

Fort Fairfield Town Council Monthly Meeting Minutes  
Council Chambers  
Wednesday, November 15, 2023  
6:00 PM

I. Roll Call

Council: Robert Kilcollins, Kevin Pelletier, Pat Canavan, Jim Ouellette, Keith Thibeau, II

Staff: Tim Goff, Neadra Dubois, Tony Levesque, Darren Hanson, Doug Sharpe, Chief Cummings, Chief Jalbert

Citizens: 7 (seven)

Media: Star Herald

II. Prayer

Mr. Levesque provided prayer.

III. Pledge to the Flag

All attendees pledged their allegiance to the flag.

IV. Public Comment Period

Kevin Hunter, Patrol Agent in charge of the Fort Fairfield Border Patrol Station, speaks on behalf of the Border Patrol to say how much they appreciate the support from the community and that they are very thankful to have a part in Fort Fairfield. Mr. Hunter states that over the years the relationship between the Border Patrol and the Fort Fairfield PD has grown immensely, including assisting on calls for each other. He also states that Chief Cummings is great and they meet together as much as possible to see how they can help each other out and to help create a stronger working relationship between their agents and officers. They also look for ways to collaborate, including trainings and keeping each other and the Town of Fort Fairfield safe. Mr. Hunter gives an example of how the agencies work well together: in the last month, Officer Wipperman made an ordinary traffic stop, based on a moving violation. That stop turned out to be two individuals smuggling Jordanian citizens through Maine, after crossing the US/Canadian border. There has been an influx of this kind of incursions, not just in Fort Fairfield, but also other areas that the Border Officers patrol. Mr. Hunter expresses his gratitude to Chief Cummings for all that he does for the Border Patrol and presents Chief Cummings with one of the first renditions of the Border Patrol Station Coin.

V. Correspondence and Reports

A. Licenses and Permits

Nothing to report.

B. Local Election Results

Mr. Goff shares the Local Election results. Shane McGillan will be the new Councilor, joining in January, and the two School Board Members are Melissa Libby and Chalice White. Mr. Goff wanted to create some awareness as the Town works through this process and thanks Councilor Kilcollins for his service on the Council.

C. Financial Report

Mr. Goff gives the financial report and states that October was a challenging month for Town Office Staff as one of the key staff members was out. Office staff took a deep dive into the General Ledger, Revenue Summary and the Expense Summary for October. Basically, it was an expensive month with County Taxes due and the school payment. Some adjustments have been made to how cashflow is managed, so a lesser amount can be paid on the TAN to keep the bank balance in the positive. Rather than keeping a larger bank balance and having more cushion, the Town is running a little bit more lean and will be paying a little less on interest on those funds until more taxes are paid to put cashflow in a more positive outlook as more taxes are paid. Currently, the TAN usage is \$400,000 and Mr. Goff anticipates the Town will use \$100,000 to \$200,000 of the TAN in November, before the bulk of the tax payments start to roll in. Overall, revenue continues to be slightly higher than budgeted. Expenses continue to track very closely to budget, but there are some areas running higher than budgeted with insurances, utilities and wages being the main three at this time. Overall, the Town remains slightly below budget and will continue to watch and adjust as winter moves in.

Mr. Goff transitions to the County of Aroostook Budget. The County of Aroostook has made some substantial changes to how they conduct business in the coming year. They will be transitioning to a July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> budget cycle, and they believe this will lead to a substantial savings in interest paid as they send out their County Tax Bills in February. Municipalities will have the option of paying the bill in full, half or one-third when taxes are due in November. The Town of Fort Fairfield will be paying this bill in one-third increments as this will have the least impact on the mil rate and resident's tax bills. This will likely result in a county tax payment closer to \$350,000 in November of 2024.

#### D. Aroostook Waste Solutions

Stev Rogeski gives the monthly report on AWS. The last meeting was on October 27<sup>th</sup>. They looked at financials from September and income was down about 12 percent for the month, but pretty well on par for year-to-date. AWS is in pretty good shape all together. A draft budget should be voted on at their next meeting. Mr. Rogeski reports on cells five and six. That project is pretty much completed, minor cleanup is being done and they are all set to use it. Mr. Rogeski reports on a problem happening downstate with where they are bringing their waste/trash. AWS has put some feelers out to nearby communities to see if assistance to the southern area of Maine can be offered to relieve some of that and to see how that could affect this area in longevity. Councilor Pelletier asks if AWS has room for the trash removal from downstate. Mr. Rogeski replies that it really won't be much more, less than 1 percent, of what is being done now.

