

MINUTES

for a regular meeting of the Pittsfield Town Council, held on *Tuesday, March 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 Vicente Morris; Officer Erica Fredrick-Rock; Pittsfield Economic Expansion Corporation Vice-President Michael Gray; Peter Logiodice, Jan Laux, Michael Smith, Scott Therrien, 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 21, 2023

Moved by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Hall to adopt the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on February 21, 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 upcoming introductory meeting of the PPI Committee on Thursday, March 30, 2023 at 6:30 pm in the Council Chambers. The consultant Gorrill Palmer is to provide an agenda for the meeting with talking points/important information so that the meeting will be effective given the importance of the work that needs to be accomplished. It was crucial to obtain a date that as many people as possible could attend that would involve all of the State and Regional representatives as well as the consultants and other interested parties that will be important for the project. In reference to a question, the Town Manager advised that the deliverables are due at the end of February 2024. Then based upon the results of the feasibility study, federal funding opportunities will likely be available.

The Mayor noted at this time that he would like to read a press release that the Police Chief provided this evening regarding a drug arrest that took place. The press release was read. The

Police Chief advised that the individual had come from New York and was staying here in town in an apartment selling drugs. The Mayor and Councilors were very pleased that drugs had been taken off the street and thanked the Police Chief and Department.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS: N/A

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 the Finance Committee needed to re-schedule their meeting as two of the members were sick. The meeting will be held on March 14 at 6:30 pm.
Ordinance Committee – No Report; and
Recycling Committee – The Town Manager reported that the Committee had scheduled a meeting for 6:00 pm on March 15.

B. Board/Committee Updates by Town Councilors and Manager
The Town Manager reported that she will know on Wednesday if the Planning Board will be meeting next Monday, March 13 at 7:00 pm.

C. Town Manager's Report

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT FOR 03/07/2023:

STREAMLINED VERSION FOR TOWN COUNCIL:

1. Planning Partnership Initiative Program: The Kick Off Meeting for the Planning Partnership Initiative Program has been scheduled for Thursday, March 30, 2023 at 6:30 pm. It is important to have the Consultant; the Landscape Architect, a subconsultant; MaineDOT; Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG); the Mayor and members of the Committee able to participate. After additional discussion, we were able to get enough parties signed up for March 30. The Kick Off Meeting will set the stage for the rest of work to be completed. The Consultant will prepare materials so that we can have a productive meeting. I saw a PPI Agenda with talking points from another community created by the Consultant and it was very comprehensive. The MaineDOT will be able to attend that date so that they can assist by providing background on PPI Projects.

2. Code Enforcement Coverage: We have been advised that Al Tempesta will be back to work as Code Enforcement Officer in April 2023. Meantime, the Alternate Code Enforcement Officer Travis Gould is learning about the Town's ordinances and finds the work very interesting. He is doing well and has committed to staying until Al is back.

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 had placed all materials in a box for easy access and/or review. To date, no one has looked at the materials. The Administrative Meeting that the Town Clerk and I scheduled with Harris Representatives went well. We had scheduled the meeting to focus on the issues which the Town had been having since the data

conversion. Their software staff were able to duplicate the issues in their copy of our data which means that these are development issues that need to be fixed and are not training related. The TRIO staff were going to go to their Development Office and request permanent fixes in addition to the one/s currently on the list. A meeting of all parties who need to work on the water/sewer software program is scheduled for this Wednesday (previously was to be scheduled last week) between TRIO, Mueller, Olver and the Town to come to a solution on addressing the water/sewer programming.

4. Foreclosures: We are compiling all the records for the foreclosures including past tax liens for a thorough review before a recommendation is made to the Council for disposition. This will include going out to take photographs for an updated record and more research for updated addresses in two cases. Under the Tax Acquired Property Ordinance, those with residential property that the former owners are living in are to be contacted and offered the property back for the back and current tax liens/taxes, interest and costs as well as advertising costs for the ordinance. In addition, one of the properties may have code violations so fixing items will be part of any buy back. The photographs will be helpful for the Council in disposition as well as the Code Officer.

5. Credit Card: Applications are in progress. 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 needed to produce documents that we do not have in our possession and have never seen here. I acquired another document that should be as good as the ones on the list from the company. I also provided a copy of the Council Resolution verifying our crucial information to the bank.

6. Open Position Recruitment:

A. F/T Code Enforcement Officer – New position. We are starting to get some interest from applicants who would be learning the CEO and LPI fields as well as taking the required tests.

B. Administrative Assistant – Started advertising after the 01/17/2023 meeting given our workload.

C. P/T Help in the Office – To date, there has not been much interest due to the lack of benefits.

7. Federal Grant Website Registration: The new Council Resolution worked well as it was accepted and then I was able to finish the registration. The Town received notification that we are officially Active in the Federal Grant data base for payments and applications with a new due date for re-registration of 02/29/2024.

