

Fort Fairfield Town Council Meeting Minutes
Council Chambers
Wednesday, September 20, 2023
6:00 PM

- I. Roll Call – 6:01 PM
Council: Keith E. Thibeau II, Pat Canavan, Robert Kilcollins, James Ouellette
(Kevin Pelletier excused absence)
Staff: Dan Foster, Tim Goff, Neadra Dubois, Tony Levesque, Darren Hanson, Ella Leighton, Doug Sharpe, Chief Michael Jalbert, Chief Matthew Cummings
Citizens: Five (5)
Media: Star Herald

- II. Prayer
Mr. Levesque provided the prayer.

- III. Pledge to the Flag
All in attendance pledged their allegiance to the flag.

- IV. Public Comment Period
No comments made.

- V. Correspondence & Reports
 - A. License and Permits
There were two liquor licenses from the VFW and Canterbury Royale and one catering permit from County Farms Market. Mr. Foster signed those on behalf of the Council. Mr. Foster asks the Council to approve those licenses.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motions to approve all three licenses.
Second: Councilor Kilcollins seconded.
Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

 - B. Financial Report
Mr. Foster discusses the financial report. Mr. Foster states that all in all there are no big surprises. The Town has a strong cash balance. The TAN hasn't had to be used as of yet. Expenses were all in line. Revenues have been great. The Town has started this fiscal year in good standing and there is no reason it should not continue through the rest of the year.

C. Aroostook Waste Solutions

Mr. Stev Rogeski gives an update on AWS. The last meeting was on August 25th. Income is, year to date, 2% below budget. Expenses were 13% below what was budgeted. Mr. Rogeski reports on the updated business plan and the merger with the Presque Isle Landfill. Along with the merger, the plan is to acquire as much licensed space as they can.

D. Tax Assessor Report

Mr. Levesque reports on his Tax Assessor's role, specifically on what's happening since the reval. Every year, he takes all the sales analysis and rank the sales from the closest to 100% to the furthest from 100%. He sends that form to the State and there is a two-year lag on how it affects the community. In 2020, 2021 and 2022 the Town was able to certify at 100%. Mr. Levesque explains how these figures are calculated and the process to be able to certify at 100%. Mr. Levesque proposes that the Town factor the maximum amount across the board instead of in classifications of residential, commercial, tree growth, water body, or farm land. What that does is raises the value and lowers the mil rate. Mr. Foster comments, saying that he thinks Mr. Levesque is going in the right direction with this plan and it makes sense.

E. Maine Street Revitalization report

Councilor Canavan reports on the last Friday in Fort event of the year. The event took place at Farm Park. There was good attendance with live music, food trucks, beer garden and lots of good people. The next Friday in Fort event is projected to be in February. There is a Quality of Place meeting on September 25th.

F. LD 1 Tax Levy Limit Calculation for FY 23/24

Mr. Foster reports on the Tax Levy Limit Worksheet for this year's budget. The intent for this worksheet is to see if the funds used to operate a community exceed the inflation rate plus any increases in valuation. Mr. Foster explains his calculations on the worksheet and states that the Town of Fort Fairfield is under the accepted Property Tax Levy Limit by \$162,623.00, which does not require a vote by the Council.

G. Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) Funding Opportunity

Mr. Goff reports on a meeting that he and Mr. Foster had with Brenna Kent, a senior member of Senator Collin's Washington D.C. staff on August 29th. At the meeting, they discussed opportunities for Fort Fairfield to access CDS funding through the Senator's Office. This is a great opportunity for funding community development projects.

H. Town Manager Transition

Mr. Foster reports on the timeline of the transition of the new Town Manager. Mr. Goff will be spending more time with Mr. Foster over the next couple of weeks. Mr. Foster's last day in the Town Office will be September 29th and he will be available until October 19th. Mr. Foster states that Mr. Goff will do an amazing job as the next Town Manager.

I. HAF – Homeowner Assistance Fund

The Homeowner's Assistance Fund is being administered by ACAP through funding from Maine Housing Authority. Ella Leighton has been working closely with the Administrator of the fund, Ann Hull to help taxpayers who are struggling to pay this past year's taxes. Ms. Leighton states that by the end of the month the Town will have taken in over \$60,000.00 by helping people utilize the HAF program. Ms. Leighton also states that the HAF program will make a significant difference in the upcoming foreclosures and liens that need to be filed.

