

Fort Fairfield Town Council Monthly Meeting
Council Chambers
Wednesday, March 17, 2021
6:00 P.M.

I. Roll Call

Staff: Ms. Powers, Ms. Sharpe, Mr. Hanson, Mrs. Leighton, Ms. Gaenzle, Sgt. Eagles, Officer Kennedy, Chief Browning, Dep. Chief Fenderson, Mr. Dufour, Ms. Dubois, Mr. Levesque, Mr. Pelletier, Mr. Bowen.

Council: All Councilors are present

Public: 30 +/-.

II. Prayer

III. Pledge to the Flag

IV. Public Comment Period

Mr. Butler – read a prepared statement:

I would like to address a few items in our local newspaper. Councilor Smith has given a lot of statistics concerning the local tax increase. I am not going to break any of that down. I asked our Town Manager where his statistics are coming from, she did not know.

We recently went through a revaluation of our town, something that should have been done years ago. Our last revalue was done about 20 years ago. I believe these revaluations should have been done every 3 - 5 years. Past administrations for some reason did not do the revaluation. That being said the revaluation had to be done, and was authorized by the Town Council.

The result of the revaluation was some taxes went up as Councilor Smith pointed out in his press release that broke down the increases in the local paper. But I did not see in that article on how many taxes went down. What the revaluation did is fairly distributed the tax burden to the citizens in Fort Fairfield.

As for the 2020 tax distribution the break down is 62.09% went to the School, 6.82 % went to the county and 31.09 % went to the Town. This Council has no control of the taxes that go to the School or to the county. Less than 1/3rd of taxes goes to the town operations.

In the article this Council and Town Manager has been accused of unnecessary spending. We as a Council approve a budget for the municipality, then it is up to the Department heads to assure that they do not exceed that budget. After being accused of over spending the Town Manger decided to begin a mid- budget review of the expenditures and scheduled a public meeting. During that meeting all the department heads showed that they were all

under budget. These department heads do all they can to keep their expenditures down. Through this last year the department heads when needing some equipment looked for ways to acquire those items at little cost to the Town. I believe they recently acquired a tanker truck for the Fire department at no cost to the town except the fee to get the truck to Fort Fairfield, again keeping the cost under the budget.

With the loss of our ambulance service the town had to look other avenues to supply service to the citizens. That was to start our own ambulance service. Along with that the availability of voluntary fire fighters during the day time hours the town decided to hire fire fighter/ paramedics. This would give greater service to the citizens. While we were fortunate to not only hire some fire fighter/ paramedics the town was able to hire some instructors with the hiring which saves the town some training expenses.

To lay all the blame of the taxes on services to the citizens is disingenuous. I will give one example: my tax bill for 2020 was 1,380.47 of that amount \$94.15 went to the county, \$857.13 went to the School and \$429.19 went to the town. While I am 65 and have a need for services than I do for a school. If I have an emergency, I am more apt to call an ambulance rather than a bus to take me to the hospital.

While the request for this council is to cut 25% from our tax burden. How can this council do this when we only control less than 1/3rd of the tax distribution? Our mill rate is not set until we receive the bill from the school. And under state law we cannot reject the amount requested.

Jeff Armstrong – During the January town council meeting, I spoke regarding fairness specifically on my evaluation. I see no consistency at all in how this revaluation was done. During the January Town Council meeting I brought this up. I have not received a response yet. I don't think due diligence was taken into consideration.

John Griffeth – Commented that his farm plots in Fort Fairfield represent about a third of their acreage and they are still expecting the exact same gross this year over last year's very slim margins. "That means we have to make tough decisions and work harder than we did when we were kids just to keep our head above water and I think these department heads need to figure out that the world is real sometimes.

Jennifer Gaenzle read a prepared statement:

My name is Jennifer Gaenzle and I am a tax payer in Fort Fairfield for the last 15 years.

I've heard people complain that their taxes are increasing, and at the same time saying there are no services. You do have services, you have 2 fully staffed and trained ambulance units, a well-trained fire department, you have a police department of exceptional officers, you have a community pool, a fantastic recreation department, a lovely library and you have a great public works department to name just a few.

We need new businesses to come here. But what new business is going to want to come here if we do not have an ambulance service for their employees or a fire department and police force in town to protect their business? None! I've heard the statement made small businesses don't help our revenue, but small businesses can grow and they encourage bigger businesses and people to move here. And there are new people moving here, Covid has helped that.

