

MINUTES

for a regular meeting of the Pittsfield Town Council, held on *Tuesday, February 21, 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; Public Works Director Don Chute; Ben Hall, Recreation and Parks Committee Chairperson; Robert Steeves and Michael Steeves from Steeves Property Maintenance; Ann Duncombe from the Bijou Theatre and Enrichment Center; Brenda Kelly and Leslie Horton from Harris; Kaitlyn Budion from the Morning Sentinel and others.

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 February 07, 2023

Moved by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Hall to adopt the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on February 07, 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. The Town has received the state agreement for the PPI Program for Main Street as well as the contract for the work from the consultant Gorrill Palmer. The Town Manager asked the Consultant for available dates for the company to present the project steps to the Committee and to begin working on the project. Now that we have received the agreements, we can contract for that work under the Charter. The intent is to have everyone on the team - the State of MaineDOT representative, the Kennebec Valley Council of Governments Planner and the Committee have their first meeting on a date/time that everyone can attend. We will be in contact this week to see if everyone can attend on one of the dates provided by the Consultant.

At this time, the Mayor introduced representatives from TRIO, Brenda Kelly and Leslie Horton who were in attendance to discuss the issues that the Town was having with the financial software. The Mayor, several Councilors and Town Manager noted that they did not know that TRIO was coming this evening. The Town Manager advised that if she had known that TRIO was attending that she would have put this item on the agenda so that people would know about it, invited the staff and prepared a summary of issues. She and the staff have an administrative meeting with TRIO representatives scheduled for this week in the office to address these items and she is surprised to see that TRIO is at the Council meeting to discuss the items.

Brenda Kelly thanked the Council for their invitation. She introduced Leslie as the person that the Town should be communicating with. Brenda provided background on the company, their products and their training opportunities. Ms. Kelly advised that she was never contacted about these issues and did not know about them. The Town Manager advised that the tax collection program malfunctions started in August right after the conversion and were reported repeatedly to TRIO through the proper protocol. There were issues with several programs. She noted that temporary fixes would take place and then in most cases the issues would come back. Items had been escalated but not yet resolved. Brenda stated that since the Web upgrade that no one called to make them aware that there were any issues. The Town Manager advised that there were many calls and tickets from August 2022 after the conversion. Ms. Ruth advised that a number of times the staff had called in and were on hold for so long that the calls got disconnected. Brenda would like to know more about why the Town Manager and the staff were spending so much time working on TRIO and advised that training was needed. This led to a lengthy discussion about their training program. Brenda explained in response to a question that the company provides 1 to several days of training when the Towns obtain programs. The Town Manager advised that the first training that the Town received for the new programming was very short and not very good. The Town requested another training. The second time that they had the hour long training it was very good touching on program upgrades. She advised that she was here when the programs were added on for TRIO and the Town was not offered a day to several days of training. A lengthy discussion then incurred about the training, availability and costs. There were many questions about the training, its cost and what it covered. TRIO representatives and the Town expressed an interest in working together to resolve the issues.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

5. REPORTS:

- A. Council Committees: Finance, Ordinance and Recycling
 - B. Board/Committee Updates by Town Councilors and Manager: Planning; Parks and Recreation; and Recycling
 - C. Town Manager's Report
 - Meeting on Ideas for next budget: Expansion of Recreation Program
- A. Finance Committee – Councilor Hall said he needs to check with Eric and Craig but would like to meet next Tuesday evening.
Ordinance Committee – No Report; and
Recycling Committee – The Town Manager reported that there will be a focus on having a video on how to recycle and the master recycling handout updated with new developments.

B. Board/Committee Updates by Town Councilors and Manager

The Town Manager reported that the Planning Board received their Freedom of Access training at their February 13, 2023 meeting. As everyone could not attend due to a death in the family and vacation plans, the group decided to hold elections at their next regularly scheduled meeting.

C. Town Manager's Report

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT FOR 02/21/2023:

Tax Lien Foreclosures, General Assistance requests, grant paperwork and other requests for assistance have been prominent since the last TM Report.

