

# MINUTES

for a regular meeting of the Pittsfield Town Council, held on *Tuesday, February 07, 2023* at 6:30 pm in the Council Chambers at the Pittsfield Municipal Building at 112 Somerset Avenue and by teleconferencing technology.

Councilors Present: Mayor Michael Cianchette; Deputy Mayor Howard Margolskee; Councilor Brent Frost; Councilor Jason Hall; Councilor Eric Saucier; Councilor Ronald Jester; and Councilor Heather Donahue.

Councilors Present by ZOOM: None

Councilors Absent: None

Also Present: Town Manager Kathryn Ruth; Police Chief Vincente Morris; Public Works Director Don Chute; Jan Laux; and Ann Duncombe.

Also Present by ZOOM: N/A

## **1. OPEN MEETING/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, FOLLOWED BY A MOMENT OF SILENCE:**

Mayor Cianchette opened the meeting of the Council by leading the Pledge of Allegiance. The Council observed a Moment of Silence.

## **2. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF: Regular Meeting held on January 17, 2023**

**Moved** by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Frost to adopt the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on January 17, 2023.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE**

## **3. PRESENTATIONS, CONGRATULATIONS AND INTRODUCTIONS:**

### **A. Community and Economic Development Activities and Events**

#### **1. Projects and Grants:**

##### **A. Planning Partnership Initiative Program Update (Main Street Project)**

### **A. Planning Partnership Initiative Program Update:**

The Town Manager updated the Town Council on the steps that had taken place since the last meeting and advised that the MaineDOT has approved the scope of services and increased the grant offer to the Town. If approved this evening, we can start the project as soon as we have a signed grant contract from the State and we are able to schedule a meeting that everyone can attend.

## **4. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

## **5. REPORTS:**

### **A. Council Committees: Finance, Ordinance and Recycling**

### **B. Board/Committee Updates by Town Councilors and Manager**

### **C. Town Manager's Report**

A. Council Committees: Finance, Ordinance and Recycling

Finance Committee – Councilor Hall said that the Committee is looking at a meeting the last week in February; Ordinance Committee – No Report; and Recycling Committee – The Town Manager reported the Committee will meet on February 15, 2023 at 5:30 pm.

B. Board/Committee Updates by Town Councilors and Manager

The Town Manager reported that the Planning Board will meet on February 13, 2023 at 7:00 pm to discuss the year’s activities and have the required Freedom of Access training.

C. Town Manager’s Report

**TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT FOR 02/07/2023:**

This continues to be the busiest time that we have seen with many requests for assistance and dealing with issues that we have not had before including difficult general assistance cases.

1. Planning Partnership Initiative Program: On 02/05/2023, I received a copy of the negotiated proposal in a MaineDOT formatted contract. This answered the on-going question of how to handle a contract. Our MaineDOT Planner and I will review the contract to make sure it matches up to the State’s approval. The Town’s approval to sign the document is included on the agenda.

2. Code Enforcement – Abandoned Building Statute: A letter has been drafted from the discussion at the last Council Meeting during the public hearing. We are awaiting Al Tempesta’s return from medical leave to have the letter signed and sent to the owners.

3. Financial System: Continued working with Harris on many tickets. Several tickets are in Development and one has been moved forward for a Fix. There will be a master report available at the Town Council Meeting as well as the files that I brought in on 12/21/2022.

4. Foreclosures: Twenty eight (28) foreclosure notices for 2020 Taxes went out. We were able to get a few taxpayers to come in prior to the date they were to be sent and one had a small balance that the taxpayer agreed to pay. Since issuance, there have been very few payments.

5. Bar Harbor Bank and Trust Accounts: The bank will be proposing revisions to enhance interest now that rates are increasing.

6. Credit Card: Completed paperwork for the Community Card Program. Hopefully this program will provide the credit cards the way that they are needed. I have a follow up meeting with the bank on 02/10/2023.

7. Open Position Recruitment:

A. Police Officers: All F/T Positions filled. One officer was hired who needs to finish the last step at the Academy. A second officer who has been a reserve and filled in as F/T Officer for the last three months has signed up for a F/T spot. He will need to go to the Academy. The Police Chief picked up a third officer who will need training and then attend the Academy. The Police Chief knew two of the officers from his last position and one was our reserve officer who has committed to moving to F/T. This is great news for the Town, Department, Chief, Officers and the public.

B. F/T Code Enforcement Officer – New position.

C. Administrative Assistant – Started advertising after the last meeting given our workload.

D. P/T Help in the Office – Trying again, however, no one has been interested as there are no benefits.

8. Animal Control Officer: The Police Chief recruited for an Animal Control Officer, receiving two applications. After holding Oral Boards consisting of representatives from the Police Department and the Animal Shelter, the group made a recommendation to the Chief which he accepted. The new ACO currently works for another community, has taken the required training and has his own equipment. Mr. Craft pledges to be available whenever we contact him. Like other employee hires, he will have a six month probationary period.

