

Fort Fairfield Town Council Monthly Meeting Minutes  
Council Chambers  
Wednesday, August 16, 2023  
6:00 PM

I. Roll Call

Council: Keith Thibeau II, Robert Kilcollins, James Ouellette, Patricia Canavan, Kevin Pelletier

Staff: Dan Foster, Neadra Dubois, Darren Hanson, Tony Levesque, Barbara Alexander, Robin Gagnon

Citizens: Seven (7) citizens present.

Media: Fort Fairfield Journal

II. Prayer

Mr. Levesque provided the prayer.

III. Pledge to the Flag

All attendees pledged their allegiance to the flag.

IV. Public Comment Period

No public comments.

V. Correspondence and Reports

A. Licenses and Permits

There was one Catering Permit from Northern Maine Brewing Company, LLC for a wedding reception. Mr. Foster asks Council to approve the Catering Permit.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to approve the permit.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

B. Financial Report

Mr. Foster reports on the Town's finances and states that the finances are great. Expenses are fine. Revenue is up in excise tax. Cash flow is in great shape, part of the reason is that the Town received part of the Homestead Exemption in July and it wasn't expected until August. The Town did not have to borrow any money

against their line of credit through the bank. Mr. Foster anticipated going into August having to borrow \$150,000.00 and having about \$30,000.00 in cash going into August. Turns out, the Town had \$451,000.00 in cash. That is due to expenses being in line and income being ahead with Revenue Sharing, excise and the Homestead Exemption money. Right now, the Town has almost \$600,000.00 in the bank and after paying the Warrants, Mr. Foster is anticipating that the Town will, by the end of August, have close to \$500,000.00 in the bank.

#### C. Aroostook Waste Solutions

Mr. Foster reports on AWS. Tri Community Landfill became Aroostook Waste Solutions about 3 years ago to incorporate the Presque Isle Landfill. The purpose for this, was to use one site at a time. Presque Isle's landfill has just recently closed and now everything will be trucked to Fort Fairfield's Tri Community landfill. The transition has finally been made, and it has been a fairly smooth transition. AWS is building two new cells and are expected to be completed in September. Mr. Rogeski comments, saying that the increase of traffic flow in Fort Fairfield is about twelve percent due to the Presque Isle Landfill closing down. Council Chair Thibeau asks what the life expectancy of the two new cells is. Mr. Rogeski states that the life expectancy for both cells combined is about 26 years. Mr. Rogeski goes on to talk about the licensable acreage in Presque Isle compared to Fort Fairfield and the reason for the doing the merge with Presque Isle. Presque Isle has about 600 licensable acres and they have only used about 80,000; and Fort Fairfield has about 200,000 licensable acres and has used well into 21,000 acres. Mr. Foster states that Tri Community Landfill and AWS has been a very good deal for Fort Fairfield with receiving equity payments from it and a reduced cost per ton for the Town's waste.

#### D. Library Report

Ms. Alexander reports on how the Library is doing. Patronage numbers are up, partly due to all the activities they have been holding and the Potato Blossom Festival. It was the best month they have ever had. In July, 493 patrons had gone to the Library, opposed to 240 last July. There were 14 new patrons, opposed to 8 last year. The Library has eight groups using the Community Room on a regular basis, compared to 2 last year. Lynn has been keeping up with the Facebook page and keeping the community informed about what is going on at the Library. Ms. Alexander talks about and shares photos on the remodeling of the Shaw Room (the Community Room). The Library has secured three grants out of the four they applied for. One of the grants is from the American Library Association in the amount of \$10,000.00 and is to be used for a cozy corner, fixing of the ADA door and, transportation for the elderly to get to the Library. Another grant was the Stephen and Tabitha King grant in the amount of \$20,000.00 to fix the roof. The last grant was \$4,000.00 through the Mraz Family grant, which enables them to train a young lady to do archive work. Programs and events are being well attended. Ms. Alexander also mentions that they would like to update their non-

fiction section as it hasn't been updated in 40 years. There is money in their Gulliver Trust account and their plan is to use 5 to 6 thousand dollars over the next 10 months to do this. The Library's long term goal is to continue to work closely with the Town Manager with the possibility of opening the Library with more hours, extending services and continue having the Library continue being the hub for the community that they think it can be.

