

Town of North Haven
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April 19, 2021

Honorable Chellie Pingree
United States House of Representatives
2 Portland Fish Pier, Suite 304
Portland, Maine 04101

Re: Community Project Funding – North Haven

Dear Congresswoman Pingree,

Thank you for making information available concerning Community Project Funding.

I am writing for two purposes, to make you aware of our Community Project Funding requests for fiscal year 2022, and to give you an idea of our longer-term plans.

FY 2022 Community Project Funding Requests – North Haven, Maine

This year we are submitting projects concerning our Public Safety Building (fire station) and our community medical clinic. We have submitted those requests online, so I will just briefly mention them here.

- Public Safety Building — Maintenance and Energy Upgrades. Our Public Safety Building houses our ambulance and EMS equipment, our fire trucks and firefighting equipment, and our two snowplows. Originally constructed in 1931, the building has been expanded over time to accommodate larger trucks and meeting and storage space. In the next few years, we intend to either upgrade the existing Public Safety Building or construct an entirely new facility. The newly-refurbished (or entirely new) building will serve two additional roles: an emergency operations center and an emergency evacuation site. In the meantime, we intend to install a bathroom so that first responders have a place to clean up after returning from an emergency. This is particularly important with the COVID-19 pandemic still underway, but also applies to possible contamination with blood-borne pathogens and any potential exposure to hazardous substances. We also intend to install a new roof because the current roof leaks, to insulate the uninsulated portions of the building, and to install a new heating system. We are considering using energy efficient heat pumps instead of an oil furnace. One vendor has provided an estimate for heat pumps, including installation: \$22,000. The total estimated cost of these repairs and modest upgrades is \$120,000. We have \$43,913 in a reserve account and will ask voters to approve \$80,000 in additional taxes this year. Any federal funds

received would help the Town offset these expenses, making the locally appropriated tax funds available for other emergency-service-related expenses.

- Public Safety Building — Standby Generator. The Public Safety Building does not have a generator to supply emergency power for the heating system, the electric garage doors, or the equipment on standby charge, such as the LIFEPAK defibrillator. Keeping the building relatively warm is important because we cannot allow the water in the fire trucks to freeze. Our goal is to purchase a new 30kW diesel generator and automatic transfer switch that could provide sufficient backup power in case of emergency. As noted above, in the next few months we will decide whether to substantially upgrade the existing building or construct an entirely new facility. Regardless of which option we pursue, we plan to obtain a generator that will support our needs far into the future. We have obtained an estimate for the generator, transfer switch, and installation: \$26,773.
- Medical Clinic — Roof. North Haven's medical clinic is a town-operated entity. It serves our entire community, summer and year-round, meaning a population that fluctuates from 350 to 1,500, depending on the season. Each of our two nurse practitioners works one week on, one week off throughout the year. These dedicated professionals strive to meet all our population's medical needs, from pediatric to geriatric. They provide as much urgent care as they feel appropriate in any particular case, consulting with experts and referring patients to mainland healthcare facilities as needed. Our clinic is not an emergency room, so patients requiring emergency services are transported off the island by boat or aircraft. The clinic building is comprised of the medical clinic and a residence for the duty nurse practitioner. The building was constructed in 1890 and upgraded most recently in 2011. Water has recently leaked around one of the chimneys and damaged the interior. We have had the chimney capped off and sealed and the interior repaired. But the roof continues to age and will require replacement in the next couple of years. Because the roof is complex, we are estimating the replacement will cost between \$45,000 and \$60,000, depending on how much repair work needs to be done once the shingles are removed.
- Medical Clinic — Standby Generator. Our clinic has a generator that provides emergency power when started manually and connected to the electrical system with a manually-thrown switch. Since our nurse practitioners are the only residents of the building, each provider knows how to start the generator and throw the manual switch when the power goes out. On one occasion, a provider found herself in the dangerous position of standing in a puddle in the dark during a rainstorm when she went to start the machine and switch over the electricity. Our providers also accompany our EMTs to emergencies. If an emergency occurs and the power goes out while the provider is on the scene, no one is present to start the generator. This means refrigerated medicines run the risk of spoiling. The generator is a 1969 model. Electricians tell me they cannot connect an automatic transfer switch to it because the unit is too old. We would like to purchase a new 20kW unit with an automatic transfer switch that will serve the Town's needs well into the future. We have obtained an estimate for the generator, transfer switch, and installation: \$9,715.00.

Longer-term Goals – North Haven, Maine

North Haven is a community that is simultaneously concerned about preserving its character and heritage while planning for a changing and uncertain future. We face a number of challenges. At last count, North Haven is home port to 47 lobster boats. Our lobster boat captains and their crews make their living in a threatened industry. Changing ocean temperatures, stark increases in bait and fuel prices, and a diminished market cause concern among all Maine's coastal communities. Litigation concerning the endangered Atlantic right whale population could result in significant short-term changes that push these small businesses over the edge. For North Haven, this means a direct negative impact on at least 94 fishermen (captain and at least one crew member per boat), as well as the spillover effects on boatyards, our grocery store, and the general economic wellbeing of our community as a whole. Likewise, sea level rise will affect our roads, our ditches and culverts, our sewer and water lines, some of our parking areas, many of our community's houses, and our waterfront facilities — including storage tanks and pumps for home heating oil, diesel and gasoline vehicle fuel, and boat fuel. The Maine State Ferry Service is also facing severe budget shortfalls and may be forced to ask the communities it serves — North Haven is one of six — to subsidize a portion of the Ferry Service's operations. Finally, with more people moving to Maine to escape cities, increases in housing prices and a corresponding reduction in housing stock exacerbates one of North Haven's longstanding difficulties: a lack of available housing for workers and their families.

With these challenges also come opportunities. By increasing the availability of internet and cellular telephone services and highlighting our unique K-12 school, North Haven could become an ideal location for remote workers and their families. Our island location makes us an ideal site for aquaculture and related activities. There may also be room to expand business opportunities related to recreational boating, food & hospitality, retail sales, and ecotourism. Making any of these ideas a reality will require the Town to engage in self-help in the forms of planning, resource allocation, careful budgeting, and marketing. We will also have to invest funds in such things as hydrologic studies to ensure we have sufficient potable groundwater available, sewer and water line expansions, public access to the waterfront, and even such mundane matters as parking areas and household trash collection and recycling.

The Select Board and I have already started the planning process by engaging our community in crafting a vision statement. Once we have community-wide consensus around what we expect the island to look like in the near and longer terms, we can begin to take steps to make that vision a reality.

I am writing to make sure you are aware of these bigger-picture efforts, so that when future earmarking or grant opportunities arise, you will not be surprised to hear from us.

Very truly yours,

Rick Lattimer
Town Administrator

Copy to:
Honorable Janet Mills