1. Planning Partnership Initiative Program: The contract with MaineDOT for the PPI Program was signed and sent back to the State. We then received an on-line Document to sign for the Contract which was sent back. I was then advised that the electronic contract was not received so I am sending it again. We also received the contract from the new Consultant Gorrill Palmer based upon the MaineDOT contract requirements. Now that we have the contracts authorizing work, we are in the process of scheduling a session to meet State, regional and Consultant schedules as well as the Committee.

2. Code Enforcement – Abandoned Building Statute: Al Tempesta has not yet returned from medical leave so we have asked for the document to be signed by PDF. Alternate Code Enforcement Officer Travis Gould has advised that except his scheduled vacation, he is available to cover the Town as long as we need.

3. Financial System: After compiling all of the background on the tickets and other issues called into Harris since the data conversion to the Windows Platform and making up a master list, I placed everything I had brought to the last several meetings in a box for easy access and/or review. The Town Clerk and I have a meeting with Harris scheduled this week to review the outstanding issues. After filing multiple written tickets requesting assistance, we have been advised that completion dates for items in development which affect taxes, water/sewer and budgetary, will be available.

4. Foreclosures: Twenty eight (28) foreclosure notices for 2020 Taxes were sent. As of today, the Town has acquired by automatic tax lien foreclosure five (5) properties on paper to include vacant land, a mobile home on a rented lot and a building. When people did not sign their certified letters, signed their certified letters and did not come in and/or one letter was not deliverable, we searched the Town's records, white pages and other records on-line to locate telephone numbers and/or addresses. This was an additional step beyond making regular phone calls to remind people. The additional work did allow for contact with a number of people so that they could pay their tax liens off. Unfortunately, several people/entities did not come in or call. A list had been attached to the TM Report the Councilors received.

5. Bar Harbor Bank and Trust Accounts: The bank has proposed revising two of our commercial accounts for the Town to receive a higher interest rate. The bank is working on the paperwork.

6. Credit Card: After completing the paperwork for the Community Card Program, I met with the bank. I was advised I can have two separate cards I would be responsible for, however, I need to produce documents that we do not have in our possession and have never seen here. I have acquired another document that should be as good as the ones on the list from the company.

7. Open Position Recruitment:

A. Police Officers: All F/T Positions are filled. The last Police Officer will not start this week but will start on 01/27/2023. He will be new to the profession so he will need to have a full training period as well

as go to the Academy. The Police Chief provided an introduction. The new hire was very interested and pleased to be selected.

B. F/T Code Enforcement Officer – New position. Little interest so far. I am going to ask Al Tempesta, who is on leave, if it would be permissible to send the position out on the list serve that he participates in.

C. Administrative Assistant – Started advertising after the 01/17/2023 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 new Animal Control Officer (ACO) Russell Craft has started work. I met him last week during an evening visit and found him to be very personable.

9. Water Leak: The leak that has a large area of water along Madawaska Avenue in the ditch/ property along the road is being monitored by Olver Associates. The company was waiting for better weather to address it. They believe it is a service line, however, may need to dig to verify.

10. Roof Repairs: The roofing company had to come back to repair more leaks in the Theatre Roof. To date, a bill has not been received although we have asked several times so that we can keep up to date on the costs being incurred.

11. MaineDOT Work: The Town has received notification of a Pavement Preservation Project on the Interstate I-95 South Bound. This project will be in the Towns of Fairfield to Pittsfield. Competitive bids will be advertised in 2023 with construction projected to start in late Spring and continue to completion in later 2023. Construction work hours will include day and night work, including occasional nighttime ramp closures. The work called “Ultra-Thin Bonded Wearing Course” will begin at the Exit 150 Interchange and extend south 15.95 miles to the Kennebec River in Fairfield.

12. Kennebec Valley Council of Governments Cooperative Purchasing: The Town has signed up for the yearly KVCOG Cooperative Purchasing Bid which includes calcium chloride, rock salt, culverts and geotextiles.