I've heard people saying the town "should be run like a business", but that is not what a town does. A business runs to make money for their owners. That is not what town economics are. Towns provide services to their communities to enhance their way of life and safety, to increase business and resident opportunities. Offset some expenses, yes, but it's not meant to make money. The more opportunities and services here in town the more people will come which in turn lowers taxes for all by giving a larger tax base. You need to look at your long-term goals, not just today and tomorrow, but where you want this town to be 10-20 years from now.

For way too many years this town has been run to "just get us by" and now we need to pay the piper for that thinking. Many things converged to put the town in the position it's in. The loss of ReEnergy was important, but years of short-sightedness meant we weren't receiving the state funds we were entitled to because for 20 plus years no one wanted to step up and take the bull by the horns and do what needed to be done in a reassessment. The loss of ReEnergy pushed us over that tipping point.

The assessed value of my property was one of the ones that was set to go up almost 72%, even though I haven't made one single upgrade, addition or improvement in the 15 years I've owned it. Except for mil rate adjustments my taxes haven't changed in the last 15 years and for who knows how long before I bought it. This assessment corrected that. If I had made additions, new buildings, upgrades to existing structures, hot-top driveway or any other improvements, the assessed value would have been even higher.

And yes, like you, I was completely sticker shocked. But I sat down and really studied the assessment. I noticed a few items needed corrections, I didn't have a full basement, I have a crawl space, I don't have central heat, I have a wall unit, I don't have 3 bedrooms, I have 2, and I have lots of swamp land and ravines that are unusable land. So, I took the initiative and called the assessor's office. It took a while to get through but once I did, I left a message detailing the needed corrections. The assessor called me back and we went through each item and corrected what needed to be corrected and he explained the things I didn't understand. Is my assessment still higher than what it was? Of course, it is, because for the last 15 years I wasn't paying what I should have been paying, but after corrections it's now only about 46% higher.

I don't have children that use the school system, I don't use the community pool or rec department services. I rarely go to town festivals because I'm working. I live on a state-maintained road, not a town road. And my husband is retired on a fixed income. But we will

still gladly pay these taxes to keep and expand the services we have. We consider it an investment in the town where we want to live and grow old in.

Yes, times are tough and uncertain right now, for all of us. I'm very familiar with the history of this town, and one thing that shows up all through the history of Fort Fairfield, is that this town knows how to pull itself up by the bootstraps and get things done. Well, now it's this generation's turn to do it. Instead of looking at this as they "raised my taxes", did you ever consider that instead with an open mind, careful preparation and a solid action plan, 10-15 years from now you could be seen as the people who started the revitalization of your town.

Keith Thibeau – Mr. Thibeau commented his concerns about future businesses, like himself being around 20 years from now to carry the tax increases. (mostly inaudible)

Gary Sirois – commented that "we commend Mr. Smith for providing us citizens with information about the impact of our taxes." Mr. Sirois also stated that the Town should invest in a public address system and that hopefully the Council recognizes that there is interest in this town with what's going on with the assessments, with the taxes and the spending.

Kevin Pelletier – commented he has lived her for 64 years and it's heartbreaking. Has not seen any growth in this Town. He said his taxes doubled. Mr. Pelletier said "you guys" need to understand something; "we" vote you in, "she" works, (pointing toward the Town Manager, you don't work for "her." You've got to understand that. This isn't going to go away. We need to do something about it. "It starts with "you guys."

Mark Babin – We understand that we are involved in a transition, right now what is happening with our community and with the Reval is something that has been shared and done already. Some information that you guys are hearing is not quite accurate. What we read in the papers is not quite accurate. I want to make sure we do not draw conclusions that are based on assumptions or comments that are made that were inaccurate. We do understand our position on the Town Council. We know that you guys elected us and we are trying the best we can to make things right for everybody. At the same time, we understand that our town manager is doing the best that she can. It's not an easy job. She has to be in charge of all departments making sure everything goes the way it's supposed to so I would encourage you to be cheerful and let's bring healing to our community at the same time give us the ability to work on what needs work instead of pointing fingers and accusations at us, the town manager and others. So, give us the opportunity to work together and not listen to what other people assume what we are doing or not doing.

