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**PRESS RELEASE**

for immediate release

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**TITLE: Special Town Meeting Scheduled for Blue Hill**

BLUE HILL, Maine – The Town of Blue Hill will hold a special town meeting, slated for December 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm in the Gordon Emerson Auditorium at the Town Hall.

The purpose of this special town meeting is to secure taxpayer approval for a USDA Rural Development Authority loan and grant that town has been awarded for the municipality's wastewater treatment plant, to amend the Town's Planning Board Ordinance to include an alternate member, and to amend the Town's Commercial Site Plan Review Ordinance to remove outdated fee references.

Blue Hill, with the assistance of Olver Associate - the engineering firm that the Town contracts with for the operation of the treatment plant - applied for and was awarded a 1.25-million-dollar grant and 2.75-million-dollar loan through the USDA Maine Rural Development Authority for upgrades to the facility. While the Town's Select Board has authority to accept the grant of 1.25 million dollars, voter approval of the loan offer is required at a town meeting. The loan, which has a 28-year payback, has an interest rate of 2.65%. Both the grant and loan are contingent on the other being accepted. Funding needs to be approved in 2022 to secure construction and equipment costs as well as stay on schedule for a 2024 completion date.

The treatment plant has been in operation for 47 years and was last upgraded 22 years ago. A 2021 engineering study identified over 4 million dollars of immediate and short-term maintenance needs, including making the plant's outflow function properly at very high tides. The Select Board has been seeking other grant sources to assist with the cost of the necessary upgrades.

"The Rural Development loan is a deal for the town; cheaper than any 30-year bond we could potentially secure at this point" stated Town Administrator Nicholas Nadeau. "This will allow our Town to start completing crucial upgrades to the Wastewater Treatment Plant in order to adapt to sea level rise and modernize outdated equipment. The plant is a crucial piece of the Town's infrastructure.



The second article seeks approval for an amendment to the Planning Board ordinance to allow for an alternate member of the Board. An alternate member may attend all meetings and participate in discussions. In the event a board member cannot partake in a matter brought before the board, the alternate may be designated by the chair to step in to provide a vote. “With everyone’s busy schedules, having an alternate alleviates some of the stress and pressure on the current members and the workload they face monthly” commented Planning Board Chair, Mary-Alice Hurvitt. “It also allows us to use the alternate in situations where a full-member cannot vote on an item due to a conflict of interest.” The Planning Board Ordinance can be found on the town’s website, [bluehillme.gov](http://bluehillme.gov).

The last article is a housekeeping item for the Commercial Site Plan Review Ordinance. It seeks voter approval to remove specific reference to old and incorrect fee’s and replace it with language that points to the Town fee schedule, which is updated as needed. The ordinance can also be found on the town’s website, [bluehillme.gov](http://bluehillme.gov).

The warrant articles and the ordinances referenced in the articles can be found on the Town’s website, at [bluehillme.gov](http://bluehillme.gov). Questions can be directed to Town Administrator at [nnadeau@bluehillme.gov](mailto:nnadeau@bluehillme.gov)

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