

Selectmen mull fire depts.' budget requests

by Mary Grow

China selectmen went over 2012-13 budget requests from the town's three volunteer fire departments and China Rescue at their Jan. 16 meeting, but ran out of time to finish the municipal budget review.

The social service requests are likely to be postponed to Jan. 30, because the committee established to pre-review them has not yet scheduled a meeting.

Once the selectmen finish their review, the budget committee will meet and make its recommendations. The town business meeting at which voters will make the final decisions is scheduled for Saturday, March 24. (ep)

Representatives of the fire departments and China Rescue explained their requests. All but the South China fire department are requesting modest increases.

For example, China Village Fire Chief George Studley said his additions include \$1,000 for plowing the fire station yard. He was told the town crew did not have time to do it, and none of the volunteer firefighters take care of it as the old-timers like Jack Sylvester did when he was chief.

The China Rescue budget includes \$3,000 to reimburse rescue members for the gas they use responding in their personal vehicles.

Peter Foote, chairman of the board of selectmen, commented that he is "not a big fan of fuel reimbursement."

Rescue Treasurer Webb Shaw said the current economy has made him conscious of the out-of-pocket cost of driving to a rescue call, not counting his time. The rescue unit is drafting a policy to govern reimbursements, he said.

South China Fire Chief Richard Morse said he is holding the budget line this year. However, he warned selectmen the town is looking at a major expenditure soon for new self-contained breathing apparatus, also called air packs, for his department and the

China Village department.

The Weeks Mills department has five-year-old air packs, thanks to a grant, but South China's are 25 years old, Morse said. Studley said his are about the same age.

So far the air packs are maintained, tested regularly and in good working order. But there is no guarantee they will continue to work, and new ones cost almost \$6,000 apiece.

Morse, Studley and Town Manager Daniel L'Heureux intend to apply for a grant for new air packs for the two departments – Morse would like to have eight apiece. However, several people said in the age of terrorism, grants are more likely to go to city departments than to rural ones.

L'Heureux said the fire departments' capital reserve fund is up to about \$50,000 that could be used to match a grant or to start buying new air packs if the grant application is denied.

Morse and Selectmen Steven Hughes discussed their conflicting understandings of Hughes's Jan. 2 motion, approved unanimously by the board, requiring an audit of fire department funds as a condition of 2013-14 town funding.

Morse thought Hughes wanted an accounting of all department funds, including money from donations and fund-raisers. The South China department is a non-profit organization, he said, and its privately-raised funds are its own business, not the town's.

Hughes said he wanted an audit only of taxpayers' money, to make sure expenditures are properly documented. He proposed the board reconsider the Jan. 2 motion at a future meeting.

In other business Jan. 16, L'Heureux told selectmen the June local balloting will include election of one of China's representatives on the Regional School Unit 18 board. Elwood Ellis's term ends this year.

The manager reported that the tipping fee for trash trucked to the Penobscot Energy Recovery Center incinerator has gone up

Board continues warrant discussions

by Mary Grow

China selectmen put the warrant for the March 24 town business meeting in near-final form at their January 23 meeting.

They did not make recommendations on the annual requests from social service agencies. That list will be reviewed at a meeting of a special committee, consisting of four selectmen and two or three budget committee members, scheduled for 6 p.m. Monday, January 30, in the town office meeting room.

Selectmen will meet at 7 p.m., the same evening planning to finish the warrant so that a budget committee meeting can be scheduled.

Major topics discussed January 23 were the planning board and emergency services' requests and a proposed new town position, a town librarian recommended by the Library Services Committee.

Planning Board Chairman Ronald Breton is asking for \$8,200 for next year, an increase of \$700 over the request for the current year. One new expenditure is for technical services; Breton explained the town might need to hire a third-party inspector for a future commercial development, if the developer would not pay. So far, he said, companies putting in major projects – Hannaford, the Dollar Store and Central Maine Power Company – have agreed to fund independent inspectors.

Selectman Paul MacDonald objected to the planning board asking for more money and also being allowed to build up a reserve fund – if the budget needs to increase, money should be taken from the reserve, he said. No other selectman agreed.

