

Fort Fairfield Town Council Monthly Meeting Minutes
Council Chambers
Wednesday, September 28, 2022
6:00 P.M.

Mr. Foster addresses the public before the Council Meeting to address the Memo that came from Felch, the Town's auditing company. Mr. Foster discusses having a sustainable community, and there are three major stakeholders in maintaining a sustainable community – residents who want the services, tax payers that pay for the services and employees that provide the services. If any one of those gets out of whack it effects all three. Mr. Foster states that the financial side of Town Government is more than out of whack. Mr. Foster discusses the tax bills coming out next month and the Mil Rate going up. The Mil Rate is going to be 26.5 Mils – up 7 Mils or 36% from last year. Mr. Foster explains the reasons the Mil Rate is going from 19.5 to 26.5. Mr. Foster also discusses the finances surrounding the Fire Department and states that he is recommending the appointment of a new Fire Chief, Mike Jalbert. Mr. Foster also states that Mike Jalbert and Chief Cummings will be working together to provide the services that this community needs. Mr. Foster states that the Tax Rate Calculation Form was not filled out correctly last year. The Tax Assessor made a \$700,000 mistake on the form and nothing was done about it to correct it. Mr. Foster also discusses the Town's spending, when revenue comes in and recurring expenses. Mr. Foster states that the Town will not raise taxes anymore, will reduce expenses starting with this year's budget and decrease next year's Mil Rate and reduce the debt. Mr. Foster asks the public for their forbearance. Mr. Foster expresses to the public that he knows it is not fair and promises to do everything he can to rectify this and maintain the employee base to provide the services. Mr. Foster ends by saying he will meet with anyone or any organization that wants to talk more about this or has any questions and opens the floor up for anyone that has comments and or questions now.

Tammy Deschesne comments, saying the blame can't be put on one person. More than one person was involved in the process of all that went on over the years.

Mr. Foster responded by saying he doesn't want to focus on assigning blame. He wants to focus on moving ahead.

Milton asks if it's possible to turn out that \$1.2.

Mr. Foster responds by saying yes, and explains how the Town is going to get that paid down and use a repayment plan for the rest of it.

Regular Town Council Meeting started at 6:16 PM.

I. Roll Call

Council: All Council present.

Staff: Mr. Foster, Neadra Dubois, Shannon St. Pierre, Chief Cummings, Cheryl Boulier, Kevin Senal, Darren Hanson and Jennifer Gaenzle.

Budget Advisory Committee: Pat Canavan, Kevin Bouchard and Janet McGillan

Citizens: 45 citizens present.

Media: Star Herald and Fort Fairfield Journal.

II. Prayer

Chief Cummings says the prayer.

III. Pledge to the Flag

IV. Public Comment Period

Councilor Butler thanks the employees of the Town of Fort Fairfield for the cards and flowers for his wife's funeral. It really meant a lot to him.

Gary Sirois congratulated Mr. Foster for stepping up. He also congratulates the Council for hiring Mr. Foster. In Mr. Sirois' opinion this is a step in the right direction. He implores Department Heads to save on expenses. He states that the cash flow problem for the Town is very, very serious. Mr. Sirois also implores tax payers to pitch in and pay their taxes as soon as they can to alleviate the Town from having to borrow more money.

Mitzie McKenney has a concern about the Dancing Divas coming to the VFW on October 1st. She talks about the phrase "slippery slope." She passes out pictures for Council to see what the Dancing Divas have done at previous events. Mrs. McKenney also passes out information that she printed out for Council to look at regarding definitions of lewdness and pornography and the local VFW's Moto, Oath and values. Mrs. McKenney wants the Council to consider investigating what the dictionary terminology for all the points in pornography or lewdness and do we really want to bring this to our community.