13. Insurance Program Inspections: The Town will have a number of inspections by our insurance company, Glatfelter which covers our property and commercial policies as well as the Maine Municipal Association, which covers Workers Compensation insurance. These inspections will take place in March – April 2023.

14. Federal Grant Website Registration: As noted at the last meeting, this was indeed interesting. Multiple attempts have been made over more than two weeks to access the site to no avail in finishing the registration. All source documents we have produced to prove that we are a municipality that is able to receive grants that are on the master list of acceptable documents, have been rejected. I noticed that a Town Council Resolution is listed so we will process one at the Council Meeting on 02/21/2023 to see if this will work. This new website is reported to be the combination of 10 federal websites. It used to be easy to process the registrations. Now, the federal government and other entities are warning of delays up to several months. I will continue to work on this. If the Town Resolution does not work, I will call the Help Desk again as well as other federal agencies we work with for suggestions in getting this registration processed

15. Maine Community Foundation Grant Application: After the Librarian came back, I provided the letter and some suggestions on the grant application. Mrs. Williams did an excellent job on the write-up. Hopefully this grant to hire a consultant for focus groups will be approved and the information gathered will be able to be considered for the Comprehensive Plan Update.

16. 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. The Town Manager asked to discuss how to proceed on this award at the Council Meeting. Councilors were interested in having the award this year.

17. Meeting on Ideas for next budget: Expansion of Recreation Program: In response to questions and comments from Councilors interested in discussing an expansion of the Recreation program at the meeting, the Town Manager had invited the Chairperson Ben Hall to the meeting. While this item was addressed at the end of the meeting, it is reported on here as it was listed on the agenda under the Town Manager's Report for discussion. Ben reported on how well the Recreation Program was working. The sports such as Basketball are totally different now. It is not just throwing the basketball. Now that they are out of COVID, it is travel, being in a League and being organized. For the first time, Recreation hosted the basketball championship games at MCI. They had over 150 children signed up for basketball. They would like to host more items. There are two open seats on the Committee and one new person has applied to be appointed this evening. A lot of good items are taking place. They do need to communicate better. The website could be updated more and there was a discussion on updating the Town website too rather than just referring people from the Town website to the Recreation website as originally planned. They could post in the Town Office, Library and other locations. They would like to leverage the library for Adult Education. They cannot do everything at once. They would like to keep on developing and enhancing items. Town Councilors thanked Ben for coming and for all of their good work.

6. OLD BUSINESS: None

7. NEW BUSINESS:

RESOLUTION 23-18: Resolved that the Town Council act upon the Mowing Contract to include the mowing of the Department properties, parks and airport for a three year period.

Moved by Councilor Donahue and seconded by Councilor Frost to approve Resolution 23-18.

The Mayor asked Steeves Property Maintenance to present their proposal. Councilor Hall and Councilor Saucier expressed concern over revealing the proposal if the Council decided to go out to bid. Councilor Hall explained that this would give other bidders an unfair advantage over the current contractor. The Town Manager explained as we have gotten this far as to have placed the item on the agenda and enough Councilors were interested in hearing the proposal, the Council needs to know the proposal figures in order to vote. She explained that the Council can not vote upon this item without knowing the proposal. The Mayor explained that the Council needs to hear the presentation in order to vote upon this resolution.

Robert Steeves, owner of Steeves Property Maintenance introduced himself and his brother Michael. Their company is located here in Pittsfield and they held their price last year although there were increased costs. This past year the Recreation Department installed an irrigation system and the area now needs to be mowed more regularly. In order to keep the Little League field at Hathorn Park presentable, they have had to mow it two times a week instead of one time as in the

past. This has been costing them \$100 a week to do the extra work at Hathorn. The Town and its staff have treated them fairly and have been good to work with so they did not ask for an increase last year. For the next three years, they would like to continue to work for the Town.