9. Boards and Committees: The Town Clerk continues to work on recruitment for the Committee positions. A list of renewals received to date is included in the Council package. The Town Clerk will be advertising for board and committee position openings.

10. Maine State Housing Authority “Maine Water Assistance Program”: The Town Council authorized submitting an application for this program back on 12/06/2022 after receiving the materials just before Thanksgiving. We were advised that our agreement was approved although we do not have a signed copy yet. On Friday, 02/03/2023 we were notified that we will be receiving over \$3,000 for users’ water and sewer bills by the end of 02/2023. We also received some publicity materials so we will be displaying those materials, making copies for various locations and setting up a section of the website to promote this new program to help those who qualify based upon household income. The water/sewer bills going out in February 2023 will have an announcement in it. It is great to have a program that can assist with residents’ utility bills. It is a one-time program application which expires 12/31/2023.

11. Water Main Leak: As the leak on Dorothy Street took time to determine the best way to shut off the water in order to affect as few residences as possible, Olver Associates will be establishing a new program for exercising the valves. The engineered plan with locations of valves did not seem to be accurate in that part of town, therefore, they will be working on this project as part of their contract.

12. Water/Sewer Accounts: We are continuing to work with Olver Associates on our Action Plan to replace all the malfunctioning meters that we have located to date (after testing them to make sure it is a malfunction if it is not entirely obvious). Several orders of meters have been placed since last year once the chain supply issues of 2021-2022 were resolved. We are going through the accounts Book by Book to review each account and make sure that they are set up correctly, which does not seem to be an issue, however, it is a process of elimination. It does appear that after the Town and Olver were able to determine the meters that got moved around by a former employee without paperwork, then resolved the conversion issues when going from old utility software to a Windows based one and now having a training session with Mueller on the meter reader, that we have eliminated several possible causes for issues. Now, we are replacing meters that seem to be malfunctioning, having learned that the readers are failing at 12-20 years. When the meters were purchased, the estimated lifespan was 20 years. This may not be the case.

13. Roof Repairs: After the heavy ice storm, the Town’s Library and Theatre Roof started leaking. The library roof was fixed. The theatre roof has a temporary fix which we were advised could last 3 months or 3 years. We checked several times last week to see if we could get the information in case an agenda item was needed, but the quote for permanent work was not ready. We got excited when materials were received from the company, however, it was for maintenance agreements for 2023 and not the specifics for the library or the theatre on costs to date as well as the cost of further work for the theatre, if needed beyond the fee in the agreement.

14. Federal Grant Website Registration: It is coming to the time of the year in 03/2023 when the authorization to receive federal funding must be renewed. The program has again been revised and there appear to be several program authorizations needed so this will be interesting.

15. Maine Community Foundation Grant Application: Before the Librarian went off on her vacation, she forwarded a draft copy of the grant application with a list of items I will supply in addition to reviewing the application in time for her return next week to file it by the deadline. I will be concentrating on this application that would provide for focus groups for community priorities which could be viewed as the first step for a Comprehensive Plan.

16. Mowing Contract: Our current mowing contractor has done an excellent job and has requested that we sign a three-year contract with them which involves refiguring the cost for mowing Hathorn due to the additional work there as well as small increases each year. We need to determine if the Town Council wishes to bid this out or if because we do have a contractor we are very pleased with, if we can proceed with a Resolution on the next agenda to waive the bid policy and negotiate an arrangement with the current contractor. I have not listed the offer as it would be unfair to advertise this and then the Town decides to bid the work, however, it is quite reasonable when looking at the work that is being completed. She asked the Councilors to think about how they want to proceed and let her know.

17. Spirit of America Program to Celebrate Volunteerism: In 2023, the Maine Spirit of America Program is going strong with a deadline of 06/30/2023 for the Town Council to choose the local person, project or group to receive the 2023 Pittsfield Spirit of America Foundation Tribute for outstanding community service using our own criteria. The Town would honor the recipient at a meeting in 04/2023 which is National Volunteer Month. If the Town presents the Spirit of America Foundation Tribute at that time, the Town will be recognized for the Gold Distinction category.

