

Fort Fairfield Town Council Monthly Meeting Minutes
Council Chambers
Wednesday, December 20, 2023
6:00 PM

I. Roll Call

Council: James R. Ouellette, Patricia A. Canavan, Keith E. Thibeau II, (Kevin C. Pelletier & Robert E. Kilcollins – excused absence)

Staff: Timothy R. Goff, Neadra E. Dubois, Tony Levesque, Darren Hanson, Fire Chief Mike Jalbert

Citizens: Seven (7)

Media: Star Herald

II. Prayer

Mr. Levesque provided prayer for the Council Meeting.

III. Pledge to the Flag

All attendees pledged their allegiance to the flag.

IV. Public Comment Period

Councilor Ouellette commented on how beautiful Fort Fairfield looks this year with all the Christmas decorations on Main Street. He also states that the Town Council wants to give special thanks Quality of Place Council and Town merchants for all their efforts. Councilor Ouellette also comments on the Light Parade. He thought it was outstanding. He thanks all the Town staff, especially Fire Chief Jalbert and Police Chief Cummings and all of their staff involved in planning the parade and festivities, for putting on such an event to highlight the beauty of Fort Fairfield.

V. Correspondence and Reports

A. Licenses and Permits

Town Manager Goff presents a Liquor License for the Knights of Columbus.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to accept the license.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present – affirmative.

B. Financial Report

Town Manager Goff gives the financial report. He states that November presented a few challenges with the circulator pump cost and cash flow was a little tighter this year, compared to last year, more than he had hoped. The difference between last year and this year is that there was a call made to citizens to make their tax payments a little bit earlier to help the Town through some of the cash flow pinches. The Town dipped into the TAN a little less than expected for cash flow. Under the previous Town Manager's predictions, the Town would have been \$700,000 into the TAN, but currently the Town is at \$625,000. Town Manager Goff states that \$625,000 will probably be where the cap's going to be. As for revenue, the Town is a little bit higher than budgeted. There is a little bit of a lag in the EMS services. Expenses are tracking exceedingly close to budget. The items that are running a little higher than anticipated are insurances, utilities and wages. Election expenses is one line item that will need some attention with the Presidential Election coming up and voter turn out going up. Town Manager Goff states that overall things are going pretty well.

C. Aroostook Waste Solutions

Stev Rogeski reports on AWS. The last AWS meeting was November 17th. In reviewing their October income statements, income was up about 28 percent, which is about right, as they try to break even with their budget. The cells five and six project has been completed except for a few pieces for the pump systems, which they won't need until they start utilizing those cells sometime in April. AWS also renewed their contract with Caribou Utilities District and there is a slight increase, which is into the lease agreement with them. PFAS is going to become a problem with landfills altogether and Stev reminds the Council that it is something to think about with the drainage from the landfill. AWS has passed their budget and included an increase to their Capital Improvement Reserve budget. It will gradually increase over the next couple of budgets from \$100,000 to \$150,000 a year. There is no meeting in December.

D. Fire/EMS Chief's Report

Fire Chief Jalbert gives a report on the Fire/EMS Department. Chief Jalbert states that the call volume for November is a little above average for both Fire and EMS. There were 38 calls for EMS in November and 15 for Fire. The Volunteer Fire Department does a lot of fire prevention and they meet every Tuesday night for trainings. So far, in December, the November numbers have been matched and there's still a few days left in December. For the year, there have been 603 EMS calls and 115 Fire calls. The Department has been working with their Smoke Detector Drive and so far, they have installed and put out in the community 40 smoke detectors. Chief Jalbert states that there are still a lot of people in Fort Fairfield that do not have working smoke detectors and he urges everyone in the

room and viewers/listeners to help get word out to call the Fire Department for smoke detector help and they will take care of it. Chief Jalbert is also working on securing some of the EMS Stabilization Funding. There is \$31 million to help stabilize EMS Departments in the state. There are more and more jobs available in the EMS field and less and less people going into that field of work because of burnout, the cost of education, and other dynamics. It's been recognized statewide in Maine. The local CBP station has contacted Chief Jalbert about giving some of their agents, who are nationally registered EMTs, a chance to have real-life training, and asked if they could partner to serve the community. This agreement would allow the agents to get real-life experience, adds a third member to the "rig", the Town would not have to pay for their hours, it helps strengthen the ties between the Town and the federal agency, increases their capabilities to help out when needed.

