

Fort Fairfield Town Council Meeting Minutes
Council Chambers
Wednesday, May 17, 2017
6:00 P.M.

Councilors: Jason Barnes, Mitchell Butler, John Herold, Melissa Libby and Scott Smith
Staff: James Risner, Tony Levesque, Darren Hanson, Ella Leighton, Shawn Newell,
Tim Goff
Citizens: 3 including media

- I. Roll Call – Chair Jason Barnes asked that the record reflect all councilors were present.
- II. Prayer – Tony Levesque offered the prayer
- III. Pledge to the Flag - All in attendance pledged their allegiance to the Flag.
- III. Public Comment

Mr. Butler, recognized and thanked the Highway Department for doing a great job with the Town Wide Clean-up effort.

Mr. Barnes thanked Mr. Risner and Mr. Goff for hosting a very productive Economic Development Committee meeting today at the Library. Mr. Risner recognized Mr. Goff for all his hard work getting that meeting organized.

V. Correspondence and Reports

A. Licenses/Permits

As of May 17, 2017 we received one License and Permit application from the Knights of Columbus #1753.

B. Financial Report

Excise tax collections as of April 30 are \$486,199.06. This is 88.40% of the budgeted amount, which is 5.07% above the 83.33% budget projection.

We received State Revenue Sharing on April 21 in the amount of \$9,428.52. To date we have received \$163,153.30, which is 76.28% of our budget projection.

This puts us behind our budget projection of 83.33%. Historically, the reduction in receipt of State Revenue Sharing is normal in March and April and the full amount is received by June.

Real Estate and Personal Property tax collections were \$3,093,402.54 on April 30. This is 84.12% of our budget projection.

Overall, our expenses are lower than our budget projection; 80.01% compared to the budget projection of 83.33%.

Cash flow is comfortable with a balance of \$138,367.67 in checking and \$1,200,000 in savings after completion of Warrant #23 on May 17.

C. Tri-Community Landfill Report

Last meeting was April 21, 2017. We are actively looking for some non-profit

groups to help pick up some of the litter that has blown around during the winter months. This will pay \$10 an hour and would be a good fund raising effort for any group. Interested groups should contact the Landfill directly.

The Wet Land project is all but done. There will be a tree planting event on May 20. Mark is going to reach out to WAGM TV to come out and do a story on this so that people will know about the project.

Mr. Rogeski wished to recognize Chuck, head maintenance and mechanic, for 35 years of employment with the Landfill who retired on May 10, 2017.

A presentation on anaerobic digester was given by Jamie Whitehead recently as well.

D. LED Streetlights

Mr. Risner is working with 13 other municipalities in Aroostook County to look at the possibility of converting our community street light system to LED fixtures and from utility owned to municipally owned and maintained fixtures on utility owned poles. The other municipalities are the cities of Caribou and Presque Isle and the towns of Fort Kent, Frenchville, Grand Isle, Houlton, Island Falls, Limestone, Madawaska, Mapleton, Mars Hill, St. Agatha, and Washburn.

A Request for Qualification was released on February 24, with proposals to be submitted no later than 2:00 p.m. on March 27.

Interviews of three companies; NEI (Northern Electric Incorporated), Realterm Energy, and Tanko Lightning; were conducted on April 27 and 28 at the Presque Isle City Hall. Council Chair Barnes and Mr. Risner participated in all three interviews, and Councilor Smith participated in the NEI interview. Review of the company's references is being conducted.

The municipalities, at their discretion, reserve the right to negotiate directly with the firm selected for additional project work at a negotiated contract for services, reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals for any reason, and reserves the right to negotiate with any individual or firm and to select one or more of the proposals.

We should have an update at June's regular Town Council Meeting.

E. NASA @ My Library Grant

Out of 513 applicants across the USA, Fort Fairfield was selected to receive resources, training and support through the NASA@ My Library. Only 75 libraries were chosen from across the country, with Fort Fairfield being the only library in Maine to receive this grant.

Thanks to its selection as a participant in the NASA@My Library Program, the library will be able to open a new chapter of discovery for students, transporting children to the far reaches of the universe to learn more about space while gaining skills that could prepare them for their own future explorations in science, technology, engineering, and math.

The NASA@My Library Program will provide the library with a host of space-related educational materials for students focused on increasing proficiency in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) disciplines while generating more interest and understanding about the world around us, and beyond our

more interest and understanding about the world around us, and beyond our exosphere. Included in the program are two NASA STEM Facilitation Kits designed for use in hands-on STEM programming facilitated by library staff or outside groups, such as NASA subject matter experts. The library will also receive a tablet computer, pre-loaded with apps, educational games and visualizations relevant to the kit materials, \$500 to assist with programming, ongoing training for staff and financial assistance to allow a staff member to travel to Denver for a two-day NASA workshop.

The library has begun planning for special events to introduce children and community members to the NASA@My Library programming and is excited to share this opportunity with the Fort Fairfield residents.

F. Fiscal Year 2017/2018 Budget Public Hearings and Update

Public hearings of the Town's FY 17/18 budget were held on April 26 and May 10. There were no comments from the public at the April 26 and May 10 hearings. Copies of the presentations and minutes are attached.

