

Information on Special Election for Malone Property Purchase

(Created by Waterboro Selectmen and Town Administrator)

1. The Economic Development chapter of our Waterboro Comprehensive Plan strongly encourages the creation of a business or industrial park, new extensions to our public water system, and a possible future public sewer system. In addition, the Plan suggests that the Town move forward with the development of a business park either private, or municipal, or both. The report identified current available Town land on the Bennett Hill Road as a potential business park, which could be enhanced by the purchase of land off Route 5. With this in mind, the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator and Economic Development Committee for several years have been interested in acquiring a 37 acre parcel owned by John Malone. It is behind and uphill of JD's Package Store on Route 5 and is identified as Tax Map 8/ Lot 44-2-1. A couple years ago Selectman and staff investigated the property for a potential business park, but the high price of nearly \$400K prevented any real negotiations.
2. Now, three years later, John Malone has reduced the price for his land to \$275,000 and made the offer known publicly at a January 2018 Board of Selectmen meeting. Selectmen then conducted a short executive session, and then in public session the same evening voted 5-0 to direct the Town Administrator to pursue the acquisition with Mr. Malone for \$275,000. A purchase and sales agreement was later finalized and signed by both Mr. Malone and Waterboro Selectmen in early February.
3. In addition to the 20/20 Comprehensive Plan Committee's recommendation above, there was significant interest in the future viability of the Waterboro Water District. Although not a part of Town Government, it was identified as a must-have resource to support Economic Development within the community. Beginning in 2015, the Water District embarked on an engineered strategic plan with goals for a much needed new well source and storage facility. The Water District realized costs for a new storage tank could be reduced if the tank could be constructed on Town owned land. Consequently, discussions with Selectmen started in 2014 and in 2017 a concept easement was approved for a new water tank site uphill and to the southwest of our transfer station on Bennett Hill Road. This initial location on town land abuts the Malone property which has higher ground and is an even better tank location. This supports the District's strategy to stabilize and enhance the performance of the water system.

4. The Town also has a vested interest in the viability of the Water District as we depend on the Water System for fire protection. If you look at what happened in July 2017, a fast moving fire destroyed three popular South Waterboro businesses. On that day, our Fire Department drained much of the 280,000 gallon Water District storage tank in less than 2 hours. For the rest of the day firefighters had to rely on tanker shuttles and an enormous mutual aid response from our neighbor towns to put an estimated 600,000 gallons on that fire. From this incident, many citizens learned that we not only have limited fire suppression water storage, but we also have only one water storage tank that has not been drained, scraped and painted for 25 years. Such maintenance should occur at least every 10 years. However, the Water District has understandably been reluctant to do this because we would then have zero fire suppression water and low residential pressure for several weeks during this maintenance work.
5. In order to move forward with this purchase, by charter we must have a special election as we want to promptly close on this property before our usual June election timetable. Selectmen chose March 27, 2018 as the date for this special election which will be held in Town Hall at 24 Townhouse Road. If approved by voters, the property's closing will occur before April 15th.
6. Since Waterboro has a healthy fund balance, Selectmen decided to ask voters to approve this transaction using cash from our unassigned fund balance (presently at over \$2,000,000 of uncommitted funds in addition to our charter-mandated \$1.1 million emergency fund). Doing so means there will be no future principal and interest payments and no increase to our property tax rate from this purchase. We will also be working with the Water District to see what they will pay the town for an acquisition or easement for the tank location, access road work costs, etc.
7. Selectmen feel strongly that this acquisition is a wise move and provides the necessary assistance our Water District needs to provide adequate fire suppression and drinking water to our growing Town. It will also result in 25-50% cost savings in pipe installation when compared to trenching the pipe 1000 feet through the woods to the transfer station and then about 2000 feet down the edge of Bennett Hill Road to Route 5/202. In addition, some or all of this purchase price can be recouped over time with potential land sales or

leases to commercial interests. As we all know, this area around the intersection of Routes 202 and 5 has seen tremendous commercial growth in recent years. That growth will continue as Waterboro's population will exceed 10,000 residents in the next decade or two. It is smart and less expensive to prepare for such growth now rather than wait for a crisis situation of too little water availability for future businesses who want to locate here. As usual, we encourage absentee voting for all elections. Absentee ballots were available starting on February 21 in Town Hall and the special election will be held March 27, 2018 at Town Hall, 24 Townhouse Road from 11am to 7pm.

Please contact Town Administrator Gary Lamb (207-247-6166, ext. 100 or administrator@waterboro-me.gov) if you have any questions. Please vote on or before March 27... Thank you.