

Fort Fairfield Town Council Monthly Meeting
Council Chambers
Wednesday, August 18, 2021
6:00 P.M.

I. Roll Call

Councilors – All Councilors are present with the exception of Scott Smith.
Staff: Ms. Powers, Billie Jo Sharpe, Ella Leighton, Tony Levesque, Darren Hanson.
Jennifer Gaenzle, Mitch Dufour,
Citizens: ten, including the media

II. Prayer

III. Pledge to the Flag

IV. Public Comment Period

V. Correspondence and Reports

A. Licenses and Permits

As of August 18, 2021, we have received a Catering Permit from Country Farms Market LLC for private outside event at 291 Russell Road, Fort Fairfield.

B. Financial Report

Checking account balance as of 7/31/2021 was \$617,680.07 and Machias Savings is \$5,000.

Excise collected in July was \$111,757.33 compared to \$133,571.43 last year.

As of 7/31/2021, uncollected Real Estate taxes for 2020 were \$150,841.09 which represents 176 accounts; compared to last year \$368,504.33 for 201 accounts.

On 8/09/2021, we sent out 165 thirty-day notices for 2020 taxes; compared to last year we sent out 194 thirty-day notices for 2019 taxes.

As of 8/16/2021, uncollected taxes for 2020 is 143 accounts for a total of \$131,941.32; compared to the same date last year, we had 152 accounts for a total uncollected of \$336,588.93.

During the months of July and August, we have received \$55,587.11 in reimbursements for Ambulance Services.

C. AWS Report – Mr. Rogeski

Minutes from the Board of Directors Meeting on July 23, 2021 were provided to Councilors in their packets.

VI. Old Business

A. ARPA Update

The Town of Fort Fairfield is due to receive \$346,927.01 in American Rescue Plan Act funds.

From MMA - Although MMA had expected the funds allocated to Maine communities under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) would be distributed today, the Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services (DAFS) has decided to apply for a second 30-day extension. As a result, disbursements to the state's 479 non-entitlement communities will be delayed until September.

DAFS is currently finalizing contract negotiations with a national organization, which will be tasked with deploying a website-based portal and assisting the state with implementing and monitoring other aspects of the rescue plan. It is expected that the state's portal will be up and collecting data from communities on or before September 3. The collected data will be used to ensure each municipality receives its federal revenue.

There is an ARPA Meeting on August 19, 2021 to discuss the ARPA Priorities and Partners Survey that was distributed to the County/Municipal ARPA Collaboration Group.

B. Resiliency Program

Jay Kamm, Senior Planner with Northern Maine Development Commission, through the Nature Conservancy was awarded one of three Community Resiliency Pilot Project grants. Fort Fairfield along with the communities of Caribou and Washburn will be working with NMDC to implement projects for the grant program.

We have a scheduled CRB workshop which will bring together community members to comprehensively identify and prioritize steps to reduce risk and improve resilience across Fort Fairfield. This workshop will also help clarify and advance comprehensive community resilience planning and hazard mitigation efforts.

The workshop's objectives are as follows:

- Strengthen understand between hazards and local planning efforts.
- Evaluate strengths and vulnerabilities of the community, infrastructure, and natural resources.
- Develop and prioritize resilient actions for the municipality, local organizations, businesses, neighborhoods, land trusts, and community organizations.

The meeting will take place on August 19th.

C. Town-Wide Broadband Project

With the continued efforts and collaboration with Mission Broadband the Town of Fort Fairfield sent out request for proposals to eleven (11) companies this week. The broadband network is expected to be capable of providing 1Gbps symmetrical access throughout the community. The network will provide access to single family residences and apartment buildings, business ranging from farms and home businesses to brick-and-mortar buildings downtown, with better stronger more reliable coverage throughout the Town with a full fiber optic network throughout the community. The design should provide options for 1Gbps symmetrical access speeds with a path to 10Gbps series in the future.

The RFPs are due September 17, 2021, at 3:45pm.

[The Aroostook Broadband Committee will have its first meeting August 18th at 2:00pm to further discuss how to fund and provide reliable highspeed broadband to as much of the County as possible and addressing the diversity of broadband needs.]

VII. New Business

A. Chief Matthew Cummings – Ms. Powers

Fort Fairfield welcomes its new Police Chief, Matthew Cummings. Chief Cummings will be responsible for continuing the community’s policing services, growing successful public safety outreach programs, and a vital part of the Town’s administrative team.

Chief Cummings has the law enforcement knowledge and experience in implementing innovative technology solutions and a strong aptitude in building lasting relationships that will advance our police department and position our community well into the future. He has a passion for community policing, transparency in law enforcement, and a strong service and dedication to this community. We are looking forward to his tenure with Fort Fairfield.

Councilors, please join me in congratulation our Police Chief Matthew Cummings.

Ms. Sharpe, Town Clerk then administered the Oath of Office to Chief Cummings.

Chief Cummings stated he appreciates the support and looks forward to rebuilding the police department and has “hit the ground running.”

Chairman Butler commented “We all have full confidence in you.”

B. Economic Development Board Report – Ron Jalbert

The Economic Development Board is excited to share our suggestions and support for the Industrial Park in Fort Fairfield. The things we find the most important to work on in the future for the Industrial Park is lighted signage that shows what businesses that are currently located in the Industrial Park area. Landscaping to help beautify the area and removal of old buildings that are falling down and in disrepair. Currently there is one building that the Town Manager is working on through the Brownfields Program that is in Phase 1.