J. Community Empowerment Project Recommendations Update

Mr. Goff gives an update on the Community Empowerment Project Recommendations. He gives a rundown on the seven recommendations and where the Town stands with them. So far, the Town has done work with all the recommendations which include: Standing agenda items at Town Council meetings for Department Heads, a handout for new Councilors that addresses an annual retreat/organizational meeting, include public comment period at the beginning as well as at the end of Town Council meetings, additions to the Town Manager contract, amendment to Voting in the Town Charter, and work on adopting a new budget process for the next fiscal year.

K. Town Office Automated Answering System

Councilor Canavan expresses her frustrations with the automated answering system and thinks that it should be changed. Mr. Foster concurs and suggests that staff talk about it and staff and the new Town Manager could put something together and present it to Council. The Council agrees.

L. Review Draft Audit for FY 22/23

Mr. Foster discusses his dealings with Sheri and Giselle at Felch & Company on the Audit for Fiscal Year 22/23. Sheri and Giselle were amazed at what we have been able to accomplish in one year. Mr. Foster discusses two outstanding liabilities on the balance sheet that need to be resolved and taken off the books. Mr. Foster explains the process of the audit. Mr. Goff will be getting the final Audit soon and presenting it at the October 18th Council Meeting.

- M. Update on School Speed Limit Sign on Brunswick Ave
Chief Cummings ordered the new speed limit sign and Mike Greenlaw has installed it free of charge. The speed limit sign is functioning properly, but people are still speeding on Brunswick Avenue.
- N. Access Points Grant for Aging Project
The Aroostook Agency on Aging just received a \$862,000.00 grant through the Congressional Directed Spending program to set up 20 different access points for senior citizens around Aroostook County, Fort Fairfield is one of them. A group of citizens met with their staff on the 13th to discuss the program and it's benefits. Mr. Foster is hoping that they can the Library as the spot to provide program services. A follow up meeting is scheduled for September 27th.
- O. Beaver Issue
There was a significant problem with beavers that occurred adjacent to Roosevelt Avenue. There was a huge pond created by the beavers. Darren Hanson and Michael Jalbert took care of the issue.
- P. Public Works Vehicle
Mr. Foster gives the Council a heads up on a request that will soon be presented to them for a vehicle purchase for Public Works. The Public Works Department Head is driving a vehicle that is closing in on 200,000 miles and is in need of a newer vehicle. He uses this vehicle to check roads at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning during storms. Mr. Foster thinks this request needs some serious consideration.

VI. Old Business

- A. Introduce Ordinance #23-12 to Amend the Town Charter §C-13 C. Voting Ordinance #23-12 introduced by Councilor Kilcollins.
- B. Introduce Ordinance #23-13 to Approve New State Guidelines for General Assistance
Ordinance #23-13 introduced by Councilor Canavan.
- C. Introduce Ordinance #23-15 to Establish Adult Use and Medical Marijuana Businesses Ordinance
Ordinance #23-15 introduced by Councilor Ouellette.
- D. Approve Purchase of New Police Cruiser
Chief Cummings has found a new police cruiser that he would like to purchase. The Police Department has the funds in Reserves to make this purchase. Mr. Foster asks Council to approve this purchase for the Police Chief.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motions to approve the purchase.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.
Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

E. Approve Revised Budget Process for FY 24/25

The latest rendition of the revised budget process for next year is presented. The Budget Advisory Committee and Councilor Ouellette have worked on revising this budget process. Mr. Goff shares the timeline for the revised budget process. A survey was created and will be mailed out with all tax bills that go out in October.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to approve the Revised Budget Process for FY 24/25.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.
Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

VII. New Business

A. Approve Appointments to the Budget Advisory Committee

Councilors Canavan and Ouellette have agreed to serve on the Budget Advisory Committee. There is one vacant seat on the Committee and Mr. Foster has asked to serve on the Budget Advisory Committee.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to approve the Budget Advisory Committee appointments.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.
Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

