

MINUTES

for a regular meeting of the Pittsfield Town Council, held on *Tuesday, March 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 (arrived at 6:36 pm)

Councilors Present by ZOOM: None

Councilors Absent: None

Also Present: Town Manager Kathryn Ruth; Police Chief Vicente Morris; Officer Erica Fredrick-Rock; Officer Brett Lowell; Animal Control Officer Russell Craft; Peter Logiodice; Jan Laux; Damion Carveiro and family; William Clover and family; 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 March 07, 2023

Moved by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Hall to adopt the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on March 07, 2023.

Motion passed with all votes in favor (6-0)

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

3. PRESENTATIONS, CONGRATULATIONS AND INTRODUCTIONS:

A. Introduction of new Police Officers and Animal Control Officer by Chief Morris

Chief Morris introduced the newest members of the Police Department - Officer Fredrick-Rock; Officer Lowell and Animal Control Officer Craft. The Chief passed out a copy of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Code of Ethics. He asked that the Officers and ACO consider the contents of this document as they go about their duties. The Chief asked that the document then be read and signed off on. The new hires reviewed and signed the SOP. The Town Councilors welcomed the new members of the Police Department.

B. Community and Economic Development Activities and Events

1. Projects and Grants:

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

B. Congressionally Directed Funding Application

1. A. Planning Partnership Initiative Program Update:

A. The Town Manager issued a reminder of the upcoming kickoff meeting of the PPI Committee on Thursday, March 30, 2023 at 6:30 pm in the Council Chambers. The consultant Gorrill Palmer is providing an agenda 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. At the completion of the study, the Town will have specific recommendations and backup material to then apply for federal funding with the assistance of the MaineDOT. This is federal funding that otherwise would not be available to the Town.

1. B. Congressionally Directed Funding Application

After being advised by Olver Associates that the Town did not receive the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Funds (DWSRF) for the Birchwood Terrace Water Main Construction Project we brainstormed with Water Operator Annaleis Hafford, VP for Operations at Olver Associates. The Town has applied for all available funding sources for water projects at the State level. We turned to the Congressional Directed Grant applications which were due last week. Annaleis provided the assistance of a staff person at Olver Associates. These are extremely competitive and the Town spent four days collecting up the information needed and contacting the offices of the U.S. Senators and Congressman. In summary, several days were spent creating the best application, narrative and community support background that we could as well as discussing the applications with the Congressional Offices. The competition is fierce, however, we thought we should try all avenues available due to the importance of getting this project completed. The Town has a \$57,000 DWSRF grant for design of the water and is approved for CWSRF loan funds for the design, construction and inspection of the sewer but is lacking the funding for the remainder of the water project which is over \$1 million dollars. The Congressionally Directed Grant Application process was definitely different and even though we could only concentrate on that project for several days, it was a valuable experience to know how to do this for the future.

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 noted that the Finance Committee Meeting was cancelled due to the blizzard. He will talk with the other members to re-schedule.

Ordinance Committee – No Report; and

Recycling Committee – The Town Manager reported that the Committee's next meeting is scheduled for May 17, 2023 at 6:00 pm.

B. Board/Committee Updates by Town Councilors and Manager

The Town Manager reported that the next regularly scheduled meeting for the Planning Board is April 10, 2023 at 7:00 pm.

C. Town Manager's Report

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT FOR 03/21/2023:

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, 03/30/2023 at 6:30 pm. It is important to have the Consultant; 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. As soon as the meeting package arrives, we will distribute it to the Committee. Then we will contact the Town Councilors not on the Committee, Planning Board and PEEC as well as advertise it.

2. Pittsfield Economic Expansion Corporation (PEEC) Meeting: PEEC had a very interesting and stimulating meeting on Monday, 03/20/2023. We will report on it briefly at the meeting.

3. Code Enforcement Coverage: Building and Plumbing permit requests are starting to come in. There are plans for some new houses in the works. We have several larger projects wandering around, however, a site plan review application has not yet been filed.