V. Correspondence and Reports

A. Licenses and Permits

There are two licenses. One for Canterbury Royale and one for the VFW.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette makes the motion to approve the two licenses.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

B. Financial Report

Mr. Foster gives the Financial Report for the last two months. There are a few things he would like to highlight in that, one of them being the Fire Department. The Fire Department is starting to get revenue in from EMS. As of the end of August, the Town has collected \$151,000 and Mr. Foster doesn't know how much of that was for the previous year of billing. On the expense side, the salaries were a little high, mainly because there were five pay periods in the two months being reported. The Rec Department was a little bit higher because they have more programs in the summer so

they spend more money on salaries during that time. Public Works was a little lower because they have overtime built into their budget for winter months. The only other thing that was a little high was office supplies because the Office bought bulk paper and toner. In September, because of the cash flow, and no line of credit yet, the Town has not been able to pay the School payment. Mr. Foster is working with Katahdin and is hoping to have that issue rectified this week.

C. AWS Report

Mr. Rogeski was not present to give his report. Mr. Foster reports on his first AWS meeting and business that took place at the meeting.

D. Maine Drug Enforcement Task Force Agent

Chief Cummings gives his report on the Police Department dealing with substance use and abuse in the Town and the Maine Drug Enforcement Task Force. The Task Force is comprised of Agents or Officers from different agencies like the Sheriff's Office, Presque Isle, Houlton, State Police and Border Patrol. One of Chief Cumming's officers is going to join the Task Force. This will not cost the Town of Fort Fairfield anything and will benefit the Town in combating these drug and substance abuse issues.

Councilor Butler asks how this will affect the staffing.

Chief Cummings responds by saying that he has someone that can step into that position, so it will not affect the staffing on the road.

E. Property Tax Stabilization Program

Mr. Foster discusses the State created program called the Property Tax Stabilization Program for senior citizens. This program will not take into effect this year. There are already some issues with the program and is thought to be changed. Citizens have to apply for it every year and there will be no benefit for people to apply for it this year.

VI. New Business

A. FFFR Hardship Application

Mr. Foster discusses what the FFFR Hardship Application process is.

The recommendation is that the Council approve the \$100.00 fee be waived for this particular patient.

Motion: Councilor Butler makes the motion.

Second: Councilor Libby seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

B. Library Donation from Shaw Estate

Mr. Foster states that Jennifer has brought to his attention that the Library has received a gift from the Estate of Wendall and Barbara Shaw. The gift was \$23,557.00. It is going to be utilized in creating the Shaw Community Room.

The recommendation is that the Town accept the donation with grateful thanks from the Estate of Wendell and Barbara in the amount of \$23,557.45.

Motion: Councilor Butler made the motion.

Second: Councilor Libby seconded.

Discussion: Councilor Libby says it was very generous.

Vote: All Affirmative.

C. Mil Rate Town Order #22-08

Mr. Foster states that the Town is looking at setting a Mil Rate of 26.5 and talks about Tax Club. If people want to, they can go into the Town Office to see Ella and work out a payment plan between February, March, April, May and June and they will forego any interest charges.

Mr. Foster asks the Council to approve a new Mil Rate of 26.5.

Motion: Councilor Pelletier made the motion.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

D. Authorize the Tax Collector to Accept Monthly Payments

Mr. Foster asks the Council to allow the Tax Collector to set up five equal monthly payments for those who need that and forego interest charges.

Motion: Councilor Butler made the motion.

Second: Mrs. Libby seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

E. Accept Letter of Resignation from the Fire Chief

Mr. Foster asks Council to accept the Letter of Resignation from the former Fire Chief with appreciation for the efforts made by Cody Fenderson.

Motion: Councilor Pelletier made the motion.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

F. Approve a Tax Anticipation Note in the Amount of \$800,000.00

Mr. Foster presents to the Council the language that he got from the bank to get a Tax Anticipation Note for the Town to borrow a loan of up to \$300,000.00 for five months. The motion from the bank is: “Councilor _____ moves to allow the Town of Fort Fairfield to borrow from Katahdin Trust Company a loan of up to \$300,000.00 for five months at an interest rate to be determined, for a Tax Anticipation Note. Also this motion gives Robert Kilcollins, Chairman and Dan Foster, Town Manager authorization to sign any required documentation on behalf of the Town.”

