers Bayside couldn't pay to operate a secondary treatment plan even if someone else paid to build it.

Crofoot said Woodward and Curran will still look at four options but at least one of those options will be to upgrade the present plan. He said Bayside would also have to look at correcting infiltration problems with the leaking old sewer lines at the same time.

He said the revised plan has to be submitted to the DEP by Feb. 1 and after a month to review it, the DEP expects Bayside to start expending money for design work.

Crofoot said there is \$20,000 in the village budget for that effort but with \$9,900 being used for the report revision that doesn't leave much for design work.

"We have to bid out the design work and then figure out how to pay for it," he said.

In other utility-related matters, Crofoot said December was a wet month and it appears the village will have a flow violation. He said with so few residents using the sewer system this time of year that makes it obvious there are infiltration problems.

He said a big water leak was also found in a George Street residence. The cottage apparently ran out of fuel and water pipes froze and broke, resulting in some 6,400 cubic feet of water being lost. He said the cottage owner will have to pay for that water to the tune of \$2.75 for each 100 cubic feet.

Crofoot also reported to the board that a resident who lives beyond the current boundaries of the sewer system asked to be able to hook in at his own expense. He said that request had to be denied because the system is not in conformance and no extensions are allowed.

In other action, the overseers:

- agreed to put on the February agenda recommendations for facility changes from a Maine Municipal Association insurance survey;
- agreed they need to be more supportive of next year's life-guard when it comes to enforcing civil behavior and rules in and around the dock and swimming area;
- learned there are problems with the billing software purchased by the utility department;
- agreed to try to get someone to attend a workshop so Bayside can apply for up to \$3,000 in grant money for tree planting;
- voted to keep their monthly meeting at 10 a.m. Sunday despite requests from the treasurer and some residents that a change be made to allow them to attend church services; and
- went into executive session to discuss a personnel matter.