

Fort Fairfield Town Council Monthly Meeting
Council Chambers
Wednesday, June 21, 2023
6:00 PM

I. Roll Call

Council: Keith E. Thibeau II, Robert Kilcollins, Pat Canavan, Kevin Pelletier, James Ouellette

Staff: Dan Foster, Neadra Dubois, Tony Levesque, Doug Sharpe, Fire Chief Michael Jalbert,
Police Chief Matthew Cummings, Darren Hanson, Cheryl Boulier

Citizens: 12 citizens present

II. Prayer

Mr. Levesque provided the prayer.

III. Pledge to the Flag

All attendees pledged their allegiance to the flag.

IV. Public Comment Period

Charles Cyr spoke about the Fort Fairfield Revitalization Project and Fridays in Fort. The project is going to lead a community initiative aimed at boosting wealth in businesses and attracting new ventures to this Town. Fridays in Fort will be starting July 7th from 5-8 PM in the Village Square parking lot. There will be food trucks, vendors, a DJ, and a farmer's market with the Amish at this event. It is hopeful that this event will take place once a month to keep the tax dollars in Fort Fairfield. The goal is perhaps to have a system with a co-op. Mr. Cyr also mentions other ideas that have come up as things to do for Fridays in Fort, i.e. a movie night, a soup contest, and a chili cook-off. The goal is to try to stop the tax dollars from going out of town.

V. Correspondence and Reports

A. Licenses and Permits – Boondocks Grille

Mr. Foster asks the Council to approve the Liquor License renewal for Boondocks Grille.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins makes the motion.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

B. Financial Report

Mr. Foster gives the financial report for the Town. The Town has already paid \$250,000 towards the \$500,00 line of credit to the bank and the other \$250,000 will be paid at the end of the month. There is about \$150,000 in bills that will get paid this fiscal year which will leave \$300,000 to \$400,000 left in the bank for going into July. Mr. Foster states that

the Town will get all of the bills paid and will not have to carry over any expenses and debt into the new fiscal year. Mr. Foster gives praise to Department Heads for making this happen.

C. Aroostook Waste Solutions

Stev Rogeski gives the monthly report on Aroostook Waste Solutions. The last meeting was on April 30th. Their income level was below budget by about 12 percent and expenses were down by 14 percent. AWS had a meeting with Jim Wilson about the two new cells, five and six. It will cost about \$6.8 million to build those two new cells. Mr. Rogeski mentions that Mark has had some medical issues and will be out for quite a while and he may not be able to fully function in his position when he gets back, so Danny has been put in his spot. The Presque Isle Landfill is closing on Friday of this week, so everything will be shuffling to Fort Fairfield from there. Mr. Rogeski states that he is in hopes that he and Mr. Foster can talk about the pipeline for leach aid.

Councilor Pelletier asks how many more loads will be coming through to Fort Fairfield, and are they coming from Caribou or Presque Isle to get to the landfill.

Mr. Rogeski answers by saying that traffic will probably increase by 30 percent.

D. Parks & Recreation Report

Mr. Sharpe gives a report on the Parks & Rec Department. Mr. Sharpe discusses what he has done since March, when he became Director of the Department. Mr. Sharpe has been busy with programs, obtaining a Dance Hall Permit, meeting with the Fire Marshall for the yearly inspection and getting the pool ready for the summer. Two new lifeguards have been hired and four lifeguards are returning for summer swim programs. There is also a newly hired Summer Program Assistant so they will be able to cover all programming events this summer. Mr. Sharpe wants to personally and publicly thank them for making the summer programming possible. Mr. Sharpe also personally and publicly thanks all the coaches, staff and volunteers for stepping up and making summer programming possible. Mr. Sharpe states that the Rec Department has teamed up with the Fort Fairfield Athletic Booster Club to offer all residents free swimming lessons this summer. The Booster Club will reimburse any resident who has already paid for lessons. This is a gesture is an honor and remembrance of Jake Williams, who tragically lost his life in a drowning accident. Mr. Sharpe thanks the Booster Club and Larry Gardner for this thoughtful gesture.

Councilor Kilcollins praises Mr. Sharpe for his work on creating such an environment for the younger generation.

E. Potato Blossom Festival Report

Mrs. Boulier gives a report on the Potato Blossom Festival. Mrs. Boulier shares what is going on with this year's Festival. The Festival will kick off on July 7th with a golf tournament. The Festival will be a nine days with 57 events. The last day will be July 16th, ending with the fireworks show. This Festival attracts vendors from all of the United States and Canada. The Festival is a member of the Maine Tourist Association and is a valuable source in tracking visitors interest and travel plans. With visitors increasing in Northern Maine and at the Festival, this makes for a huge economic impact for the area.

The Festival was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Maine Office of Tourism and will be used to fund the Festival Facebook page upgrades, a new website, brochures and photography. The Hampton Inn has reported that because of the Festival, they are completely booked the entire week before and the week of the Festival. Festival t-shirts and hats are ready and on sale at the Town Office as well as Festival Headquarters, when open. Brochures and booklets will be distributed next week. The Festival Headquarters will be in the historic Key Bank building this year.

