



Senator Richard A. Bennett
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Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Government Oversight Committee

Testimony of Senator Richard Bennett
before the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government
LD 193, Resolve, To Name a Mountain in Oxford County
March 8, 2021

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack and esteemed members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government: My name is Rick Bennett, I live in Oxford, and I have the honor of representing the beautiful foothills and lakes region of western Maine in the Maine Senate. I am pleased to introduce LD 193, “*Resolve, To Name a Mountain in Oxford County.*”

Greenwood, Maine, has been an important part of my life and that of my family for generations. Of major significance is the property that my sister and I now own near Sheepskin Bog. Our modest property has been in the family now for six generations. It includes about 90 acres of land and rustic cabin. These turns of land in Greenwood are very special to us. Many in our family know them intimately. We each have a strong sense of stewardship and have passed the property along from generation to generation for nearly 150 years.

Part of our property includes about one-quarter of the mountain lying between Twitchell Pond and Sheepskin Bog. Locals call this mountain either Jason’s Mountain or Oak Hill, but it has no legal name. However, there is already an official Oak Hill just three miles away, sitting on the Greenwood/Woodstock line.

This resolve simply names the mountain, Jason's Mountain, to honor my great-grandfather’s memory and his contributions to the land and to the town overall.

My father Dean Bennett is a noted Maine author and expert on natural history. When our cabin was built on this land, he was one year old. The cabin was built by his grandfather Jason Bennett, long-time town tax collector. Our cabin has been a central part of my father’s life since. Indeed, he recently wrote a memoir called Ghost Buck, which gives some dimension to the special quality of this place.

As my father writes in his own testimony for this bill, as Jason “was recovering from a kidney operation, more than thirty relatives and friends helped him build a camp close the mountain in a place he had come to love while recuperating. He had bought the land in 1923 when he was thirty-three. It had previously been owned by his father and his grandfather in the 1890s. When I was a boy, we all went to camp every weekend, spring, summer, and fall, depending on the weather and black flies....We all took long walks in the woods together, many to the mountain. We frequently fished the nearby bog on his land, Sheepskin Bog, after which the camp was named, and we hunted together every fall. The mountain was a popular destination.”

I contacted the three other neighboring property owners of the mountain who are principally affected by this naming – Mary Pat Conroy (Durham, Maine), Ari Kurtz (Lincoln, Massachusetts), and Miriam Daniel (Bald Bluff LLC, Chevy Chase, Maryland) – and asked for their support of this naming. Each has written me back with their enthusiastic endorsement.

Mary Pat Conroy wrote, “I am honored to support naming the mountain between Twitchell Pond and Sheepskin Bog Jason’s Mountain in memory of your great-grandfather and his contributions.” Ari Kurtz wrote, “I absolutely support naming the mountain [...] Jason’s Mountain after your great grandfather. It seems very appropriate to honor his memory in this way.” Miriam Daniel wrote, “We are pleased to support your effort to name Jason’s Mountain after your great grandfather.”

I also asked for the approval of the Greenwood Board of Selectmen, and their letter of support is attached to this testimony. Finally, I have provided you with a painting of the mountain as seen from Sheepskin Bog and with a map of the area so that you can see the exact location of the mountain, it is marked with an “X.”

Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Town of Greenwood

Established 1816
Birthplace of LL Bean



593 Gore Road, Greenwood ME 04255 (207) 875-2773

February 17, 2021

Senator, Richard A. Bennett
3 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0003

Re: Support of LD No. 193, Resolve, To Name a Mountain in Oxford County

Dear Senator Bennett,

The Greenwood Board of Selectmen had their meeting last evening and reviewed all of the paperwork that you submitted to them on February 5, 2021.

I am pleased to inform you that the Selectmen voted 3-0 to approve the naming of the Mountain at the southern end of Twitchell Pond in Greenwood as Jason's Mountain. The Greenwood Board fully supports LD No. 193, Resolve, to Name a Mountain in Oxford County.

I have attached a copy of the Board's meeting minutes for your review - Item 7 in the minutes.

Please contact if you should need anything further to assist you in this matter.