Mr. Foster speaks on behalf of how well the staff at the Library has done with the budget they have. It went from \$138,000.00 to \$53,000.00. He also praises the Library staff for all the good work they have done.

E. Maine Street Revitalization Report

Councilor Canavan reported on the Friday in Fort event that took place this month. The event was held on Saturday, August 12, 2023 due to the weather on Friday the 11<sup>th</sup>. The event had a fantastic turnout, despite not having the food trucks, and there was a Corn Hole Tournament that took place. Councilor Canavan states that there was a lot of support from staff and Councilors to make this event happen. The next Friday in Fort is to take place on September 8, 2023 and the theme will be a Harvest Hoedown. Councilor Canavan also states that it was the busiest she has seen Main Street in a long time for a weekend in Fort Fairfield in the summer.

F. Town Manager Transition

Mr. Foster reports on the transition of the new Town Manager and Mr. Foster's phasing out. Tim Goff, new Town Manager, will start on October 2<sup>nd</sup> and Mr. Foster will be available until October 19<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Foster states that Mr. Goff will be meeting with the Budget Advisory Committee on August 30<sup>th</sup> and Department Heads on September 5<sup>th</sup> to discuss the transition. Mr. Foster states that the Staff and Department Heads know their jobs and do them well and feels this transition will be smooth.

G. Adult Use & Medical Marijuana Business Ordinance

Mr. Foster reports on the Marijuana Business Ordinance. It's not a question of whether or not it's done, it's a question of how it's done. It's not simplistic and it needs to be organized. Mr. Levesque has gotten some information and put together an application that will have to be filled out and standards that will have to be met. It's more complicated than just opening a store. Mr. Foster doesn't want the Town to do it and not be ready. He wants it done in a professional and appropriate way. Mr. Foster states that he is not comfortable in doing this right now and would like to bring Mr. Goff up to speed with this issue before moving forward.

Councilor Canavan speaks on a citizen that approached her with wanting to open one of these stores, but there are concerns about what the regulations and

requirements are going to be. Councilor Canavan stated that the citizen asked some really good questions as far as locations, distances and signage. Mr. Foster states that the Draft Ordinance has not been introduced yet and it is still being looked at.

#### H. School Signs for Brunswick Avenue

Mr. Foster reports on the enhanced school signs for Brunswick Avenue Chief Cummings and Sgt. Cormier applied for through MDOT. Mr. Foster states that if the signs haven't been ordered yet, they will get ordered and get put up because school is starting very soon.

### VI. Old Business

#### A. Community Empowerment Project Recommendations

Mr. Foster and Council discuss the recommendations from the Community Empowerment Project that were presented at the July Council Meeting. Councilor Kilcollins would like the Town to get legal and/or MMA advice on these recommended items.

Council Chair Thibeau states that these recommendations are pretty straight forward and doesn't think it would be much to adopt the recommendations moving forward.

Councilor Pelletier states that they are good recommendations and doesn't think there would be any reason not to adopt them.

Councilor Ouellette has a problem with item #6 on the recommendations list of amending the Town Charter for voting on the Town budget and borrowing over \$250,000.00. He states that it could open up a can of worms and lead to a sticky situation.

Mr. Foster explains the process of amending the Charter for #6, which would include introducing an Ordinance, having a Public Hearing and approving the Ordinance. Approving the recommendation would allow an Ordinance to be introduced. He also explains how approving the recommendations would be good for the Town, that it will allow the Town to be able to move forward in a functional manner.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motions to approve.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

#### B. Public Works Plow Truck

Mr. Hanson presents a plow truck purchase that Public Works would like to make in the amount of \$44,900.00. This plow truck will be the third F550 truck purchased by Public Works and is well liked by staff and Mr. Hanson. The F550 can be driven by anyone with a Class C license, instead of CDL certification,

unlike the aging fleet of wheelers that they currently have. These F550 trucks will not take the place of the wheelers, but can help tremendously by taking the pressure off during the winter season and they are much cheaper to run. The cost of this truck is within the Public Works Reserves budget. Mr. Foster asks that Council approve this purchase for Public Works.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motions to approve the purchase.

Second: Councilor Kilcollins seconded.

Discussion: Councilor Ouellette asks Mr. Hanson if the truck has a programmer. Mr. Hanson answers, saying no, this one does not, it's stock.

Vote: All affirmative.