18. Financial Software: The Town Manager had provided a compilation of the issues with the software since the changeover to the web based TRIO financial software program. This was an upgrade as the Town's current Access program was being phased out as Microsoft would no longer support the platform. The Town has been plagued with issues with the conversion and afterwards. Often Harris will be able to provide fixes, however, later on the issue comes back or other issues take place. Two staff members also provided their accounting of what has been taking place with the programs that they manage. There was a lengthy discussion regarding this problem and how it is taking up the Town Manager's and staff's time. Solutions were proposed such as requiring Harris to come to the Town Office to see the problems first hand and/or attending a Council Meeting to present their solution. It was also suggested that we check into the other two software programs that are approved by the State for use with their programs. The Town Manager will continue to work on this issue with the staff and Harris. A report is to be provided at the Council meetings until this is resolved. The Town Manager had brought the records to the Town Council Meeting to show interested Councilors after the meeting or they can come to the Town Office to review the records which describe the problems and are in date order.

**6. OLD BUSINESS: None**

**7. NEW BUSINESS:**

**RESOLUTION 23-12:** Resolved that the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to execute the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) Planning Partnership Initiative Grant Agreement for a Planning Study to not exceed \$91,200 with a 40% Town Matching Share of \$36,480 with such match to be paid for from the Town's Carry Forward Funds authorized last year and the Economic Development Budget with such action to approve the new grant agreement

considered an action to replace the former grant agreement for \$80,000; and furthermore to authorize the Town Manager to execute an agreement with the Consultant chosen if required by the State of Maine.

**Moved** by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Donahue to approve Resolution 23-12.

Councilor Jester asked about the grant funds that would become available from this project. The Town Manager advised that currently we have just over \$2 million in funds committed from numerous state and federal programs. We had lost the little Project Canopy grants as they could not move forward but she can re-apply and receive funding again for the tree plantings. The grant that is of concern is the CDBG grant of \$250,000 as we have had it for several years and are unable to proceed until this planning project is completed and the joint MaineDOT and Town project is ready to proceed in the downtown. The PPI Grant project is estimated to have deliverables by February 2024. Then there will be federal grants to apply for with figures being mentioned in the millions, however, she cautioned that this all depends on the final scope of the project that is approved through this State partnership planning grant. It is important that all parties involved on and with the PPI Committee be able to attend the first meeting so it will be 2-3 weeks after we get the State grant signed.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE**

**RESOLUTION 23-13:** Resolved that the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to execute a Listing Agreement with Allied Realty of Skowhegan for the Pittsfield Community Theatre to continue the relationship with the brokers Heather Blodgett & Aaron Bolster with a listing price of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

The Mayor noted that he had information to provide. He was contacted by an interested party who will have a plan to present within a couple of weeks for the downtown and he would like to have this resolution tabled this evening until March 07, 2023.

Councilor Donahue noted that the Council had been dragging its feet long enough in addressing this issue. She advised that the Theatre should be advertised and a price set this evening. This will not affect any offer that may be coming and may actually increase interest.

**Moved** by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Jester to table Resolution 23-13 to the first Regular Council Meeting in March which will be March 07, 2023.

Motion passed 5-2 in favor.

**VOTE AYE:** Hall, Saucier, Margolskee, Jester and Cianchette.

**VOTE NAY:** Donahue and Frost

**RESOLUTION 23-14:** Resolved that the Town Council accept \$2,492.50 from the Maine Forest Service for the State of Maine Volunteer Fire Assistance Program from the Maine Forest Service and authorize the Town Manager to execute the Agreement and Assurances for this program.

**Moved** by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Donahue to approve Resolution 23-14.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE**

**RESOLUTION 23-15:** Resolved that the Town Council approve the filing of an application of a Wal-Mart Community block grant of \$5,000.

**Moved** by Councilor Donahue and seconded by Deputy Mayor Margolskee to approve Resolution 23-15.

Police Chief Morris explained that the grant would provide for active shooter equipment to train the staff and the public.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE**

**RESOLUTION 23-16:** Resolved that the Town Council appoint Megan Hart as an interim director for the MSAD#53 Board of Directors to serve until the next General Election and until a successor is elected and qualified.

**Moved** by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Hall to approve Resolution 23-16.

Councilor Donahue noted that next time it would be good to receive a form from the school similar to the Town's application for a new appointment to a volunteer board/committee in order to learn about the person who is to be appointed. The Town Manager will relay this information to MSAD#53.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE**

**RESOLUTION 23-17:** Resolved that the Town Council appoint members to fill the vacancies on the various Town Boards and Committees.

**Moved** by Councilor Hall and seconded by Deputy Mayor Margolskee to approve Resolution 23-17.

Councilor Hall brought up the terms of the Economic Development Team and how the original terms would have resulted in the appointments of the Committee members expiring in different years and not having all of the committee members expire at once. He noted that this was a violation of the Town Charter. The Town Manager advised that term expirations are not under the Town Charter as the Committees are listed in the Administrative Code. There was a lengthy discussion about the history of the Economic Development Team, terms and the projects that the Team and the Pittsfield Economic Expansion Corporation had worked on. The result of the discussion was that with the terms viewed as not being correct that the Town Office would call the members of the Committee to inquire on their preference for a term length.

