

Fort Fairfield Town Council Monthly Meeting Minutes  
Council Chambers  
Wednesday, February 16, 2022  
6:00 P.M.

I. Roll Call

Councilors: All present, with the exception of Mr. Pelletier.

Staff: Ms. Powers, Neadra Dubois, Mitch Dufour, Darren Hanson, Ella Leighton, Jennifer Gaenzle, Doug Sharpe, Kevin Senal, Police Chief Cummings, Fire DC Fenderson, Fire Chief Browning, Cheryl Boulier.

Citizens: 10

Local Media: Fort Fairfield Journal

II. Prayer

III. Pledge to the Flag

IV. Public Comment Period

**Gary Sirois** – “Gary Sirois, long-time citizen of the Town of Fort Fairfield. I want to thank the Council for the opportunity to present my thoughts tonight. Okay? I have taken the time to review the Annual Report, and the Annual Report before that, and the one before that. There are some very disturbing trends that I want to bring the Council awareness to. Maybe you all are all aware of them, maybe not, but I think it’s my duty to identify them. As an example, disturbing trends, long-term debt. As of July 1, 2019, seven hundred thirty-two thousand some odd dollars. Long-term debt as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 21, two million, three hundred ninety-six thousand and some odd dollars. Red flag goes up to me, and it did. Secondly, net worth of the Town of Fort Fairfield July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, six million, five hundred sixty-four thousand and some odd cents. Net worth, as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, four million, two sixty-eight and some odd dollars. A difference of two million, two hundred ninety-three thousand dollars. Net worth down, during that period, three years. Red flag goes up. What the hell’s going on? In addition to that, there’s some other issues too, and one is short-term debt for the same period of time. I gotta find my place here. Short-term debt, as of right now, to my knowledge, we owe Aroostook Waste Systems one million dollars. It’s due February 28<sup>th</sup>. I hope the town has enough resources to pay that debt, that was originally taken out as a tax anticipation. Addition to that, we also have another tax anticipation note due to Katahdin Trust, I don’t have the due date. Five hundred, sixty thousand dollars, tax anticipation. Again, I don’t know if the Town has the money to pay those. Or, did the Treasurer and the Manager tell you folks whether you have the money to pay those debts when they become due? I don’t really think you do, but nonetheless, that’s something for you folks to think about and consider. It’s a challenge. Other, other items that concern me is that Administrative Reserves were improved by moving the Revolving Long Fund to

Administrative Reserves. That was a lot of money. I have the figure here, somewhere. Also, a

your officials, your Department Heads, and your staff that supports those Departments. You learn from them. Not from a few ill-informed citizens that have no exp

playing field even for all and establishes a solid record for future assessments. I'm asking you to show yourselves to be the pillars of our community, that you were elected to be. Learn from your fellow Councilors that have been here numerous times before, use the recourses available from Maine Municipal Association, and most of all working with Ms. Powers to learn what you don't understand. Talk to her, just as you do the Towns people. Come in and see her. And, yes, most definitely, ask all the questions you want to ask. Put all this effort of recreating the wheel, into learning how the original wheel works."

**Mr. Kilcollins** – "Thank you."

**Gary Sirois** – "Bob, if I may?"

**Mr. Kilcollins**

V. Correspondence and Reports

A. Licenses/Permits

None to report.

B. Financial Report

Checking account balance as of 01/31/2022 was \$1,312,189.34 and Machias Savings is \$5,000.

Excise collected in January was \$33,761.42 compared to last year at \$32,561.12.

As of 01/31/2022, uncollected Real Estate taxes for 2021 were \$1,695,462.21 compared to last year at \$1,735,303.57.

The Town's 45-day foreclosure notices for 2019 Real Estate Taxes were mailed on 1/21/2022. The Town sent 34 notices to property owners for a total of \$168,621.28 in unpaid taxes which includes ReEnergy in the amount of \$150,978.19.

Compared to last year the Town sent out 36 notices for a total of \$26,650.80. The major difference in dollars is for ReEnergy in the amount of \$150,978.19.

The Town received January Revenue Sharing in the amount of \$69,721.09 on 01/20/2022. Total revenue sharing received to date is \$483,686.76. The Town is at 56.05% vs the budget of 58.33 %, which is down \$19,676.47.

C. AWS Report

Stev Rogeski gives an update on AWS per the AWS Meeting Minutes from January 28, 2022:

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to Order at 8:35 am.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tara Henderson, Jesse Philbrick, Kevin Freeman, Martin Puckett, Stev Rogeski, Ken Murchison, John Morrill

MEMBERS ABSENT: Andrea Powers, Penny Thompson, Dana Fowler

OTHERS PRESENT: Mark Draper, Sharon Raymond

It was noted that Martin Puckett would be voting for Presque Isle in the absence of Dana Fowler.

