

Hopkinton OKs septic loan program

February 17, 2016

By Cynthia Drummond

HOPKINTON — The Town Council voted Tuesday to accept the terms and conditions of the state's septic-system loan program. Councilor David Husband cast the lone dissenting vote.

The objective of the program is to offer low-interest loans that will make it financially feasible for homeowners to replace old and faulty septic systems and cesspools.

The Community Septic System Loan Program of the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank will issue a \$300,000 line of credit to the town, which will then make 1 percent interest loans to homeowners. Rhode Island Housing will pay a half of a percent and the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank will pay the remaining half of a percent, so the loans will not cost the town anything. Homeowners are responsible for paying the engineering costs of their new septic systems, and they must also pay a \$300 loan origination fee. The town will hold the liens on the properties.

Councilor Sylvia Thompson asked Town Planner James Lamphere, who is coordinating the program, how residents could apply for the loans.

"We will have something on the town website, probably on the Planning Department page," Lamphere said. "We can put it on the front page as well. It will also be on the building and zoning page, with an application for people to fill out. People may need assistance, and they can feel free to call me, and I'll help them fill out the application."

Chariho aid update

Town Council President Frank Landolfi reported on a recent meeting with Senate President M. Teresa Paiva Weed. Landolfi and Chariho Superintendent of Schools Barry Ricci asked Paiva Weed to consider restoring the loss of transportation aid that had been promised to the district when the state eliminated the regionalization bonus.

The council also unanimously passed two resolutions pertaining to education funding, the first calling for the reinstatement of transportation aid and another asking the state to respect the agreement with Chariho not to allow other towns to operate competing career and technical programs.

Landolfi said his town modeled its transportation aid resolution on one recently adopted by Charlestown.

“The categorical aid that Charlestown crafted, that we’re adopting as well, is an attempt to send word to the legislators and the speaker and the governor that we want that aid restored,” he said. “It was agreed upon and it’s been level-funded for the last two years.”

Other business

In other business, the council approved amendments to the town’s comprehensive plan and authorized the purchase of Palmer Circle from the state. The purchase price is \$1, and the town has already issued a certified check in that amount. The town has made several improvements to the 2.15-acre property.

Council members also learned of an initiative by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to purchase properties throughout the northeast and convert them to thickets. The goal is to acquire up to 15,000 acres to provide scrubland habitat for species such as the New England Cottontail rabbit, American Woodcock and monarch butterflies.

Hopkinton Conservation Commission Chair Harvey Buford told councilors that the program, called the Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge, could involve the federal government’s purchase, at fair market price, of more than 200 acres of property in Hopkinton.

“This one would be made up of many scattered parcels, creating a type of habitat that has become very rare, a scrubby type of habitat that you wouldn’t think of as being very valuable, but for a lot of species, it’s very valuable,” Buford said. “They would seek to buy properties over a long period of time. They would all be purchases from willing sellers.”

The comment period on the refuge proposal ends on March 4, and council members agreed to send their remarks to Town Manager William McGarry, who would forward them to Buford for submission before the comment period ends.