

Hartford votes to buy dam

By **Mary Standard** , Special to the Sun Journal

Saturday, June 14, 2008

HARTFORD - After considerable debate, voters Thursday night passed a request from the Anasagunticook Dam Committee to support Canton in the purchase of the defunct dam for \$20,000.

Committee member Judy Hamilton read a statement to support the article.

"Of the 127 properties that have lakeshore property, 81 of them are in Hartford," she said. "Those properties represent 12.3 percent of the total town valuation. Lake Anasagunticook is a shared resource with the town of Canton and their plight should also be a shared problem."

Resident Tom Hamilton spoke from a biologist standpoint with concern over what the low water level is doing to the wetlands, which are now disappearing. He said what was once wet marsh with standing water is now dry and new plants are moving in. Areas that were under water now have become a wet marsh. Warmer water is also moving close to the bottom of the lake, which makes conditions good for algae to grow, he said.

Hamilton also said people would be demanding abatements on their taxes because many no longer have lake use for lakefront property. He said the loss of these taxes would affect the town greatly.

Selectman David Bowen said he is expecting the town office to start getting requests soon. One realtor, who is also a lake owner, said he would be expecting a \$1,000 abatement on his property.

John Convey said the Hartford beach looks like the infield at Fenway Park. He said one would have to walk 100 yards to get in water waist deep.

Bowen said it was more like 200 yards.

Swimming lessons at the beach have had to be moved to another site due to the low water.

Arthur Harvey said he thought townspeople should give Canton something, but he thought \$20,000 was too much.

Connie Shaw said that when Bear Pond had a problem, Hartford didn't help.

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Convey said that association didn't ask for help.

The fact that the dam is still privately owned was a problem for some voters, but in the end the vote was overwhelming to approve the \$20,000.

Canton selectmen, Canton Water District and Anasagunticook Lake Dam Core Committee met last month to draw up plans for taking the dam by eminent domain. An appraiser has been hired to determine its value before the issue goes to voters.

The reasons for taking the dam are flood control, economy of the town, water quality and property value, according to Canton officials. The water level has been 6 feet or more below normal since May 2007 when the dam gates were ordered by the state to remain open for safety reasons. Fortier was ordered to file a plan to make repairs and has repeatedly missed the deadlines.

The Maine Emergency Management Agency and the Maine Department of Transportation are suing dam owner Ray Fortier of Sabattus, who has been accruing fines at the rate of \$500 a day since Nov. 1 for violations.

In other business at Thursday night's meeting, the article to make the road commissioner a three-year position was amended to two years and passed. There was considerable debate over the change from it being a one-year position.

Elected Tuesday were Jack Plumbley as selectman, winning over incumbent David Bowen; Jeremy Johnson as road commissioner over Kathy Lowe; and Christine Mumau and Tom Hamilton to the SAD 39 board.

The budget is approximately \$730,000.