The Board members introduced themselves to John Morrill, who was recently appointed to the Board representing Caribou.

1. Election of Officers for 2022

Mark noted that the election of Officers occurs annually in January, and that those nominated for the positions have volunteered to do so. The recommended slate of Officers was as follows:

President                      Penny Thompson

Vice President	Tara Henderson
Treasurer	Mark Draper
Secretary	Martin Puckett

**A motion was made by Stev Rogeski; and was seconded by Ken Murchison; to approve the slate of officers as recommended. The motion carried unanimously.**

2. Review and approve the minutes of the November 19, 2021 meeting

- a. Scrap metal piles: accumulated scrap metal at both Tri-Community Landfill and the Presque Isle Landfill has been sold to AIM Recycling for \$150/ton, which Mark noted is a very good price.
- b. TCL Scale Attendant: unfortunately, the most-recent hire has decided to leave to take a different job. Interviews have been conducted and a likely replacement has been identified. Mark will likely be making an offer soon. He also noted that an issue regarding unpaid, scheduled breaks for the scale attendant has been addressed with schedule options.
- c. TCL Foreman absence: the TCL Foreman has been dealing with medical issues and has been absent for an extended period of time, but he is hopeful to return soon.
- d. Waste and recycling annual trends: Mark reviewed with the Board updated trend charts for wastes received at both landfills, and for recycling. In general, municipal solid waste (i.e.; trash) is up slightly at both landfills, and construction/demolition debris is down at both landfills as compared to last year. Recycling volumes remained fairly steady.

7. L.D. 1875, “An Act to Address Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances Pollution from State-owned Solid Waste Disposal Facilities”

Mark explained that this bill is one of several regarding the ongoing “PFAS” issue before the Legislature’s Committee on the Environment and Natural Resources. Specifically, this bill would require that any landfill leachate being discharged to a wastewater treatment plant from the State-owned Juniper Ridge Landfill would have to be treated to the State’s interim drinking water standard for PFAS chemicals. The Committee has already held a public hearing on this bill and is scheduled to hold a work session to discuss it on January 31<sup>st</sup>, along with an update from the DEP on the effort to address PFAS contamination in general. Mark will track this bill, but does not expect it to be approved in the current form because there is a question of whether the technology exists to treat landfill leachate to that standard or not, and that the DEP is currently in a massive data collection phase (including for leachate from all landfills) and is not prepared to implement all remedial actions yet. Mark will report back on the progress of this bill, and will continue to monitor developments regarding PFAS in general.

8. Review a proposal for a health insurance stipend option

Mark explained to the Board that the AWS Personnel Policy does not include a provision to offer a stipend to an employee that elects not to be covered by the AWS health insurance plan. He referenced his memo in the Board packet that provides examples of what 3 out of the 4 Owner Communities provide for in stipend benefits. He noted that most employees have elected the health insurance coverage in the past, and that only one (1) employee is currently not participating. As a matter of fairness, and to remain competitive in attracting and retaining employees, Mark suggested that the Board consider offering such an option. He further explained that, if the Board agrees and sets a stipend level, he will develop a more detailed written policy for further review and approval by the Board. Following significant discussion, **a motion was made by John Morrill; and was seconded by Stev Rogeski; to develop a policy offering an annual stipend of 25% of the employer cost for a single health insurance plan. The motion carried unanimously.**

9. Review and approve an updated 5



13. Schedule next meeting

The next meeting of the Board was scheduled for **February 25, 2022.**

14. Other business

No other business was discussed

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 10:47 am.

Respectfully submitted,  
Martin Puckett, Secretary

Mr. Butler asks a question about the deal AWS is doing with the Presque Isle Landfill.

Mr. Rogeski answers his question in detail about how the merger is going to work better for the Fort Fairfield AWS Landfill.

## VI. Old Business

### A. Budget Committee Ordinance Resubmission

Pursuant to 30-A M.R.S. §3001 and §C-15 of the Town of Fort Fairfield Charter an ordinance providing for establishment of a Budget Advisory Committee, composition, appointment, qualifications, terms, vacancies, officers, meetings, quorum, procedure, powers, duties, authority, recommendations, official cooperation.