It was agreed that all appointments would be approved except those for the Economic Development Team that will be brought back to the next meeting.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE**

## **9. REPORTS: Audience, Council**

Audience:

Jan Laux indicated that the State was suffering a loss in population in the area of Waterville north. He stated there are two Maines being North Maine and South Maine. He advised that if children are not counted that the Town's population is 2,800. The census for 2020 is 3,900 +/- . He was advised with the Town's recent population growth we are listing approximately 4,000. He would like more activities such as the Summer Concert Series to bring people here.

Public Works Director Don Chute advised that if the snow continues as is, his crew will be working at night to haul away the snow in the downtown from 10:00 pm – 6:00 am as there will be a lot less traffic and liability for the Town. Noted that he made the decision to shut down the Transfer Station on Saturday and received complaints. It was very cold, the equipment would not work and he advertised on Facebook.

Councilors:

Councilor Donahue: Advised that the Town should lock in the mowing contract price for the next three years with a local company that has grown their business here. We need to spend our dollars in Town. Commended Donnie for closing the Transfer Station for the safety of the staff and the equipment. Stated we need to have more families move to Town and by expanding recreation programming for the children, having a working downtown and homes for people to buy, we can do this. Looking forward to the PPI Program.

Councilor Frost: No Report.

Councilor Hall: Requested that the Pittsfield Economic Expansion Corporation (PEEC) provide the update of the Economic Development Action Plan for the Town (TM: Stated that she will ask PEEC to meet to do so). Thanked the Town Manager for the report on TRIO which was a lot of work. Thanked Animal Control for dealing with a large skunk problem in District 2 that had been problematic. Thanked Donnie and Public Works for removing snow and keeping the streets clear. Announced Pinnacle Fest will be held on February 24, 2023.

Councilor Jester: Thanked the Department Heads for attending the meeting. Thanked the Town Manager for the report on the Town's software. Advised that he knows that there was considerable time invested and wanted the Town Manager to know that he appreciates it. Stated that we need to remove road blocks to growth, continue to make changes and be a cohesive group. We need to make the community affordable for everyone. Programs like the Partnership Planning Initiative and supporting other partnerships is important.

Councilor Saucier: Thanked Donnie for the tough choice he made to close the Transfer Station. Would like the recreation program to grow and for more people to get involved. We have a certain population that has become involved and we need more people to do so. Excited about many items coming up such as the PPI. Does not know what the vision should be for downtown and it will be good to talk and then to act. A lot of things can happen.

Deputy Mayor Margolskee: Asked about the Department Head reports (TM: Noted that they are presented at the second meeting of the month in the Council package). Advised there has been a decrease in volunteerism since COVID and we need to work to get people involved. Stated that we are all working hard to provide the best service. Need to look as suggestions for IT for timely service to show people that we care. Need to attract other businesses and people to Town. He had

expressed interest at the last meeting to invite Recreation to an upcoming meeting to discuss an expansion of services.

Mayor Cianchette: Thanked the Police Chief for the two new programs he has introduced: Buckets for Seniors which is buckets from Walpole with the Town's sand in it delivered to seniors for their slippery driveways. The second program is a car wash to raise funds for the Town's Keep Me Warm Program which is running out of funds. Would like to talk about the Recreation Department to add activities to it. Noted that Jan and his wife have been running the Summer Concert Series. He would like to see Recreation doing this in the future as well as other activities like this to draw people to Town. Reminded the Finance Committee to come in to sign the Expense Warrants when the Town Manager contacts them as it is important to keep everything running.

## 10. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- A. For the Town Council Members To Enter into an Executive Committee pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. Section 405(6)(A) to discuss the assignment and duties of an employee.

Moved by Deputy Mayor Margolskee, seconded by Councilor Hall to enter an Executive Committee under 1 M.R.S.A Section 405(6)(A) to discuss the assignment and duties of an employee.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE**

The Town Councilors entered Executive Session at 8:20 pm.

Moved by Deputy Mayor Margolskee, seconded by Councilor Frost to exit the Executive Session

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE**

The Town Councilors exited Executive Session at 9:16 pm.

## 11. ADJOURNMENT:

**Moved** by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Frost to adjourn the meeting at 9:17 pm.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

**VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE**

Respectfully submitted,

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Kathryn Ruth, Deputy Town Clerk

*Minutes are a synopsis of a meeting. For more detail, please go to [www.pittsfield.org](http://www.pittsfield.org) and click on Town Meeting Videos to listen to videos of Town Council and other Board/Committee Meetings.*