The proposal is to add \$1,600 to the baseline to cover the extra work at Hathorn Park which would then result in a cost of \$19,670. For 2023 there would be a 3% increase to \$20,262. In 2024, the price would be \$20,870 and in 2025, the price would be \$21,496.

Councilor Donahue noted that after the addition of the \$1,600 to cover the additional work that was created by the new irrigation system, that the increase is small being \$592 in 2023. There was a discussion on all the increases in pricing that have been going on.

Councilor Saucier stated that being a businessman, that he wanted the work bid out. Although the Steeves do very good work, he wants the little guy just starting out to be able to bid on the work.

The Town Manager advised that some years the Town has bid out the work and taken the low bidder's price to find that the work does not get completed and there are many complaints. At one point, there were so many problems that this is how Public Works ended up mowing the parks and dedicating staff to all the parks and town properties. This took away from other work. Last year after seeing the quality of the work and how easy the company was to work with, the Town decided have the Steeves continue to work for the Town. The staff would like to continue this.

Motion passed 6-1 in favor.

VOTE AYE: Hall, Donahue, Margolskee, Frost, Jester and Cianchette.

VOTE NAY: Saucier

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

RESOLUTION 23-19: Resolved that the Town Council approve the Request for Proposals for Consulting Services with Options to update the Town of Pittsfield's Assessing Records and authorize the Town Manager to seek bids for same.

Moved by Councilor Donahue and seconded by Councilor Frost to approve Resolution 23-19.

The Town Manager advised that although there was interest, the Town did not receive any bids by the due date. Ms. Ruth noted her conversation with the current Tax Assessor and how the certified rate was estimated to continue to go down. Since we have to re-bid this, she added two Options to see if we could afford to complete the project in less years by doubling up the quarter work. While we may not be able to do this due to cost, we will know that we tried to increase the certified ratio that has decreased quickly due to how property is selling for high prices.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

RESOLUTION 23-20: Resolved that the Town Council approve a document depicting the establishment of the Town of Pittsfield for a federal government website for funding opportunities.

Moved by Councilor Donahue and seconded by Deputy Mayor Margolskee to approve Resolution 23-20.

Councilor Hall was concerned that he did not see the exact language for the document. The Town Manager stated that since we do not have the original documents dating as far back as 1891 that the Council can document this and the Town Manager will provide it to the federal funding website as reported on previously to the Council. The Mayor indicated that this is needed in order to use the federal website for grants.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

RESOLUTION 23-21: Resolved that the Town Council appoint members to fill the vacancies on the various Town Boards and Committees.

After a lengthy discussion on options to address what took place in 2020 with the terms of the Economic Development Team during the COVID shutdown, an amendment was proposed by Councilor Donahue.

Moved by Councilor Donahue and seconded by Councilor Frost to amend Resolution 23-21 that when the Committee members meet that they appoint a Chair and decide on the terms among their membership to be reported to the Town Clerk for the official record.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

A. Department Reports for 01/31/2023 Accomplishments/Achievements

The Town Manager advised that all Department Head/Supervisor reports were included with the exception of the Cemetery that had closed down last year (but did open up for Kenneth Cianchette's funeral) and Code Enforcement. Mr. Tempesta remains on leave with Mr. Gould, the Alternate CEO, covering requests in a few hours each week between his other part-time positions in the region). The reports will be discussed at the upcoming Department Head meeting this week.

B. Financial Reports as of 01/31/2023: Budget Expenditure Report Revenue Collections Report Excise Tax Collections Comparison Report State Revenue Sharing Comparison Report Economic Development Accounts Update Housing Revolving Loan Update Tax Increment Financing Update Pittsfield Future Account Update Transfer Station/Recycling Monthly Report

The Town Manager had forwarded the Budget and Revenue Reports for 01/31/2023 to the Town Council and copies are available this evening. Ms. Ruth noted that after the TRIO malfunction with

the budget closing out with the screen indicating that the end of the year close out had been successful and finding out that the budget was then not accessible, TRIO restored the data multiple times to get us going again. She had to check all the accounts which took considerable time to locate and re-enter missing information but now the Budget and Revenues for 01/31/2023 reconcile. She has started working on 02/28/2023.