8. General Assistance Cases: The call and drop by volume of contact for general assistance are the highest I have ever seen. In the end, the number of applications actually turned in to date are certainly more than usual but not anywhere near the level of the initial contact. We are providing application packets, program details, landlord listings and other resources. Verification follow-up has been very time-consuming as there are more applications started with clients in one month now than we used to have in multiple months prior to and after COVID.

9. 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. Attached is a list of those nominees who have been proposed by Councilors and staff in the past. If you would like to add other names, those can be sent to me via e-mail or provided at the Council Meeting/after the Council Meeting. It is not necessary to make

a decision at this Council Meeting. In order to have a Celebration in April, it would be good to decide upon the Spirit of America Volunteer at the 03/21/2023 Council Meeting.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

RESOLUTION 23-13: (Tabled to 03/07/2023) 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 \$_____.

Moved by Councilor Donahue and seconded by Councilor Hall to remove Resolution 23-13 from the table to adopt Resolution 23-13 pending discussion for disposition.

A lengthy discussion then took place regarding this resolution involving the Town Councilors, Vice-President Michael Gray from the Pittsfield Economic Expansion Corporation and Michael Smith from Hammer Down Inc.

PEEC Vice-President Michael Gray spoke briefly. He noted that last August-September PEEC was charged to bring a buyer forward for the Theatre who would have the skill to develop it. PEEC did this. The Council had a different idea. He suggests that we list the property and charge the Mayor, Town Manager and Mr. Bolster to work on this. He stated we have a person who has a passion for this project to improve the theatre. PEEC can meet to help move the development forward.

Michael Smith spoke at length about his background and what he wanted to do at the Theatre. He had been shot down by the Councilors for not having a business plan. He talked about his plan. He had provided information. Mr. Smith believes that the Town should start with the Theatre and then after a successful project, other projects will follow.

Councilor Jester thanked Michael Smith for the information that he presented and noted that PEEC let you down that night. He advised that the Council did not receive all the information from PEEC. It was a disservice that your plan was not presented. PEEC did not prep you.

The Mayor suggested that there be a motion to table this Resolution for 60 days to the second meeting in May 2023 as there is a proposal to develop one-third to one-fourth of Main Street that he has very recently been advised of. He indicated that it is a significant plan and no longer just the theatre. He would suggest that we table this Resolution or vote it down.

Councilor Donahue noted that at the meeting last year that a lot of what Mr. Smith brought up was presented. The Council had the opportunity to ask for additional information and when a business plan was brought up, Hammer Down Inc. agreed to provide it. However, the Council still voted it down. She advised that the Council should not be involved in a private sale with a public building and should have a realtor involved to represent our interest. She advised that there has been discussion of a local 501c3 taking it over, however, it does not have the funding. Basic maintenance is not taking place and the building is going downhill. She would like to see it listed.

Councilor Hall did not agree and indicated that we should not be having the Realtors spend time on this when we know that a proposal is being worked on. It is not costing us to keep the theatre for two more months. He advised that anyone worth their sale would have provided a business plan.

A number of people started talking at once and the Mayor requested that there not be back and forth discussions.

The Town Manager noted that very recently she was advised that there is a business proposal being worked on for the downtown which was significant and the party asked that this agenda item be tabled this evening. She advised that a timeframe was not provided.

The Mayor noted this fits in with what he had discussed. He advised that this would be a good time to call the vote.

VOTE AYE: Donahue

VOTE NAY: Hall, Saucier, Margolskee, Frost, Jester and Cianchette.

VOTE: Motion failed 1-6.

7. NEW BUSINESS:

ORDINANCE 23-02: (Set to Public Hearing on 03/21/2023) The Town of Pittsfield hereby ordains to repeal Chapter 2. Administrative Code, Division 1, Article 1, Section 110. Remote Participation Procedures.

Moved by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Saucier to move Ordinance 23-02 to public hearing.

Mayor Cianchette noted that he requested that this item be placed on the agenda in order to avoid any more inappropriate issues with ZOOM which had taken place at the last meeting. ZOOM had been put in place during the pandemic and we no longer need it. As it was put in by Ordinance, this is the reason why it was set up as an Ordinance on the agenda.

Councilor Saucier really likes the ability to have everyone participate. He wants to be here in person but if not, he wants to have the ability for the Councilors and the public to be able to participate. He advised that it can be set to public hearing but he would like to explore other avenues such as a safer platform or using e-mail or another format to obtain the access rather than having it available so anyone can get to it.