Mr. Foster explains that the request was for \$800,000.00, not for \$300,000.00, but this is what they think they are willing to do. What this means is that this is something he thinks he can work out. The Town has a loan with AWS for \$275,000.00, which is due at the end of November and he’s going to request that the Town wait until January to pay them. Mr. Foster has already talked with Mark Draper and he’s very comfortable with allowing that to happen. Mr. Foster also talks about not paying the County Tax until January as well. The Town will be paying four percent interest on that bill for the amount between November 1st and January. Mr. Foster asks the Council to make that motion for a loan of up to \$300,000.00 for five months.

Motion: Councilor Pelletier made the motion.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: Councilor Butler asks Mr. Foster about AWS not being a loan but a normal fee.

Mr. Foster answers that question by saying it is a loan.

Mrs. Libby asks what the interest rate will be for the late payment.

Mr. Foster says it will be less than what the bank is going to be, three percent.

Vote: All Affirmative.

G. Approve Adding Dan Foster and Crissy Emery to the Town’s Bank Accounts

Mr. Foster asks the Council to replace Billie Jo and Andrea on the Town’s bank accounts with Dan Foster and Crissy Emery and adding them to the signatory lines on the bank accounts.

Motion: Councilor Butler made the motion.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

H. Appoint Dan Foster as an Alternate Board Member to AWS

Mr. Foster asks the Council to appoint Dan Foster as the Alternate Board Member to the AWS.

Motion: Councilor Pelletier made the motion.

Second: Councilors Libby and Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

I. Approve Snowmobile Trail Use Permit

The Town has received the Snowmobile Trail Use Permit from George McLaughlin. The Snowmobile Club is getting ready to set up their trails and the Town has to sign off to allow the use of Town property. This is something that is done every year. Mr. Foster asks the Council's permission to allow him to sign it.

Motion: Councilor Butler made the motion.

Second: Councilor Libby seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

J. Approve Cheryl Boulier as Festival Director

Mr. Foster talks about Cheryl Boulier stepping up and willing to be the Festival Chair. Mr. Foster asks Council to approve Cheryl Boulier as the Festival Chair for next year.

Motion: Councilor Butler made the motion.

Second: Councilor Libby seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

VII. Minutes

A. Regular Town Council Meeting Minutes August 17, 2022

Motion: Councilor Ouellette made the motion to accept the Minutes.

Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

B. Special Council Meetings Minutes August 24 & 29, 2022 and September 1 & 7, 2022

Motion: Councilor Butler made the motion to accept the Minutes as written.

Second: Councilor Libby seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

VIII. Warrants #4: \$197,273.58 #5: \$172,456.72 #6: \$416,473.28
#7: \$183,192.02

Motion: Councilor Butler made the motion.

Second: Councilor Libby seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

IX. Other
Nothing to report.

X. Executive Session 1 M.R.S.A. §405(6)(A) Personnel Matters

Motion In: Councilor Butler made the motion.
Second: Councilor Pelletier seconded.
Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

Council went in Executive Session at 6:49 PM.

Motion Out: Councilor Libby made the motion.
Second: Councilor Butler seconded.
Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

Council came out of Executive Session at 7:01 PM.

Action taken: Mr. Foster makes a recommendation to the Council to approve the appointment of Michael Jalbert for the new Fire Chief.

Motion: Councilor Butler made the motion.
Second: Councilor Libby seconded.
Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

XI. Adjournment

Motion: Councilor Butler made the motion to Adjourn.
Second: Councilor Libby seconded.
Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

Council Adjourned at 7:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Neadra E. Dubois, Council Secretary