E. January 2, 2024 Special Council Meeting

Town Manager Goff asks the Chair if January 2nd works for Council to hold the Special Council Meeting for swearing in the new Council Member and electing Council Chair. Chair Thibeau asks the other Councilors if that works for them and they all agree that it does. Town Manager Goff mentions to Council that he will have a small agenda for that meeting and gives them a heads up that he would like to change the Regular Council Meeting date for the month of January to the 4th Wednesday instead of the 3rd. He states that this change would only be for the January meeting because of scheduling conflicts.

F. Border Patrol MOU

This item was moved to New Business item D.

VI. Old Business

A. Council Vote - Ordinance #23-17 to Prohibit Retail Marijuana Establishments

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to accept Ordinance #23-17.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: Affirmative.

Yay votes: Councilor Ouellette &
Chair Thibeau

Nay votes: Councilor Canavan

VII. New Business

A. Accept Bids & Approve Sale of Excess Property – Public Works Vehicles

Town Manager Goff states that Council had approved the sale and bid of excess Public Works equipment. It was advertised and some folks took a look at the equipment, but there was only one bid each on two pieces of equipment that were potentially going to be scrapped. There were no bids on the piece of equipment that a reserve was set on of about \$3,000. Public Works is seeking the Council's approval to accept those two bids and also to approve the sale of that excess property by negotiation, allowing the Public Works Director to do basically what the Police Chief has done with some of his Cruisers to find a buyer at the highest possible price. The Council is asked for approval to accept the bids and approval of the sale of excess property for Public Works equipment.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to accept the bids and approve the sale of excess property for Public Works vehicles.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present – affirmative.

B. Versant Power Easement Request

Town Manager Goff discusses the casualty of power outages that occurred on Monday. The Versant Power Easement Request is actually a power right of way, not an easement. It doesn't need Council approval, but Town Manager Goff wanted to bring it to Council because historically when than one poll placement was done, it was brought to Council. This will be straightforward project, citing five polls in the area of Route 1A and Conant Road for Versant. Town Manager Goff and the Public Works Director find no reason not to grant them access to the public right of way in that area, after reviewing the schematics and locations Versant provided.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to approve the right of way.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present – affirmative.

C. Huber Grant Funds CD

At the last Council Meeting, Council voted to approve the acceptance of a \$50,000 grant from Huber Engineered Woods under the Your Community Grant, which helps kickstart the renovations of the tennis and basketball courts next to the pool. By putting these funds into a CD, it would generate about \$1,200 interest on the \$50,000. Town Manager Goff suggests that the Town hold these funds separately and invest it into a short-term CD until July and asks Council for permission to do so.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to authorize the Town Manager to put the funds in a CD.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present – affirmative.

D. Border Patrol MOU

Town Manager Goff asks Council for authorization to sign the Border Patrol MOU. Town Manager Goff states that he thinks this is a win-win for the community, for the Border Patrol and certainly for the EMS Crews, and strengthens those bonds between First Responders.

Motion: Councilor Canavan motioned to authorize the Town Manager to sign the Border Patrol MOU.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present – affirmative.

VIII. Minutes of the November 15th Regular Council Meeting & Minutes of the November 29th Public Hearing on Warrant #23-17

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to approve the minutes.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present – affirmative.

IX. Warrants: #9 – \$646,777.02 #10 – \$430,180.62

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to approve the Warrants.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present – affirmative.

X. Other

Nothing to report.

XI. Public Comment Period

No public comments.

XII. Adjournment

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to adjourn.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Councilors present – affirmative.

Council ended at 6:26 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Neadra E. Dubois, Council Secretary