

Fort Fairfield Town Council Monthly Meeting Minutes
Council Chambers
Wednesday, March 15, 2023
6:00 P.M.

I. Roll Call

Council: Present – Pat Canavan, Bob Kilcollins, Keith Thibeau II, Jim Ouellette

Absent – Kevin Pelletier(excused)

Staff: Dan Foster, Neadra Dubois, Tony Levesque, Darren Hanson, Chief Cummings,
Chief Jalbert, Doug Sharpe, Kevin Senal

Citizens: 9 citizens present

Media: Star Herald, Fort Fairfield Journal

II. Prayer

Tony provided prayer for the meeting.

III. Pledge to the Flag

All present pledged their allegiance to the flag.

IV. Public Comment Period

Stev Rogeski thanks Council and the Town Manager for endeavoring into this Fort Fairfield Empowerment Project and wants everyone to be aware that there is a connection for a survey on the website for people that want to have some input, that's a good way to do it. He also states that for people who don't have input, but want to say something about when something's not right, now's your chance to speak up and put your ideas out there for the public. Mr. Rogeski states that he is excited that they are doing this and thinks that the lady mentioned in the program is doing a great job. Mr. Rogeski states that he wants to get the word out about this and thinks that it is a great thing that the Town Council is doing to get the public involved.

V. Correspondence and Reports

A. Licenses and Permits

No licenses or permits to report.

B. Financial Report

Mr. Foster reports that the Council has received February's financial statements. Mr. Foster states that the Town is continuing trends of maintaining revenues and slowly decreasing expenses. Mr. Foster discusses having to reduce this year's budget by \$400,000 and next year's budget by \$1 Million to be able to pay off debt, lower the Mil Rate, and improve cash flow. Mr. Foster also states that the caveat of this is that the Town will need to have a robust line of credit – a Tax Anticipation Note. Mr. Foster feels confident about the Town's trends to be able to put this difficult time behind them. Mr. Foster states that all in all the financials are in a good place.

C. Aroostook Waste Solutions – Stev Rogeski

Mr. Rogeski reports that the last meeting AWS had was on February 24, 2023 and everything seems to be going pretty well. Mr. Rogeski reports on AWS' transition to the closing of the Presque Isle Landfill, which will be happening this summer. Mr. Rogeski talks about putting in a transfer station and they are waiting on a DEP Achievement for their transfer station license. Mr. Rogeski also talks about the new cells that they will be starting to construct this year at the Fort Fairfield Landfill, and it's going out to bid for construction. AWS has voted down a residential right of way thru the landfill property of 600 acres in Presque Isle and explains why.

D. Fire/EMS Department Report

Chief Jalbert thanks the Council for taking the time to take the classes with him last month. Chief Jalbert gives his monthly report on the Fire/EMS Department and reports average call volume for the month of February with 8 fire calls and 51 EMS calls. Chief Jalbert reports on his trip to Fort Kent with Darren Hanson to check out their river gauges and talks about the Community Resiliency Grant that will pay for a new river gauge and pump house gauge. Mr. Foster interjects, saying that he received a call from the Governor's Office about this project and they are sending a video team up here because they are really impressed with the work that's been done on this project. Chief Jalbert also reports on the Firemen's Breakfast, a Volunteer Fire Fighters Scholarship fundraiser. The breakfast is happening on Saturday, March 18, from 6:30 to 10:30 am. All of the food for this event has been donated from R&J's Market and Aroostook Self Storage. Chief Jalbert states that he now has 22 Volunteers and still building on that. Chief Jalbert also mentions the sale of the Ladder Truck.

E. Police Report

Chief Cummings gives his report on the Police Department from the beginning of the year. Since January 1, the officers have dealt with 701 various incidents with 37 of those resulting in arrests/summons/prosecution. Chief Cummings states that it's been very busy and the officers have been doing very well in keeping up with the calls and cases as they come in. Chief Cummings reports that at the same time last year, without being fully staffed, they were at 299 calls for service compared with 701 calls for

service this year, and says that it makes a big difference in having staff. Chief Cummings states that they've seen an uptick in OUI's, drug arrests at night and crashes. Officers have started working Operation Stone Garden, which is Homeland Security Detail, which allows an extra officer on duty with reimbursement from the FEDs and the State. Chief Cummings reports that the Police Department is fully staffed and is still looking for a part-time officer to supplement coverage on open shifts to save the Town from having to pay overtime to full-time officers. Chief Cummings discusses one notable call involving 3 bison that were on the loose for 9 hours, with one of those being on the loose for over 24 hours. Chief Cummings urges the Town Council to look into some sort of protections for the Town, the public and abutting land owners who can see damages to their property from the animals escaping their enclosures. Chief Cummings states that this is an important issue, that has happened three times already, and creates some serious liability on the Town and officers involved. Chief Cummings also states that he spoke to the bison owner, who states that he will do everything he can to mitigate the bison from escaping again.

F. Fort Fairfield Community Empowerment Project

Mr. Foster reports on the Community Empowerment Project going well. Catherine will be interviewing 23 people and has three left, to be interviewed on Friday. Catherine will be compiling a synopsis of her meetings, providing it to all of the participants and will meet with all the participants together to come up with some consensus as to how to proceed in moving forward. Mr. Foster states that once that is done, it will be shared with the community and a meeting will be scheduled for anyone in the community to come in and ask questions and/or offer some suggestions. Once that is done there will be a final presentation to the Town Council will be provided for their consideration and then, the next step is to start the process of finding a new Town Manager.

