

Fort Fairfield Town Council Monthly Meeting Minutes
Council Chambers
Wednesday, October 19, 2022
6:00 PM

I. Roll Call
6:00 PM

Council: Councilor Butler, Councilor Kilcollins, Councilor Ouellette, Councilor Pelletier. Councilor Libby is excused from this meeting.

Staff: Dan Foster, Neadra Dubois, Chris Gamblin, Darren Hanson, Jennifer Gaenzle, Chief Jalbert and Shannon St. Pierre.

Budget Advisory Committee: Pat Canavan and Kevin Bouchard.

Media: Star Herald

Citizens: 12 present.

II. Prayer

Dan Foster offered the prayer.

III. Pledge to the Flag

All in attendance pledged their allegiance to the American Flag.

IV. Public Comment Period

Councilor Butler gave “hands up” to the Police Department for executing a warrant and seized property from four or five burglaries that have happened around Town.

V. Correspondence and Reports

A. Licenses and Permits

No Licenses or Permits to report this month.

B. Financial Report

Mr. Foster spoke about the Town’s finances. For income and expenses, at three months in the Town is at 25 percent and most everything is in line. Overall expenses are at 21.8 percent. A few line items are over budget, but nothing of great significance. As of October 17th, EMS has taken in \$21,800. If that stays the same throughout the month, we are looking at well over \$30,000 for the month. It’s a reasonable expectation that we could be somewhere between \$320,000 and \$350,000 in annual income. Cash flow continues to still be very, very tight. Mr. Foster has sent letters to the County

Commissioners and AWS regarding monies the Town owes to those individuals and requesting to make those payments in January. Mr. Foster met with Tim Doak about the School payment and Mr. Doak is very understanding and is willing to work with the Town on this issue. There is only one warrant, \$565,000, this month and of that Mr. Foster is holding \$65,000 worth of checks, that he has not paid. Right now we have about \$130,000, with payroll coming up, about \$100,000, and the School payment of \$183,000, both due, we clearly do not have enough money to do both of those things. The Town hasn't received the Revenue Sharing check, as of yet. There is a pending deposit of \$110,000 that could be the Revenue Sharing, but we won't know until it deposits. The Town has a \$300,000 line of credit, and in order to make the School payment last month, the Town drew down \$175,000. There is \$125,000 to get the Town through to the end of December.

Mr. Foster gives "hats off" to Gary Sirois. Mr. Foster has had several people mention to him about paying their taxes early, despite the fact that their tax bill is 36 percent higher. Last October, the Town took in \$174,000 in taxes. As of October 18th the Town has taken in \$271,000 in taxes.

Mr. Foster reads a note from Arthur Morrow: "Dan Foster, I'm paying this early so you can get out of debt sooner. I know you will. Good luck, Arthur Morrow."

Mr. Foster praises Ella Leighton for all her work on the tax bills and tax collecting.

C. AWS Report

No report, as they have not met yet. They will be meeting next Friday.

D. ARPA Compliance

Mr. Foster discusses the ARPA (Covid) Funds that the Town receives. It is a grant the Town receives and in order to keep the money, the Town has to comply with the requirements, which is filling out reports and that has not been done. Neal Goldberg, with MMA, has been very helpful to Mr. Foster in navigating him through the Treasury Website to get the final submission of the reports that are required. Once the reports are submitted the Town should be in compliance and shouldn't have the Feds asking us to pay back the \$347,000.

E. Preliminary Audited Financial Report

The Town did receive the Preliminary Audited Financial Report and Mr. Foster wants everyone to know that it will be out before the next Council Meeting. The report will get posted on the Town's website for the citizens and all the Councilors will be getting a copy.

F. Fire & EMS Department Report

Mr. Foster mentions that Chief Jalbert has been on staff for a week and a half now. Mr. Foster and Chief Jalbert met with the City Manager of Presque Isle, the Fire Chief and the Deputy Fire Chief from Presque Isle. They have made an offer to the Town – they will provide Ambulance Service to the Town for \$65 per person, which equals \$215,800. That would be service coming from Presque Isle, not Fort Fairfield. To keep the Ambulance Service in Fort Fairfield, it would need a baseline of \$565,000 to \$575,000 and with the anticipated income coming in, it would be a break-even. If the Town goes with the service coming from Presque Isle, we will lose the money coming in on the income side. Mr. Foster and Chief Jalbert have broken down the current budget into three separate line items: EMS, Fire Department and Debt Service. In future budgets it will be presented as three separate budgets, to compare apples to apples. At some point, Chief Jalbert and Mr. Foster will make a recommendation to Council as to how they would like proceed with EMS in Fort Fairfield.