C. Approve ORD 23-10

Mr. Foster speaks about ORD 23-10, which precludes any commercial structure on Main Street to have apartments put in on the ground floor, facing the street. A Public Hearing was held, Councilor Canavan and Charlie Cyr were present. Mr. Cyr spoke in favor of this Ordinance and there is major concern that Main Street will be nothing but apartments. There has not been anything received opposing this Ordinance. Mr. Foster recommends that the Ordinance be approved.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motions to approve ORD 23-10.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconds.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmative.

VII. New Business

A. Paving

Mr. Hanson speaks about a paving job that Public Works has coming up. They will be paving 2 continuous miles of road on Forest Avenue, beginning at the Page Road and ending at the Easton Town line. The project will start in mid-September.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motions to approve the project.

Second: Councilor Kilcollins seconds.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmative.

B. Appointment for Utilities District's Board of Trustees

Mr. Foster reports on the Utilities District having a vacancy on their Board of Trustees. The Utilities District has sent a request for Council to appoint Mark Giberson to finish out Todd Maynard's term.

Motion: Councilor Pelletier motioned to appoint Mark Giberson.

Second: Councilor Kilcollins seconded.  
Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmative.

C. Fort Fairfield Solar Project

Mr. Goff speaks about the school looking at a solar project behind the softball field, adjacent to the Elementary School. They gone through the process and secured the transmission rights for that project. Ultimately, the School Board chose not to move forward with this project at the time, but the application and the agreement with the power company expires soon. Substantial cost savings could be utilized by the Town the school or both. Mr. Goff's hope is to extend the agreement and explore this opportunity. The potential savings could be up to \$67,000.00 a year. Councilor Ouellette suggests that the spot left where ReEnergy was could be a solar farm because it has all the infrastructure is there to tie in. Mr. Goff states that he has reached out to the school's Superintendent to make sure that if the Town takes this project on, it will not step on the school's toes for doing it. Mr. Goff states that he doesn't want to see this project die before the Town has the opportunity to explore it. There is value to this proposal, even if the Town doesn't build it and somebody else does. The Town's ability to get into this will expire if the application or agreement doesn't get extended.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motions to accept the proposal.

Second: Councilor Kilcollins seconded.

Discussion: Councilor Canavan asks about the filling out of the application.

Mr. Goff states that Mr. Maynard has agreed to help the Town out with that. The numbers will have to be reworked and the potential cost of the project may have gone down \$130,000.00 as well.

Councilor Pelletier asks about tying the solar power into the power company.

Mr. Rogeski answers that question and states that all the work is done and the tying in cost is already figured into the project.

Mr. Goff states that it's a whole package, the Town just needs to buy some time to dig a little deeper. There are a lot of benefits that the Town could be looking at, like grants to get it built, grants for labor to get it built and educational opportunities as well.

Councilor Pelletier states that with electricity costs going up, it would be beneficial for in the community for the Town to be able to lower that cost.

Vote: All affirmative.

VIII. Minutes of the July 19<sup>th</sup> Regular Council Meeting & ORD 23-10 Public Hearing on August 14, 2023

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to approve the minutes.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmative.

- IX. Warrants: #2 - \$340,915.34; #3 - \$509,969.44  
Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to approve the warrants.  
Second: Councilor Kilcollins seconded.  
Discussion: None.  
Vote: All affirmative.
- X. Other  
Noting to report.
- XI. Executive Session – 1 MRSA §405(6)(A) – Personnel Matter  
– 1 MRSA §405(6)(C) – Economic Development  
Motion IN: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to go into Executive Session for Personnel Matter and Economic Development.  
Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.  
Discussion: None.  
Vote: All affirmative.  
TIME IN: 7:04 PM.  
Motion OUT: Councilor Ouellette motioned to get out of Executive Session.  
Second: Councilor Kilcollins seconded.  
Discussion: None.  
Vote: All affirmative.  
TIME OUT: 8:08 PM  
Action taken-  
Motion: Councilor Kilcollins moves to accept the revised contract for the new Town Manager.  
Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.  
Discussion: Councilor Canavan commented that she will bring in her revised copy to Mr. Foster so the changes can be made before it is signed.  
Vote: All affirmative.
- XII. Adjournment  
Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to adjourn.  
Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.  
Discussion: None.  
Vote: All affirmed.
- Council Meeting ended at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Neadra E. Dubois, Council Secretary