

Budget, bag ban, fireworks go to voters

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TREMONT — Voters here will decide Monday, May 13, whether to adopt new rules governing the use of fireworks in the town and whether to join other Mount Desert Island towns in banning plastic carryout bags and polystyrene food containers. They'll also elect one member of the Board of Selectmen, one member of the School Board and one member of the Mount Desert Island High School Board of Trustees (see related story, page 2).

Polls are open in the Harvey Kelley Meeting Room of the town office from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m.

At Town Meeting, set for 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 14, in the same room, voters will consider the town and school budgets and a new ordinance governing wireless telecommunications facilities.

The plastic bag and polystyrene container bans are similar to ones passed this week by Mount Desert, and already

adopted by Southwest Harbor and Bar Harbor. Public hearings on the two ordinances last month drew no public comment.

Governor Janet Mills signed into law a statewide polystyrene food container ban last week, but that change in state law does not go into effect until Jan. 1, 2021.

The fireworks ordinance was requested by selectmen last summer after the fire department received complaints, including one from a who resident reported waking up to his mulch pile on fire due to an errant firework.

The ordinance would regulate when fireworks can be set off and would require a permit for setting them off, to be issued by the code enforcement officer. Permits are not required on certain days, including the Fourth of July and the weekends before and after that holiday.

Voters will also consider town and school budgets that, if approved as presented, will mean a mill rate increase of 2.8 percent for fiscal year 2020.

The mill rate for the current fiscal year is \$10.37. The proposed mill rate for next year is \$10.66. This means for a house valued at \$250,000 the annual tax bill would increase by \$72.

The town's high school assessment will be \$1,063,111, down slightly from the current year. The county assessment is \$220,584, up 1.4 percent from the current year.

A new wireless communications ordinance, which sets a maximum height for cell towers of 125 feet, also goes to voters Tuesday. It seeks to "encourage the co-location of wireless telecommunications facilities, thus helping to minimize adverse visual impacts on the community," according to the ordinance.

The proposal comes as a 195-foot cell tower in Southwest Harbor is being debated. That town did not have any rules in place that would have allowed the planning board to deny a building permit, but opponents are hoping to kill the project by appealing to the Federal Communications Commission.