B. Approve General Ledger Adjustments

A couple of things on the General Ledger that Mr. Foster would like to take out and Council would need to approve that happening. One is the unpaid taxes from ReEnergy. That has been taken off the books but is still listed as uncollectible taxes that are due. The other thing is the \$101,000.00 on Farm Park. It's one of those things that just hangs out there and needs to come off the books. The auditors are in agreement to take those items out of the audit and off the books if Council approves it. Mr. Foster asks Council to approve making these adjustments to the General Ledger.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motions to approve the General Ledger Adjustments.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.
Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

- C. Approve Town Order #23-11 To Set FY 23/24 Mil Rate
Mr. Goff presents Town Order #23-11, which states that the mil rate will be 24.25.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motions to approve Town Order #23-11.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

- D. Approve Proclamation #23-14 Honoring Mavis Towle's 100th Birthday
Mr. Foster asks Mr. Levesque to read Proclamation #23-14 Honoring Mavis Towle's 100th Birthday.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motions to approve Proclamation #23-14

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

- E. Approve Planning Board Appointment
There are currently two vacancies on the Planning Board, both alternate positions. It is the recommendation of the Planning Board that Chris Campbell fill one of those positions.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to appoint Chris Campbell to serve on the Planning Board.

Second: Councilor Kilcollins seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

- F. Approve Library Request
Jim Everett has requested that the Town donate or lend the World War I vintage machine gun that is in Library storage to the Fort Fairfield Historical Society. The Historical Society would like to display it in the Block House Museum on Man Street. Mr. Foster recommends that the Town donate this museum piece to the Historical Society.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motions to donate the vintage machine gun to the Historical Society.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

- G. Approve Alternate for AWS
Mr. Foster asks Council to approve Mr. Goff as the Alternate Board Member for AWS as of October 2nd.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to approve Mr. Goff as the Alternate Board Member for AWS.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

H. Introduce ORD #23-16

Mr. Foster and Mr. Goff have been working with Bruce Sargent on an agreement for the construction of a potato chip processing plant in Fort Fairfield. They have also been working with Jeff Ashby to put together a lease agreement for the land where ReEnergy was. At some point there will be a more defined agreement between A Taste of Maine (the company that Mr. Sargent has formed) and the Town of Fort Fairfield. Mr. Foster asks for this Ordinance gets introduced.

Councilor Ouellette introduced Ordinance #23-16.

VIII. Minutes of the August 16th Regular Council Meeting

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to approve the Minutes of the August 16 Regular Council Meeting.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

IX. Warrants: #4 \$531,674.66; #5 - \$405,574.79

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to accept Warrants #4 and #5 in the amounts stated.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

X. Other

A. Farewell Speech

Mr. Foster gives a speech, highlighting this past year he has served as Interim Town Manager. This is his last Council Meeting as Interim Town Manager. Mr. Foster thanks Council for their leadership and thanks the citizens for making it easier for him to get through the challenging times, as Town Manager, with their support, kind words and comments. Mr. Foster states that he is honored to have been able to serve in this capacity for the community. Mr. Foster also talks about how he will miss the staff and his amazement with the work that has been done over the past year. Mr. Foster tells staff that they kept the community intact, while saving the Town a million dollars and did it, and the work involved, in a positive, proactive manner. He states that the staff supported each other in this process,

presented themselves as a solid functional workforce, and not only made this Town better financially, but spirits are better. Mr. Foster states that this is an experience that he will keep in his heart for the rest of his days.

B. Public Hearings

Mr. Levesque sets Public Hearing dates and times with the Council for the Ordinances that were introduced. Mr. Levesque suggests having the Ordinances scheduled for Public Hearing dates as follows: ORD #23-12, #23-13, #23-16 at 12PM (noon) on Wednesday, October 11 and ORD #23-15 at 6PM the same day (October 11). Mr. Levesque asks Council to authorize the Manager and staff to schedule and work on Public Hearing Notices and use of the room.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to authorize the Manager and staff to schedule and work on Public Hearing Notices and use of the room.

Second: Councilor Kilcollins seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

XI. Public Comment Period
No public comments.

XII. Adjournment

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to adjourn.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

Council ended at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Neadra E. Dubois, Council Secretary