

## **Town of Greenville Legislative & Congressional Issues Position Paper**

**Drafted October 7, 2008 by Town Manager John Simko**

Reviewed and amended by Board of Selectmen October 7, 2008.

*The following topic areas and related legislative or congressional issues are described with desired actions to be taken which would support the Town of Greenville. The topic areas are listed alphabetically, not necessarily in order of importance. This is not an exhaustive list of legislative issues of concern to the Town of Greenville.*

### **Airport**

The Town of Greenville participates in funding for airport improvements with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT). The Town is currently finalizing the scope of work for the rehabilitation the crosswind runway in 2009, an estimated \$2.4 million project. The Town and the MDOT currently enjoy a 2.5% cost-share apiece, due to the FAA's 95% participation. Both the MDOT and the Town will expect to pay about \$60,000 toward these improvements, which may also include the installation of an Automated Weather Observation System (AWOS) and may also result in funding for a stand-alone arrival's building (in lieu of a temporary engineer's work trailer) for this and future projects.

*As our state legislative representative, you could help our airport by: (1) pushing our cross-wind runway and taxiway project with the MDOT OPT as a priority for 2009 and seek to have the MDOT share fully funded; (2) making sure the next budget includes funds for general aviation airports to match FAA funds (in the past the state has fallen short with this 2.5% match); and (3) consider re-creating the former state-local capital improvement program, which funding smaller projects like crack-sealing, small drainage and frost-heave problems, access road paving, etc.*

*As our congressional representative, you could help our airport by (1) passing the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) legislation with funding remaining at the 95% level; (2) advocating to the FAA the importance of using program funds for a permanent building rather than a temporary structure for project oversight; and (3) pushing the National Weather Service to fully fund and implement expansion of its airport-based weather station (see attached letter to the NWS).*

### **CA Dean Memorial Hospital and Nursing Home**

C.A. Dean Hospital is Greenville's largest employer, and adds more than \$11 million into the regional economy each year through payroll and accounts payable. Unfortunately, the payer mix for our hospital is such that it relies heavily upon payment from the State and the federal governments. In recent years, payments from the State of Maine have, in net, been withheld from C.A. Dean, causing financial difficulty for our hospital.

In addition to this, there are other complicated funding and operational issues serving as obstacles for CA Dean's continued operation and future growth. In addition to reimbursement issues, the Certificate of Need cap for facilities may serve as an impediment for the third of three phases of upgrade at the hospital. The final phase - expansion and upgrade of the ER and OR, upgrading the ambulance entrance, and moving the CatScan machine into the main building are all critical upgrades. This third phase is critical to good patient care of our community members!

*As our legislative representative, you could help our hospital by: (1) MEETING WITH OUR HOSPITAL PRESIDENT REGULARLY TO STAY ABREAST OF ISSUES IMPORTANT TO OUR HOSPITAL!; (2), working to reconcile the outstanding balances owed by the State to CA Dean (currently in excess of \$1.2 million);*

(3) working with Department of Human Services (DHS) to fix their software accounting program so that the federal government will approve the state's accounting of care given to patients with both Medicaid and Medicare insurance so that two year's federal reimbursements to CA Dean totaling over \$300,000 can be released;

(4) working with the Greenville Public Safety Committee and other entities to implement a Moosehead Lake Emergency Services Fund for capital equipment and training (see attached); and

(5) working to get CA Dean the Certificate of Need it requires to move into phase III.

*As our congressional delegation representative, you could support our hospital through final passage of the hospital's most recent earmark request for capital improvements.*

### **Code Enforcement and Comprehensive Planning Issues**

Comprehensive Plan Revision: The Town of Greenville desires to update its 1999 adopted and consistent Comprehensive Plan. Unfortunately, there are no funds currently available from the State Planning Office to fund such an update.

*As our legislative representative, you could assist the Town in its planning efforts by advocating for full-funding of comprehensive planning needs by the State Planning Office (a just cause considering the 1991 Growth management Act requires municipalities to create such a plan).*

Implementation of a Statewide Building Code: The attached document, "Resolve 46 -To Establishing Statewide Uniform Building Codes – Executive Summary" is a product of the multi-state-agency working group which developed a series of recommendations for how to proceed with the implementation of a statewide building code. This could have a fiscal impact on the Town of Greenville if we were required to establish a new full-time position for a building inspector.