Melissa Libby – So I don't usually say a lot but I do want you guys to know that we are listening we're listening to your comments we're listening to concerns we want to you know help to rectify a situation that you feel like you're currently in where it feels like it's us against everyone else that's not what we want that's not what's intended I think that's kind of again from a lot of misinformation but if you do have questions come to the town office speak to people who are doing this every day, people that know the most about all of the

information that you're seeking if they can't give you the answer or you don't feel comfortable with the answer come to us. I think we all need to be willing to work on this together versus just pointing fingers so just know that we hear you, we're trying. I know that I am willing to put as much time and energy as it takes. We're all trying to do the right thing but pointing fingers and giving out misinformation is just not helping anything so if you have questions or if there's anything that I can do please feel free reach out. "Start with the Town Office."

Bob Kilcollins - I've had people come to me and show me I've read them; I've seen the differences between the valuations. And I can honestly say that if you put your facts together that you have, contact the Reval company, they will fix them with you. They will, but we as a community have to look at what we're doing. And nothing comes easy. Nothing's ever easy. Without hard work.

Kevin Pelletier – commented that it is heartbreaking to see the Town go in the direction that it is. "I get worked up and I apologize for that." "I'd like to see Fort Fairfield grow." People are talking about selling their homes, tearing down their barns so they don't have to pay taxes. "This affects me on a very personal level."

David McCrea – commented that he spent 15 years on the Council. Mr. McCrea then spoke of his recollection of the budget process. Prior Town Managers and Councilors pushed the thought of a Town Reval off and now the State is starting to push back and it is something that had to be done. The State was starting to "ding" for not having it done. It's costing this Town money in State funds, because "we didn't do it." I applaud you for doing it and having the guts to getting it done. "To Vote to have it done."

Almost every body's properties are worth more today than it was twenty years ago, that's the bottom line. A professional Assessor comes in and is supposed to make it 100 percent of the value, which means that when I list my house for sale, I should be able to get out of it what it is assessed for.

I am just speaking as someone who has been where you are before. We are in this together. If you have a problem with your assessed value, there are avenues you can go through

Fred Everett - "On one of my trips home from work the other morning, I heard on the radio on the news about work that Councilor Kilcollins was doing to make for Fairfield a second amendment sanctuary town." "I wanted to take this moment to thank you for your efforts."

V. Correspondence and Reports

A. Licenses and Permits

As of March 17, 2021, we have not received any license renewals.

B. Financial Report

We received February Revenue Sharing in the amount of \$53,268.58 on 02/22/2021. Total revenue sharing received to date is \$338,947.08. This puts us at 71.69% of budget versus 66.67%. We are now \$23748.05 over our budgeted amount.

Checking account balance as of 02/28/2021 is \$2,235,835.69 which includes the promissory note with AWS; Machias Savings balance \$5,000.00.

Total expenses at the end of February were at 64.27% vs 66.67% budgeted. Total revenue received was at 80.18% vs 66.67% budgeted. Expenses are 2.4% under budget and revenue is 13.51% over budget.

Total excise tax collected in February was \$38,512.18; State revenue sharing \$53,268.58; Real Estate & Personal Property taxes collected \$973,309.32.

In comparison, 2019 unpaid tax bills as of 2/28/2020 were 619 for a total of \$809,441.01; 2020 unpaid tax bills as of 2/28/2021 were 561 for a total of \$765,708.52. Our 2020 tax collections are much better than they were for the same period of time last year.

Loan balances as of 02/28/2021:

Jones Fuel - \$1,680.63
Langley #5275 - \$18,616.63
Langley #5277 - \$6,699.37

2020 Real Estate taxes collected as of 3-17-2021 is \$3,090,257.35, compared to 2019 Real Estate taxes collected as of 3-17-2020 of \$2,595,131.52. This shows an increase in collections to date of \$495,125.83.

In comparison, 2019 unpaid tax bills as of 3/17/2020 were 540 for a total of \$678,561.94; 2020 unpaid tax bills as of 03/17/2021 were 477 for a total of \$624,395.25. Our 2020 tax collections are much better than they were for the same period of time last year. We have 63 more bills paid for 2020 for the same period.

C. AWS – Mr. Rogeski

Mr. Rogeski gave an overview of topics discussed at the last AWS Board meeting. Minutes are attached for the record.