#### E. Police Department Chief's Report

Chief Cummings gives a report on the Police Department. Chief Cummings reports that it has been a busy summer/fall for the PD. The Department is short-handed with one officer at the Academy and due to graduate in December. The PD is trending, so far this year, at 3,383 incidents, which is over 1,200 more incidents than the same time last year. Chief Cummings states that he doesn't see it trending downward at anytime. The increased demand is the issues with substance use, mental health, and domestic violence. The schools have been keeping the PD busy lately with behavioral issues, instances of violence and threats in the schools. Chief Cummings reports on an incident that happened on November 1<sup>st</sup>, where threats were made online to schools, causing schools across the state to go into lockdown. Within three minutes of receiving information of the gentleman making these threats being in Fort Fairfield, Sgt Cormier and Officer Wiperman had the gentleman in custody and in the Police Station. Chief Cummings commends these two officers for their very quick, prompt response that put a lot of people statewide at ease. Since the incident in Lewiston, the PD has increased their presence at the schools to put staff, parents and citizens at ease, and to let everyone know that the Police are there, they will always be there and they will always respond. Total cases, this year, that have been referred to prosecution is 171 adults and 16 juveniles. These numbers are probably triple what would normally run in a year. There are still six outstanding warrant requests. The PD has been successful in applying for grants and there is one outstanding that they haven't received word on yet for body worn cameras. The ones the PD currently has need to be replaced as they are not reliable and they fall off the vests. Other than that, the budget looks good and reimbursements have been received from the state like normal. Chief Cummings is hopeful that in the

spring the PD will be able to help Border Patrol more with increased patrols. Chairman Thibeau asks about the new cruiser. Chief Cummings talks about the new PD cruiser and states that the decals were put on by Cushman's and it came out really good and it is currently being outfitted with the console, lighting, cage and gun mounts, all the stuff that the officers need. Chief Cummings is also trying to sell the old cruiser for the most he can get out of it. Councilor Pelletier comments on the crime going up more than last year and asks Chief if he thinks it's because of drugs. Chief Cummings states that he thinks it has a lot to do with mental health and substance use. It's challenging because hospitals are taking on all the mental health issues and they are not equipped to do that and officers are being asked to respond to these mental health calls and they are not licensed clinical social workers. More services are needed in the mental health field.

F. New Border Crossing Meeting

Mr. Goff reports on the Border Crossing Meeting and states that the meeting was step one of many more steps to come in the process of getting a new land port. Mr. Goff states that it was a good meeting with 15 to 20 residents attending. It's a pricey process with a \$35 to \$45 million price tag. They will be trying to incorporate the historic land port of entry that is currently there into their design. Councilor Pelletier asks if there is a drawing of that site. Mr. Goff replies, stating no, they are in the environmental, seeking out contracts stage.

G. Fire Department Smoke Detector Drive

Mr. Goff reports on a tragic fire that happened earlier this month in Fort Fairfield that claimed the lives of three people. The investigation reveals that it seems likely that there were not working smoke detectors in the home. So the Fort Fairfield Fire Department has taken it upon themselves to do a smoke detector drive. So far, they have raised about \$3,000 and Fire Chief Jalbert has ordered 110 smoke detectors with the funds that have been donated. These smoke detectors have a sealed 10-year battery in them, so this isn't just a fix for a one-time period, these will be an extended life. The Fire Department will be installing these in homes for free and Mr. Goff commends the Fire Department for making some good out of a bad situation. Mr. Goff states that he is very proud of this Town and the Fire Department for stepping up for this family and the kid that was left behind.

H. Resignation – NMDC Executive Committee

Mr. Goff publicly thanks Kevin Bouchard for his commitment to serving the Town of Fort Fairfield. He served on the Northern Maine Development Commission Executive Committee. Mr. Goff received notice from Mr. Bouchard

on Saturday, October 28, 2023 that he was resigning from this position effective immediately.

I. Undiscovered Maine

Last month, Mr. Goff was approached by some faculty with the University of Maine Business School to participate in a program called Undiscovered Maine. Undiscovered Maine seeks to use the Sustainable Ecosystem Economic Development Model to assist rural communities to connect with different organizations that these rural communities are not aware of or don't have access to. They will bring together all these resources, from public entities, as well as private business to help rural communities to develop Economic Development Models. Mr. Goff states that Fort Fairfield is looking to potentially do a project with them to utilize the Aroostook River. Mr. Goff thinks this is an underutilized resource. It's an opportunity for the University's graduate students to gain real-world experience working with communities. Mr. Goff states that anything the Town can do to get additional resources to enhance economic and recreational opportunities in the community is welcome. There is no cost for the Town to participate in this program and it can help bring resources to help the Town do some good work.