Sincerely,



Kim Sparks, Town Manager

Enc: 1 – Selectmen Meeting Minutes
File

GREENWOOD SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES

February 16, 2021

Topic: Greenwood Board of Selectmen Meeting
Time: Feb 16, 2021 05:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/88390175461?pwd=ZVQvL1V0WTlzKzdheEVwQzFZblZxZz09>

Meeting ID: 883 9017 5461

Passcode: B0vWqA

Item 1: Call Meeting to Order – Chair Chapman called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

Item 2: Pledge of Allegiance

Item 3: Review and approve:

The Board reviewed Expenditure Warrants # 30, 31, 32, and 33.

Expenditure Warrant # 30 (\$ 13,630.10) covering period Jan. 19, - Jan. 25, 2021

Expenditure Warrant # 31 (\$ 42,012.62) covering period Jan. 26, - Feb. 1, 2021

Expenditure Warrant # 32 (\$ 119,652.92) covering period Feb. 2, - Feb 10, 2021 which includes voucher # 892 for \$ 95,065.00 payable to MSAD 44

Expenditure Warrant # 33 (\$ 12,556.05) covering period Feb. 11, - Feb 16, 2021

Selectman Milliard motioned that all four Expenditure Warrants be approved as read. Selectman Jordan seconded the motion. Vote: 3-0. Motion passes. Expenditure Warrants # 30, 31, 32, and 33 approved.

Item 4: Review and approve minutes of January 19, 2021

The Board reviewed the minutes of January 19, 2021. Selectman Jordan motioned that the minutes be approved as submitted. Selectman Milliard seconded the motion.

Vote: 3-0. Minutes are approved.

Item 5: Comments from the Public - None

A. Selectmen contacted outside of meeting

Selectman Jordan stated that he received a phone call from Rick Bennett to give him an update on Jason's Mountain which we have on our meeting agenda.

Selectman Milliard and Chair Chapman were not contacted outside of the meeting.

Item 6: Presentation from the Mahoosuc Community Broadband Committee

Zoom Presentation

Theresa Doherty, Greenwood rep on the Mahoosuc Community Broadband Committee introduced the other 8 zoom attendees and members of their Committee.

Theresa explained that the Committee represents the Towns of Greenwood, Woodstock, Bethel, Newry, and Albany.

Introductions of the Committee members present:

Theresa Doherty, Greenwood resident. She completed the survey sent out by the Committee and thought she could offer some help by joining the Committee. Theresa has terrible internet coverage at her home in Greenwood and knows that there is a great need for high-speed internet in our Community. Theresa stated that she feels like Internet is becoming a need like a utility such as water and electricity. She stated that during Covid-19 this became very evident with the needs of resident's remote working via the internet and our students remote learning. She explained that this is the time for us to all work together locally to make this happen as there are several grants available that we can apply for. She explained that the Committee is working on next steps and how we can secure better internet for our Community. She explained that they are looking to assess the internet structure in our Community to determine what areas need service.

Mike Wilson, Senior Program Director for regional non-profit called the Northern Forest Center and Greenwood property owner. Mike explained that they work on rural Economic and Development projects all across Northern Maine, Northern New Hampshire, Vermont, and Northern New York. Mike explained that he works in the area called Maine West which covers the Oxford Hills, Bethel area, and the River Valley. Mike stated that he and Mia Purcell have worked closely on several projects in this area over the years. He stated that he is excited to work with this group to help move things forward.

Mia Purcell, Vice President of Economic Development and Impact for Community Concepts in Oxford County. Mia explained that Broadband is something she has been focused on as it touches everyone's lives.

Jeff Martin, resident of Bethel explained that he became interested in Broadband several years ago after retiring from Honeywell. Jeff stated that he has tried to have several virtual meetings with clients and the DSL is just totally unreliable. Jeff stated that he received the survey from the Committee and immediately contacted Mia to find out how he could get involved. Jeff stated that COVID has changed our world forever and we need to be ready for this in our future. He stated that now is the time to apply for these grants that are available for Broadband.

Art Marshall, current resident in Albany and prior to that was a Newry resident. He explained that he had worked for an accounting firm in Portland and when COVID hit over 500 of the employees at the firm were to start working from home. He explained that employees could only work from home if they had broadband. He explained that when he moved to Albany his internet speed was 3 megabits and is now 10 or 11. He stated that speed is acceptable but is still slow as compared to the national average of 25 megabits and some States are at 100 megabits. He stated that they are in the infant stages in Albany as there is no highspeed internet available in all of Albany. He stated that he is pushing for a regional solution as highspeed internet is needed in our entire area.