4. Airport Airfield Wide Crack Seal and Pavement Markings: This project will be scoped this week with the State and Federal Government to determine how to proceed and file a grant.

5. Funding for Water Main Replacement: Olver Associates advised that we did not receive the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan funding (DWSRF) for Birchwood Terrace Construction. Our application is on the back up list for when some of the projects that are awarded drop out. The backup list is very long. Looking around for funding, Olver Associates and I worked on a Congressional Directed Grant application to the U.S. Senators and Congressman. The competition is fierce. Several days were spent creating the best application, narrative and community support background that we could as well as discussing the applications with the Congressional Offices. Receiving the DWSRF funds would have moved Birchwood Terrace forward quickly which had been waiting for this funding. We are going to apply for the CWSRF funds for the sewer part of the project and start the DWSRF Design work now that it is clear where we stand. We will complete several steps and then re-evaluate how to proceed further. As you know, our water rates are low so our applications do not score high. If we have to get a commercial loan, it is going to be more expensive than a 0% interest or 1% interest loan.

6. Economic Development Projects: There are a few projects being reviewed and we have provided documents and background materials. One project that can be discussed is a new commercial hangar for an interested party. A new hangar requires working with the Code Enforcement Officer on the specifications and permitting as well as organizing the review of the Town Council, Planning Board and Airport Committee of various parts of this project.

7. Computer Financial System: The software expert for TRIO we have been working with has referred items to the Development Office for permanent fixes. Fixes have been applied to the taxes and budget. At first it seemed that everything was fine, however, as we found with the budget, one fix may result in another fix. The Automatic posting did not automatically post so it has been resubmitted. As we have over 2200 tax accounts, we are looking at how to check them in the most efficient manner. I will be working on this on Thursday-Friday of this week in between meetings. The fix is supposed to find all of the accounts that had the "rogue" interest added to it for random years even going back to 1998 and 1999. These random years did not have any principal or interest due but the computer program thought that interest was due and attempted to apply it. This strange occurrence could sometimes be stopped and we could get the payment into the right year, but other times even though the tax payment was applied to the correct year, the payment would go where it wanted within that person's account and be stuck there. Water and Sewer is more complex. A meeting of all parties who needed to work on the water/sewer software program took place after re-scheduling. After work in TRIO by the software expert, we now have a new data set, however,

the last two digits of each reading did not transfer over so we are manually entering the last two digits of each reading in what is called a Play Environment. This is where we can test out how well the revisions that were made will work so that we will not have to get the bills fixed again by the company after having an accurate edit report and an accurate bills creation report. A testing of 10 readings showed responsive and reasonable bills so we are continuing. If this works well, the results in the Play Environment will be moved over to the active TRIO. Then we need to review the readings and check math.

8. Maine Housing Water Assistance Program: Maine Housing will be expanding the benefits offered under this program in order to allow eligible households to receive up to a \$1,000 benefit as a credit issued to their vendor to assist with future payments on water and wastewater bills along with coverage for past due bills. The program will continue to provide coverage for past due bills. We are scheduled to receive our second monthly payment for qualified applicants.

9. 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. We are learning interesting information about some of the properties. The Town is fortunate that we only had a few foreclosures, two of which were plots of land.

10. Credit Card: I met with the bank to be advised that the credit cards were approved and received written confirmation. The credit card came in the mail and in another envelope from the same company on the same day was a letter suspending the credit card as the credit card company needed more information. This information was the same information that was already filled in on the application that got it approved. We are getting closer though.

11. Maine Tax Portal for tax payments: The only tax payments that the Town has are on items that we sell such as water, concessions, etc. We will sign up for the new Maine Tax Portal so that we can pay the sales tax on line with the credit card. Normally, I would send a check as that should be simple, however, this should be easier as we have had a number of sales tax checks that we have sent in to the State lost and then have to re-issue the checks.

12. Open Position Recruitment:

A. F/T Code Enforcement Officer – New position. We have started getting some inquiries. We also have the two applications from individuals who are 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. We have received a few inquiries and applications.

