

## **Summary of the Informational Meeting held before the 4/25/2018 Special Town Meeting**

Prior to opening the Special Town Meeting the Board provided an informational session starting at 6:30p.m. This session was attended by Keith Pooler, Belfast Water District Superintendent; Andrew Hamilton, Attorney for the Belfast Water District; Bill Kelly, Attorney for the City of Belfast; Amanda Meader, Attorney for the Town of Northport; Mark Humphreys, Chairman of the Northport Board of Selectmen; Drexell White, Vice Chair of the Northport Board of Selectmen; Shelly Patten, Member of the Northport Board of Selectmen; Barbara Ashey, Northport Town Administrator; Jeanine Tucker, Northport Town Clerk; Robin Coombs, Northport Deputy Town Clerk; Dee Reid and Reeves Gilmore, Election Clerks; and many residents of the Town of Northport.

The intent of the informational session was to provide Northport residents with an explanation of the reason for the Special Town Meeting. And to express, with certainty, that the decision on whether or not to purchase property, situated in Northport, from the Belfast Water District as outlined in the "Right of First Refusal" that was presented to the Board on March 12, 2018 is the responsibility of the residents of the Town. The Board explained that a vote in the affirmative means that the Town would like the opportunity to acquire the property and a vote in the negative would indicate that the Town has no interest in the parcel.

Attorneys for all parties provided information relevant to the right of first refusal, including statutory reasons for the procedure. Vice Chair Drexell White noted that, prior to the Town receiving notice of the Nordic Aqua Farms intent to purchase portions of the Belfast Water District property, the Belfast Water District, City of Belfast and Nordic Aqua Farms had entered into a purchase agreement. White continued by stating that statute requires that a municipality must be offered first refusal on property belonging to a water district, when that land has been held in resource protection. He told those present that the Board wants residents to make an informed decision and that the discussion they were going to hear would offer conflicting opinions.

Belfast Water District Attorney Andrew Hamilton provided a timeline on what had transpired up to the purchase agreement that was signed at the end of January, 2018. Hamilton explained that there are three parts to the agreement, which includes protecting trails and conservation use. He noted that a purchase price for the property is hard to determine as the lot is subject to recreational and conservation terms. He added that the property would also be subject to easements necessary to the Nordic Aqua Farms project, including intake and discharge pipes that may have to run through or along the property. Hamilton said that the City of Belfast stepped forward to protect the current trail network running through the property and this is why they are included in the purchase agreement. Hamilton informed attendees that the right of first refusal could not have been presented until after a purchase agreement had been reached, a procedural process by law.

Belfast Attorney Bill Kelly stated that, based on the purchase agreement signed by the Belfast Water District, Nordic Aqua Farms and the City of Belfast, the City of Belfast intends to convey the parcels purchased by the city to Coastal Mountains Land Trust. He continued by noting the matter had not been discussed too deeply, as the purchase has not been finalized. Hale Morrell, representing Coastal Mountains Land Trust (CMLT), stated that she was pleased to hear this news and this was the first she had learned of any conveyance.

Northport resident Sandy Wallace asked to confirm that the City of Belfast intends to convey the entire Northport parcel to CMLT; Kelly replied that City Council does plan to conserve and convey the entire parcel at some point down the road, once the purchase has been completed. When asked if the City of Belfast would be deeding property to CMLT, or providing them an easement Kelly stated that he was unsure as they had not gotten that far in the discussion yet.

Belfast Water District Superintendent Keith Pooler informed those present that the Board of Trustees agreed to sell the property to Northport for its' assessed value, which is currently \$35,000. Pooler also assured everyone that the reservoir had not been used as a water resource since the 1980's. Northport Attorney Amanda Meader stated that, per Public Utilities Commission and Conservation rules, Northport would have to follow the outline of the agreement if moving forward with the purchase. Meader added that if the property is sold for less than fair market value, it must be used for conservation.

Chairman Humphreys closed the informational session at 7:45.