G. FY 23/24 Budget

Mr. Foster states that the proposed budget has been given to the Council already and the binders are being prepared for the Budget Advisory Committee and will be available by March 24. Mr. Foster states that the intent is to get the Town's debt paid, incrementally increase the cash flow, and, at the moment, the proposed budget has a lowered Mil Rate of 25.75. Mr. Foster states that he is confident that what he just outlined will happen and cautions that there is still 3 and a half months left and those numbers will be changing.

H. New Puddledock Bridge

Mr. Foster reports on an MDOT schematic for the new Puddledock bridge sent to him by Jon Helstrom. Mr. Foster wanted to show it to Council and was curious as to where they were going to put it, but it is going to be put on the same footprint. While this is going on they will divert traffic to the Dumond Road. There will be a Public Hearing on this.

VI. Old Business

A. Appoint New Members to Budget Advisory Committee

Mr. Foster reports that the Town has received two applications from individuals that are interested in participating in the Budget process. The applications are from Chuck Ainsworth and Ann Hull. Mr. Foster states that these two are worthy citizens to take on this challenge. Mr. Foster asks Council to approve Chuck Ainsworth and Ann Hull to serve on the Budget Advisory Committee for two years.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette made the motion.

Second: Councilor Kilcollins seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

B. Approve Sale of Ladder Truck

Mr. Foster reports on the sale of the Ladder Truck. Mr. Foster states that the Truck has been sold, the check has been received and the loan has been paid. Mr. Foster asks the Council to approve the sale of the Ladder Truck.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins made the motion.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

C. Appointment of Municipal Registrar

Mr. Foster and Ms. Dubois report on the appointment of the Municipal Registrar. The appointment needs to be made by January 1st of every odd-numbered year. The appointment should have been made in December of 2022, so it is a little bit late, but needs to be done as soon as possible. Mr. Foster asks the Council to approve the appointment of Crissy Emery as the Municipal Registrar.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins made the motion.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

VII. New Business

A. Approve Purchase of Police Cruiser

Mr. Foster reports on Chief Cummings buying a used police cruiser for a reasonable price of around \$18,000. Mr. Foster asks Council to approve that purchase, with the money coming from the Police Department's Reserve Account.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins made the motion.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

B. Approve Walmart Grant to the Parks & Rec Dept.

Mr. Foster reports on the Rec Department being busy with applying for Grants. Mr. Foster asks the Council to approve the Walmart Grant.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins made the motion.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

C. Approve Youth Sports Rally

Mr. Foster reports on the Rec Department putting on a Youth Sports Rally and have received a lot of donations for the event. Mr. Foster asks Council to approve the donations for the Youth Sports Rally.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins made the motion.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

D. Approve Putting Tax Acquired Property out to Bid

Mr. Foster reports on a Tax Acquired Property, on lower Fort Hill Street, and asks Council to approve putting the property out to bid, with a minimum bid of \$5,000.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins made the motion.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

E. Approve Dick's Sporting Good Donation

Mr. Foster asks the Council to approve another donation to the Rec Department from Dick's Sporting Goods Store.

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins made the motion.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

F. Approve Bid to Demolish Potato Storage

Mr. Hanson talks to Council about demolishing the potato storage on Cheney Grove. Mr. Hanson states that he has recently received a bid to remove the potato storage building that the roof is collapsing on and it's really a hazard. Mr. Hanson reports that the property will still be in use for another 2 or 3 weeks, but as soon as that is done, he would really like to move forward with this. The bid received was about \$4,000 with a return per ton on the steel and the Town will pay for the bill at the waste site. Mr. Hanson states that he doesn't foresee getting a better deal on this. Mr. Foster states that the Town is anticipating a cost of around \$3,500, which will come out of the reserve account for the Industrial Park.

Motion: Councilor Ouellette made the motion.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

VIII. Minutes of the February 15th Regular Council Meeting

Motion: Councilor Kilcollins made the motion to accept the minutes of the February 15th Regular Council Meeting.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

IX. Warrants: #17 - \$683,554.39; #18 - \$177,429.18

Motion: Councilors Kilcollins and Ouellette made the motion to accept the Warrants # 17 and 18 with the amounts stated.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmative.

X. Other

Councilor Ouellette reports on the Amish making a “Thank you” card for all the work Bob O’Brien has donated in and for the Town and wants to it at the Town Office for all the public to sign if they wish. Also, Bob’s girlfriend, Lynn, has passed away and Councilor Ouellette would like to add a sympathy card to the thank you card.

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

Motion IN: Councilor Kilcollins motioned.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Vote: All Affirmed.

Time: 6:34 PM

Motion OUT: Councilor Kilcollins motioned.

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Vote: All Affirmed.

Time: 6:45 PM

Action Taken:

1.) Motion: Councilor Kilcollins – “Mr. Chairman, I move that we accept Kevin Senal’s letter of resignation with regret. That we acknowledge that Kevin leaves our employment in good standing and that his employment will end effective immediately. His compensation will end effective April 21, 2023 and that he is to receive his unpaid vacation, personal days and half of his accumulated sick leave.”

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmed.

2.) Motion: Councilor Kilcollins – “Mr. Chairman, I move that we approve the appointment of Doug Sharpe as Interim Parks & Recreation Department Head effective immediately.”

Second: Councilor Ouellette seconded.

Discussion: None.

Vote: All Affirmed.

XII. Adjournment

Motion: Councilor Ouellette motioned to adjourn.

Second: Councilor Canavan seconded.

Vote: All Affirmed.

Time: 6:47 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Neadra E. Dubois, Council Secretary