- F. Fort Fairfield Community Empowerment Project
Mr. Foster states that Catherine Ingraham has been helping the Town by gathering comments and putting together recommendations based on the meetings she has had with staff and citizens. Ms. Ingraham gives an update on what she has done so far with the Community Empowerment Project. There have been 20 responses to the online survey and so far, the comments have been mostly positive and people shared additional thoughts.

- G. MSAD #20 New High School Principal
Mr. Foster publicly congratulates Garrett Martin for becoming the new High School Principal.

- H. Speed Limit Sign on Brunswick Ave
Mr. Foster reports on the process of getting new school zone speed limit signs for Brunswick Ave. Sergeant Cormier has submitted applications to the Maine State Department of Transportation for the school zone signs, which are provided free of charge, but could take up to two years to complete the process and get the signs. The thought is, that in the meantime, the Town could purchase signs that Chief Cummings had found and have them put up before school starts in the fall.

- I. Bison Ordinance Process
Chief Cummings reports on the Bison issue and the process of getting regulations from Augusta before creating an Ordinance. There's no need to rush. The Town should see what they can do to push Augusta on this issue and see what can come of it. Chief Cummings stresses the point of taking the time to do it right and be thoughtful with it.

- J. Main Street Revitalization Report
Councilor Canavan reports on the Main Street Revitalization Project. There is too much being lost in this Town and it's time to do something positive to put stuff back. There is a core group of six or seven people that talk about ways to make Fort Fairfield a business-friendly community and bring businesses in. They have started with Fridays in Fort because it gives an avenue to invite businesses in and an avenue to increase the energy in the Town and bring some excitement to Town. The other part of the group's discussion is working on developing a Vision Statement and work on developing a long-term plan to help grow Fort Fairfield, not just downtown, but the Industrial Park as well,

bringing businesses in. They intend to involve the rest of the Council and people in the Town as much as they can. Councilor Canavan states that it's going to take a community to build this community back and that's what they want to do. They are welcoming new members and anyone can join or go to the next meeting, which is next Thursday in the Village Square parking lot.

- K. Quality of Place Council – 2021 Spirit of America Award for Fort Fairfield
Mr. Foster received a letter from the County Commissioners Office announcing that the Quality of Place Council is the recipient of the 2021 Spirit of America award for Fort Fairfield. The award will be presented at a celebration on July 21st in Presque Isle.

 - L. NMDC Annual Meeting – June 22, 2023
NMDC is holding their annual meeting June 22nd. Mr. Foster will be attending, representing Fort Fairfield.

 - M. Limestone Subdivision Rail Use Advisory Council Request
Mr. Foster discusses the Limestone Subdivision Rail Use Advisory Council and the rail line that runs from Caribou, through Fort Fairfield to Loring. The railway is how they got their coal and it hasn't been used for years. This organization was formed to determine what to do with that railway. All of that has been shelved because of what's going on with development at Loring right now and they are now looking at possibly putting that rail back to use. Mr. Levesque gives a rundown of what development is going on at Loring. Mr. Levesque is cautiously optimistic about this development.

 - N. Fire Marshall Report of Deficiencies on Municipal Complex
Mr. Foster states that Mr. Sharpe, Chief Jalbert and Chief Cummings have gotten everything up to speed to fix the deficiencies from the Fire Marshall's report.

 - O. Bikes and Helmets for Kids
Mr. Foster discusses a project that Chief Cummings has done with giving bikes and helmets to kids. These bikes are all by donations, all organized by Chief Cummings and advertising was done mostly on Facebook. Last year they gave out 57 bikes. This year they gave out 78 bikes. Mr. Foster gives hats off to Chief Cummings for wanting to do this, for taking the time to do it, and for organizing and doing it in such a significant way. Mr. Foster states that the community needs to know about this. Chief Cummings thanks Terry Donovan and Paul Everett for putting the bikes together, Chief Jalbert for giving him a place to store the bikes and Chief Jalbert and Sergeant Cormier for numbering and photographing all the bikes.
- VI. Old Business
- A. Approve Ordinance #23-06 – Lease Agreement with Little Sunshine Learning Center
Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.
Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

B. Approve Ordinance #23-07 – Repeal Ordinance #17-08 Prohibiting Retail Marijuana Establishments

Mr. Foster states that he was asked to present this to allow this retail activity to happen in Fort Fairfield. Chief Cummings met with the Police Chief in Presque Isle to discuss the issues involved with having these establishments. Presque Isle has six of these facilities and it is asked if it is a public safety issue and is it a public nuisance issue. Chief Cummings states that in his discussion with Chief Kelly in Presque Isle, they have a pretty strict Ordinance in place regarding the retail marijuana establishments. He viewed the Ordinance and thinks it is appropriate. Chief Cummings suggests that if Fort Fairfield is going to do something like that, Presque Isle's would be a good model to follow. Mr. Foster states that the City of Presque Isle generates revenue from the licensing fees and it has not created any kind of a negative backlash from the community. There were no comments made for or against this matter. There was one very thoughtful letter from a couple who were concerned about what it might do to our community. Mr. Foster mentions the Public Hearing that was held for this topic and how nobody showed up. Mr. Foster recommends the Council approve the Ordinance with the caveat that he and Chief Cummings come back to the Council with an Ordinance that will regulate how that industry will be utilized within this community.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motions to approve Ordinance #23-07.