The current projected deficit is \$299,931; approximately 2.03 mils. This deficit is driven by:

- A 9.57% increase in funding for the school. This is an increase of \$199,788 over the FY 16/17 budget, and requires a mil rate increase of approximately 1.35 mils.
- A Capital Reserve of \$100,143 for the Town. This requires a mil rate increase of approximately .68 mils.

G. Fiber to the Home Project Extension Grant Application

The Town of Fort Fairfield has been working in partnership with Pioneer Broadband to expand high-speed Internet access in rural, underserved sections of our community. The Town supported Pioneer Broadband's submission of a grant application to the Connect ME Authority to construct a fiber to the home project to serve residents and businesses along sections of Presque Isle Road, Houlton Road and Maple Grove Road. The Connect ME Authority awarded a grant to Pioneer Broadband of nearly \$200,000 in spring 2016. Construction of this project has been underway since fall 2016.

In April 2017, the Connect ME Authority announced a new round of grant funding. Given the results of the Town's Internet Feasibility Study, which recommended the Town work with Internet Service Providers to seek funds for phased expansion to serve unserved areas, Town Staff have been working with Pioneer Broadband to craft a proposal to expand the fiber to the home project and extend service to other unserved areas of Fort Fairfield. With only \$300,000 in funding available statewide, the proposed expansion project was scaled back to include only a 2.6 mile section of Houlton Road from Maple Grove Road to the Francis Malcolm Science Center in Easton. This project would serve 23 more homes and businesses that have limited Internet service. In addition, the grant proposal would extend service .5 miles down Conant Road from the intersection with Presque Isle Road nearest the Nordic Heritage Center. This spur would serve seven additional homes that are currently underserved.

H. Cable Television Franchise Renewal

The Town of Fort Fairfield's cable television franchise with TWC/Charter

Communications will expire on September 27, 2018. The Town received \$23,377 in franchise fees from TWC/Charter in Fiscal Year 2016/2017.

Town staff wants to leverage the knowledge of the Sewall Company and the bargaining power of multiple municipalities as we negotiate a new franchise with TWC/Charter.

Mr. Risner contacted Mr. Michael Edgecomb of the James W. Sewall Company in January of this year to discuss Sewall's assistance in the Town's franchise renewal. I arranged a February meeting with Mr. Edgecomb and several municipalities in order to get an understanding of the franchise renewal process and how Sewall could assist the municipalities in the renewal process. Mr. Edgecomb and Mr. Brian Lippold from Sewall made a presentation on cable franchise renewal at the April Aroostook Municipal Association meeting. As a result of the February and April meetings, several municipalities have expressed an interest in contracting with Sewall to assist with cable franchise renewals.

The proposed budget has a sliding scale that reduces the cost per municipality from \$5,000 when three municipalities join, to \$3,500 when nine municipalities join.

Mr. Risner has spoken with several Town Managers who plan to take Sewall's proposal to their Councils or Boards. He intends to contract with Sewall for the cable franchise renewal.

No Town Council action is required. The Town's Finance Policy allows the Town Manager to join other units of government in a cooperative purchasing plan when it is in the best interest of the Town.

V. Old Business - None

VI. New Business

A. Approve Appointment of Housing Authority Board Member

The Housing Authority Board meets in the morning of May 17, and has provided letter of recommendation to the Town Council for an individual to serve the remainder of a Board Member's term that expires on June 30, 2020.

Recommendation: That Town Council appoints Randolph Bouchard to the Fort Fairfield Housing Authority, for the term ending June 30, 2020.

Motion: Mr. Herold moved to approve the appointment of Randolph Bouchard to the Fort Fairfield Housing Authority.

Second: Mr. Butler

Vote – All affirmative

VII. Referendum Election

A Special Referendum Election has been schedule for Tuesday, June 13, 2017. As in the past we need to have the Council vote on:

- A) Opening (8:00AM) and closing (8:00PM) of the polls, which is set by the State as stated in Title 21-A §626.
- B) Voting and counting location per Title 21-A §622-A.
- C) The election warden, Billie Jo Sharpe.
- D) The election clerks.
- E) The warrant for payment for the election clerks.

Recommendation: That Town Council approves A – E as presented.

Motion: Mr. Butler moved to approve A-E as presented.

Second: Mr. Herold

Vote: All Affirmative

VIII. Minutes of the April 19, 2017 Regular Council Meeting

Motion: Mr. Butler moved to accept the minutes of April 19, 2017.

Second: Mr. Smith

IX. Warrants: #21 - \$291,766.37, #22 - \$94,591.40 and #23 - \$83,471.38

Motion: Mr. Butler moved to accept warrants #21, #22 and #23 as presented.

Second: Mr. Herold

Vote – All

affirmative

X Other

Council requested Mr. Risner contact Superintendent Tim Doak to arrange a meeting in order to gather more information regarding the increase in MSAD#20's budget. Mr. Risner said he would contact Mr. Doak to arrange a meeting and will contact the Councilors as to what date and time.

XI Manager's Report – Mr. Risner submitted this to the Council for information purposes only.

XII. Adjournment

Mr. Butler moved to adjourn at 6:21PM

Respectfully submitted,

Council Secretary
Billie Jo Sharpe