J. Community – Light Parade and Holiday Celebration

Mr. Goff reports on the Holiday Light Parade. It was a very successful event last year. This year, it will be taking place Saturday, December 9<sup>th</sup>. Lineup for the Parade will begin at 3:30 PM on Forest Ave/Lower Fort Hill area and will commence down Main Street at 4:30 PM to end at the Community Center. At the Community Center, there will be a craft fair, cookies, cocoa, a band and a chance for families to have their child's photo taken with Santa in the Council Chambers. There will also be a Home Decorating Competition again this year, with the judging set to be held on Sunday evening December 10<sup>th</sup>.

VI. Old Business

A. Council Vote - Ordinance #23-15 to Establish Adult Use and Medical Marijuana Businesses Ordinance

Motion: Councilor Ouellette makes the motion.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Discussion: Mr. Goff asks for a point of clarification and asks Councilor Ouellette if he is motioning to Establish the Adult Use and Medical Marijuana, because this is an Ordinance that was tabled. Councilor Pelletier states that they are opposing it and Chairman Thibeau agrees with that statement. Mr. Levesque states that the way the motion reads, Council is approving the Ordinance as

submitted. The motion was to support the Ordinance as presented. Councilor Kilcollins states that since the Ordinance was tabled, there has been a lot of input and the input has averaged 50/50. So, he asks himself how is there going to be a happy/happy ending on this. Councilor Pelletier states that there is not going to be a happy ending on this. Councilor Kilcollins states that upon listening to the concerns of everybody, adjustments could be made to the place of business not being on Main Street, not being near schools, not near public places as stated and if guidelines were set to the Ordinance where it wasn't put in exposure, other than if you wanted to do business, then that is a happy medium, and that is what he has come up with. Councilor Pelletier tells what he has come up with. Most of the people he has talked to are not in favor of it. A lot of people feel it is a gateway drug, the Police Chief was just talking about lots of problems with drugs in Town and at the school. He asks what kind of message is being sent to the youth. Out of 500 towns in Maine, like 46 or 47 it's legal to sell medical marijuana and this is a Second Amendment Sanctioned town, so anyone that's using medical marijuana or using it for recreational purposes, it's illegal to own a firearm. Councilor Pelletier also states that the Town is not going to generate much revenue from selling pot in Fort Fairfield. He says he has tried it before and most of the people at this meeting have probably tried it once or twice in their life or maybe even use it, but personally he doesn't want to send that message to the youth. Also, there are lots of police officers in this Town, local and federal, and what's that say to them? Councilor Pelletier reiterates that he is not in favor of it. Councilor Canavan says that she has had a number of people approach her this week that are very disappointed that Council would consider revoking and going back to the old ordinance of no marijuana. There are some people that specifically use medical marijuana, they can go out of Town to get it but they would like to stay in Town to purchase it. They are elderly people and they don't want to travel. Councilor Canavan talks about how they, as Council, introduced an Ordinance regarding marijuana sales to revoke it, a Public Hearing was held and nobody attended, nobody had any input as to whether or not the Town had medical marijuana Ordinance in place in favor of or against until Council introduced a new Ordinance to allow medical marijuana and marijuana sales in Fort Fairfield and now everyone has decided they don't want it. She states that all five Councilors voted to have the prohibition Ordinance revoked earlier this year and now all five Councilors have decided that they've changed their minds. Councilor Pelletier states that they needed to know more about it. After listening to people that's when he thought it through and decided that it is not a good idea for Fort Fairfield. Councilor Canavan points out that they have spent a lot of time on it and now it sounds like there's still a lot of discussion to be made around it. She also states that they kind of look foolish that there was an Ordinance that they revoked and now they want to put the revoked Ordinance back in place and in the meantime, there isn't any Ordinance at all. Councilor Pelletier states he needed time to think about it. Councilor Canavan states that she thinks the Town needs to

be open to business. Councilor Pelletier asks what they are voting on. Chairman Thibeau states that they are voting for or against the Ordinance to establish adult use and medical marijuana.

Vote: Councilor Nays – Pelletier  
Kilcollins  
Ouellette  
Thibeau  
Councilor Yays – Canavan

#### B. Audited Financial Report

Mr. Goff states that the Town has received the Audited Plan Report. There are copies at the Town Office for anyone that is interested and there will also be one at the Library. The Auditors found no weakness or deficiencies in the Town's internal control roles and any previous deficiencies that were identified had been corrected from the previous years. Basically, the audit shows things are being done right and the Town has got kind of a good bill of health from the auditors. Mr. Goff also mentions that digital copies can be emailed to residents if they want to reach out to the Town Office to provide an email.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to accept the audit.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

### VII. New Business

#### A. Introduction – Ordinance #23-17 to Prohibit Retail Marijuana Establishments

Councilor Kilcollins Introduced Ordinance #23-17. Mr. Goff stated that a Public Hearing on the Ordinance will be scheduled and held before the next Council Meeting.

