

Fort Fairfield Town Council Monthly Meeting Minutes
Council Chambers
Wednesday, July 20, 2022
6:00 P.M.

I. Roll Call
Council – All present.

Staff – Andrea Powers, Neadra Dubois, Jennifer Gaenzle, DC Fenderson, Kevin Senal and Chief Cummings.

Citizens – 10 citizens present.

Budget Advisory Committee – Kevin Bouchard.

Media – Star Herald.

II. Prayer

Chief Cummings led the meeting in prayer.

III. Pledge to the Flag

IV. Public Comment Period

Mr. Kilcollins – “Before we get started, I would, there’s just one thing I wanna add. I know the last couple, three past Council Meetings that we’ve had, there’s been a lot of tension and when we promote Public Comment Period it gives everybody a chance, that’s here, to stand and, and give us their response on something that might’ve happened or going to happen and that’s why we have Public Comment Period. After Public Comment Period, we have discussion between us Councilors, it’s just the way our parliamentary procedure laws prevail, we can’t accept any comment from anybody here, that is witnessing upon Council Meetings. And I know tension has been high the past two or three, because of different issues, and it’s been, you know, tolerated a little, although it’s my job to keep the meetings on course. I just wanna emphasize that we’ve, we’ve got to stay on course, and I apologize if there’s anything that somebody would like to add to our discussion on New Business, per say, and you can’t until the following month if you pick up Public Comment Period. So, I just would like to apologize, myself, not coordinating some of the meetings and our table sessions got a little outta hand because people in the crowd were adding to it. But I’ve got to, from here, prepare to keep our meetings in order and if I do see anybody out of place, don’t be offended if I have to put you, you know, our meeting in place because of it. But I just wanted to make a note of that so everybody

can understand. And then again, I apologize if I allowed it in some ways. So, at this time we will move on to Public Comment Period.”

Mr. Butler – “Mr. Chair? Before you start, Dave, I just wanna thank the Festival. I’ve had nothing but rave reviews from everybody around Town from the weekend before or the crowds of people coming through Town and I would like to thank the Police Department and Fire Department with the Muster and stuff like that, and the kids really, really enjoyed it, and the Smoke Trailer they enjoyed and stuff like that. The Rec Department did an excellent job, and I have nothing but rave reviews from everybody around Town that I talked to and, for the life of me I can’t think of her name.”

Audience and Councilors – “Cheryl.”

Mr. Butler – “Cheryl. I apologize Cheryl, but I would like to say she done a good job planning it, and it was a good time by all. I liked it, I just made that note. Thank you David.”

David Dorsey – “I guess I’m here tonight because I just found out that you approved budgets on June 28th. I guess there was a little changes from the one I had but I don’t know what I’m restricted to say under your statements but I am being sarcastic because I want to congratulate Libby, Butler and Kilcollins and the Manager for developing a 1.2 million dollar budget deficit. It is the largest single deficit of this Town in its history. It was approved by a board that have been larger, I guess in 2020 two million and three. This new budget is gonna be 26 Mils, as I understand. That’s an increase of what? 6.5? That’s a 33% increase, I think, if my math is correct. So, if I take taxes on my house for 3,000, I can expect to get a 4,000 bill bring you the next time around. I don’t know how you’re gonna attract people here to build anything with the tax rates going up they are in the deficits like we have. Presque Isle just, I think they just announced a reduction in their, their costs and I guess Caribou went up, but we’re, we’re, we lead the pack. If we, if we get the reputation of a high tax Town, you’re not gonna get brokers, real estate brokers trying to move houses, because, you know, who, who wants to move. Emily Smith told us, what, a month ago? She was saying about putting a complex, and she’s in Fort Fairfield, the system’s in Fort Fairfield, but I think they’re going to Presque Isle now. We missed out on that. Somehow, you’ve gotta address the spending, you gotta address what you’re doing, your policies. I’ve said it before here, and I’ll say it again, cause it’s, it’s mind-boggling. I can’t understand. I was a math major. I can’t understand how we continue, on an average, to have a budget deficit of a million dollars the last four years. In the end of July, let’s say it was yeah July 19 we had six and a half million-dollar net worth. That was nice. When we close our books for this year with this million two, we’re going to be close to 2.6 million dollars net worth. We wiped out two thirds of it, and we still don’t know and we haven’t heard from you people, what, what’s happening to ReEnergy. Is it gonna be a charge against our income? Or, or, I don’t know. Somebody outta be telling us what, because we’re all looking, that’s a half million dollars four, 460 plus fees and filing. So, if you do nothing but what you’ve done in the last four years, the next two years at a million dollars each in ReEnergy, you have zero net worth. You try to go to a bank and get money. You’re borrowing all you can right now. You’re short of

