

Fort Fairfield Town Council Monthly Meeting Minutes
Council Chambers
Wednesday, April 17, 2024
6:00 PM

I. Roll Call

Council: Keith Thibeau II, Shane McGillan, James Ouellette, Patricia Canavan, Kevin Pelletier - Absent

Staff: Town Manager Tim Goff, Tony Levesque, Fire Chief Michael Jalbert, John Cummings, Police Chief Matthew Cummings

Budget Advisory Committee: Stev Rogeski, Dan Foster

Citizens: 4 (four)

II. Prayer

Mr. Levesque provided the prayer.

III. Pledge to the Flag

All in attendance pledged their allegiance to the flag.

IV. Public Comment Period

Ruth Abigail Miller (Abigail) speaks on her experience with mental illness and PTSD. Her husband was in the military and experienced PTSD, which ultimately resulted in him committing suicide. She then goes on to talk about how she had to call the police. She goes on to talk about how the character and training the Officer, from the Fort Fairfield Police Department, kept her safe that night during a panic attack. She was having a panic attack because a family member was missing. The Officer ensured that her family had a positive resolution to a scary situation. She commends Chief Cummings and the entire Fort Fairfield Police Department for being community servants and high caliber human beings with honor and integrity that hold themselves to a standard higher than the law.

V. Correspondence and Reports

A. Licenses and Permits

Nothing to report.

B. Financial Report

Town Manager Goff reports on the Town's March finances. The Town starts April with an uncollected balance of nearly \$24,000 and that means that 99.48% of all property taxes have been collected. What concerns the Town Manager is that the Town has a larger number than normal of taxpayers of properties that have lien waivers placed on them. Because of the process for the Town to sell off tax acquired properties, the process needs to be looked at long and hard moving forward. A major incentive for some property owners to pay taxes has been removed and it could create a situation where other folks notice that people are not paying their fair share so they won't either. Cash on hand in March was approximately \$1.2 million, split between checking, \$1000,000; IC, \$850,000 and a short-term CD, \$300,000. Expenses are on track. Town Manager Goff speaks on the MEMIC meeting he had with the worker's comp administrator and how he has a better understanding of why the cost is the way it is. The Town is in very good shape heading into the final quarter of the Fiscal Year.

C. Aroostook Waste Solutions Report

Stev Rogeski gives a report on the last AWS meeting. The last meeting was March 29th and their first order of business was to approve their 2023 Audit with no negative finds. Revenue was 9% behind the estimated revenues coming in. Expenses were down by 6%. They are in pretty good shape for this time of year. Mr. Rogeski goes on to talk about some Legislative issues that are coming up. The State of Maine is on the cutting edge of somehow making it so the manufacturers of packaged products have to pay for some of the recycling. Mr. Rogeski also talks about what Solid Waste Director, Mark Draper is doing for AWS.

D. Update on Pool Pumps

Town Manager Goff reports on the Pool Pumps and states that both pumps were able to be salvaged. He does not have the final cost estimate yet on the repairs, but it will be substantially less than the \$10,000 replacement cost. The pool will be opened as scheduled this summer.

E. Friends of Monson Pond Presentation

Mr. Towle and Mr. Foster give a presentation on Friends of Monson Pond. The presentation included a little bit about what Friends of Monson Pond is all about and about a project they have coming up. In May of last year, a Watershed Survey done at Monson Pond, and it reports that all of the plant life in the Pond belong there and there are no invasive species. Mr. Foster talks about grants that they received for testings of the Pond. Another grant that they are applying for is a bit more extensive as they are a 501c3 and the group is not allowed to be the grantee, they need to be a quasa municipal entity – ergo, the Town of Fort Fairfield. Mr.

Foster and the Friends of Monson Pond are asking the Town of Fort Fairfield to allow Mr. Levesque to do the administrative stuff for this grant and the involvement of the Town Manager, who is also part of the board of this group. Part of what the Friends of Monson Pond is asking for, is that the Town of Fort Fairfield be the grantee of this grant.

F. Spring Clean Up

Town Manager Goff reports on the Spring Clean Up event is going to be happening again this year, May 13 through 16. The event will be scaled down, as it has been the last couple of years. Residents will need to bring their items to the Sand Shed on Cheney Grove. The Public Works crews will be there to accept yard debris, unpainted wood and metal. Hours will be 6:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Any debris or trash left outside of those hours will be considered littering.

G. FY 24/25 Budget

Town Manager Goff states that he published and distributed the first draft of the budget on March 22nd and he has received a limited amount of feedback from residents, which is not exactly what he expected given the contentious budget processes the Town has been through the past years. He is thankful because it does seem that folks are understanding the financial situation the Town is in and is looking forward to working through this process. There have been two budget meetings thus far – one with Department Heads on April 4th and one on with the Budget Advisory Committee on April 10th. The Budget Advisory Committee is tentatively holding a meeting again on May 8th. Public Hearings have been scheduled for May 1st and at the Regular Town Council Meeting on May 15th. The hope is that the budget will be voted on at the Regular Town Council Meeting on June 12th. Town Manager Goff speaks on the Town paying off TAN debt and the school's budget having an increase and the County's tax bill increase. Town Manager Goff states that the budget put forward represents a stabilized approach to managing and funding an operating government. He believes that this budget is an opportunity for the Town to hit reset and start to move the community forward in a better way.