VI. Old Business

A. Proclamation, Carl Young

Mr. Carl Young began with the Fort Fairfield Planning Board July 1, 2007 and through his outstanding contributions and leadership to the community of Fort Fairfield on the Planning Board he was able to have a significant impact on the lives of our citizens.

Mr. Young helped to author our current Planning Board Bylaws, and Shoreland Zone Ordinance providing many valuable thoughts and ideas to the improvement and safety of our Town.

Mr. Young was the Chair of the Fort Fairfield Planning Board from August 16, 2016 to November 25, 2020. We are grateful for his dedicated service to our community and its citizens.

Recommendation: Council votes to accept the Proclamation for Mr. Carl Young for outstanding service to the Town of Fort Fairfield.

Motion: Mr. Kilcollins made a motion to accept the Proclamation for Mr. Carl Young for outstanding service to the Town of Fort Fairfield.

Second: Mr. Smith.

Discussion: Mr. Young thanked the Council for the recognition and said it was a pleasure to serve the Citizens.

Vote: All Affirmative.

B. Discussion of April Council Meeting Date and Time

Councilwoman Libby has requested a date change for the April Council Meeting to be moved to Tuesday April 13th at 6:00pm.

Recommendation: Council votes to accept the proposed date and time change for the April Council Meeting to Tuesday April 13th, 2021 at 6:00pm.

Motion: Mr. Kilcollins made a motion to accept the proposed date and time change for the April Council Meeting to Tuesday April 13th, 2021 at 6:00pm.

Second: Mr. Babin.

Vote: All affirmative.

VII. New Business

A. Certified Clerk of Maine, Billie Jo Sharpe

It is with great honor and respect that I share with Council the letter I received from Maine Town & City Clerk's Association regarding the Certified Clerk of Maine status for our Town Clerk, Ms. Billie Jo Sharpe. Ms. Sharpe has served the Town of Fort Fairfield and the public for 10 years this past August with honor, dedication, loyalty, and passion. For the past 10 years she has proudly served her community with various jobs as Town Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Deputy Tax Collector, Deputy Treasurer, Registrar of Vital Statistics, Records Management Officer, General Assistance Director and most recently has taken on the role as our Website and Social Media Coordinator and all with the greatest of integrity.

Ms. Sharpe's years of service, growth, and respect that she has earned from our citizens, Department Heads and Staff, Elected Officials, and myself, is because of the love she has for public service and for the community of Fort Fairfield. It is often said that the Office of the Town Clerk is the gateway to local government and this proves to be true in the Town of Fort Fairfield. She strives daily to help make our Town a better place, which has often been done without much recognition.

While there are far too many to name, other noteworthy credentials and accomplishments not tracked by the classes she attended for certification:

Ms. Sharpe has developed various "in-house" forms that help track daily registration fees for better stream-lined end of day procedures. Received recognition during Council Meeting for her helpful information and postings for our citizens. Delivers and performs Town duties and services for our elderly and shut-in citizens. Customer Service to our citizens, staff, Council and myself is her top priority. Often works long hours to complete all tasks at a moment's notice. Developed a mail-in form to allow our citizens to continue to re-register their vehicles through the Stay-at-Home Order.

Ms. Sharpe has always been helpful and dedicated to serving the citizens of the Town of Fort Fairfield with her dedication and work ethic that she brings to the job of Town Clerk, and always willing to go the extra mile in service to her community and beyond.

Recommendation: Council joins me in congratulating Ms. Billie Jo Sharpe in her designation as a Certified Clerk of Maine.

Mr. Kilcollins made a motion that Council congratulates Ms. Billie Jo Sharpe in her designation as a Certified Clerk of Maine.

Mr. Babin seconded.

Mr. Butler commented that Ms. Sharpe does a great job in the Town Office and during the Elections.

Vote: All Affirmative.

B. ME DOT Roger Soucy Culvert Work on Forest Ave

Mr. Roger Soucy of the Maine DOT is here this evening to discuss the culvert work on an old farm road named Mallory Drive, about a mile north of Bryant Pond road on Forest Avenue that will be taking place this summer. Mr. Soucy had handouts for Council to review.

Roger Soucy and Chris Helstrom from Maine DOT discussed plans for road construction and replacement of a failing culvert approximately 1 mile north of Bryant Pond Road in Fort Fairfield. This will cause a detour of traffic for approximately 7 days but will allow 2 residents that are directly affected to have full access while they are reconstructing a 500–600-foot stretch of road. This project is expected to be advertised November 2021 and will begin in 2022 with a completion deadline of October 1, 2022.