money, I know that, because you're rolling. Nobody's gonna touch us, just, just consider yourself a banker, you know, anyway. I know it's tough but somebody's gotta make some tough decisions and if you look, I don't wanna single out the ambulance, because they get all bent out of shape here, but I think we're gonna probably have a per capita cost of maybe 470 bucks. We got about 3300 people, so it's gonna be around a million and a half, give or take, depending how she makes the books on revenue coming from ambulance and from putting out fires, but anyway. What I wanted to show you is that Presque Isle is paying 76 bucks, Caribou is 99, Limestone is a hundred and Caribou services Limestone, so there must be some way that we can look to have an area type ambulance service that would help these small Towns. We wouldn't have to forego a good quality service, look, I said before, I'm almost 81, I got some health problems, I want, when I call, I want somebody pick me up fast. But I don't know if you're really looking at the hard things and exploring and you, you just gotta do that. We need to find an inexpensive way to do this and you gotta start now. So, I'm suggesting that you open discussions with neighboring communities to see if there's some way, some avenue that, that we can piggyback or do something and reduce our costs because if we paid like Limestone, we're gonna pay three, four hundred thousand dollars a year. That's a million dollars less than what you're budgeting for. So, in closing, I guess I'm, I, I do have a problem with the Council. I don't think, I don't think there's any transparency here. Sometimes, over the last year, it's been hostile and that's not for a good working relationship, but it just seems like some of us are just trying to find answers but where our are falling on deaf doors. The numbers don't come out. So, anyway if you guys can't support some way to stop this bleeding and cut this million-dollar loss, you really should step aside and let somebody else do it. You're not gonna win any favors, I'll tell you, whenever you start doing that. The people, you know, they don't wanna lose this, they just talk about how fast they get there and they don't. Maybe it's changed. Now, now the municipalities do it, maybe it's changed. But, I haven't heard anything like that and I haven't heard anything about ReEnergy, so you talk about talking back and forth, there's a lot of us would like to know more of what's going on but, there's some, some policy philosophy here that, hey you don't need to know, just stay the hell out of it. I think that's what maybe. I was really sorry to see that your Budget Advisory Committee, I heard was cancelled. I know your Town Manager wasn't in favor of it, she spoke against it at the time, but I would think if it's done right, we could have a flow of information that we wouldn't be asking questions all the time and bugging ya and maybe you take something from somebody else, anyway I've had my three minutes I'm guessing. Thank you."

Mr. Kilcollins – "Thank you Mr. Dorsey. Anybody else?"

Shane McGillan – "In regards to what you said at the beginning of the Meeting, Bob, as far as Public Comment and speaking during Meetings and stuff, I think it'd you know be worth looking into having a different system of how we go about the Meeting, whether it's per item or per, I don't know, per bullet on the sheet. I know public speaking at the beginning of the meeting, people get frustrated because, you know, if you, you think you know with the information going into the Meeting, and then you guys discuss it and vote on it and the information is if you understood differently, there's no chance for anybody to ask a question or a concern. I know some other communities around the area do, do

differently. I think it'd be worth looking into to avoid the issues of what happened during the Meeting. [inaudible] Thank you.”

Mr. Kilcollins – “Thank you, Shane.”

Ken Stratton – “Ken Stratton, resident of Fort Fairfield. I thought last year we decided to put in Public Comment Period at the end of the meeting before it’s Adjourned. Did we not?”

Mr. Kilcollins – “It was talked about.”

Mr. Stratton – “But I’ve yet to see one put on the, on any of the agendas since. I think it would be a good idea. You know, if you have questions, comments, whatever, you don’t have to [inaudible]. Thank you.”

Mr. Kilcollins – “Thank you, Ken. Anybody else? If not, we’ll move on to the Correspondence and the Reports.”

V. Correspondence and Reports

A. Licenses and Permits

As of July 15, 2022, there is nothing to report.

B. Financial Report

Excise collected in June was \$58,400.02 with a total for the year of \$650,153.09 compared to \$65,902.86 last year with a total for the year of \$698,089.32. The Town’s 2022 excise collections decreased a total of \$47,963.23 compared to 2021.

As of 06/30/2022, uncollected Real Estate taxes for 2021 were \$290,840.30 compared to last year \$330,329.44.

The Town ended the year with Revenue at 88.47% of budget and Expenses at 98.75% of budget.

The Town received June Revenue Sharing in the amount of \$81,812.52 on 06/21/2022. Total revenue sharing received to date is \$875,781.44. The Town is \$12,778.44 over the total budgeted amount for Revenue Sharing.

