

Council Chambers
Wednesday, May 15, 2013
6:00 P.M.

2nd Public Hearing on FY 13/14 Budget

Dan started with the 2nd Public Hearing for the 13/14 budget. The purpose of this hearing is to allow for public comments on the Town of Fort Fairfield 2013/2014 budget. The first budget hearing was held on May 1, 2013. The notice was published in the Star Herald May 8th and posted April 29th at the County Federal Credit Union, Katahdin Trust Company and here at the municipal building.

Currently we do not have any information that would indicate what we can expect from the legislature. For the moment we have the Governor's budget which would reduce our income by \$550,000.

Our current budget reduces expenses from last year by \$81,000.00, maintains the current mil rate with a surplus of \$30,469.00 while maintaining revenue sharing at \$364,000.00. If we lose revenue sharing and do not shut down any departments, we could envision one less police offer, working with either TAMC or Caribou to have ambulance service with no fee, petition the PUC to reduce the Hydrant rental by half, increase user fees to Tri Community Landfill, reduce our expenditures on Street Lights and freeze employee wages. This would further reduce expenses by approximately \$204,000.00.

The Town Charter allows for us to continue with the current budget should the Council not approve a new budget in June. It is expected that with this Governor, the State will not have a budget in time for us to approve our budget by the June Council Meeting.

Will no questions or comments the Public Hearing for our FYE 13/14 budget closed 6:05 pm

**Presentation by Superintendent Marc Gendron
Dept of Education Grading of SAD #20**

The Department of Education has graded all schools in the State and Fort Fairfield did not fare well. The elementary school received a C, the middle school received an F and the high school received a D. This overall rating of a D was close to the lowest in Aroostook County.

Marc Gendron began by saying that he isn't here to make excuses or try to explain away and excuse the results for what they are, we are focusing on improving these results. But for the town we have had two blows recently within the last few months with negative publicity regarding the schools.

The first one concerned is graduation rates.

Graduation rates were published in the paper and Fort Fairfield did not perform well, we had very high drop out rates. The data in the paper was two years old and the numbers were not good. It was presented to the school board that next year we are going to have another year of high drop out low graduation rates. After that everything is going to improve, that's what my promise was to the school board and that is what my firmest hope is for the Town of Fort Fairfield. Those numbers will get better. There was justification for this, for example our graduation requirements for Fort Fairfield are 24 credits, the States requirements are 20 and most area schools are 21. We did that because we wanted higher standards for our students. We also have a four year graduation requirement of 4 math, 4 social studies and 4 ELA classes, other schools in our area only require 3 math, 3 social studies and 3 science. There was an effort made to try to raise the standards for all students.

Then there was the requirement that was put in approximately seven years ago that the passing grade for the High School was to be an 83, instead of for example in Presque Isle the passing grade was 60. By 2018 the report cards will not be A, B, C or D like we are traditionally used too. It will be based on the four standards are going to be exceed standards, meets standards, partially meets standards or did not meet standards. Anybody who is in the partially meets or did not meet will not have the necessary graduation requirements.

The school board has gone back and changed the requirements back to a passing grade of 70. We failed to reach some children that perhaps could have graduated. Two years ago there were seven drop outs and they continued full time at the Caribou Adult Ed. All seven students received their diplomas on time. Adult Ed graduation requirements was 18 credits where Fort Fairfield's was 24 credits. We realize that we need to give a little, we have to adjust our standards to make it more achievable. The other part is the philosophical changes, three years ago we started this, it takes time.

Another thing that is also under a lot of pressure is the grading at the High school which is based on one test, the SAT Test. Used to be that only college bound

students took this test. The state average on taking the SAT was 40% and Fort Fairfield's was 60%. Now Fort Fairfield is now at 100% participation.

Our elementary school is ranked in the top 3rd in all elementary schools in the State and 6th in Aroostook County. We are consistently on the Maine Department of Education's AYP list, (Annual Yearly Progress) 20% of the High School grade was based on drop out rate.

We are trying to promote as a place to come, we are aware and we want to improve, we want to be on the top.