C/ Recycling Attendant – Our Recycling Coordinator would now like to advertise this position. He had a great employee working several days a week who would have been laid off from the Town from the Cemetery Department during the Winter months. Instead, that employee worked at the Recycling Facility and did a super job.

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

E. F/T Police Officer – One of the police officers has resigned effective 04/09/2023. The Chief has two candidates he has been talking to about the position who are interested, therefore, this will not need to be advertised.

13. Town-wide Appraisal to Maintain Equitable Assessments: This re-bid with options yielded one bid from our current Assessor. Two options were provided. This will be on the agenda for the first meeting in April 2023.

14. Negotiations for the next Police Contract: A tentative contract has been reached pending approval by the Town Council and the Union membership. The Police Labor Negotiation Committee met with the Police Union twice as well as had their own meetings. The Police Chief and I have reviewed the tentative contract to request a few minor revisions. I expect that the ratification will be on the agenda of the first meeting in April 2023.

15. General Assistance Cases: The call and drop by volume of contact for general assistance continues to be the highest we have seen. We now have 5 applications that have come in all at once. Meeting with the client, explaining the forms and putting together their budget to assist them as well as making referrals is needed on each application. Verification follow-up has been time-consuming.

16. Meeting with Departments for Presentations and Awards: We would like to invite the Town Councilors to a Social Hour after work next Tuesday, 03/28/2023 to hear brief presentations from the departments and for awards. If that date does not work for the Town Councilors, we can do this at a Council Meeting in 04/2023 starting earlier in the evening.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

7. NEW BUSINESS:

RESOLUTION 23-24: Resolved that the Town Council approve the Mutual Police Aid Agreement with the Town of Newport and authorize signature.

Moved by Councilor Hall and seconded by Deputy Mayor Margolskee to approve Resolution 23-24.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

RESOLUTION 23-25: Resolved that the Town Council approve the Mutual Police Aid Agreement with the Towns of Skowhegan and Clinton and authorize signature.

Moved by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Donahue to approve Resolution 23-25.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

RESOLUTION 23-26: Resolved that the Town Council act upon the Nomination for the Pittsfield Spirit of America Award for 2023.

Moved by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Jester to open discussion on Resolution 23-26.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

The Councilors reviewed the list of nominees. Mayor Cianchette stated he would like to add the name of Kenneth Cianchette to the list. After discussion of Mr. Cianchette's accomplishments including his work on fields at MCI, the Mayor asked for a vote.

Moved by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Saucier to adopt Resolution 23-26 with the name of Kenneth Cianchette.

This nomination shall be in the memory of Kenneth Cianchette who passed recently.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

RESOLUTION 23-27: Resolved that the Town Council approve the issuance of a parade permit to the MCI Key Club for a 5K Color Run on May 21, 2023 at 9:00 am to benefit the Pittsfield Parks and Recreation Department and waive the permit fees.

Moved by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Hall to approve Resolution 23-27.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

RESOLUTION 23-28: Resolved that the Town Council approve the Public Exhibition Permit for the Maine Cheese Festival to be held on Sunday, September 10, 2023.

Moved by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Frost to approve Resolution 23-28.

Councilor Donahue, who submitted the application as the Secretary of the Maine Cheese Guild, provided background on the event for the Town Council and public. This is the fourth year of the festival. It has moved around before coming to Pittsfield. At Manson Park there is room to grow. The event has over 1700 attendees. The organization received a grant for tourism attraction. They are focusing on places to stay, places to eat and things to do so that people will come and put their money into Pittsfield. They will be back as they are modifying the alcoholic beverage process to have taste testing for the entire event. A discussion then incurred about the importance of the event to the Town and the region and how Councilor Donahue is trying to keep the event here and the Councilors and Town Manager would like to assist with this.

Motion passed with all votes in favor.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

- 8. DISCUSSION ITEMS: N/A**
 - A. Department Reports for 02/28/2023
Accomplishments/Achievements

- B. Financial Reports as of 02/28/2023:
 - 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 provided a brief overview of the Department Reports noting that we should have a report from the CEO Al Tempesta for April as he is expected back at that time and from the Cemetery Sexton Peter Snow as clean-up work will start at the Cemetery as the weather clears up.