C. AWS

Mr. Rogeski discusses items discussed at AWS' last meeting on June 24, 2022.

Mr. Pelletier – “Stev, the filtration system that you’re concerned about, possibly plugging up, is there an overflow collections area that, that would go through?”

Mr. Rogeski – “You know something, DEP is, is, they’ve been very good about this PFAS thing. No one really knows what’s gonna happen with that yet. There are no really good filtration systems to keep that from going to the river. [inaudible] When they clean our leaching, the water goes in there in between.”

Mr. Pelletier – “There’s no containment area, is that what you’re saying?”

Mr. Rogeski – “No, no. They really don’t know what they want to do with that other than they’re telling us to keep in in the landfill. So, I don’t know what that’s gonna involve yet, we’re waiting on DEP. Mark has been involved with them both from the landfills prospective plus he’s also on the Maine Board of Protection, which is a public DEP, so he’s kind of looking at it from both ends. No one really knows what’s gonna happen with that. We’re just trying to speculate what we need to have in place in case that happens.”

Mr. Pelletier – “Well, where would it go right now if it did happen, where would it go?”

Mr. Rogeski – “It’s going right in the river. I mean, it doesn’t show up, you know, we don’t filter out PFAS stuff. It’s so small, so molecular, when we clean our leaching we’re cleaning it for other chemicals that are in the region, we don’t do it for PFAS. We know that this is the ability for DEP to say we’ll be able to stop it somehow, now that may work to our benefit because maybe they want us to contain this on site, which would pose the question that would go to DEP to us.”

Mr. Pelletier – “You’d think it’d be some kind of set up pond or containment area or something that would, if something like that did happen, take care of it, keep it until it’s treated.”

Mr. Rogeski – “[inaudible] I know they’re right over in Canada, they’re actually making people put molecular filters on their washing machines because a lot of that comes right from when you’re washing clothes with”

Mr. Pelletier – “Detergents?”

Mr. Rogeski – “No, no. It’s from anything that’s water repellent. So, rayon or nylon clothes or teflon pans or plastic bottles that we’re drinking out of, you know, all those, they’re out there, and it’s really nothing new. It’s been around since 1947. And, and they tracked a lot of it through the septic system, like sewer treatment plants, which means the way it gets there it’s passing through us to get there. [inaudible] Thank you very much.”

Mr. Kilcollins – “Thank you, Stev.”

VI. Old Business

A. Budget Advisory Committee Ordinance

Pursuant to 30-A M.R.S. §3001 and §C-15 of the Town of Fort Fairfield Charter an ordinance providing for establishment of a Budget Advisory Committee, composition, appointment, qualifications, terms, vacancies, officers, meetings, quorum, procedure, powers, duties, authority, recommendations, official cooperation. The composition, appointment, qualifications, terms, and vacancies are as follows: the Committee shall consist of five (5) to seven (7) members who shall be appointed by the Town Council. Prospective members shall be registered voters of the Town and shall submit an application expressing their desire to volunteer to serve. Town officials or employees, and their spouses, may not serve on the Committee. Members shall serve for terms of two (2) years. Members may serve for up to six (6) consecutive years. For transition purposes, the initial terms shall be staggered so that as nearly an equal number of terms shall expire annually. Two (2) non-voting Town Council members shall be voted upon by the Town Council to serve on the Budget Advisory Committee for a term of two years. Vacancies shall be filled within thirty (30) days by appointment of the Council for the unexpired term.

The officers, meetings, quorum, and procedure are as follows: the Committee shall annually elect a Chairman and a Secretary from among its members. Meetings will be monthly during the most active time of the proposed budget process from January to June. Members must attend the Department Budget Presentations to Council and both Public Budget Presentations in April and May. The Chairman may call meetings through the Town Manager’s Office as necessary or when so requested by a majority of members of the Council. A quorum necessary to conduct business shall consist of at least a majority of members. The Chairman shall preside at all meetings. The Secretary shall maintain a record of all proceedings including all correspondence of the Committee. All meetings and records shall be subject to the Maine Freedom of Access Act, 1 M.R.S. §§401-410. The Committee may adopt rules of procedure not inconsistent with this ordinance.

The powers and duties, authority, recommendations, and official cooperation are as follows: the Committee shall have the following powers and duties: to review and make recommendations to the Council on the proposed annual Town budget as proposed by the Town Manager and to review and make recommendations to the Council on the proposed capital expenditures as proposed by the Town Manager and to make such other recommendations on fiscal matters on the proposed budget as the Committee may from time to time deem advisable, or as requested to do so by the Council.