Mr. Kilcollins asked how the detour will affect the Amish community traffic.

Mr. Soucy commented there aren't any additional considerations for that traffic, but there will be through access up until the closure.

C. **Sheriff Gillen*

Sheriff Gillen gave a presentation to Council regarding three proposals for the Aroostook County Sheriff's Department to provide police coverage or service in Fort Fairfield as requested. After having the Sheriff's department work in the Town since September due to the inability to hire police officers, Mr. Gillen said he was concerned. Mr. Gillen provided Councilors a copy of his proposal. The proposals are not for 24-hour coverage. They are for 16 or 18 hours of coverage.

Mr. Babin commented, so to hear you correctly, you do not recommend us doing this?

Sheriff Gillen replied "I am not." Let's just say I would rather not. I believe this Town wants to keep its PD. If the Town didn't want to keep their PD, then I would recommend.

If legislation gets rid of qualified immunity, then you will have a harder time to find officers than you are right now. If you want my help then I will help you. I am your Sheriff, if you reach out to me, I will help within my means. If you want a proposal and you want me to take over, I will work with you to do that. For me to find two deputies to take over may be just as difficult for me as it is you. It does put a strain on the Sheriff's Department. I am willing to help you.

Mr. Butler – do you find it hard to find law enforcement officers?

Sheriff Gillen – not really hard for him because when he picks up a deputy, it is usually a town officer that is leaving. Aroostook County right now is down 21 officer positions. I am concerned about the Town. I am concerned you're not going to find officers. I am concerned that police departments are going to just close their doors. What's stopping you from closing your doors right now, other than the towns people want it? I just want to make it clear that I am not running around trying to take your PD over. I was approached.

Mr. Butler asked about 24-hour coverage.

Sheriff Gillen responded in order to provide 24-hour coverage; they would have to fully take over. When that happens, the Town loses its control over the PD and is more expensive. It is harder to get it back.

D. CDBG Week

Background: The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program was established in 1974 and is a partnership of federal, state and local governments as well as private sector, non-profit and community efforts to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing, suitable living environments and expanded economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons.

The Town of Fort Fairfield has received \$11,485,617.00 in CDBG funds since 1984. Town projects funded with CDBG dollars include the clinic project, armory renovation and Monson pond dam and bridge project.

Discussion: The National Community Development Association established the National Community Development Week 35 years ago. This year, April 13 through April 18 has been designated Community Development Week.

The proclamation proclaims the week of April 5 through April 9, 2021 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.

Recommendation: Town Council sign Proclamation 21-03, Community Development Week.

Motion: Mr. Babin made a motion to sign Proclamation 21-03, Community Development Week.

Second: Mr. Smith.

Vote: All Affirmative.

E. Application for Vacancy on FF Economic Development Board

We recently received an application to serve on the Fort Fairfield Economic Development Board from Mr. Reginald St. Pierre. (Application is attached)

The Fort Fairfield Economic Development Board currently has a vacancy left By Edith Helstrom, who resigned in 2020 just prior to her term ending.

If appointed, Mr. St. Pierre's term (3-year) would begin immediately and end June 30, 2023.

Recommendation: Council appoints Mr. St. Pierre to the Economic Development Board for a 3-year term ending June 30, 2023.

Motion: Mr. Kilcollins made a motion to appoint Mr. St. Pierre to the Economic Development Board for a 3-year term ending June 30, 2023.

Second: Mr. Babin.

Vote: All Affirmative.

F. Review of the FF Economic Development Board

2021 is the end of the five-year period for the Fort Fairfield Economic Development Board that was put in to place in the original Board By-Laws. I have received and shared with Council the letter from the Vice Chair, Ronald Jalbert for the Boards continued commitment to the Town.

Recommendation: Council votes to renew the Economic Development Board for another five years per the Boards statement of commitment.

Motion: Mr. Kilcollins made a motion to renew the Economic Development Board for another five years per the Boards statement of commitment.

Second: Mr. Smith.

Vote: All Affirmative.

G. Fort Fairfield Fire Rescue Fire Bay Wall Construction

On February 17, 2021, three bids were opened at 1600. All bids met all requirements set forth in the RFP. The summary of the bids was as follows: PNM Construction- \$24,365.00, Buck Construction- \$22,465.00, and Beaupre's Construction- \$49,680.00.