Discussion:

Dan Foster – Perception is reality and it would be really great to share this information with the public. It could be shared with the Star Herald, with David Deschesne or with Dennis Curly. I think it would put people's minds at ease.

Marc – Right now I am doing the school news letter, we do three a year, we are sending out the next one to everyone in Fort Fairfield and to the papers. This should be out within two weeks. We have the Melmac Grant, that will be \$45,000.00 in the next three years and will be used for college aspirations.

Dan – Department of Education is reaching out to the communities that had D's and F's in terms of a plan to help. Have you been part of any discussion with the department of education to look at whether there are any resources out there available to you?

Marc – Met with representative, they have 1.3 million dollars for 300 schools and they are going to allot it by student count. So it is going to be a small amount of money.

Dan – Its more than money, is there an actual plan out there to help. Fort Fairfield is in its 9th year with 21st century program, which is the whole idea around the program is to help students that are at risk. To have them and their family to be involved avoiding this exact thing that is now happening.

Marc - We have had a great program, there were 45 kids playing outside last night and where would we be without that program? 21st century is part of the solution its not the problem.

David McCrea – I would like to point out that a lot of people don't know what a drop out is. In the past it was a student who left school and didn't return. A drop out now is any student that doesn't finish in 4 years. So if they come in and blow away their freshman year, at best they are going to be a 5 year student. So they are considered a drop out

Adjourned 6:40

Fort Fairfield Town Council Meeting Minutes

Councilors: David McCrea, Jason Barnes, Mark Babin, Susan LeVasseur and John Herold

Staff: Ella Leighton, Bill Campbell, Tony Levesque, Mike Jalbert, Mike Bosse, George Watson

Citizens: Stev Rogeski, Marc Gendron

- I. Roll Call - Chair David McCrea asked that the record reflect all councilors present with the exception of Mark Babin and Susan Levasseur.
- II. Prayer – Chair David McCrea offered the prayer
- III. Pledge to the Flag - All in attendance pledged their allegiance to the Flag.
- IV. Public Comment Period –

David McCrea - About a month ago we sent a letter to the Governor's office in response to the letter the governor sent to the Wall Street Journal he had express a desire for the State of Maine to be a gun friendly state. In it he encouraged if there were manufacturers that needed a state to be in that the State of Maine would be a good place to be. Sometime ago, we had talked about having some type of manufacturer move into town. So when this letter came out we thought we would jump in with good faith with the governor and sent a letter to the governor to be considered as a community that would like to have manufacturing, with good paying jobs. We have a good facility for it and it could be any kind of industry. So we jumped in on his Wall Street Journal article and expressed our, perhaps overly strong desire to attract a manufacturer to this town. We certainly would like to have those manufacturing jobs, we did not in any shape or form mean to come off saying that only a gun manufacturer is the way to go. We would like to have an industry and if that was one of them we certainly would take a long hard look at it. I hope no one continues to misunderstand our intent, it was to look for good economic development, to bring good paying jobs.

- V. Correspondence and Reports
 - A. Licenses/Permits- None
 - B. Financial Report – Dan – Our expenses remain consistent with prior months. Revenue sharing has been down the last two months and it appears that we may be down for the year by as much as \$20,000.00. We are still waiting on a check from the State for the balance of our homestead exemption, which is approximately \$20,000.00. Our cash flow remains good, we should be receiving \$212,000.00 from Pines sometime this month and we have an additional \$140,000.00 worth of expenses to completely finish the project and pay the retainage that has been withheld from the contractor.