*As our legislative representative, you could help the Town by advocating for keeping the "opt out" provision for municipalities with fewer than 2,000 residents and could also work to clarify the law in regard to municipal and state responsibilities for enforcement of fire codes and life-safety codes in commercial properties.*

### **Economic Development & Tourism**

Tourism Development: The Town of Greenville's economy is driven predominantly by tourism. However, the services rendered to visiting tourists, as well as the infrastructure enjoyed by tourists, and even desired by tourists, is typically funded by the Town of Greenville and private entities predominantly. Notable exceptions include the 1997 downtown revitalization project in Greenville Village and the recent funding from the Municipal Investment Trust Fund for the improvements to the Junction Wharf.

In short, the Town is constantly seeking outside funding sources for infrastructure improvement projects because their cost is too large to be shouldered entirely by the Town itself.

In addition to infrastructure, there is a need for some operational and marketing actions to increase the Moosehead Lake's market share for tourism-related commerce. In addition to the efforts of the Piscataquis Tourism Task Force, the Moosehead Lake Region would benefit from additional funds for marketing of this region by the State, as well as funds to develop some annual benchmarks to measure tourist activity. The Piscataquis County Economic Development Council is working to develop some benchmarks like this, and the Greenville Economic Council is likewise looking into annual "rank cards" for tourist activity such as sales tax revenues; daily average traffic counts; sales recorded for food and drink at the time of liquor license renewal.

There is a particular need to improve the snowmobile program in the greater Greenville area, and an emerging need for a multi-use trail across town for ATV, snowmobile, and pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Particular needs for the snowmobile program have been previously identified in a 2005 report titled "Making Snowmobiling A More Vibrant and Sustainable Portion of Our Winter Economy – An Economic Development Proposal for the Town of Greenville" as well as a Maine Policy Review article by Bowdoin College Economist David Vail titled "Snowmobiling in Maine: *Past Successes, Future Challenges*" outline these issues in further detail.

Grants are being sought for development of the aforementioned cross-town, multi-use trail, and additional funds will be necessary for development of the proposed permanent trail for snowmobiling between Greenville and Kokadjo and Brownville as part of the Plum Creek plan. A final need is for the design and development of a local land and trails trust to hold land and easements for the purposes of supporting trails and other pieces of land for outdoor recreation purposes.

*As our legislative representative, you could help this effort by: (1) increasing funding for the State of Maine Snowmobile Municipal Grant Program;*  
*(2) consider a state-bond for snowmobile trail land acquisition AND trail development as part of the next economic development or land conservation bond package;*  
*(3) direction to the Maine State Office of Tourism and other entities to focus on tourist destination areas in inland Maine, in particular Moosehead Lake;*  
*(4) seek to direct the proceeds of all future tree growth penalties associated with conversion of forest land to developable land within the Unorganized Territories to trail development programs such as the DOC Municipal Grant program for snowmobile trail grooming, and to focus proceeds from the Plum Creek lands tree growth penalties to the proposed Moosehead Recreational Trails Fund;*  
*(5) develop a funding stream for the Municipal Investment Trust Fund so this can be accessed by service centers like Greenville for multiple future projects;*  
*(6) pass a resolve in the legislature to direct the Departments of Public Safety, Transportation, Revenue Services, Office of Tourism and Economic and Community Development to work with local economic development groups like the PCEDC and the Greenville Economic Council to provide and to help analyze the data held by the state to better track commercial activity associated with tourism in our region.*

*As our congressional delegation representative, you could help promote tourism in our region by (1) passing and funding the proposed Northern Border Commission legislation which was inspired by an Economic Development Administration (EDA) funded, four-state planning effort called the Northern Forest Sustainable Economy Initiative (see attached brochure);*  
*(2) working with the USDA Rural Development Agency to streamline the funding requirements for grants for such pieces of infrastructure as snowmobile trail groomers; and (3) targeting special transportation projects to improve the roadways leading to and from tourist destination areas such as the Moosehead Lake area, with priority given to designated scenic byways such as the route from Jackman to the Greenville.*

**Greenville Business Incubator:** In the future, we may have a business which would like to purchase our facility. The Town would like to have the flexibility to be able to sell this facility to them - or have the Town retain ownership and enter into a very long-term lease with the business - if such an offer is forthcoming.

*As our legislative representative, you could help our Greenville Business Incubator (GBI) by: arranging to let the GBI be released from the State of Maine Department of Economic & Community Development' s requirement that we run this as an Incubator AND release us from any payback of state funds in exchange for reaching agreed-to job creation targets.*

*As our representative to the Congressional Delegation, you could help the GBI by likewise releasing the Town of any requirement to return funds from construction in exchange for sale to a private business which agrees to reach certain job creation goals.*

## Emergency Services

Emergency Two-Way Radio Communications: The region has "dead spots" for 2-way radio communications between emergency service providers (EMTs, Firefighters, Wardens, Deputies, Police Officers, etc.). There is a technical study underway by Whitten's 2-way Radio Service out of Brewer, commissioned by the Piscataquis County Emergency Management Agency, to develop recommendations for how to lessen or even eliminate these "dead spots". To accomplish this, we will need to build or access new radio towers.

