

Vassalboro workers ask for better pay

by Mary Grow

Vassalboro selectmen heard employees' requests for better pay at their January 19 meeting, and two-thirds of them promptly expressed interest in trying to improve the situation.

Robert Browne, the most fiscally conservative board member, asked employees to give him more information as he considers how salaries fit into the whole town budget. No one offered guarantees. In a town where selectmen and the budget committee have traditionally tried to give town meeting voters a budget that will not increase their taxes, if employee salaries go up significantly, something else will have to be cut, board Chairman Philip Haines said.

Staff from the town office, public works department and transfer station presented figures showing that compared to people doing similar jobs in comparable Maine towns, Vassalboro employees are paid up to 30 percent less. Town Manager Mary Sabins had a similar result when she compared Vassalboro's office staff to office employees in all 22 other Maine towns in the same population category. Therefore, employees said, they would like to have selectmen recommend more than the traditional one or two percent pay increases, beginning with the 2012-13 budget.

There was consensus that bring-

ing everyone up to area standards would take more than one year. Selectman Lauchlin Titus recommended aiming for three years, since by the end of three years there might be three new selectmen.

J. J. Wentworth said when he mentions his pay to friends working in other towns, they say, "That's what you get? Are you stupid?"

His boss, foreman and Road Commissioner Eugene Field, said public works drivers could get more money as school bus drivers or beginning janitors at the school.

Wentworth said as long as selectmen are working on the problem, he does not mind waiting. Others nodded agreement.

Haines said since some categories of employees are underpaid, comparatively, more than others, catching up might involve differential increases. Employees did not object to the idea.

Selectmen will begin detailed review of the draft budget at a workshop scheduled for 9 a.m. Thursday, February 16. They also hold a regular meeting that evening.

Sabins said the budget committee's organizational meeting is scheduled for Wednesday evening, March 8.

Selectmen agreed that the town has good employees who deserve to be as well paid as other towns', if possible.

"We'll try, gang," Haines promised as the discussion ended.

The other group attending the January 19 selectmen's meeting was Coyote Ridge residents and landowners, bringing selectmen up to date on plans to resolve the subdivision's problems.

After the original developer sold the entire subdivision, the new owner failed to build the interior road to specifications and has fallen behind on taxes, creating problems for the residents and with state environmental regulators and town officials. Following up on a proposal made two weeks earlier, spokesman Charles O'Neal and Michael Farrell said they still want selectmen to foreclose on nine unsold lots next month, since the subdivision owner has indicated he does not intend to pay overdue taxes, and to sell the lots to Farrell for \$1 each.

Farrell intends to donate the land to a road association that was about to be formed by six resident families and two of the five non-resident lot owners. The road association will maintain a gravel road and keep taxes paid, he said.

Haines said he has been notified that the state Department of Environmental Protection will no longer require a paved road and will overlook other problems in view of the significantly smaller developed area as the subdivision goes from 20 lots to 11 lots.

Girl Scouts at state museum



Girl Scout Troop #436, of Sidney, visited the Maine State Museum in Augusta on January 18. Their trip was part of the work they are doing to attain the Girl Scout's Capital Badge. They are pictured here with State Senator Roger Katz who greeted the troop and answered questions about the Legislature. Photo courtesy Maine Senate Republican Office

LCF to discuss wind power energy

PALERMO—The Living Communities Foundation (LCF) will present a pertinent part of the PBS series on alternative energy for this month's dinner-and-a-movie selection on Friday, January 27. Wind is proving to be a viable source of power and income for Minnesota farmers. Explore the pros and cons of how it might—or might not—work in Maine.

There are other possibilities,

too: Founded by Nobel Laureate Mohammed Yunus, the Grameen Shakti organization distributes small solar systems and portable bio-gas systems to rural Bangladeshis. Solar collectors that look like dishtowels are being used in Africa to provide light in village homes at night. Several of the LCF members actually use alternative energy, and can provide personal insight into the benefits and problems

with various systems. Is it worth it to convert? Can we afford not to?

A potluck dinner will also take place at 6 p.m. There is no charge, but donations are certainly appreciated. The LCF is planning on installing a solar hot water system, and needs your help. For more information call Connie at 993-2294.

Scrapbooking fundraiser at Erskine

The Class of 2012 will host a scrapbooking workshop to benefit Project Graduation on Saturday, March 10, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., in the Erskine cafeteria. Creative Memories consultant Mary Haskell will be there with how-to workshops, ideas, and materials to purchase. In addition, Stampin' Up Consultant Tonia Tibbetts, Silver Fox Stamps and More consultant Sheila Bacon, and Close to My Heart consultant Kathy Kendall will also be available to demonstrate various techniques. The cost of the event is \$25 and includes lunch, snacks, and drinks. All participants will also receive a thank you gift for attending. In the case of inclement weather, a snow date of Sunday, March 11, has been set.

To register, please send your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and seating preference (i.e. names of other participants you would prefer to sit with) along with the non-refundable fee of \$25 to: Dee Porter, c/o Erskine Academy, 309 Windsor Road, South China, ME, 04358. Checks should be made payable to Erskine Academy and registration information should be received by Saturday, March 3, to ensure a spot.

Children & adult Sunday School 10 am.
Worship services at 11:00 am. Meeting at the American Legion, 79 Legion Memorial Drive, South China off Route 3.
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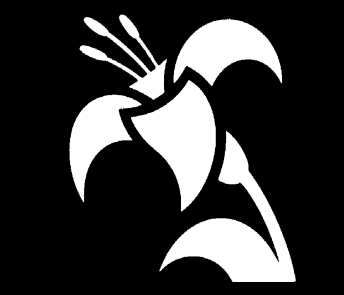
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