We were able to discuss the project in detail with representatives from each company who were also able to provide some insight and detail on what their plans for the project's completion looked like. It is our recommendation to accept the bid from Buck's construction. While this was the lowest bid, Bucks also demonstrated a great deal of experience with similar projects and had a great plan to move forward with the project, and has time and crews ready to begin the project very soon.

There are several ways this project could be funded. We could take this amount from several of our reserve lines. This would zero at least two of those accounts. We also have requested and received proposals from several local banks for low interest loans. These loan payments could be taken from our current budget and next year's budget very easily and would continue to allow our reserve accounts available for unexpected expenses. We recommend seeking a loan to cover the cost of this project.

It is essential that we complete this project as our current set up does not allow for storage of all our equipment properly. With the addition of the tanker which will be put into service in the coming months, we will have even less space. This project allows us to make better use of our current space at a much lower cost than building new structure to house and protect the equipment we have.

Ms. Sharpe opened two sealed bids received for a loan, if approved by Council to pay for the Fire Rescue Bay Wall Construction.

Recommendation: Council allows the Town Manager to accept the bid from the bank that Council approves at tonight's Council Meeting.

Mrs. Libby commented that after all of the public discussion tonight regarding taxes and the budget. In my opinion, there are funds available and they need to use these funds before we borrow any more money.

Mr. Kilcollins: Does this wall fall under the State Fire Marshall law?

Ms. Powers – replied that it is in the plan and if we don't do it, we may just have to build a new building and that's what Chief (Browning) and Deputy Chief (Fenderson) are trying to prevent.

Mr. Kilcollins said that we will have to eventually do it because of the state laws. State law regulates it.

Mrs. Libby, commented she didn't say they shouldn't do it, but not to borrow any money to do it.

Mr. Kilcollins agreed to use the Reserve account

Mr. Babin agreed to use the Reserve account, no more loans.

Motion: Mrs. Libby made a motion to take money from the Reserve Account rather than borrow money for this project.

Second: Mr. Kilcollins

Vote: All Affirmative.

H. Fort Fairfield Fire Rescue Bid Opening for sale of 1992 Pierce Arrow Ladder Truck

On March 17, 2021 at 4:00 pm, the two bids received for the 1992 Pierce Ariel Ladder truck were opened in the Council Chambers. The first bid was for \$101.01 and the second was for \$3750.00. Although neither of these bids met the posted minimum bid amount, Chief Browning recommends accepting the highest bid of \$3750.00.

Mr. Kilcollins made a motion that Council accepts the higher bid.

Mrs. Libby asked what the value of the vehicle is.

Ms. Powers responded that this has been out to bid multiple times and this is the highest bid received to date.

Mr. Babin asked what we would like to have seen?

Ms. Powers replied that she thinks Chief Browning's recommendation to accept the \$3750.00 is the right recommendation.

Mr. Smith asked what the minimum bid was advertised.

Ms. Powers replied \$7500.00

Mr. Smith – recalled talking with Darren last year, and that the motor in that truck is worth quite a bit of money? “Didn’t you guys put that in?”

Mr. Hanson – We did not put it in, it was a spare motor out of a snowblower.

Mr. Smith – Do you think the parts are worth more than the \$3750 especially with steel prices as high as they are?

Mr. Hanson – the truck is fatigued beyond..... The engine has a considerable leak. If it were me, I’d take the bid.

Second: Mr. Babin

Discussion: Mr. Kilcollins commented that for the amount of money it would take to bring the truck up to code, he agrees to accept what we can get out of it.

Vote: All Affirmative.

I. Fort Fairfield Fire Rescue Donation from Katahdin Trust Company

We recently received notice that Katahdin Trust Company has donated \$500.00 to the Fort Fairfield Fire Rescue Department to assist with the costs of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This money will assist the Department in being able to purchase much needed PPE. Placing the funds in PPE line item, E-01-06-05-45 will help to alleviate the constant cost of personal protective equipment.

Per Title 30-A M.R.S.A. §5654 states that a conditional gift for any specified public purpose offered to a municipality may be accepted or rejected by its legislative body.

Recommendation: Council accepts the \$500.00 donation from Katahdin Trust Company and place the funds in line E-01-06-05-45.

