

THE WEEKLY PACKET

Blue Hill voters approve remaining part of dam discussion

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BY TRESSA VERSTEEG

BLUE HILL—Blue Hill voted yes on November 25 to participate with other towns to gain information about the petitioned abandonment of Toddy Pond dam. The vote came at a special town meeting called expressly for the purpose of discussing the future of the dam.

Around three dozen members of the public came to ask questions and offer their comments about the dam owned by American Iron and Metal Demolition USA (AIM) and its subsidiary Bucksport Mill LLC, whose petition to abandon three area dams was accepted by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection on November 1. The company's move to relinquish its responsibilities for the dams has spurred a lengthy legal process which requires special town meetings in every impacted town.

Select board member Scott Miller said that the vote is about keeping the town of Blue Hill in the discussion about the next dam owner. He explained that Blue Hill has combined efforts with four

other towns—Bucksport, Orland, Penobscot and Surry—to come up with solutions to avoid abandonment. They've joined legal representation with Orland, Penobscot and Surry.

Miller said he hopes that Blue Hill can help find a solution and support the Toddy Pond Association and property owners. However, he said, there is a limit to how much of the town's money he would be "comfortable" spending. While the issue is of interest to many, it's also of "less interest" to many without property on Toddy Pond. He encouraged those who want to help in the effort to donate to the legal fees.

Miller said that since 5 percent of Toddy Pond properties fall within the town of Blue Hill, he expects the town to only pay 5 percent of any total legal fees associated with the ownership discussions.

Many people asked questions about where to get information and why the state is not more involved. Others shared concerns about the loss of property value if the water is released, as well as loss of property taxes to the town.

Toddy Pond Association President Marc Restuccia said the organization seeks an ownership model that maintains lake levels to "promote wildlife habitat, support recreational activities and preserve property values."

In response to the lack of information from the dam owners, State Rep. Nina Milliken said AIM is "not being forthcoming." She said she's submitted multiple bills to change legislation on this statute.

For more ongoing information, visit the Toddy Pond Association website, toddypond.org, and the town of Blue Hill website.

In related news, Bucksport Mill has posted responses to questions from a November 12 public hearing at bucksportmillanswers.com. Additional questions will be accepted at that website through December 2, with answers to be posted no later than December 23.

Surry's special town meeting is Tuesday, December 3, at 7 p.m. at the fire station. Penobscot's is Saturday, December 7, at 1 p.m. at the fire station.