*As our legislative representative, you could help this effort by: (1) passing legislation to require cell phone companies to allow emergency service providers to place radio antennae and related equipment on their towers in suitable locations; and (2) assist in the development of the proposed Moosehead Emergency Services Fund (previously-mentioned – see attached memo.*

*As our Congressional representative, you could assist this need with further funding of radio communication equipment for our rural departments through grants from the Department of Homeland Security.*

Amendments to the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program: After four years of being repeatedly denied for funding to replace our unsafe tanker truck in the Greenville Fire Department, the Town authorized the borrowing of funds to pay for the replacement of this truck. The program has technical flaws which disadvantage rural, geographically isolated fire departments such as Greenville's.

*As our congressional representative, you could work with our Town Manager and Fire Chief to draft changes to this grant program which would place rural departments with unsafe, homemade apparatus to be replaced on a level playing field with other departments seeking similar funds.*

PSAP and County Jail at Piscataquis Sheriff's Office: Pursuant to last year's jail consolidation legislation actions and administrative edicts, there is a statewide commission designed to oversee all county and state jails. There remain concerns in Piscataquis County (Maine's most-rural county) that either (a) Piscataquis County will end up shouldering some of the cost of debt service on jails located in other counties when the property taxpayers recently paid off the bond on our county's jail without any state funding, or (b) the State will re-visit the seizure and closure of jails such as the one in Piscataquis County. Either scenario would result in added cost to taxpayers in Piscataquis County, either directly for debt service or indirectly as police transportation costs expand to cover the cost of transporting prisoners out of the county.

A similar effort to consolidate statewide services exists in emergency radio communications. The dispatcher at the end of the 911 telephone call from a land-line in Piscataquis County is located in the dispatch center in Dover-Foxcroft. This dispatcher has the technological ability to communicate via two-way radio with all emergency service departments in the county, and has an understanding of these services' jurisdictions, resources, and dispatch protocols. 911 calls made in Piscataquis County via cell phone go to the nearest State Police Department barracks (typically Orono), where the caller and/or the caller's information is relayed to the dispatcher in Dover-Foxcroft.

This system should be streamlined to allow cell phone calls to be received at the dispatch center in Dover-Foxcroft. State efforts to further consolidate dispatch centers would result in the closure of the Piscataquis County dispatch center: this should be avoided as it will only complicate dispatch protocols and stretch to the breaking point the limits of radio communications technology (e.g., to attempt to dispatch all services in Piscataquis County from Orono or Bangor).

*As our legislative representative, you could help this effort by: (1) keeping the Piscataquis County Dispatch Center in Dover-Foxcroft as the recipient of all 911 calls and the dispatcher for all emergency services in our county, and to expand this service to include cell phone calls; and (2) working with the legislature and this new jail commission to keep the Piscataquis County jail open and to protect Piscataquis County taxpayers from having to pay for jails in other counties (or, conversely, reimburse Piscataquis County for a requisite share of the cost for our jail).*

*As our Congressional representative, you could help our dispatch center through continued and expanded funding of Department of Homeland Security grants to pay for communications equipment improvements within the dispatch center and in identified “dead spots” throughout the region.*

**Backcountry Rescue:** This is a trying and very difficult issue: who pays for finding, assessing, treating, extricating, and delivering to definitive medical care a person hurt or injured in the backcountry in Maine? Municipal fire departments and hospital-based ambulance services join state agencies such as the Maine Warden Service and the Maine Forest Service in effecting backcountry rescues, but few if any of these services are specifically funded to perform this service. As a result, funding for equipment, training, and wages are often scarce and inconsistent in availability, case by case. A recent editorial written for and published within the Bangor Daily News outlines these issues (attached).

*As our legislative representative, you could help this effort by: (1) establishing a commission to come up with ways to best fund these operations; (2) consider funding from property taxes in the Unorganized territories a fund at the county-level for capital equipment and training necessary to effect backcountry rescues (In our region, this could be an annual contribution to the proposed Moosehead Emergency Services Fund); and (3) supporting funding for search and rescue in the Maine Warden Service budget, coming from the general fund and not from fee revenues.*

## **Energy**

**Energy Conservation and Alternative Energy Sources for Public Facilities:** Rising energy costs continue to impact public entities such as the Town of Greenville and the Greenville Schools. There are examples in other states of programs to convert inefficient heating systems in public schools and other public facilities into more efficient units utilizing wood pellets and other renewable energy sources.

