

THE TOWN OF FORT FAIRFIELD
Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Budget Public Hearing Minutes
Council Chambers
Wednesday, May 1, 2024
6:00 pm

Council: Pat Canavan, James Ouellette, Keith E. Thibeau II
Staff: Tim Goff, Neadra Dubois, Fire Chief Jalbert
Citizens: 6 citizens present (see attached attendance sheet)

TOWN OF FORT FAIRFIELD
PUBLIC NOTICE

There will be a Public Hearing on Wednesday, May 1st, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the Fort Fairfield Council Chambers located at 18 Community Center Drive, Fort Fairfield, ME 04742. The purpose of this hearing is to allow for public comments on the following:

The Town of Fort Fairfield FY 2024-2025 Budget 1st Hearing

The budget may be reviewed at the Town Office during regular business hours. Comments and/or questions should be directed to Tim Goff, Town Manager, 18 Community Center Drive, Fort Fairfield, Maine, 04742, or by phone at (207) 472-3800. Comments will be received until the Town Council Meeting, May 15, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

Town Manager Goff started the Public Hearing at 6:01 pm stating that he and Council will accept any comments and will answer any questions the attendees may have. Before opening the floor to any comments/questions, Town Manager Goff explained the presented budget by each department, overall Town costs and revenue. He also discusses mil rates and property taxes.

Gary Sirois spoke on his concerns with 24/25's budget compared to 23/24's budget. He doesn't think that the Library and the Fire/EMS departments are sustainable for the Town of Fort Fairfield with income vs. expenses. He wants to see all the departments make budget cuts. Mr. Sirois also talked about repairs and costs of repairs on roads and the stairs at the Town Office.

Tom Towle spoke about Covid money and how it was built into the budget, but now the money is being pulled away, how it was misspent and was incorporated into the budget. He also talked

about Revenue Sharing and how it is only a one-time expenditure. He states that neither of those items should be infused into the budget.

David Dorsey asks what the Town would do if they didn't get the Revenue Sharing. Mr. Dorsey talks about things that he has a problem with the budget, including the Fire/EMS department. Mr. Dorsey states the Town needs to think smarter and utilize assets better. He also states that the budget needs to be tightened up a bit more.

Town Manager Goff states that the goal of utilizing that Revenue sharing is using it on one-time expenditures so Capital Improvements, Mil Rate reduction, paying off the County Tax and not increasing staff levels.

Mr. Towle asks what happens next year if the Revenue Sharing get back down to around \$900,000 and is the Town prepared to face that problem when it happens.

Town Manager Goff explains that he thinks the Town is prepared, and part of the budget has the fixes that need to be done while there is cash on hand, paying off the County tax now instead of kicking that can down road and absorbing the School budget. It's going to be tough.

Mr. Towle mentions that last year Mr. Foster said that he hoped that in fiscal year 24/25, there would be a bit of relief for the taxpayers and he is not seeing that in this budget.

Town Manager Goff explains that if the Town reduces the Mil Rate by more than one mil, then it's going to be guaranteed that precipitous drop in Revenue Sharing. He states that he would rather utilize the funds now to fix facilities and try to establish a little bit of reserves. He also states that he doesn't want to get into a Mil Rate yo-yo, so he wants to make it a measured relief so that the Mil Rate doesn't have to be jacked up the following year. He also talks about the changes in the budget this year are to create a better, more accurate picture of what the true expenses are as where, in the previous years, there was not an accurate picture of the true expenses were.

Mr. Towle and Town Manager Goff have a discussion on the Mil Rate and the indexing of property and tax bills.

Charles Cyr says that he would like to ask for more money on the budget. He is asking for more money to be appropriated to Economic and Community Development. He encourages the Town to reach out to the City of Presque Isle to share their Economic and Community Development director.

Steve Springer comments, saying that he supports what Mr. Cyr said.

Town Manager Goff asks if there are any other comments, questions or concerns before the hearing is closed.

Councilor Ouellette asks Town Manager Goff to explain why the Town of Fort Fairfield pave Forest Ave.

Town Manager Goff answers that question by stating that the Town owns the section of the road that was paved – the Page Road to the town line in Easton. The DOT is responsible for the rest of Forest Ave and curls up the Page Road and ends at the Dorsey Road. If the road is striped it is usually a DOT road.

The Public Hearing adjourned at 6:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Neadra E. Dubois, Council Secretary