Steve Wight, resident of Newry and non-professional collaborator. He stated that having access to broadband is a real problem to all of rural Maine and all rural areas across this Country. We were told by suppliers that they were unable to make a profit unless they had more than 20 homes per mile and we have a lot of places around here that don't have 20 houses per mile. He stated it was pretty exciting to learn about the ConnectME program is working on helping Maine to get grants that could be used to sweeten the pot for the providers. He stated that he thinks that broadband is our business park as during this pandemic anyone who had a vacation house was up here working from their second home if they had internet. He stated that the Committee is excited and appreciates the opportunity to update the Greenwood Selectmen.

Marcel Polak, resident of Woodstock explained that when he moved to Woodstock in 1979, they had crank phones. He explained that he has used computers since the 1980's and upgraded all along the way. He explained that he is retired now and recently saw an advertisement from L. L. Bean to work remotely from one of their call centers and that he currently has DSL and found out that DSL was totally inadequate to meet the standards from L. L. Bean, one of Greenwood's native sons. He looked at this as an opportunity for our residents to work but doubted that anyone had adequate internet in this area. He stated that he looks at this as it is a critical utility right now as much as electricity.

Michelle Cole, resident of Bethel and on this committee as a Bethel Selectman. She explained that the Selectmen appointed her last summer and she started attending the Mahoosuc Broadband Boot Camp that had seven or eight sessions. She stated that she is interested in pushing the project down the road and positioning our community as one region so we can take advantage of any grants and such that are available.

Steve Smith, resident of Albany stated that he was a new member to the Committee. He explained that we probably noticed that he doesn't have any video on this zoom meeting as he doesn't have enough bandwidth to have video. He explained that he uses zoom for catching up with family members and for all of his Bethel Rotary meetings. He stated that it is really, really important for our area to have broadband and he thinks this Committee did an excellent job in explaining that tonight.

Theresa asked everyone to review the paper power point presentation. (Copy attached to minutes). Selectman Milliard asked that he understood part of the presentation that if the Committee were to receive grant funds that some of those funds could be given to the internet providers like Spectrum and First Light and would be a subsidy. Theresa stated that was a great question and should be answered with this presentation. Theresa explained that the funding they are seeking is to cover them hiring a consultant who will pull together all of the numbers and data needed to apply for the State and Federal grants. Theresa went through the presentation with the Board and Committee. Mia updated the Board on what the speed test survey results for our area. Mia stated that download speeds show that 50% of folks were underserved and upload speeds were 61% and that 43% of those surveyed were not at all or only somewhat satisfied with their internet speeds. Mia stated that having higher internet speeds in this area will help us retain families and expand business.

Theresa ended the presentation asking that area Select Boards agree to the following items:

- **ADOPT THE RECOMMENDED MAHOOSUC COMMUNITY BROADBAND GOAL.**

EVERYONE IN THE MAHOOSUC REGION HAS ACCESS TO RELIABLE, AFFORDABLE, HIGH-SPEED AND FUTURE READY INTERNET SERVICE*

**ALBANY, BETHEL, GREENWOOD, NEWRY, WOODSTOCK*

- **APPOINT A TOWN OFFICIAL (E.G., TOWN MANAGER, SELECT BOARD MEMBER) TO REPRESENT YOUR TOWN TO THE MAHOOSUC COMMUNITY BROADBAND COMMITTEE.**
- **CONSIDER ENTERING INTO AN INTER-LOCAL MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT.**
- **ALLOCATE \$2,500 TOWARD CONTRACTED MAPPING AND COST ANALYSIS ASSISTANCE. ***

Theresa explained that the Town of Woodstock, Albany, and Newry have approved of the four items and they will be attending the Bethel Selectmen's Meeting tonight at 6:00pm to do the same presentation. The Greenwood Board thanked the Committee for doing the presentation. Zoom presentation ended at 5:45pm.

Chair Chapman asked the Board if they were in favor of the 4 items presented. Selectman Milliard stated that he felt it was truly a worthwhile thing but questioned if we had the funding to cover the \$ 2500 with our flat 2020/2021 budget. Chair Chapman asked if this would come out of this year's budget or next year's budget. Kim explained that she thought it would come out of this year's budget as the Broadband Committee wanted to hire a consultant to apply for grants that are presently available. Kim stated that the Town Office Admin account had available funds in this year's budget to pay the \$ 2500. Selectman Milliard stated that is a pretty reasonable investment where it is going to be matched with other funds. Chair Chapman stated that she thinks that if the Towns do this as a region it will be cheaper in the long run and we will probably never get as much bang for our buck as we would right now. Chair Chapman stated that obviously there are people from Greenwood that are trying to work from home with slow internet. Kim stated that there are also students in Greenwood trying to work remotely with poor internet. Chair Milliard stated that there is additional funding available that we can apply for but we need the statistics in order to apply so we need to have that work completed.