*As our legislative or congressional representative, you could help the Town by funding energy conservation and efficiency programs for towns and schools like ours to fund energy audits; wall insulation and replacement doors and windows for improved energy conservation; and wood-pellet stoves or other wood-based heating systems for public facilities.*

**Low-Income Energy Assistance:** The elderly are particular susceptible to high energy costs in our community because (a) many elderly residents are on fixed-incomes and cannot absorb large increases in energy costs, and (b) benefit from warmer environments for health reasons. Also, many elderly residents reside in subsidized housing units which have an over-reliance on electric heat and oil-based boilers for hot-water baseboard heat.

*As our legislative or congressional representative, you could help our elderly population by supporting continued or expanded funding for the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), as well as weatherization and central heating improvement programs. You could also create a matching grant program specifically for owners of subsidized housing complexes to fund the replacement of central heating systems for non-electric dependant and non-oil-based fuel sources.*

## **Greenville Schools**

This is a very controversial issue – the possible consolidation of the school districts in this region, which could ultimately result in loss of local control, possibly future closure of the school in part or in whole. There are also funding issues centered around the Essential programs and Services (EPS) model for funding, as well as penalties associated with not joining the proposed Regional School Unit (RSU).

*As our legislative representative you could help the Greenville Schools by:*

- (1) KEEPING IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH OUR SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT TO FOLLOW ISSUES OF CONCERN WHICH CHANGE QUICKLY THROUGH STATE ACTIONS;*
- (2) Remove penalties for school units which vote to opt out (especially geographically isolated units like Greenville);*
- (3) Support repeal of the entire school consolidation law;*
- (4) Support pending legislation for a private and special law for the joining of the Jackman and Greenville School Districts in a school-union-like manner.*

## **High-Speed Internet Capacity**

There is a need to expand high-speed Internet service throughout Piscataquis County, but demand is particularly high around Moosehead Lake. The ConnectMe Authority has tentatively approved the funding of a major broadband Internet project in the Moosehead Lake Region through a commercial entity known as Cornerstone Communications. A competitor – Premium Broadband Internet – is also coming to the area without the benefit of ConnectME Authority funding. The Moosehead Lake Region will benefit from the presence and delivery of service by both of these companies which offer distinctive, complimentary technology.

A separate Internet need is for the development of a community-wide, if not region-wide common Internet and email “platform” such as has been completed in the Town of Hermon. The replication of “Hermon.net” in the Greenville region would work to connect the community more closely together and create an added incentive for residency in our community as well as enrollment in our schools.

*As our legislative representative, you could help expand broadband Internet in our region by supporting funding for the aforementioned telephone-based Broadband Internet project of Cornerstone Communications through the ConnectME Authority, and encourage the Authority to expand funding to include the replication of the “Hermon.net” model in Greenville in the future.*

*As our Congressional representative, you could help to expand Broadband Internet options in our region by funding the aforementioned Northern Border Development Commission, which would make grants for such projects in rural regions possible.*

## **Junction Revitalization**

There is a 2002 Junction Revitalization Plan which was completed by consultants and engineers at the request of the Town of Greenville and Piscataquis County (see attached). The main focus of this effort is to improve the safety of visitors, travelers and residents in this area. The improvements about to begin on the Junction Wharf represent a sizable portion of the objectives for this plan. To complete the others, additional state and/or federal funding will be required. Areas of public infrastructure currently under development / rehabilitation include the Junction Wharf, a new snowmobile and pedestrian entrance to the wharf and a proposed ATV / Boat Trailer parking area off Depot Street. Areas which will require additional funding and development include:

- Re-alignment of Depot Street or relocation of truck traffic through Moosehead Industrial Park for safety;
- Road improvements to Route 15 to address pedestrian and bicyclist safety traveling under railroad trestle and around the sharp bends of Route 15;
- Completion of surface amenity improvements to the Junction Wharf, including an outdoor display, beach and bathhouse improvements, and parking lot paving;
- Rehabilitation of the Railroad Depot Station;
- Welcome sign development;
- General landscaping and possibly a façade improvement program for the businesses.

