

Fort Fairfield Town Council Monthly Meeting Minutes
Council Chambers
Wednesday, December 21, 2022
6:00 PM

- I. Roll Call
6:00 PM
Staff: Dan Foster, Neadra Dubois, Darren Hanson, Chris Perkins, Fire Chief Jalbert,
Kevin Senal
Council: Melissa Libby, Mitchell Butler, Jim Ouellette, Bob Kilcollins, Kevin
Pelletier(via Skype)
Citizens: 56 citizens present.
Media: Fort Fairfield Journal

- II. Prayer
Darren Hanson provided the prayer.

- III. Pledge to the Flag
All attendees said their pledge to the flag.

- IV. Public Comment Period

Before comments start, Robert Kilcollins, Chairman, presented awards to the two Councilors (Melissa Libby and Mitch Butler), whose terms are up on December 31, 2022.

Emma Evergreen commented in support of the Rec Department.

Cambria Winters commented in support of the Rec Department.

Stephanie Schlesinger commented in support of the Rec Department.

Shelley Everitt commented in support of the Rec Department.

Ryan Cormier commented in support of the Rec Department.

Ryan Rochford commented in support of the Rec Department.

Nathan Everitt commented in support of the Rec Department.

Jessica Puig commented in support of the Rec Department.

Doug Schlesinger commented in support of the Rec Department.

Angela Cormier commented in support of the Rec Department.

Arlene Wright commented in support of the Rec Department.

Ashley Cole commented in support of the Rec Department.

Tammy Cyr commented in support of the Rec Department.

Mr. Foster addresses the comments by explaining his position on the issue. He wants everyone to know that the intent is not to shut down the Rec, or dramatically decrease the Rec Department or the services it provides. Mr. Foster explains that he has to find a way to cut \$400,000 out of the current budget as a whole. What they are doing is cutting the increases from all Departments. Every Department has to come up with some significant savings in their budgets.

Keiza Rochford commented on the spending in 2020 and doesn't think it's a fair reflection of the Department and what it's capable of.

Councilor Libby comments on the Rec Department of past and present, and what the Rec Department has become in the last few years is because the funds have been put into their budget. Councilor Libby isn't in favor of taking \$50,000 away from the Rec Department.

Council Chair Kilcollins comments on the budget cuts and says that the Council is going to have the last say.

Councilor Pelletier says the bottom line is that they are trying to get the taxes down. He says they are all in favor of the Rec Department and it's not as bad as what some are making it out to be.

Councilor Libby says that the youth in this community cannot afford to have less than they already do. She thinks there are other things that can be cut.

Council Chair Kilcollins says that there are no decisions being made right now.

Councilor Pelletier says that there are changes that have to be made to get the taxes down. And he doesn't want to see services go away.

Council Chair Kilcollins says that there are more ways to come up with a system that can work with enough cuts that will make the whole community not suffer with the services that are provided. He also states that he doesn't think that our youth will be suffering in any way because of the cuts. He also says that the budget cuts will have no reflection on the services provided for the kids.

Keiza Rochford asks to hear from Kevin Senal about the budget cuts and how it would directly impact the Rec programming.

Council Chair Kilcollins asks Kevin if he would like to reflect on that.

Kevin comments on the issue at hand stating that the requested budget cuts were from the wages line, meaning \$30,000 from additional support or part time wages. He also states that this cut will not have a direct impact by cutting of programs, but it will have a direct impact on the quality of the programming.

Angela Cormier asks what the percentage is that the different Departments are asked to cut their budgets by.

Mr. Foster answers by saying it will probably be close to half.

Gary Sirois comments on the Rec Department, saying that he applauds the amount of people that came to support the Rec Department. He then states that the budget was approved by the Council and that they approved an unsustainable budget. He tells the Council that they should have asked more questions when they were presented with the budget information before approving it.

Councilor Libby states that the people are not asking to not have any cuts be made, it's just they don't want to see it cut so much that programs suffer. The people don't want the Rec Department to be cut down from what it's been built up to become.

Nathan Everitt suggests that the Town do some fundraising or something to help out with the Town's money situation.

Councilor Libby suggests to Nathan that he go into the Town Office during the week to talk to the Town Manager about those ideas and maybe they can figure something out.

V. Correspondence and Reports

A. Licenses and Permits

No licenses or permits to report.

B. Financial Report

Mr. Foster reports on the Town's finances. Mr. Foster states that costs continue to come down. The majority of the Departments are under budget. Income has been pretty straight forward. Revenue Sharing is up a little bit. EMS is on track to being \$400,000 a year. Property Tax Collections have dropped drastically, but Accounts Payable is current. The School's bill is up to date and was paid on time. There is still money left in the line of credit.