H. June Meeting Date Change Reminder

Town Manager Goff reminds everyone that the June Town Council Meeting date has changed to June 12th.

VI. Old Business

A. Spirit of America Award

Chairman Thibeau speaks on this item, that was tabled at the last meeting. He states that he and the other Councilors talked and voted on Mike Greenlaw to be the recipient of the 2024 Town of Fort Fairfield Spirit of America Tribute Award.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motions to put forward Mike Greenlaw as the recipient of the Spirit of America Award.

Second: Councilor McGillan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present Affirmative.

VII. New Business

A. EPA Planning Grant

Town Manager Goff requests that Council authorize the Town of Fort Fairfield accept an EPA Planning Grant for Monson Pond. The Town would be the pass through on this and Friends of Monson Pond would be responsible for any matching funds.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present Affirmative.

B. EMS Stabilization Grant

Town Manager Goff asks Council to approve Fire Chief Jalbert to sign the contract with Maine EMS awarding \$98,011.67 to the Town of Fort Fairfield Fire/EMS Department. This grant would provide funding to help maintain and retain medical service providers, EMT's and paramedics, bringing their salaries closer in line with peers throughout the region and also reducing the overall operating cost of this department.

Councilor Ouellette asks if this cost is reflected in the budget.

Town Manager Goff states that, yes, it is and it dropped the overall operating line by over \$25,000.

Motion: Councilor McGillan motioned to follow the recommendation.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present Affirmative.

C. Municipal Clerks Proclamation

Proclamation 24-01 proclaims the week of May 5 through May 11, 2024 as the 55th Annual Professional Municipal Clerks Week throughout the Town of Fort Fairfield. Town Manager Goff reads the proclamation and asks Council to sign the proclamation.

Motion: Councilor McGillan motioned that Council sign the proclamation.
Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.
Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present Affirmative.

D. CDBG Proclamation

Proclamation 24-02 proclaims the week of April 1 through April 5, 2024 as Community Development Week throughout the Town of Fort Fairfield and gives special thanks and recognition to all the participants whose hard work and devotion to the neighborhoods and their low- and moderate-income residents to help ensure the quality and effectiveness of the Community Development Block Grant Program. Town Manager Goff recommends that Council sign Proclamation 24-02 and the Resolution 24-03, authorizing the Town Manager to submit an application to enable the Town's participation in the 2024 CDBG Public Infrastructure program.

Motion: Councilor Ouelette motioned.

Second: Councilor McGillan seconded.

Discussion: Councilor Canavan asked if the motion also includes the proclamation. Town Manager Goff states that it does.

Vote: All Councilors present Affirmative.

E. State Primary Election Authorization 6/11/24

The State Primary Election is scheduled for June 11, 2024. Election Clerks will be compensated at \$14.15 per hour per Maine State Minimum Wage Law. As in the past, Council needs to vote on the following – A. Opening and closing of the polls; B. Voting location, 18 Community Center Community Gym; C. Election Warden, Neadra E. Dubois; D. Approval of Election Clerks of the Warden's choosing. The recommendation is that Council approve A-D as presented.

Motion: Councilor Canavan motioned to approve A-D as presented.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present Affirmative.

F. MDOT Permit for Construction

There are a lot of DOT projects set to commence in Fort Fairfield this year. This specific request is for overweight and over limit vehicles to be on Route 1A and it's side streets. The Town Manager and the Public Works Director have reviewed the request and they see no need for any special bonding, as these aren't roads that trucks will be transported over. Likely, they will only be at the intersections,

working on the actual project. Town Manager Goff asks Council to approve and sign the agreement so it can be returned to MDOT.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to approve and sign the agreement.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present Affirmative.

VIII. Minutes of the March 20th, 2024 Council Meeting

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to approve the minutes.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present Affirmative.

IX. Warrants: #17 – \$116,720.76 #18 – \$406,117.20

Motion: Councilor Canavan motioned to approve the Warrants.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present Affirmative.

X. Other

Councilor Canavan gives an update on the Revitalization Committee. At their last meeting, they discussed doing a Community Clean-Up Project using volunteers and making it a family event. The day for this event will be May 18th. The Committee will be asking for some support from some of the Town departments and what they will ask for will not cost any money. The first Farmer's Market will be on May 11th from 8am-2pm. It will be held downtown, in the space between Katahdin Bank and Acadia. The Committee is looking for more vendors and anyone that wants to be involved.

XI. Public Comment Period

No public comments.

XII. Executive Session – 1 MRSA §405(6)(A) – Personnel Matter

Motion IN: Councilor Ouellette motioned to go into Executive Session.

Second: Councilor McGillan seconded.

Vote: All Councilors present Affirmative.

TIME IN: 7:05 PM

Motion OUT: Councilor Oullette motioned to come out of Executive Session.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Vote: All Councilors present Affirmative.

TIME OUT: 7:50 PM

XIII. Adjournment

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to adjourn.

Second: Councilor McGillan seconded.

Vote: All Councilors present Affirmative.

Respectfully submitted,

Neadra E. Dubois, Council Secretary