The composition, appointment, qualifications, terms, and vacancies are as follows: the Committee shall consist of five (5) to seven (7) members who shall be appointed by the Town Council. Prospective members shall be registered voters of the Town and shall submit an application expressing their desire to volunteer to serve. Town officials or employees, and their spouses, may not serve on the Committee. Members shall serve for terms of two (2) years. For transition purposes, the initial terms shall be staggered so that as nearly an equal number of terms shall expire annually. Vacancies shall be filled within thirty (30) days by appointment of the Council for the unexpired term.

The officers, meetings, quorum, and procedure are as follows: the Committee shall annually elect a Chairman and a Secretary from among its members. The Chairman shall call meetings as necessary or when so requested by a majority of members of the Council. A quorum necessary to conduct business shall consist of at least a majority of members. The Chairman shall preside at all meetings. The Secretary shall maintain a record of all proceedings including all correspondence of the Committee. All meetings and records shall be subject to the Maine Freedom of Access Act, 1 M.R.S. §§401-410. The Committee may adopt rules of procedure not inconsistent with this ordinance.

The powers and duties, authority, recommendations, and official cooperation are as follows: the Committee shall have the following powers and duties: to review and make recommendations to the Council on the annual Town budget as proposed by the Town



Ms. Powers tells Mr. Kilcollins that it would have been thousands of dollars and doing it this way does not cost the Town anything.

## VII. New Business

### A. Openings on the Economic Development Board

Ronald J. Jalbert, III, the Chair of the Economic Development Board has tendered his resignation as of January 28, 2022. The Economic Development Board now has two vacancies available for application to join.

Recommendation: Council accept the resignation of Ronald J. Jalbert, III.

Mr. Butler makes the motion to accept the resignation of Ronald J. Jalbert, III.

Mr. Ouellette and Mrs. Libby seconded at the same time.

Discussion: None

Vote: All Affirmed

### B. Fort Fairfield Fire Rescue ARPA Request Equipment

Fort Fairfield Fire Rescue is requesting to use ARPA funds for the purchase of medical equipment to help extend the life of the current equipment, conduct more realistic trainings, and be prepared for multiple call, or patient scenarios. FFFR is requesting the council approve the purchase of Stryker Power Pro XT stretcher, A Stryker Stair-PRO stair chair, and a Zoll X Cardiac Monitor.

The current stretchers were refurbished when they were purchased, and did not come with the option of the Stryker, on site, annual maintenance plan and warranty. While these stretchers are working well, without the option of the annual maintenance, the expected lifespan of these stretchers is greatly reduced. Adding a third stretcher, which would include a five-year warranty with annual, on-site maintenance, would allow FFFR to rotate stretchers and allow each stretcher to have less use, therefore extending the life of all the stretchers in service. It would also allow FFFR to have a backup stretcher in house, if FFFR were to have a failure of one of the current stretchers. If this were to happen now, FFFR would not be able to respond with one of their ambulances until they could send the stretcher away for repairs, or purchase a replacement.

The stair char is another piece of equipment that sees frequent use and is essential to moving patients out of tight spots without risking the safety of the crew. Purchasing another stair chair would allow FFFR to rotate the current stock to prolong their usable life as well as add a six-year maintenance/ warranty. It would allow for ambulance to remain in service if there was a malfunction and also allow for first responders to have additional equipment for extrication when both ambulances are on calls.

The cardiac monitor is one of the most essential pieces of equipment FFFR has, and is used on every call. Adding a third monitor would allow them to complete more in-depth trainings for staff without taking ambulances out of service. It would also allow them to have a monitor available when both ambulances are on calls and there is an additional call for service. This allows FFFR's response ability to increase as well as the level of care able to be provided on additional calls.

In addition to the benefits listed, adding these three pieces of equipment would position Fort Fairfield Fire Rescue well should the need to add an additional ambulance arise in the future. The equipment listed is the costliest equipment needed outside of the vehicle purchase itself.

The cost breakdown is as follows:

Stryker Power-PRO XT MS Stretcher with 5-year warranty is \$26,587.80  
Stryker Stair-PRO Stair Chair with 6-year warranty is \$5,056.20

Zoll X Monitor with 3-year warranty is \$41,623.80

The total is \$73,267.80

FFFR would request that the Council approve the Town Manager and Fire Department leadership to move forward with the purchase of the above listed equipment.

The recommendation is that Council allow the Fort Fairfield Fire Rescue Department to use the ARPA funds to purchase of this medical equipment so that they don't have to go back to the tax payers and ask for that in the next year's budget, and use the ARPA funds, which is part of their revenue, to do it. Otherwise, this will be presented in the budget.

Mr. Butler makes a motion to allow the Fort Fairfield Fire Rescue Department to use the ARPA funds to make the purchase.

Mrs. Libby seconded.

