

# Town of Camden 2024 Ballot Explained

## A Guide for Voters

### **ARTICLE 1**

To elect a moderator to preside at said meeting.

**Explanation:** All Town Meetings, whether held through open floor (in-person) voting or secret ballot voting, require a moderator to be elected prior to voting commencing. Because Camden holds the annual Town Meeting entirely through secret ballot, the moderator is elected at the polling place as soon as it is open for voting (typically 8 a.m.).

### **ARTICLE 2**

Election of two Select Board Members for a three-year term (Select Board members also serve as the Board of Overseers, and Wastewater Commissioner), and one Director of Maine School Administrative District #28/CSD #19 for a three-year term.

**Explanation:** This article is for the election of two Select Board members and one Director for the School Board of MSDA #28/CSD #19. Two Select Board and one School Board seats are open. All terms are for 3 years and begin in June of 2024 and end in June of 2027.

### **ARTICLES 3 & 4**

Amendments to Chapter 290 of the Camden Code of Ordinances (Zoning) to comply with P.L. 2021, Chapter 672 (LD 2003).

**Explanation:** The State of Maine passed the affordable housing law in May of 2022, which requires municipalities to amend zoning codes to be consistent with the statute and allow for accessory apartments and remove off-street parking requirements, among other changes municipalities must implement to encourage and/or remove barriers to the development of additional housing.

### **ARTICLES 5 & 6**

Amendments to Chapter 290 of the Camden Code of Ordinances (Zoning) to define and add terminology to short-term rental uses and adding these uses as permitted uses in all of the Town's zoning districts that allow residential uses.

**Explanation:** Currently Camden's zoning chapter of the Code does not define short-term rental uses or identify zones where they are permitted. The only place in Camden's chapter of the zoning code that presently addresses this in any form is the current definition of a "Dwelling Unit", which prohibits any dwelling unit from being rented less than 7 consecutive days. These amendments will specifically define short-term rental uses, amend the definition of "Dwelling Unit" to remove the requirement for a minimum 7 consecutive day rental period, and add a requirement that short-term rentals must be licensed annually, which requires a life safety inspection and compliance with State rules for managing sewerage.

### **ARTICLE 7**

Amendments to Chapter 215 of the Camden Code of Ordinances (Short-Term Rental Licensing), which requires Short-Term Rentals to be licensed annually to operate.

**Explanation:** While articles 5 & 6 will amend definitions/uses of Short-Term Rentals and identify zones where they will be permitted, Article 7 identifies the licensing process including: requiring Short-Term Rental operators to adhere to standards that address the life safety of their transient guests, adequate septic system/drain field capacity, and “good neighbor” policies. Short-Term Rentals will also require life safety inspections ensuring compliance with applicable Life Safety Codes. This article does **not** propose capping or banning Short-Term Rentals.

#### **ARTICLES 8 & 9**

Amendments to Chapter 290 of the Camden Code of Ordinances (Zoning) that changes Performance Standards and the Site Plan Review and approval criteria for piers, wharves, land-attached floats, breakwaters, municipal boat ramps, municipal piers, consolidated piers, causeways, marinas, bridges over 20 feet in length and other uses projecting into water bodies.

**Explanation:** *These amendments would further regulate piers in the Town’s Outer and Coastal Harbors by adding new performance and construction and maintenance standards for piers. The new performance standards will:*

- *Only allow for new piers if there were no other feasible or practicable alternative.*
- *Demonstrate that the new piers are not within 200’ of Camden Hills State Park, or any public right-of-way or public access.*
- *Will not allow new piers in or near Significant Wildlife Habitat, Tidal Waterfowl and Wading Bird Habitat, areas containing or near areas containing eelgrass, or areas that have a been historically mapped with eelgrass.*
- *Will not allow new piers in, on or near areas containing unstable or highly unstable coastal bluffs, in, on or near coastal sand dunes, or in an area designated as a Velocity VE zone on the most recent FEMA flood maps.*
- *The amendments also contain new construction and maintenance standards for new and existing piers and require the submittal of a maintenance plan that includes an annual inspection of new and existing piers and their components.*

*In addition to the above, projects that require Site Plan approval by the Planning Board will have additional approval criteria, which include requirements that projects don’t unduly interfere with established public trust rights for fishing, fowling, and navigating and unreasonably impact the viewshed and scenic and aesthetic resources of Camden’s harbors and Penobscot Bay.*

#### **ARTICLE 10**

Amendments to Chapter 108 of the Camden Code of Ordinances (Harbor and Waterways), to amend the maximum height of piers and to require that repairs to and the replacement of existing piers comply with the construction and maintenance standards proposed in the proposed amendments for piers in Chapter 290, Zoning.