C. AWS Report

Stev Rogeski gives the monthly AWS report. Mr. Rogeski states they are doing pretty well on their budget. Mr. Rogeski also talks about a smoldering fire at the landfill that was 25 feet deep and the phenomenal help that was received from the Fort Fairfield Fire/Rescue Department. He states that Mark (Director at AWS) and Fire Chief Jalbert are working together to get some better equipment out to the landfill so they can contain the fire before having to call the Fire Department. The cause of this fire is unknown at this point. Other fires that have happened this year were all caused by cell phone and laptop batteries. The landfill has a drop-off point for batteries that is at no additional cost to the patron. Fire Chief Jalbert is working on setting up a drop-off point at the Fire Station as well.

D. Fire & EMS Department Report

Fire Chief Jalbert gives his monthly report on the Fire & EMS Department. He states that the call volume for November was 46 EMS calls and 4 Fire calls. Four new volunteer firemen, which gives a total of seventeen volunteer firemen. He talks about some of the things they have done to reduce costs and help eliminate debt, including the selling of an Ambulance and one SUV. Fire Chief Jalbert is still working on selling the Ladder Truck. He also talks about the workshops he has attended and mentions that he was chosen for a scholarship for the EMT Basic course in January at NMCC.

Mr. Foster states that what the Fire Chief is doing is not so much reducing costs, but increasing income.

E. Christmas Light Parade & Tree Lighting Ceremony

Mr. Foster talks about the Light Parade and Tree Lighting being a success. He also states that Chief Cummings and Kevin Senal did an outstanding job planning and executing the event. Mr. Foster states that he was really impressed.

F. Police & Fire Dept Vehicles Sold

Chief Cummings and Fire Chief Jalbert sold their surplus SUVs. Two of them sold for \$8,500 and another one sold for \$5,200. That money will go into their reserve accounts.

G. Potato Blossom Festival Grant Award

Mr. Foster states that Cheryl Boulier has applied for a Grant and got \$10,000 for marketing for the Festival.

H. Recreation Department Walmart Grant Award

Mr. Foster discusses the Rec Department getting a Walmart Grant Award. The grant award was used for picnic tables that Kevin Senal is going to put by the Tennis Courts for the Ice-Skating rink.

I. Donations to the Recreation Department

An anonymous donation has been made to the Rec Department. Following the incident of the break-in and robbery of the Rec TV, The Rec Department has received and installed a monitoring system, valued around \$500, to hopefully stop people from breaking in and stealing stuff.

Chris Murchison also donated a \$100 Amazon Gift Card to the Rec Department for use in purchasing PLA filament for the 3D printer.

VI. New Business

A. Appoint Board Member to the Library Advisory Board

There is a position open on the Library Advisory Board. Elizabeth Reed has submitted an application to be on the Board. Mr. Foster highly recommends that Elizabeth Reed fills the vacant position on the Library Advisory Board.

Motion: Councilor Butler makes the motion.

Second: Councilors Libby and Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

B. Approve Sale of Ambulance to the Town of Van Buren

Mr. Foster wants to have it on record that the Council approves the sale of the Ambulance to the Town of Van Buren. The Ambulance sold for \$150,000, which will go towards paying off the loan.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette makes the motion to approve the sale of the Ambulance.

Second: Councilor Butler seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

- C. Approve Ordinance #22-10, Sale of Property to K-PEL, Inc.
The Ordinance was introduced at the last Council Meeting and the Public Hearing was held on for Ordinance 22-10. Mr. Foster asks that Ordinance 22-10 be approved by the Council.

Motion: Councilor Butler makes the motion.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: Councilor Pelletier reclused himself from the vote.

Vote: All Affirmative.

- D. Special Council Meeting for January 3, 2023

Mr. Foster states that the Organizational Meeting for January has to be scheduled. This does not need to have a vote. Everyone agrees that the meeting will take place January 3rd at 6 PM.

- E. Ambulance Replacement

Mr. Foster discusses the exchange of a surplus pickup in the Fire Department for a used 2008 Ambulance from Autotronics. This is an even trade. Mr. Foster asks that Council approve that.

Motion: Councilor Butler makes the motion.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

VII. Minutes

- A. Regular Town Council Meeting Minutes November 17, 2022

Motion: Councilor Butler makes the motion to approve the Minutes.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

VIII. Warrants: #11 - \$259,384.61; #12 - \$320,949.78

Motion: Councilor Libby makes the motion to approve the Warrants as stated.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

IX. Other

Nothing to discuss in Other.

X. Adjournment

Motion: Councilor Butler motioned to Adjourn.

Second: Councilor Libby seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

Council Adjourned at 7:04 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Neadra E. Dubois, Council Secretary