The Committee's authority shall be advisory only. The purpose and function of the Committee is governed by the Council, and it is directly responsible to the Council. Any recommendations shall be provided to the Town Manager's Office and presented to Council in writing. The Town Manager shall cooperate with, meet with, and provide the Committee with such information as may be reasonably necessary and available to enable it to carry out its functions under this Ordinance.

Recommendation is that Council introduces the Budget Advisory Committee Ordinance 22-02 amendments and direct staff to hold a public hearing on the Ordinance on Wednesday, August 3, 2022 at 6 PM in the Council Chambers of the Fort Fairfield Municipal Building.

Mr. Butler introduces the Ordinance and directs staff to hold a Public Hearing on August 3, 2022.

VII. New Business

A. Treasurer Request

Past practice for the clothing allowance for all full-time Public Works employees in the amount of \$400 each has become part of their payroll with a gross adjustment. This requires the employee to pay taxes, and FICA on this amount. This also requires the Town to pay FICA.

With Councils' approval, the Treasurer's suggestion is that we change this practice to issuing each employee a Town check in the amount of \$400 each. Checks would be for clothing allowance and would be issued once a year the first pay-period in July.

By issuing a Town check, the employee would benefit and we would save Public Works and the Town approximately \$307.00 per year.

The Treasurer asks the Council to please approve the above suggestion effective 07/01/2022.

Mr. Pelletier – “So would the employees be required to bring the receipts in?”

Ms. Powers – “No. We're giving them the money to purchase the clothing for, for work. We don't require them now to bring in a receipt.”

Mr. Pelletier – “So you don't know if they're spending it on clothes or not.”

Ms. Powers – “It's part of the benefit of working for the Public Works Department. They get a clothing allowance.”

Mr. Pelletier – “Usually when I worked and had a clothing allowance, they paid for it, and I had to bring proof that I bought the clothes.”

Ms. Powers- “So, past practice, here for the last 25, 30 years has been you do not require a receipt. So that’s why [inaudible]”

Mr. Pelletier – “[in audible] tax money, right? By doing this, it’s gonna save the Town money?”

Ms. Powers – “It will save them money, yes. I, I put to the Treasurer to find ways to save us money and that’s, each month she is coming forward with new ways for us to save money.”

Mr. Pelletier – “Is that for all employees, or just Public Works?”

Ms. Powers – “Public Works.”

Motion: Mr. Pelletier made the motion to accept it.

Second: Mr. Butler seconded.

Discussion: Above.

Vote: All Affirmative.

VIII. Minutes of the June 28, 2022 Special Town Council Meeting

Motion: Mr. Butler motions to accept the Minutes as written.

Second: Mrs. Libby seconded.

Discussion:

Mr. Ouellette – “No discussion?”

Mr. Kilcollins – “Usually, the minutes, it’s self explanatory.”

Mr. Ouellette – “There are [inaudible]”

Mr. Kilcollins – “We can if, if you have any questions before we close the vote.”

Mr. Ouellette – “There’s a few that’s more of a clerical error, but, on page five, the fifth page, there’s quite a few places they put performer and the term is performa.”

Ms. Powers – “So, just so you know, she can only do the minutes based on what she hears from the video. So, if it sounds like you’re saying performer that may be why it says that. What is the spelling that you are looking for to change?”

Mr. Ouellette – “Yeah, just performas. So, going forward, if asked, Town employees know that if we want a performance or performa evaluation of whatever is proposed.”

Ms. Dubois – “So, it’s perform-a?”

Mr. Ouellette – “Performa. P-e-r [inaudible].

Mr. Kilcollins – “So under the circumstances of noted, vote will stay the same under the circumstances that was stated.”

Vote: All Affirmative.

IX. Warrants: #26 \$1,007,990.01 #01 \$281,069.41

Warrant #26 in the amount of \$1,007,990.01 was completed on 06/30/2022. Warrant #01 in the amount of \$281,069.41 was completed on 07/11/2022.

Motion: Mr. Butler motioned.

Second: Mrs. Libby seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmed.