**Explanation:** *These amendments ensure that the regulations on piers in Chapter 108, Harbors and Waterways are consistent with the proposed amendments further regulating piers in Chapter 290, specifically changes in the maximum height of piers and requiring any repairs to and replacement of existing piers conform with the construction and maintenance standards in Chapter 290, Zoning.*

#### **ARTICLE 11**

Are you in favor of the Town retaining the ownership of the property currently known as “Tannery Park,” on Washington Street, for community purposes?

**Explanation:** *This question will provide guidance on whether citizens want Tannery Park to remain in the ownership of the Town to be used for purposes that may include, but are not limited to, green space, playground spaces, community gathering space, and any other uses that will benefit Camden citizens.*

### **ARTICLES 12 through 17**

These articles are procedural and annual voter ratification is required by the Town Charter and/or State Statute.

**Explanation:** The following is an overview of Articles 12 through 17:

- Article 12: Sets October 15<sup>th</sup> and April 15<sup>th</sup> as the due date for taxes and sets the interest rate for property taxes that are unpaid by these dates at 8%. Voters are required by State Statute to vote on setting these dates and the interest rate.
- Article 13: This article allows people to pay their property taxes prior to October 15<sup>th</sup> and April 15<sup>th</sup> but does not obligate the Town to pay interest on property taxes that are paid early.
- Article 14: Allows the Select Board and Treasurer to apply for and accept grants, gifts, real estate donations, trust funds and other funds that are given to the Town on behalf of the Town.
- Article 15: Allows the Select Board to sell property acquired by the Town when the owner does not pay property tax and the lien has matured. Excluded from this is the former Apollo Tannery, which can only be sold by a vote of Camden citizens.
- Article 16: Allows the Select Board to sell and/or dispose of personal property with a value greater than \$3,000 and allows the Town Manager to sell personal property less than \$3,000 in accordance with the Town's Purchasing Regulations.
- Article 17: Authorizes the Select Board to transfer no more than 10% of an unexpended balance from one budgetary category to another from April 1 to Town Meeting in June.

### **ARTICLE 18**

This article will authorize the Town to borrow \$12,500,000 to extend and repair the Town's sewer system and repair roads, stormwater infrastructure and rebuild/build more sidewalks in key locations in Town.

#### **Explanation:**

The Need: The majority of the Town of Camden's sewer pipes are beyond their useable life and are made of materials (mostly clay tile pipe) that have cracked over time and allow large volumes of rain, groundwater, and seawater to enter the Town's wastewater treatment system. When fresh and/or sea water enters sewer pipes and manholes, particularly during major rain events and high tides, pipes become surcharged and can cause sewage to back up into people's homes, and manholes and pump stations are overwhelmed, which often results in untreated sewage flooding into the harbor and other water resources. This is referred to as a "Sanitary Sewer Overflow" and violates the Town's permit with the Maine Department of Environmental Protection to operate a Wastewater Treatment Facility because it degrades water quality in our river, streams and harbor. Significant increases in annual participation caused by climate change have created conditions where the Town's sewer infrastructure is regularly overwhelmed. Additionally, fresh and seawater that reaches the Wastewater Treatment Plant is treated at a significant cost to sewer ratepayers, and limits the capacity of the facility to accept and treat additional wastewater.

Many streets and roads in Camden with aged sewer pipes also have stormwater infrastructure that needs to be rebuilt to handle the increased volume of water it must convey. Many streets and roads with poor surfaces are in a bad condition because of issues with the stormwater infrastructure. When the Town fully rebuilds sewer and stormwater infrastructure that is in the roadway, it is the Town's policy to take a "Complete Streets" approach and also improve active transportation infrastructure, such as sidewalks and bike lanes (when possible). Additionally, this funding will be used to match State and Federal grants for infrastructure improvements.

The Question: By State Statute when a municipality asks voters to approve borrowing, it must be accompanied by a financial statement from the Town's treasurer that shows the Town's current outstanding and unpaid bonds/loans, annual debt payments by the Town, County and School District(s), and show any other borrowing that has been authorized but has not been issued. The cost of the borrowing is also disclosed so that voters can understand the likely interest rate range, term of the borrowing, and estimated cost of interest payments over the life of the bond.

TOWN OF CAMDEN, MAINE  
TREASURER'S FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Total Town Indebtedness as of June 30, 2023

Bonds Outstanding and Unpaid: \$23,120,451

Municipal \$2,490,332

County \$402,520

Schools \$20,227,599

Bonds Authorized and Unissued: \$0

Bonds to be Issued if this Article is Approved: \$12,500,000

**Total Indebtedness: \$35,620,451**

Cost of the Bond

At an estimated interest rate of a range between 3.11% to 4.72% for a term of thirty (30) years, the estimated costs of issuing the bond will be:

Principal \$12,500,000

Estimated Interest \$8,229,628

**Total Debt \$20,729,628**

**ARTICLE 19**

This article approves \$5,527,361 in revenues from non-property tax sources to be used to reduce the amount of property taxes that must be raised to fund the Town's expenses.