The Town Manager reported on the Financial Reports for 02/28/2023 advising that overall with the municipal budget, water, sewer and special revenues, 20.64% of the budget has been expended. When we focus on the Municipal Budget, we are through 16.7% of the budget period and 11.5% of the budget is expended. Ms. Ruth noted that the expense totals for the month are correct, however, that the expenses totaling \$123,105.85 in February were stuck in the budgetary program for no apparent reason and would not post to the accounts. TRIO fixed the malfunction and posted the expenses. While she was reconciling the budget, she found that this automatic posting is in the budget but did not post to the control accounts that track entries. The ticket was re-opened and we will continue to work with TRIO on a resolution so we can close out February.

For the municipal revenue budget, water, sewer and special revenues, 11.10% of the budget has been collected. Focusing on the Municipal Revenue Budget, we are through 16.7% of the budget period and have collected 10.8% of the budget. This is similar to past years as a majority of revenue sources are collected in the last months of the period.

9. REPORTS: Audience, Council

Audience:

William Clover: Introduced himself as a business person who wants to buy the theatre and would like to know more about it. He talked to the Town Manager about the opportunity last year. He just called the Mayor about the property and would like to make a presentation and offer. Mr. Clover wants to know what the Council and community want to see at the theatre.

The Mayor advised that he had discussed the theatre with Mr. Clover when he called and invited him to the meeting to discuss this with the Council.

Councilor Jester advised that another project got tripped up by not being prepared and having a plan. He advised that there needs to be a clearly stated vision. He is interested in off Council time to discuss this with Mr. Clover. The project needs to better the community, be part of the creation of a vision for downtown Pittsfield and align with that. A business plan is needed along with financial background. Councilor Jester advised that a large project is coming in to the May 7 Council Meeting. This would be a competing idea.

Mr. Clover advised that he is a Real Estate Investor. He has the ability to do the work that is needed at the Theatre. He wishes to return it to be a theatre playing the old movies.

The Mayor advised Mr. Clover to contact the Town Manager with his proposal so that it can be scheduled for review by the Town Council.

Jan Laux: Noted that the Summer Concert Series has been here for 8 years. There are new faces. The response from the business community is great. There will be 9 Thursday concerts. The fire department wagon and the food trucks will be present.

Councilors:

Councilor Donahue: Advised she was at the State House today as it was Agriculture Day. Welcomed the new officers and glad the department is at full force. Thank you to Jan and Barb for the Summer Concert Series. Thanked the Town Council for approving the Guild's Annual Cheese Festival. Very pleased to see that the PPI Planning project is starting.

Councilor Frost: Glad to meet the ACO.

Councilor Hall: Thanked Officers for working on drug issues in town – this is going in the right direction. Asked about the Flashing Speed Limit Sign (TM indicated that there had been two flashing signs, the first one being the unit moved around Town we received due to being chosen in the lottery and the second being the stand alone one for Peltoma Avenue. She will check with Donnie on the one that will flash the speed limit that we received for Peltoma). Asked about Donnie's Dump Truck (TM noted that we need the Finance Committee meeting that keeps getting cancelled and then Town Council meeting/s for authorization).

Councilor Jester: Thanked the Chief and Officers – it is big to have a show of solidarity.

Councilor Saucier: No Report.

Deputy Mayor Margolskee: No Report.

Mayor Cianchette: Appreciates the Police Officers and the Councilors. Appreciates the work of Jan and Barb on the Summer Concert Series. Thanked the Ladies upstairs for their work.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

- A. To discuss the duties of the Town Manager pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A., Section 405(6)(A).

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

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

The Town Council entered Executive Session at 7:30 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 9:52 p.m.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS AYE

11. ADJOURNMENT:

Moved by Deputy Mayor Margolskee and seconded by Councilor Hall to adjourn the meeting at 9:55 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.