Discussion: Mrs. Libby asks about the ARPA funds and the status of the Ambulance and Fire Service, so not to "rubber stamp" this.

Chief Browning gives an update on the revenue coming in through the Ambulance service. The Ambulance service started in August of 2020 so they don't have an end of year report. This will be the first year that they will have that trend to set what they will be taking in and staff to send out on calls.

Deputy Chief Fenderson also talks about the calls that they are getting and mentions that they only get paid for transporting calls. What they are finding with the amount of calls is that some days they don't have any calls and other days they will get six calls in an hour and a half span. There's lots of times that they have crew members that can go on calls, but they don't have an ambulance or the equipment available to go help the citizens in need. So they aren't able to assist as fully as they should or could be able to. That is why they are

proposing to use the ARPA funds to get the equipment that is needed. As far as the stretcher that is needed, every person that goes in the ambulance gets put in the stretcher and there is a back log for ordering stretchers, as with any other medical equipment. If they ordered it now, they are looking at a wait time. If they wait until one of the current stretchers is no longer functional, they would still have the same wait time or longer, but now they would have one less ambulance. It's Maine EMS rule that every ambulance must have a stretcher, stair chair and cardiac monitor for every EMS call they respond to.

Mrs. Libby asks about using the ARPA funds versus using funds coming out of the department budget.

Ms. Powers explains that the ARPA funds were funds given to the Town through the American Cares Act, and it was put in the Revenue line and the Federal Government states that the ARPA funds can be used for General Fund purposes. Any Department can request use of the ARPA funds now. The Town has to use the funds by a certain date and whatever is not used by that date, has to be given back.

Vote: All Affirmative

#### C. Public Works CAT Loader Loss/Replacement

Background: Recently the Cat loader used by Public Works on a daily basis developed transmission issues to the point where the machine is not useable in its current state. The engine was replaced 2000 hours ago with a remanufactured Cat engine which should have a few thousand hours of service left.

Discussion: Although the loader has high hours it still fills the need Public Works has for this piece of equipment and given the cost of a new replacement loader, we think the best

times, so in the event that something happen to their equipment, they have the funds to cover it. Right now, the Reserve line is at forty percent, and they should be around fifty-eight percent.

Mr. Kilcollins mentions that the price to cover that piece of equipment today would be in the excess of two hundred and fifty thousand.

Mr. Hanson states that in the northern climate, the equipment that would replace it today, he's not sure that piece of equipment would be wanted.

Vote: All Affirmed.

#### VIII. Minutes of the January 19, 2022 Regular Council Meeting

Mr. Butler makes a motion to approve the minutes from January 19, 2022.

Mr. Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: All Affirmative.

#### IX. Warrants: #15 \$145,969.76 #16 \$415,929.40

Warrant #15 in the amount of \$145,969.76 was completed on 01/19/2022.

Warrant #16 in the amount of \$415,929.40 was completed on 02/03/2022.

Please note that this warrant included \$178,532.09 for February SAD 20 appropriation.

Mr. Butler makes a motion to approve the Warrants as written.

Mr. Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative

#### X. Other

Ms. Powers reads a letter from Phil Christensen to Council from the Fort Fairfield Quality of Place Council:

Dear Robert,

The Directors of the Fort Fairfield Quality of Place Council that the Town Council and Town Manager for recognizing our work through your presentation of the Spirit of America Award.

We appreciate the support we have received from numerous Town employees on many of our activities including:

The acquisition, restoration and sale of homes on Brunswick Avenue, Presque Isle Street and Columbia Avenue;

Fort Kids First College Planning Initiative; and

Our brochure “Sharing the Road Safely – Amish Horse Drawn Vehicles and Motor Vehicles”.

We also want to acknowledge the outstanding involvement and support we have received for our most visible project – the ‘Celebration of Lights’ that was conceived by our retired Director, Kim Jones. The participation of our Maine Street Businesses, our Service Organizations, the Library Team, the Frontier Heritage Historical Society, the Fort Fairfield Housing Authority and numerous property owners has made this a true community effort.

We welcome ideas for ways to continue to enhance the quality of life of our citizens.

Sincerely,

Philip Christensen, Secretary/Treasurer

Fort Fairfield Quality of Place Council

XI. Executive Session  
1 M.R.S.A. §405(6)(C) Economic Development

Mr. Butler makes a motion to go into Executive Session.

Mrs. Libby seconded.

Vote: All Affirmative.

Executive Session started at 6:50 PM.

Mr. Butler motioned to go out of Executive Session.

Mrs. Libby seconded.

Vote: All Affirmative.

Executive Session ended at 6:59 PM.