Another subject our board has been discussing is the need for child care in the Town of Fort Fairfield. We have been in contact with Superintendent Tim Doak, Representative David McCrea and the Town Manager to see what we can do to work together and find a solution for this daycare situation.

C. Public Works Paving Plan 2021

The spring of 2021 left our roads with some areas broken up and although we have patched the affected areas given another spring breakup these spots may become unsafe for travel.

Discussion: We have been able to repair Riverside and Bryant Pond Road (with our staff at a fraction of the cost of hiring a contractor) out of our operating budget but will need to spend up to \$45000.00 out of reserves to repair the affected areas on Marshall, Russell and Morse Roads.

Recommendation: Town Council authorizes Public Works to spend up to \$45000.00 from Paving reserve account G1-3064-00.

Mr. Kilcollins made a motion to authorize Public Works to spend up to \$45000.00 from Paving reserve account G1-3064-00.

Mr. Babin seconded.

Discussion: Mr. Kilcollins added that the work that was done on McCrea Crossroad is amazing. "Hats off" to the Department. You can now safely drive 45 mph on that road.

Mr. Hanson commented that this project started three years ago and was mainly due to the large amount of DFAS traffic and added that all of the materials and labor were produced and provided by the Public Works Department. This project could have cost between \$80,00 and \$100,000 and it only cost \$40,000.

Vote: All affirmative (Mr. Smith absent)

D. Tax Collector Abatement Request

2020 real estate taxes for Account #807, ReEnergy, for land located at 78 Cheney Grove in the amount of \$3,576.23. This land was transferred to the Town of Fort Fairfield by ReEnergy and recorded at the Southern Aroostook Registry of Deeds in Book 6033 Page 55.

A copy of the bill is attached.

Recommendation: Town Council approve the abatement for 2020 real estate taxes for account #807 in the amount of \$3,576.23.

Mr. Kilcollins made a motion to approve the abatement for 2020 real estate taxes for account #807 in the amount of \$3,576.23.

Mr. Babin seconded.

Discussion – None

Vote: All Affirmative (Mr. Smith absent)

VIII. Minutes of the July 21, 2021 Regular Council Meeting

Mr. Kilcollins made a motion to approve the VIII. Minutes of the July 21, 2021 Regular Council Meeting.

Mr. Babin seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative (Mr. Smith absent)

IX. Warrants #3: \$375,120.59

Mr. Kilcollins made a motion to approve Warrant #3 for \$375,120.59

Mr. Babin seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmative (Mr. Smith absent)

X. Other

On June 17, 2021, Code Enforcement Officer, Tony Levesque, presented a Dangerous Building Order to the personal representatives and interested parties of 125 Fort Hill Street and 128 Fort Hill Street.

The Town Council met on June 24, 2021 at a Special Hearing for Dangerous Buildings regarding these two properties. Council voted the properties Dangerous Buildings and ordered them to remove them within 30 days of notice. That time period has expired.

Request For Proposals (RFP) for demolition of structures was dispersed to area contractors and the bid opening was held on August 18, 2021 at 12:00pm in the Council Chambers.

Four bids were received, the lowest responsive and responsible bid was from Cushman Enterprise, Inc at \$9,850.00 with project to be completed no later than October 20, 2021.

Recommendation: Town Council allows the Town Manager to sign the Notice of Award for Cushman Enterprise, Inc in the amount of \$9,850.00 to be utilized from the UDAG/RLF account # G1-3330-00.

Mr. Babin made a motion to allow the Town Manager to sign the Notice of Award for Cushman Enterprise, Inc in the amount of \$9,850.00 to be utilized from the UDAG/RLF account # G1-3330-00.

Mr. Kilcollins seconded.

Discussion:

Mr. Butler – Are we going to be going after the owners of the residences for reimbursement to the Town or is this something the Town has to soak up?

Ms. Powers – We are taking it out of the UDAG/RLF account and the Town has several options.

Mr. Levesque – When we (Town) abate a situation, we (Town) keep track of all the bills, including what Public Works puts into it for materials, equipment and labor. When we're all said and done the project that will go into a special tax that could go against the property. Come back for authorization to do that and if they don't pay that tax, it becomes a tax lien and could become Town property potentially. We could recover those fees in the minimum asking price. At this time, we are just going to keep track of the costs.

Mr. Kilcollins – It was brought to my attention that there may be some abutting owners that may be interested in purchasing the properties once they are cleaned up.

Mrs. Leighton – commented that she was aware of one individual that has made an arrangement with the owner of the smaller parcel to take over ownership.

Mr. Butler – So we are going to recoup some of the money?

Mr. Kilcollins – “we should receive it all.”

Vote: All affirmative (Mr. Smith absent)

Chief Cummings stated that he has been receiving a lot of complaints of ATV's operating on public ways and reiterated that ATVs must follow State laws and the Municipal Ordinance in Fort Fairfield.

I. Executive Session 1 M.R.S.A. §405(6)(E) Legal Counsel

Mr. Kilcollins made a motion to enter into Executive Session 1 M.R.S.A. §405(6)(E) Legal Counsel.

Mr. Babin seconded.

Vote: All affirmative (Mr. Smith absent)

Council entered into Executive Session at 6:23 pm.

Mr. Kilcollins made a motion to come out of Executive Session regarding 1 M.R.S.A. §405(6)(E) Legal Counsel.

Mrs. Libby seconded.

Vote: All affirmative (Mr. Smith absent)

Council came out of Executive Session at 7:12 pm.

II. Adjournment

Mrs. Libby made a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Kilcollins seconded.

Vote: All affirmative (Mr. Smith absent)

Council adjourned at 7:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Billie Jo Sharpe
Council Secretary