Councilor Donahue noted that having the access for everyone to participate is very important as several Councilors have been away or ill and been able to attend and there have been child care issues so that a Councilor had to leave but then could participate. She, herself, ran a meeting from Ireland when she was away on vacation. Councilor Donahue noted that there were controls that can be utilized that the Town Manager has already put in process this evening such as having audio only. She advised that we could not list the login on the agenda and have people call in beforehand in order to participate. She noted that the situation was not good, but has happened before in many towns and businesses so they took steps to avoid it. She advised we should keep this as the Town Hall Streams is a passive observance and we do not know what will happen in the future.

The Town Manager noted that these were all very good options to look at and that some of them will not meet the State law requirements for participation. However, we can experiment by only signing people in that are known for right now, not listing the contact information on the agenda, signing people up and sending them the contact information, etc. and then decide how to change the ordinance if necessary.

Motion failed with all votes against scheduling the public hearing.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS NAY

RESOLUTION 23-22: Resolved that the Town Council re-allocate funding of up to \$9,000 originally approved for Celebration items from the funding available in the Special Revenue – Bicentennial Account toward the cost of an electronic display sign for town-related announcements.

Moved by Deputy Mayor Margolskee to table Resolution 23-22 until the Council Meeting on May 02, 2023 by when more information can be collected, seconded by Councilor Donahue.

Deputy Mayor Margolskee explained the number of items that need to be researched before this Resolution should be passed including the cost, one-sided or two-sided, MaineDOT and town setbacks, where the funds would come from due to the cost and other items. He believes the concept is great, however, more research is needed.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

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

Moved by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Donahue to discuss Resolution 23-19 for approval.

The Mayor explained that there are two candidates volunteering for committees: Elizabeth Bridger for the Cemetery and Desiree Jester for a second term on the Library Committee.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS: N/A

9. REPORTS: Audience, Council

Audience:

Jan Laux: At the Bicentennial, there was a contest for a slogan - Pittsfield, a Good Place to Call Home. He then noted maybe. He would like to have that evaluated in five years. A lot of items can happen. This is not going to be an Industrial community as it was in the past. It will be a place for people to find a home, have recreation and do items. Need to take a bus around town.

Michael Smith: Stated that he no longer wants to participate with the theatre. But someone has to take the first step. He is willing to help. Basically, he would love to see a project downtown come to fruition but if in two months if it does not go forward, he would like it to go in another direction.

Councilors:

Councilor Donahue: Thanked the PD for the update to the Council and the general public. Thanked Michael and Scott for becoming involved and having a vision. Stated she loves planning and envisioning what we can be but also wants to look at the items that we can do now such as the theatre. If we are constantly waiting for something to come along, then we miss items that can happen. PEEC will be having a meeting soon to talk about the Economic Development plan update. She is excited about Renys moving out to the old Rite Aid building to have more space and open up a spot in the downtown. She is also excited about the PPI project and what we can do.

Councilor Frost: Impressed with the Police Chief and how quickly he has moved the department forward. Also impressed with the Animal Control Officer who was out looking for skunks one evening for well over an hour. Recommended that Michael Smith consider getting on PEEC.

Councilor Hall: Apologized to Michael Smith, passionate about the Town and where it is at and where it can go. Stated that sometimes his professionalism is not as it should be. Thanked Michael Smith for coming. Thanked the Police for being at the Pinnaclefest.

Councilor Jester: Thanked Mr. Smith for attending and providing the behind piece that was never transmitted well to the Council. Understands what Jan is getting to, he will be living here the rest of his life. We need to put our money where our mouth is. Thanked Chief Morris on the updates and pleased with the team that he is building.

Councilor Saucier: Thanked Michael for coming. Want to bring things forward as does Michael. The Chief was highlighted on the radio with a shout out for his ability to attract talent. Pleased with the visibility and seeing items happen so people realize that this is a place where we do not want drugs. He stated that other departments are going to follow suit with positive energy due to what the PD is doing.

Deputy Mayor Margolskee: Appreciates the conversations that he has had with Chief Morris and the tour that he had of the station. It has greatly improved and looks good. ZOOM is important for participation of residents. He is approaching 75 this year and does not want to wait for 5 years on taking the maybe out of the slogan.

Mayor Cianchette: Thanked everyone for attending. Let the ladies know upstairs that they are very professional, always get the information that he requests and that he appreciates them. They deal with the public and it is the nature of the beast that they have stressful jobs. (TM thanked the Mayor for his comments and noted that the staff will appreciate it). Happy to serve with all the Councilors. He appreciates everyone's input.

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.

Deputy Mayor Margolskee made a motion to enter Executive Session, seconded by Councilor Jester.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

The Town Council entered Executive Session at 8:06 p.m.

Deputy Mayor Margolskee made a motion to leave Executive Session, seconded by Councilor Hall.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

The Town Council exited Executive Session at 10:40 p.m.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

11. ADJOURNMENT:

Moved by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Hall to adjourn the meeting at 10:41 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.