- C. Tri-Community Landfill Report – Dan – Last meeting was on the 19th, we are putting bids out for the metal pile. Had the Maine Department of Labor in for a safety inspection and that went very well. Just hired a new employee and we are getting lots of help with picking up litter after the long winter. We will be buying a new compactor, we have reviewed the bids and we are going back out to get some clarification on whether or not to take the current compactor that we have and completing rehab it as opposed to buying a new one and turning that one in as a trade in. Looking at \$400,000.00 expenditure for that piece of equipment. We are continuing our talks with Presque Isle, possibility of merging and that is a slow process.
- D. Police Department Report – Bill – We received the final bill for our dispatching services, and was surprised that due to staffing reduction they haven't had to spend as much money so our bill was reduced by 60% we saved a little over \$1,200.00. The National Drug Take back, the tally for the State of Maine was 22,260 pounds, about 8,000 pounds more than the last take back in September. The sharps kiosk has been a benefit, people are utilizing it. We have been advertising for two reserve officers, currently have two guys that are on the payroll but they are working else where so they are only available a limit amount of time. Beginning in June we will have an University of Fort Kent criminal justice student who will be doing an internship here with the Police Dept. We are currently doing a background check on him and waiting to get the paper work on him from his advisor. He will riding along with the full time officers, he has 250 hours to complete. Also on June 1st, as a way of being more involved with the community Bill will be help our with the Boys Scouts at Farm Park, by doing a crime prevention program.
- E. Chamber/Quality of Place Council Report – Mike – Our next event is July 13th & 14th, the town wide yard sale, which is the kick off for our Potato Blossom Festival. Festival is running the 13th through the 21st with the parade on the 20th. The car show will be back on east side of Riverside Park Tammy Kilcollins has agreed to chair this event. There will be a new event this year at the Rocking S Ranch, it will be a western event.

The Quality of Place Council continues to be quite active, the Main Street committee is still polling and surveying the downtown merchants on how we can increase downtown traffic. The real estate committee purchased a home on Brunswick Ave. The remodeling of that home is progressing quite well, currently the foundation is dug out. It is going on time and on budget

David – In case someone doesn't know the purpose of the Brunswick Ave home is, would you explain the purpose.

Mike – approximately two years ago, a citizen, Gary Sirois, approached the council with a concept that we needed an incentive program to have people move here and stay. The vision Fort Fairfield Group had met and outlined what they wanted to happen for future residential home in Fort. They identified homes that were substandard, and identified that they would like to see those homes be brought up to a standard. We came up with a model, a program that would give an incentive for people to purchase a home in Fort Fairfield. The way the program works is that we have the house appraised, if it appraised at a certain amount, the bank will traditionally loan up to 80% of that. This isn't a program that will be financed by the Quality of Place Council or the Town but by a bank.

- F. Update on Budget Process – An Act to Modernize and Simplify the Tax Code LD 1496 – The homestead exemption would go from \$10,000 to \$50,000 or ½ the value of the home whichever is less. The State would only fund half of the amount that would be exempted, which in Fort Fairfield's situation we would lose \$15,637,175.00 in valuation which would need to be made up by increasing the mil rate. So we would need to increase property tax revenue by \$150,000.00 to \$3,679,970.00 and this would be paid from a town wide valuation of \$142,388,575.00. This would increase the mil rate to 25.85 from 23.00. The good news is that all taxes owed by residents would go down.
- G. Update on Street Lighting Costs – Goal is to reduce municipal costs on maintaining street lights in urban areas. Currently we have 176 lights that are owned by the Town, they have been converted to LED lights. The cost for electricity has been reduced from \$16,000 a year to \$5,500. But we are paying for an additional 146 lights that belong to MPS, which costs almost \$22,000 a year. We are unable to own these lights as they are on MPS's poles and the rate we pay has no correlation to the amount of electricity they use. LD 1251 would change this, we could continue as we do now or we could buy our own lights and have MPS install them or have a certified contractor install them for us
- H. Update on Senior Citizens Housing – They are a couple of weeks behind, we can not go beyond August 31st, things are coming along.
- I. Update on Clinic Project – attached to these minutes is a correspondence that was received regarding the audit that was recently completed by DECD for the grant to construct the clinic. Paving was done yesterday, side walks hopefully will be started tomorrow. Public works will be putting the signs up, then they will be loaming and seeding. Next week Pines will be moving in and getting ready to open on June 3rd.
- J. Update on Village Restaurant – Just received the report from Summit Environmental Consultants, Inc. Because this is a commercial structure we had to have a certified company come in to determined whether or not there

was asbestos. The report identifies two major areas that would cost us approximately \$14,000.00. One is the roof, there is asphalt sub-roofing material under asphalt shingles and also some patching material that all contain asbestos. Also in the kitchen and in the dining area there is linoleum floor tiles and adhesive that will need to be removed. Until we can get this all sorted out with DEP the demolition will be put on hold. Phil Christensen would really like the council to hold off from tearing this structure down because he really thinks we can find a functional use for this building.