Second: Councilor Kilcollins seconded.

Discussion: Chair Thibeau asks if Presque Isle gave him any kind of numbers for revenue generated off of the licensing fees. Mr. Foster states that some of the fees he saw charged were \$5,000, so it's not insignificant. Mr. Foster also states that when the Ordinance is brought to Council, it would also have a fee structure set up that would follow closely to what Presque Isle is doing. Councilor Kilcollins states that this would give society a chance to regulate and control the amount that is going through the community, where as right now, there is none.

Vote: All Affirmative.

C. Proclamation Budget Advisory Committee

Mr. Foster discusses a memo congratulating and thanking the Budget Advisory Committee for all the work that did on behalf of the community. Mr. Foster thought it was great and appropriate and put that into a Proclamation. Mr. Levesque reads the Proclamation.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

VII. New Business

A. Approve Closing Office on June 30th to Complete Year of End Work

Mr. Foster asks the Council to approve closing the Town Office to the public on June 30th so staff can get the end of year work completed.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

B. Approve Letter of Engagement with Felch & Co. for Annual Audit

Mr. Foster states that the Town got the Letter of Engagement from Felch and Company to do the Town's annual audit. It is \$500 higher than last year. They are very confident and they do a great job. Mr. Foster asks the Council to approve Felch and Company to do the Town's audit for this fiscal year.

Motion: Councilor Pelletier motioned.

Seconded: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

C. Approve 2023-2024 Permits & Licenses

Mr. Foster asks Council to approve the 2023-2024 Permits and Licenses list.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

D. Approve FY 23/24 Appointments of Town Officials & Board/Committee Members

Mr. Foster asks Council to approve the annual appointments of Town Officials and Board/Committee Members.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Discussion: Councilor Canavan asks about the Community Development Advisory Board, the Fair Hearing Authority and the Economic Development Board, saying that they do not have term dates or members listed for the Economic Development Board. Mr. Levesque explains to her that the Community Development Advisory Board is not active at this time and there are no members for the Economic Development Board. The Town still gets credit for having that board, even though it is inactive. Also, the Fair Hearing Authority is a function for the community for General Assistance.

Vote: All Affirmative.

E. Approve Insurance Carrier for FY 23/24

Mr. Foster references a spreadsheet that was handed out to the Council that lists quotes from FA Peabody and United Insurance. Mr. Foster recommends to Council that the Town go with United Insurance for the Town's insurance for the next fiscal year.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned.
Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.
Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

F. Approve Reserve Account Activity

Mr. Foster states that there is a fair amount of money in the Administrative Reserve Account and the Police Department could use it because of the things that Department needs, primarily vehicles. Mr. Foster wants to transfer \$50,000 from the Administrative Reserve Account to the Police Reserve Account. The other thing is that \$100,000 was built into the budget for Public Works to be used to buy two F-550s. What Mr. Hanson would like to do instead is spend \$8,500 on the F-450 to put a plow and wing on it and then look for one more F-550. Mr. Foster asks Council to approve Public Works to use \$8,500 of the \$100,000, that's already been approved, for the plow and wing for the F-450 and the transfer of \$50,000 from the Admin Reserves to the Police Department Reserves.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned.
Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: Councilor Pelletier asks if this is for one more truck, an F-550. Mr. Foster explains that the plan is to have three trucks altogether. Councilor Pelletier asks more about the \$100,000 in Public Works' budget and what it will be used for. Mr. Foster explains that there is not a plan mapped out for the rest of the money. What is planned is the headgear, plow and wing for the F-450, which is being asked for approval at this time.

Vote: All Affirmative.

VIII. Minutes of the May 17th Regular Council Meeting; Minutes of the June 7th Special Council Meeting

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned.
Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.
Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

IX. Warrants: #24 - \$130,377.55; #25 - \$370,501.97

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to accept the warrants.
Second: Councilor Kilcollins seconded.
Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

X. Other

Nothing to report.

XI. Executive Session – 1 MRSA § 405 (6)(D) – Labor Contract Negotiations

Motion IN: Councilor Kilcollins motioned.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Vote: All Affirmative.

TIME: 7:10 PM

Motion OUT: Councilor Ouellette motioned.

Second: Councilor Kilcollins seconded.

Vote: All Affirmative.

TIME: 7:36 PM

Action taken:

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to accept the contract from CEI and to accept the recommendation for the Committee.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

XII. Adjournment

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to Adjourn.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

Time Adjourned: 7:38 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Neadra E. Dubois, Council Secretary