X. Other

Update on Ambulance Service Billing

D.C. Fenderson – “Good evening, everyone. Last time we met, you asked about an update on billing. So, I have some numbers for us. So through, from January 1 to the end of June, Comstar, our new ambulance billing company, submitted 353 bills. 353 billable runs. Out of those 353 billable runs, 304 of them were to Medicaid or Medicare. The total amount submitted was \$237,691.60. With 304 of them being Medicaid/Medicare, there’s an allowable amount that they’re just not gonna pay because the Federal Government and they decide what they’re gonna pay, so that total that we’re not gonna to receive from those for sure is \$47,096.45, which leaves an outstanding amount of \$190,595.15. So, so far this month in July, we’ve received \$65,447.19 of that, that’s been done. They are up to date on July’s billing and they will submit us monthly reports. In addition, I want to reiterate, as I have at one of the past several meetings, that some of our runs from the beginning of this year, we’re probably not gonna receive payment on or we’re gonna receive a reduced amount, because the lack of timely billing caused by Maine Billing Services. What Comstar has agreed to do is continue to, to negotiate with the insurance companies to try to get what we can back. If they’re not able to get something, they’re gonna compile me a list to run and the total amount not collected so that hopefully within a few months, I’ll have, I’ll know exactly what we’re not receiving because of Maine Billing Services inability to hold up their end of the contract and I can bring that back to you guys so you’ll have that total.”

Mr. Butler – “Is there any way to go after them, or for not billing, or?”

D.C. Fenderson – “That would be something that you as a Council would have to consult the Town’s Attorney about. That is, that is why I’m getting you that information so you’ll have a dollar value of what we’re, what we’re missing out on because of their inability to do what we contracted with them to do. As a year-to-date total, as of today, we’ve done 405 EMS calls and 111 fire calls is what we call them, that’s basically any call that’s not an ambulance transporting patient or an ambulance sign-off patient. So, is there any other questions about billing, or?”

Mr. Pelletier – “I just had one, Cody. What was the reason they weren’t paying”

D.C. Fenderson – “So, with insurances, you need to submit bills within a certain time frame. Each insurance company has a different time frame. Generally, it’s three months. Maine Billing didn’t do that. Comstar, we just recently signed a contract with, they have now gone back and done from January 1st.”

Mr. Pelletier – “So we waited too long basically, they said they’re not gonna pay?”

D.C. Fenderson – “Correct. Maine Billing did not submit bills in a timely fashion.”

Mrs. Libby – “And how much did we pay Maine Billing for their service?”

Ms. Powers – “No. We don’t pay.”

D.C. Fenderson – “Five and a half percent.”

Ms. Powers – “If they collect the money.”

D.C. Fenderson – “We pay 5.5 percent of what’s collected to Maine Billing.”

Mrs. Libby – “Okay.”

Mr. Butler – “So if they get nothing, 5.5 percent of nothing, is nothing.”

Mr. Pelletier – “That’s pretty accurate. So, you’re saying that we didn’t bill them in time, did they, is there any?”

Ms. Powers – “Not us. Maine Billing Company.”

Mr. Pelletier – “Not us. So, can we go back on them?”

Ms. Powers – “That’s what we’re trying to gather the information for.”

Mr. Pelletier – “There must be a contract somewhere or agreement that someone has to”

D.C. Fenderson – “Once you have a total dollar value, I think it would be easier for you to take that to your, to the Town’s attorney to discuss that option. I know that other Towns are doing the same thing with Maine Billing.”

Mr. Pelletier – “[inaudible].”

D.C. Fenderson – “What we’re waiting on is \$190,595.15. Not all of that is not billable, it would most likely be January, February and part of March probably. I know. Again, they’re, they have submitted everything to all the insurance companies and we’ve only received one denial letter so far, and they’re they’re doing their full process. So, they’re gonna appeal the denial and just like they would if it was something, a run we did yesterday, they’re gonna do the whole process and fight what they can. They’re just being upfront like, like I told you guys that it’s some of them we’re just not gonna be able to bill because it’s outside that time window, and especially with MaineCare/Medicare, they’re again, once again they’re the Government so they say goes and they don’t have to pay, so. But with some of the other insurance companies that sometimes they’re able to negotiate a lower amount of what we billed, but again, they don’t know until they go through their whole process, which they will be doing and they will get us a spreadsheet of what the run is, how much we billed, what we did collect if we were able to collect anything and then what the difference is so I can bring that back to you guys. Any other questions? Thank you.”

Mr. Kilcollins – “Thank you.”

XI. Executive Session

A. 1 M.R.S.A. § 405(6)(A) Personnel Matters

Motion In: Mr. Butler motioned.

Second: Mrs. Libby seconded.

Vote: All Affirmed.

Executive Session In – 6:36 PM

Motion Out: Mr. Butler motioned.

Second: Mrs. Libby seconded.

Vote: All Affirmed.

Executive Session Out – 7:24 PM

XII. Adjournment

Motion: Mr. Butler motioned to adjourn.

Seconded: Mrs. Libby seconded.

Vote: All Affirmed.

Town Council Meeting Adjourned at 7:24 PM.

Submitted Respectfully,

Neadra E. Dubois, Council Secretary