Mr. Smith made a motion to accept the \$500.00 donation from Katahdin Trust Company and place the funds in line E-01-06-05-45.

Second: Mr. Babin

Vote: All Affirmative.

J. Tax Acquired Property for 2018 Taxes – Ms. Leighton

The following is a list of properties that became Tax Acquired on March 09, 2021 for 2018 taxes and total amount due on each property as of 3/10/2021:

(A) Heirs of Archie Holton – 41 Center Street – Total Taxes Due \$1,387.80
Assessed Value is \$14,280: Minimum Bid Recommendation is \$2,500.

(B) Danielle Caron & Rodney York, Jr. – 107 Riverside Avenue – Total Taxes Due \$1,487.36
Assessed Value is \$15,670: Minimum Bid Recommendation is \$2,500

(C) Kevin Benson – 8 Pool Drive – Total Taxes Due \$5,829.38
Assessed Value is \$95,820: Town retains ownership

Ms. Leighton's recommendation is that we put these properties out for bid with a minimum bid on each property. Mrs. Leighton has certified mail receipts from all owners and has spoken with the owners of (A) and they are not interested in the property: (B) Ms. Leighton has spoken with Ms. Caron and she has made no attempt to

pay taxes; I do not have a phone number for Mr. York, but they have the same mailing address: (C) Ms. Leighton has left messages for Mr. Benson with no response. We have also attempted to purchase the property from Mr. Benson and he has not responded.

Ms. Leighton has attached a copy of each map, map card and tax detail.

Recommendation: Authorize Treasurer to put A and B properties out to bid with minimum bids as stated and for the Town to retain ownership of property C.

Mr. Babin made a motion to authorize the Treasurer to put A and B properties out to bid with minimum bids as stated and for the Town to retain ownership of property C.

Second: Mrs. Libby.

Discussion:

Mrs. Libby asked what the Town's plan is for Property #C.

Ms. Powers replied it will be used by the Recreation Department.

Mr. Kilcollins asked if the Town holds any liability on these properties.

Ms. Powers responded that new owner(s) would be liable after sale.

Mr. Smith asked why the Town is retaining and tearing down the Pool Drive property.

Ms. Powers responded that it is not repairable or livable. It will be torn down and used as parking for the Pool and tennis courts area.

Vote: Mr. Babin – Aye
 Mr. Smith – No
 Mr. Kilcollins – Aye
 Mrs. Libby – Aye
 Mr. Butler – Aye

Motion Passed: 4-1

K. Interest Rate for 2021 Taxes

Delinquent Tax Rate has been set by the State of Maine at 6% maximum for 2021 Real Estate and Personal Property taxes. This rate would become effective on March 01, 2022

The higher rate often encourages tax payers to pay taxes in a timely manner versus having to pay a high interest rate. At this time, I am asking the members of the Town

Council to approve the new interest rate, set by the State, of 6% for the 2021 Real Estate and Personal Property taxes.

Recommendation: Council votes to accept the 6% interest rate for delinquent taxes for the 2021 Real Estate and Personal Property taxes.

Mr. Smith made a motion to accept the 6% interest rate for delinquent taxes for the 2021 Real Estate and Personal Property taxes.

Second: Mr. Babin

Discussion: Mrs. Libby commented as a reminder to the Public that the Tax Club is interest free and encourages all to use it.

Vote: All Affirmative.

VIII. Minutes of the February 17, 2021 Regular Council Meeting

Mr. Kilcollins made a motion to accept the minutes of the February 17, 2021 Regular Council Meeting

Second: Mr. Babin

Vote: All Affirmative.

IX. Warrants: #19: \$143,055.29; #20: \$385,490.88

Warrant #19 in the amount of \$143,055.29 was completed on 02/18/2021. Checking account balance as of 02/18/2021 is \$1,572,774.83 and Machias Savings is \$5,000.00.

Warrant #20 in the amount of \$385,490.88 was completed on 03/04/2021. Checking account balance as of 03/04/2021 is \$1,909,592.06 and Machias Savings is \$5,000.00.

Mr. Kilcollins made a motion to approve Warrants #19 and #20 as written.

Mr. Babin seconded.

Vote: All Affirmative.