**Explanation:** Non-property tax revenue comes from a variety of sources, the most significant includes:

- Licenses, permits & fees (excise tax, building permits, animal control fees)
- State reimbursements/revenues (revenue sharing, assistance for maintaining State roads, tax incentive programs)
- Charges for services/income from Town Departments (Harbor fees, Parks & Rec maintenance contracts, reimbursement for services the Town provides to neighboring municipalities)
- Operating transfers from reserve accounts and trust funds.
- Use of the undesignated fund balance (surplus)
- Proceeds from bonds/notes to pay for capital projects and/or equipment

While both the Budget Committee and Select Board authorize a total amount of revenue to be raised by sources other property tax, it is the Select Board’s amount you are being asked to authorize. The Budget Committee recommended \$5,741,361 and the Select Board recommended \$5,527,361. The difference is largely due to cuts the Select Board made to capital projects that were to be funded with bonds/notes, and the Select Board utilizing a greater amount of surplus.

**ARTICLE 20**

This article is the approval of the annual budget, with bottom-line expenditures of \$12,075,115.

**Explanation:** Of this total, \$6,547,754 is raised through property taxes, while the remaining \$5,527,361 is raised through the non-property tax-based revenue identified in Article 19.

While both the Budget Committee and Select Board recommendations for each budgetary category are displayed on the ballot, you are being asked to vote on the Select Board’s recommendation. of \$12,075,115,:

Budget Category	Budget Committee Recommends	Select Board Recommends
A. GENERAL GOVERNMENT	\$ 2,631,952	\$ 2,655,952
B. PUBLIC SAFETY	\$ 3,768,336	\$ 3,768,336
C. PUBLIC WORKS STREETS SIDEWALKS DAMS	\$ 2,001,200	\$ 2,001,200
D. COMMUNITY SERVICES	\$ 74,500	\$ 74,500
E. CULTURE & RECREATION	\$ 2,130,950	\$ 1,980,950
F. DEBT/CAPITAL/CONTIN GENCY	\$ 2,308,177	\$ 1,594,177
<b>Total Proposed Expenditures A through F:</b>	<b>\$12,915,115</b>	<b>\$12,075,115</b>

The difference between the Budget Committee and Select Board can largely be attributed to the removal of funding for operational support for the Snow Bowl and the removal of capital projects/equipment.

The reduction of expenditures combined with the increased use of surplus revenues, represents a net increase in expenditures of 0.81 % from the prior financial year for the Select Board’s recommended budget.

**ARTICLE 21**

This article will authorize the Town to borrow \$320,000 to purchase a Snow Groomer for the Camden Snow Bowl

**Explanation:**

The Need: Grooming all the skiable trails at the Snow Bowl during the winter season requires two Snow Groomers. One of the Groomers currently owned by the Snow Bowl is at the end of its recommended useable life and the newer Groomer broke down and was inoperable for much of this past winter season. While both Groomers may be operable for next season, should one Groomer breakdown, it would impact the Snow Bowl’s ability to open all trails for skiing during the winter season.

The Question: As was explained for Article 18, by State Statute when a municipality asks voters to approve borrowing, it must be accompanied by a financial statement from the Town’s treasurer that shows the Town’s current outstanding and unpaid bonds/loans, annual debt payments by the Town, County and School District(s), and show any other borrowing that has been authorized but has not been issued. The cost of the borrowing is also disclosed so that voters can understand the likely interest rate range, term of the borrowing, and estimated cost of interest payments over the life of the bond/note.

TOWN OF CAMDEN, MAINE  
TREASURER’S FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Total Town Indebtedness as of June 30, 2023

Bonds Outstanding and Unpaid:	\$23,120,451
Municipal	\$2,490,332
County	\$402,520
Schools	\$20,227,599
Bonds Authorized and Unissued:	\$0
Bonds to be Issued if this Article is Approved:	<u>\$320,000</u>

**Total Indebtedness: \$23,440,451**

Cost of the Bond

At an estimated interest rate of approximately 6% for a term of ten (10) years, the estimated costs of issuing the bond will be:

Principal	\$320,000.00
<u>Estimated Interest</u>	<u>\$106,318.73</u>
<b>Total Debt</b>	<b>\$426,318.73</b>

**ARTICLE 22**

This article asks voters to approve the use of \$340,000 from the Town’s undesignated Fund Balance (surplus) to fund budget losses at the Camden Snow Bowl in FY 23 (\$80,000) and FY 24 (\$340,000).

**Explanation:** Both the winters of 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 had challenging weather that made opening and maintaining adequate man-made snow exceedingly difficult.