#### B. Budget Advisory Committee Appointment

Chairman Thibeau read the following memo: On Wednesday November 8<sup>th</sup>, the Budget Advisory Committee held an organizational meeting to elect officers, set terms for their appointments and review an application received for a new member to join the Committee. The Committee voted unanimously to recommend the appointment of Daniel J Hapgood to a two-year term expiring June 30, 2025. As there was some confusion as to the terms to be served by the current members given the Ordinance establishing the Budget Advisory Committee appoints all members for two-year terms, but did not leave the ability to stagger those terms for continuity, the Committee moved to update the terms of the current members

as follows: Danielle Cote expires 3/30/24, Chuck Ainsworth expires 6/30/24, Ann Hull expires 6/30/24, Billie Jo Sharpe expires 6/30/24, Dan Foster expires 6/30/25, Stev Rogeski expires 6/30/25, Daniel Hapgood (if approved by Council) expires 6/30/25. Pat Canavan and Jim Ouellette are Council Representatives, 1-year term, and that also expires 6/30/24. The Committee also approved the following officers: Chuck Ainsworth as the Chair and Billie Jo Sharpe as the Secretary. Their next meeting will be scheduled for late March or early April, 2024. The recommendation of the Town Manager is that the Council vote to appoint Daniel J Hapgood to Budget Advisory Committee for a two-year term expiring June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025 and approve the terms for currently serving members. Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to approve the appointment of Daniel J Hapgood and the terms for currently serving members. Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded. Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

C. Approve Sale of Excess Property – Public Works Vehicles

A request from the Public Works Director has been received to get rid of three pieces of surplus equipment that is no longer needed: a 1987 International 1900 flatbed truck that will be advertised with a minimum bid of \$3000.00; a 1997 Dodge Ram 3500 cab and chassis with no minimum bid; and a 2008 Chevrolet K1500 with no minimum bid. The recommendation is that Council allow this advertisement be posted, with bids due by noon Friday, December 15, 2023.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to approve the request.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

D. NMDC Appointment

There is a resignation to the Northern Maine Development Commission, Executive Committee, so the Town of Fort Fairfield is no longer represented on the Board at NMDC. Mr. Goff was advised that, as the Town Manager who is also responsible for and working on economic development and related issues, he should join the Board as the representative for the Town. The recommendation is that Council vote to appoint Timothy R. Goff, Town Manager, as the Town of Fort Fairfield's representative on the Northern Maine Development Commission Board.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motions to appoint Tomothy R. Goff, Town Manager, as the Town of Fort Fairfield's representative on the NMDC Board.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.



Vote: All affirmed.

E. Rec Department Grants

Earlier this year Doug Sharpe put out a thought to the Townspeople that the basketball and tennis courts need some love. He started to look into some concepts and designs and options. It's not going to be cheap to resurface the courts and replace infrastructure. He was contacted earlier this month by a resident, Chris Vegas – technology director at Huber, to say that the Town's Rec Department has been awarded \$50,000.00 to help start this project off. He has also been in talks with former resident, Richard Clark, who has pledged \$20,000.00 to help with this project in memory of his brother Keith David Clark. Council is asked to approve those two grants.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to approve the two grants.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

VIII. Minutes of the October 18<sup>th</sup> Regular Council Meeting; Minutes of the November 1<sup>st</sup> Council Workshop

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to approve the Minutes of the October 18 Regular Council Meeting and November 1<sup>st</sup> Workshop.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

IX. Warrants: #7 – \$225,818.05 #8 – \$678,408.85

Motion: Councilor Pelletier motioned to accept warrants #7 and #8.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

X. Other

Nothing to report.

XI. Public Comment Period  
No public comments.

XII. Executive Session – 1 MRSA §405 (6)(A) – Personnel Matter  
Motion IN: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to go in to Executive Session.  
Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.  
Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

TIME IN: 7:25 PM

XIII. Executive Session – 1 MRSA §405 (6)(A) – Personnel Matter  
Motion OUT: Councilor Kilcollins motioned to come out of Executive Session.  
Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.  
Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

TIME OUT: 7:45 PM

Action Taken: No action taken.

XIV. Adjournment  
Motion: Councilor Kilcollins motions to adjourn the meeting.  
Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.  
Discussion: None.

Vote: All affirmed.

Adjourned: 7:47 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Neadra E. Dubois, Council Secretary