X. Other

Background: The Public Works Foreman currently uses a 2001 Chevrolet 2500 pickup with 173,000 miles to complete daily tasks. This truck is also used as a fill in for plowing parking lots, drifting and checking to see if roads are in need of sand or plowing so as to

keep miles and hours down on our heavy equipment and labor costs as low as possible by checking the roads to make sure the crew is needed.

Mr. Hanson would like to purchase a 2015 GMC 2500 from the State Auction so as to have a more reliable vehicle.

Recommendation: Town Council authorizes Public Works to spend up to \$14,500.00_____ with \$7,500.00 from account E-01-08-25-40 and \$7,000.00 from account E-01-08-01-05 at the state auction to replace the 2001 Chevrolet 2500.

Mr. Kilcollins asked what the mileage is on this truck.

Mr. Hanson replied: 130,000 miles.

Mr. Kilcollins – Does it come with a plow package?

Mr. Hanson – It does not. The pickup has some repair needs. Once everything is done, we will have the truck painted and fully rigged for around \$20,000 which for a 2015 three quarter ton is pretty reasonable. We haven't seen the truck yet, but when we travel to Augusta, we want to be able to buy it. We have been dealing with the same gentleman for a couple years down there and he has been really good about the description of the vehicles and how he feels it's been used.

Mr. Kilcollins – Have you ever considered looking at another model, like a one-ton where you are plowing more streets and stuff (longevity wise)?

Mr. Hanson – We have. We actually bought two last year at the auction. I usually put around 20,000 miles on my truck a year, so to use a one-ton like that I think we might end up going the other way. The reason we are looking to purchase this truck out of the expense account is because in the past, past management when they'd go out to check the roads, the Manager didn't go check the roads the Supervisor didn't go check the roads. The crew did with wheelers and checked the roads. What we do now and why we put so many miles on these trucks is that we go out and check the roads. These are working vehicles.

Mr. Kilcollins – is it diesel?

Mr. Hanson – it is not, it is a 6-liter gas.

Mr. Kilcollins – you don't think diesel would pay the difference?

Mr. Hanson – I would certainly consider a diesel but they are hard to come by. It comes down to price and availability.

Mr. Kilcollins – is there money in the account that the insurance money from the truck that burned?

Mr. Hanson – yes, but I would rather use that money for future heavy equipment purchases.

Mr. Kilcollins – I thought we replaced that truck?

Mr. Hanson – we did, but we always look at the future upgrade or replacement.

Mr. Babin – How often do the auctions happen for these trucks?

Mr. Hanson – It's a continuous auction. They are not always public. This truck just came up a week ago and if we pass on it, it will go somewhere else.

Mr. Babin – The reason I ask, is that we are at the end of our snow season, would it be better to wait for a better deal?

Mr. Hanson – I don't think we can find a better deal.

Mr. Kilcollins – The price is really good.

Mr. Kilcollins made a motion to authorize Public Works to spend up to \$14,500.00 with \$7,500.00 from account E-01-08-25-40 and \$7,000.00 from account E-01-08-01-05 at the state auction to replace the 2001 Chevrolet 2500.

Second: Mr. Smith

Vote: All Affirmative.

XI. Executive Session

- A. 1 M.R.S.A. § 405(6)(E)
Consultation with Legal Counsel
- B. 1 M.R.S.A. § 405(6)(D)
Labor Negotiations

Mr. Kilcollins made a motion to enter into Executive Session.

Mr. Babin seconded.

Vote: All affirmative.

Time IN: 7:50 pm; M.R.S.A. § 405(6)(E) Consultation with Legal Counsel

Motion OUT: Mr. Babin; M.R.S.A. § 405(6)(E) Consultation with Legal Counsel

Second: Mrs. Libby

Vote: All Affirmative.

Action taken: None.

Motion IN: Mr. Smith; M.R.S.A. § 405(6)(D) Labor Negotiations

Second: Mr. Babin

Vote: All Affirmative.

Time: 9:15 pm.

Motion OUT: Mrs. Libby; M.R.S.A. § 405(6)(D) Labor Negotiations

Second: Mr. Babin

Vote: All Affirmative

Time: 9:57 pm.

Action taken:

Mrs. Libby made a motion to go 0% for all Departments.

Mr. Kilcollins seconded.

Vote: All Affirmative.

C. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn: Mrs. Libby

Second: Mr. Kilcollins

Vote: All Affirmative.

Council adjourned at 10:04 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Billie Jo Sharpe, Town Clerk
Council Secretary