Chief Jalbert discusses his busy first week and a half as the new Fire Chief. One of the things he has been working on is recruitment of Volunteers. In this last week and a half, he has had eight applications turned in and is waiting on another six applications to be returned. That has resulted in six volunteers that were hired. Chief Jalbert talks about the shortage of EMS providers and states that it is hard to turn EMS providers away. At some point he may have to approach Council because of nepotism because he doesn't really think they can afford to turn volunteers away. Chief Jalbert believes the Fire/EMS Department has a very large surplus of equipment that they really don't need. There is some equipment to set up a third rig, for long distance transfers. At this time, there is not enough crew to do long distance transfers. Chief Jalbert suggests seeing if other communities need the extra equipment that we have, to help us out by bringing more money in to take care of some of their debt. Chief Jalbert also mentions that he has been looking through everything and states that he recently canceled some cell phones that were not needed. Chief Jalbert has also returned some gym equipment. Those are some of the savings he has been looking at. Another way of reducing the debt, Chief Jalbert has been looking at staffing levels. In the past, they have had eleven full time employees. Right now, they are at seven counting the Chief. He states that on top of the regular day-to-day stuff and working out some of the problems he has been covering on the Ambulance to eliminate overtime while the EMTs are in class. He also has been eliminating some overtime by bringing on some new Volunteer Staff and EMS providers and by doing that, he has almost cut payroll in half.

Councilor Pelletier asks Chief Jalbert if the equipment he mentioned is stuff the Town owns or if payments are being made on it.

Chief Jalbert says that so far, the equipment he has mentioned, is owned. He hasn't touched yet on the arial truck and the ambulances. He states that we need to think hard on the Ladder Truck. He states that the Engines are limping along and they won't last as long as the term of the debt on the Ladder Truck, so that needs to be thought about long and hard. He also talks about reducing debt on the Ambulances by looking at getting rid of one of them and replacing it with a used one that's quite a bit cheaper and affordable. He states that we need to start with the bare minimum and work our way up. Another area

Chief Jalbert has looked at his support vehicles. He states that there are four vehicles and they only need two. Another thing he has been working on is relicensing the Ambulance Service. He has been working with Dr. Beth Collamore, the Medical Director for the Ambulance Service, to help Fort Fairfield's EMS Department be successful. She feels the need for our aging community to have an Ambulance Service here and is willing to do whatever she can to help. Chief Jalbert praises the billing company for doing such a great job at collecting the bills for us. He states that surrounding communities are interested in some of our equipment and very excited to be more involved with Fort Fairfield, they want to help us.

Chairman Kilcollins tells Chief Jalbert that we are fortunate to have him and we appreciate him.

Chief Jalbert states that he feels very strongly about keeping an Ambulance Service in this Town and knows we can make it affordable.

Mr. Foster states that this will be an ongoing report given to Council for a while, until things get resolved.

G. Winterizing Puddledock Facility

Mr. Foster states that it has been decided that Puddledock will not be open for this winter and it has been winterized. It will save the Town some money.

H. Fall Fun Fest

Mr. Foster talks about the Fall Fun Fest and states that it's a pretty big deal. The Fire and Police Departments, and Rec Department is involved. He states that there is a hot dog roast, games and a lot of folks participate and have a great time.

Councilor Butler states that it's a lot of fun and kids have a great time.

VI. New Business

A. Citizen Use of Public Facilities

Mr. Foster talks about two requests from community organizations to regain access to the Community Room at the Library. Access was initially stopped by Jim Risner and the decision was that it was only going to be used by the employees only and then the decision was made that it was an insurance issue. Mr. Foster states that he has reached out to FA Peabody and met with them about this and they said that it is not an insurance issue. Mr. Foster asks the Council to allow the Sorority and the ATV Club to use the Community Room at the Library again. He also talks about the need for the Town to create a policy around the use of the Community Center and it be a Council decision with the Community involved, not any one person. Mr. Foster is not prepared to present anything as it relates to the Community Center and wants Council to think about who does get to use these facilities.

Mrs. Gaenzle states that until the insurance issue, the Community Room at the Library was always been open to community groups.

Councilor Pelletier asks who brought the insurance issue up.

Mrs. Gaenzle states that the insurance company approached Kevin and he brought it up to the Town Manager at the time and it was brought up her that the Library also had to do it.

Councilor Pelletier says he has a letter in his hand from FA Peabody that states it is not an insurance issue.

Motion: Councilor Pelletier made the motion.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

B. November 8th Election Approval

Mr. Foster states that the November 8th Election is coming up and the Council needs to vote on the opening, closing, the location, the Election Warden and the approval of Election Clerks.

Motion: Councilor Pelletier made the motion.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmation.

C. General Assistance Rates for 22/23

Mr. Foster states the General Assistance Rates need approval, which is done every year.

Motion: Councilor Butler made the motion.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

VII. Minutes

A. Regular Town Council Meeting Minutes September 28, 2022

B. ORD 22-09 Public Hearing October 18, 2022

Motion: Councilor Butler made the motion.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

VIII. Warrants: #8 \$565,009.87

Motion: Councilor Butler made the motion.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Vote: All Affirmative.

IX. Other

No items to discuss in Other.

X. Adjournment

Motion: Councilor Butler made the motion.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Vote: All Affirmative.

Council Adjourned at 6:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Neadra E. Dubois, Council Secretary