*As our legislative representative, you could help with these planned improvements to the Junction by:*

- (b) advocating for road improvements to Route 15 to the MDOT;*
- (c) seeking on-going funding of the MITF program to pay for many of these projects;*
- (d) tailoring future state investments in historic preservation in such a manner as to include the railroad station;*
- (e) general support and advocacy for any of the aforementioned pending grant applications.*
- (f) Advocate to the MDOT Office of Passenger Transportation to support seasonal train service between Jackman and Greenville (and beyond) through study, track and station improvements, and possible subsidy.*

*As our congressional representative, you could help our Junction Revitalization project by:*

- (1) continuing to fund and even increase funding to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program which could fund most of these improvements through a Downtown Revitalization project award;*
- (2) funding for scenic by-way projects which would include this section of Route 15;*
- (3) support the proposed Northern Border Commission, which could fund most if not all of these desired improvements.*

## **Plum Creek's Moosehead Lake Concept Plan**

The Town of Greenville is on record as supporting this plan: any legislative efforts to derail this project would be unfavorable to the Town of Greenville. Support for its passage and implementation would be desired by the Town of Greenville. Two funds which could be associated with this project are listed below, with desirable advocacy requests identified.

**Moosehead Recreation Fund:** The creation of this fund will arguably assist the Town in its efforts to develop a network of multi-use, permanent trails. The implementation of this fund should be done in a manner which gives Greenville a seat at the table for such projects.

**Moosehead Emergency Services Fund:** Contributions to this proposed fund would be a desirable way for future developers (who purchase land from Plum Creek) to mitigate their impact on emergency services. Through the Site Location of Development permit process, LURC could require such contributions.

## **Public Works & Road Issues**

If the Public Works Garage were ever to move, we would need assistance with siting a new salt-sand pad through the DEP.

*As our legislative representative, you could assist this possible move of our salt-sand pad by (1) advocating for our desired location to the DEP, and (2) supporting funding for the creation of a salt-sand storage building for the Town through the MDOT.*

## **Revenue Sharing**

Revenue Sharing is the portion of sales tax and income tax received by the State which are re-distributed to municipalities to reduce property tax commitments. Historically, this fund has been raided by the legislature for a variety of purposes. In recent years, a portion of state revenue sharing (2%) has been diverted to a Local Government Efficiency Fund for grants to groups of municipalities working together to make services more efficient and cost-effective. Unfortunately, this fund has also been raided by the legislature to (typically) balance the state budget (See attachments A and B provided by the Maine Municipal Association).

*As our legislative representative, you should work to **KEEP THE LEGISLATURE FROM RAIDING EITHER OF THESE FUNDS IN ORDER TO BALANCE THE STATE BUDGET!***

## **Solid Waste Disposal**

**Landfill Closure:** The estimated total cost to close the Town of Greenville's landfill, upon full capacity, is over \$600,000. In the past, the closure of such municipal landfills has been funded aggressively by the Department of Environmental Protection. The Town of Greenville will be ordered to close this landfill in the near future.

*As our legislative representative, you could assist the Town in the closure of its landfill by advocating for funding, possibly through bonds or other sources identified by the DEP, to cost-share the closure of this landfill.*

**Transfer Station Development:** The Town of Greenville is currently reviewing options for the creation of a single facility to serve as our transfer station and recycling center for all solid waste items. The cost of developing such a facility will be a large capital expense for the Town.

*As our legislative representative, you could assist in the funding for this future transfer station by ensuring that the municipal efficiency fund is no longer raided by the legislature and is streamlined as a mechanism to create a more efficient, one-stop-shop for solid waste collection.*

## **Tree Growth Program Reform**

There is a working group which is reviewing the Tree Growth program and working to tighten loopholes for landowners who clearly are using this program solely as a tax dodge and not as a means to further commercial harvesting potential for their properties. The Town would prefer that our legislative delegation track any tree growth legislation which would come from this working group and work with Town of Greenville officials to ensure the proposed changes are in our community's best interests.

## **Unorganized Territories Services and Cost-Sharing**

As a start at reforming Unorganized Territories, the State should consider separating the means by which taxes are assessed and collected in the UTs for populated and unpopulated unorganized territories. This is a complicated issue which requires more study, but the current situation results in service centers and municipalities adjacent to populated unorganized territories indirectly funding services provided to the region by tax-exempt entities (state agencies, hospitals, schools) and also by directly funding capital needs for regional infrastructure (e.g., airport, Junction Wharf) without any specific cost-share from the populated unorganized territories.

*As our legislative representative, you could assist the Town with this initiative by forwarding legislative which would require the separate calculation of tax rates for unorganized territories which benefit from specific municipal services provided for them by the county commissioners (e.g., plow contracts, fire protection, etc.). This would serve to reflect the true cost for services in the populated UTs and would also make it possible to negotiate cost-shares with the taxpayers who benefit through adjacency or proximity the use of public infrastructure in municipalities and service centers.*

Respectfully Submitted;

John Simko  
Town Manager  
Revised 10-12-08