Selectman Jordan asked how much funding would they be asking for later on. Chair Chapman stated that they didn't know but imagined they might request more funds in the future. Kim stated that some grants require matching funds and sometimes they will take in-kind work to be used instead of actual dollars. Selectman Jordan stated that he thinks it is a worthwhile project.

Selectman Jordan motioned and Selectman Milliard seconded to adopt all four items and commit \$ 2500.00 to the Broadband Committee for purpose requested in presentation.
Vote: 3-0.

Kim stated that she didn't mind being the appointed official from the Town. The Board agreed.

Item 7: Discuss request from State Senator, Richard Bennett to approve of his Resolve, To Name a Mountain in Oxford County submitted to the 130th Maine Legislature. Jason's Mountain – at the southern end of Twitchell Pond

The Board reviewed all of the paperwork submitted by Richard Bennett. Selectman Milliard stated that the thought this was a great idea. Chair Chapman stated that she was in agreement and didn't know there was an unnamed mountain at the end of Twitchell Pond. Selectman Jordan stated that he agreed to naming Jason's Mountain as he has been hearing it called Jason's Mountain for years. Selectman Milliard stated that it has such a history.

Selectman Milliard motioned to approve State Senator Richard Bennett's Resolve, To Name a Mountain in Oxford County, in the Town of Greenwood as Jason's Mountain. Motion seconded by Selectman Jordan. Vote: 3-0. All in favor.
Kim will forward a letter and copy of minutes to Senator Bennett.

Item 8: Discuss the Mahoosuc Way Pledge to Embrace our Place

Kim asked if the Board would be willing to that the Mahoosuc Way Pledge to Embrace our Place. The Board reviewed the pledge. Selectman Milliard asked if they are asking for a monetary donation. Kim stated that they had asked for the \$ 250 donation that the Town agreed to several weeks ago but has not been asked for any further funding. Chair Chapman stated that these are things that they would all be doing anyway.

Selectman Milliard motioned that the Town make the pledge to embrace our place as it's the Mahoosuc Way. Selectman Jordan seconded the motion. Vote: 3-0. Pledge approved.

Item 9: Discussion on Beacon for Sovereignty Resolution

Selectman Milliard stated that this was a terrible idea. Chair Chapman agreed. Selectman Jordan agreed also. Chair Chapman stated that the Board is not interested in this resolution.

Item 10: Discussion on Business Licensing Policy

Kim asked the Board if they had decided if they were interested in developing a Business Licensing Policy for all businesses or just for Medical Marijuana businesses. Kim explained that the Town needed a policy to require Medical Marijuana businesses to apply annual for a permit. She explained that the application would come to the Board for their review and the Board would also need to set application fees.

Kim explained without this policy, there would be no annual review by the Town of these type of businesses to make sure they are in compliance with the Town regulations. Chair Chapman stated that the Town doesn't presently require a license for any business in Town. Kim stated that was correct and that currently a business would apply initially for a Site Plan Review permit with the Planning Board. Chair Chapman stated that if we did it for Medical Marijuana it would be an annual license that the business would need to apply for annually. Kim stated that was correct and the Board would need to consider what the fees should be and if the Town wanted to limit the number of this type of business in Town. Chair Chapman asked the Board if they were in agreement that we should license Marijuana business and not all business in Greenwood. Selectman Jordan stated that he agreed with that. Selectman Milliard stated yes, that he would say so. Kim stated that she would work on getting a draft Medical Marijuana Policy to the Board for review.

Item 11: Meetings and Events

Tue., Feb. 23rd – Budget Meeting, 6pm Legion Hall.

Mon., Mar. 1st – Planning Board Meeting 5:30pm GTO

Tue., Mar. 2nd – Selectmen's Meeting 5pm GTO

Item 12: Comments from the Public - None

Item 13: Adjourn - Having no further business, Selectman Milliard motioned and Selectman Jordan seconded to adjourn the meeting at 6:03pm. Vote: 3-0. Meeting adjourned.