Selectmen voted unanimously to recommend \$17,000 for China Rescue for 2012-13, instead of the

\$20,000 requested. Their goal is to delete money to reimburse rescue vehicles to respond to rescue calls.

The library request totaling \$22,478 was approved on a 3-2 vote, with Joann Austin, Irene Belanger and board Chairman Peter Foote in the majority and Steven Hughes and MacDonald opposed. The total includes a \$4,500 donation to each of China's two libraries, the same amount approved last year, plus \$13,478 for salary and benefits for a town librarian.

Library Services Committee Vice-Chairman Jonathan Vogel said the town librarian would improve library services town-wide. He or she would not start work until January 1, 2013, giving almost a year to develop a job description, committee member Kathy Glenn-Lewin said.

The request for \$2,500 for China Community Days sparked a brief discussion before unanimous approval. Belanger wants the town-wide Community Days Committee revived to plan next summer's celebration; she volunteered to chair it, and Hughes volunteered to serve.

Most of the articles voters will see March 24 will be familiar. Selectmen did not discuss major appropriations requests for roads, town administration, solid waste disposal, insurance and other recurring expenditures.

Before turning to the budget,

selectmen again talked with Neck Road resident Beth Preston about the teen center she first proposed in June 2011, for last summer. Half an hour's discussion left them where they started, unsure of the proper relationship between the center and the town.

Preston proposes using the old town office basement, a town-owned building, raising questions of liability, the propriety of charging a small membership fee to use town property and other issues. Selectmen asked Preston again to talk with recreation committee members to see if the center could be a town function under that committee's jurisdiction.

China Four Seasons Club to host Antique Snowmobile Show

The China Four Seasons Club will be hosting its 13th annual Antique Snowmobile Show on Sunday, February 5, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the clubhouse on Lakeview Drive, in China, across from the China Town Office.

Vintage sleds will be on display, and a cardboard sled competition will be held. Sleds should be made from cardboard, tape and paint only.


For more information, contact Dean Sheaff at 446-2968.



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**ATTENTION
TOWN OF
CHINA RESIDENTS**

**Recycle Please:
It's good for the environment,
produces revenues & saves energy...and YOUR Tax Dollars.**

Here's a resolution that's easy to keep. Recycle Please.

Can you think of any good reason not to recycle? It seems to me that there are lots of reasons why one should recycle. This year please be determined to make a difference by recycling!

Recycling works; it makes products and minimizes waste. In Maine a variety of products are produced from recycling, most particularly paper goods and composite lumber. Recycled fiber is in our newspapers and books, our printing and writing paper, packaging and is even in paper plates, tissue products, take-out trays and kitty litter.

Another common item, milk jugs, can be remade into many things, including sophisticated plastics such as the durable composite decking boards. Made from high density polyethylene or HDPE or #2 plastic, milk jugs are one of the highest-valued recyclables, realizing more than \$600 per ton in the marketplace.

Maine has a goal to recycle 50 percent of the waste we generate. In China we have a recycling rate of 42% and anticipate realizing substantial gross revenue in the current year. Recycling also offsets processing costs that would be incurred from the burning of the products that could be recycled, again making economic sense. On average China pays \$82.00 per ton for processing ("tipping" fees and transportation costs) of household waste and we produce over 1,600 tons per year.

Kindly observe what we are sending to the landfill in Norridgewock or the waste-to-energy plant in Orrington. Even though we have a good recycling program, we are still spending thousands of dollars to bury or burn materials that could be turned into products and therefore revenue. We can do better. By recycling we can reduce environmental impacts of products we use; creating savings in the water and energy used in manufacturing and reducing the associated pollution. *When a can is made from recycled aluminum, it uses 95 percent less energy than when made from bauxite.* Also, fuel use, emissions, and production and transportation costs are all reduced.

As recycling becomes more convenient in China, more residents are becoming recyclers. Perhaps you are already one of them and noticed the improvements to our recycling facility. And if not, maybe this year you will join others in a resolve to recycle. It does have a direct effect on the mill rate.

Thank you!

**TOWN OF CHINA
Dogs need to
be Registered by
January 31**



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(until January 31)

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