David McCrea – So as it stands it's a useable building if the asbestos is taken care.

Dan – There is no heating system or plumbing system, it is just four walls with an exterior that looks terrible. There is a lot of work to be done.

- K. Update on Street Light Replacement – We have had a number of street lights that have prematurely burned out. Sylvania has been up here, George has been patiently prodding their sales person. He just got another email from them and they have identified 60 lights that they will replace.
- L. Update on Libby Dams Assessment – got a response from letter that was sent, the Maine Emergency Management believes that those dams place a functional role and they do not want anything to change. They recognize the economic situation that the communities are in. What they want to do is an assessment to get those gates working. Once they figure what the actual cost is, then go to the Department of Conservation to see whether or not at some point they would have funds. They do not want us to drain them.

VI. Old Business – NONE

VII. New Business –

- A. Approve Quitclaim Deed to Ralph & Bonita Taggett – all back taxes, interest and costs have been paid as well as next year's taxes.

Motion: John Herold moved to approve the Quitclaim Deed to Ralph & Bonita Taggett

Second: Jason Barnes

Vote – All affirmative

- B. Approve Personnel Policy Change on Health Insurance – Currently our health insurance policy does not specifically address the benefit that a Department Head receives as part of their compensation. Past practice has been that the Town will pay 100% of the health insurance premium for any Department head due to the fact that they are paid a salary and consistently work more than the 40 hours required of other employees. Am recommending that any new department heads hired will be required to pay

20% of the cost of any plan that includes family members other than the employees.

Motion: Jason Barnes moved to approve amending the Personnel Policy on Health Insurance to state, “that any Department Head hired after May 15, 2013 will be required to pay 20% of the health insurance premium for either the family plan or the plan for employee and dependents”.

Second: John Herold Vote – All affirmative

- C. Approve Supporting Pines Summer Music Festival - In honor of opening the new health clinic and in recognition of the effort made by the citizens of Fort Fairfield to bring this to fruition Pines Health Services is planning on having an evening of music at FARM Park on Saturday, June 15th. This will be advertised as the Pines Summer Music Festival and will kick start a summer of fun activities at FARM Park. We currently charge a minimum fee of \$250.00 for an event such as this and due to the nature of the celebration, we are requesting the council to waive the fee for this year.

Motion: John Herold moved to approve supporting Pines Summer Music Festival by waiving the \$250.00 FARM Park rental fee.

Second: Jason Barnes Vote – All affirmative

- D. Approve NMDC’s Appointments to their Board – John Herold has been serving in this capacity for a number of years and also serves on their loan review committee. However the dues have not been included in next year’s budget and without this payment we do not have representation. John and David can be approved if we are unable to fund this line item they can always resign.

Motion: Jason Barnes moved to approve the appointment of John Herold and David McCrea to the NMDC’s Board

Second: John Herold Vote – All affirmative

VIII. Minutes: April 17, 2013 and May 1, 2013

Motion: Jason Barnes moved to approve Minutes of April 17, 2013 and May 1, 2013 as written.

Second: Jon Herold Vote – All affirmative

IX Warrants: #22 - \$194,126.32; #23- \$282,653.19

Motion: John Herold moved to accept warrant #22 & #23 as presented.

Second: Jason Barnes Vote – All affirmative

X. Other –NONE

May 15, 2013

Fort Fairfield Town Council Meeting Minutes

XI. Executive Session - Moved into Executive Session at 7:35 PM

1MRSA 405 (6) © Economic Development
IMRSA 405(6)(A) Personnel

No Action Taken

Came out of executive session at 8:20 PM

XII. Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Council Secretary
Rebecca J. Hersey