9. REPORTS: Audience, Council

Audience:

Ann Mathews: Indicated that she attended the meeting in order to advise the Council that the Bijou Theatre and Enrichment Center has filled their board and filed with the State their board bylaws and Articles of Incorporation this week.

Councilors:

Councilor Donahue: Would be interested in seeing the facilities report for all of the parks that was tasked to the Parks and Recreation Committee. Understands that the Committee has been working hard on the programming. Would like to be involved with a walk through in the parks with Recreation and Public Works. Asked how TRIO came to be attend the meeting as the Town Manager and the Mayor did not know about this. (Councilor Hall stated that he had been in contact with Brenda since last April when there were issues. He invited Brenda to attend the Council meeting to present (TM noted that the Town Office Administrative Staff were meeting with TRIO and did not know TRIO was coming to the Council meeting). Councilor Hall stated that he did not know that the staff was meeting with TRIO so he scheduled a meeting).

Councilor Frost: Advised the Madawaska leak had been worked on by Public Works. Received good feedback on the sand buckets. This is a unique program. Asked about the fee to use a moped that can only be used for three months of the season yet the horses and buggies are out all year leaving debris but do not pay a fee (TM noted the state law requires a fee for the moped registration that does not see fair and that state laws have not been updated to address the buggies).

Councilor Hall: Asked if the Treasurer and Tax Collector position had been filled. (TM advised that she is the Treasurer and Tax Collector). Stated that the Financial Clerk has a focus on Treasury and Tax Collector (TM noted that one of the Financial Clerks is learning this type of work to provide support). Appreciated the information from Brenda. Thanked the Steeves for coming in. Glad to have feedback from Ben on what is available.

Councilor Jester: Stated the Finance Committee is not just for signing Expense Warrants. Requested an update from the Department Heads on the hot button items during the budget process. Noted we are two months into the budget and wants to know about fire trucks. Stated to the PW Director that he heard he had an estimate for the roof (PW Director Don Chute indicated he did receive an updated estimate). Would like a report on the Fire Chief's review of purchases such as the SCBA (TM indicated that the budget is going to be discussed at the Department Head/Supervisors Meeting later this week. Updates will be on the next Finance Committee Meeting agenda).

Councilor Saucier: Sees a lot of involvement to support the children in the community. Would like to enhance communication with an electronic sign (TM noted that it had been put in for the budget several times now but does not get approved as other items were viewed by the Council as more important with limited funds available). Indicated there is a lot of weight put on the importance of community involvement such as having the Steeves, a local business, work for the Town. Can we put an incentive in our bids for local businesses? (TM noted that there is a way to do this, although

it is not recommended legally).

Deputy Mayor Margolskee: Proposed the concept of re-purposing funds remaining from the Bicentennial Celebration toward an electronic sign. Amazed with the activities going on with the Recreation Department. Unless you are on the Recreation e-mail/text you do not know about the events such as the basketball playoffs. He would promote the use of these funds for signage to advertise town events as it is important.

Mayor Cianchette: Thanked everyone for attending. Noted there is more to Recreation than just sports. We need to promote the Adult Education program and include celebrations in the future. He would like to see if the Recreation Director's position can be a full-time position and understand where we should be as a community. While COVID put an end to the Egg Festival, would like to see a Farm Festival in the future. Asked Councilor Donahue for the date of the next Annual Cheese Festival and if the event is going to be held here in Pittsfield from now on (Councilor Donahue advised the event will be held on September 10, 2023. She is working very hard to try to have it scheduled here each year. For 2023 the annual Cheese Festival will be in Pittsfield. The paperwork will be on the next agenda).

10. ADJOURNMENT:

Moved by Councilor Hall and seconded by Councilor Jester to adjourn the meeting at 8:47 pm.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn Ruth, Deputy Town Clerk

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

