



## Town Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday January 15, 2015, at 6:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Chairman Harrington called the meeting of the Town Council to order at 6:00 p.m. Present at the meeting were Vice Chairman Mahon (arrived at 6:03 p.m.), Councilor Boyd, Councilor Rothhaus, Councilor Woods, Town Manager Eileen Cabanel, and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali. Councilors Dwyer and Koenig were excused.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Harrington led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Announcements**

Town offices will be closed on Monday, January 19<sup>th</sup> in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

A budget meeting will be held on Monday, January 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. in the Matthew Thornton Room. A regular meeting of the Town Council will be held on Thursday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7:00 .m. in the Matthew Thornton Room.

Chairman Harrington noted additional information available regarding the Kinder Morgan Gas Pipeline proposal. A joint letter was signed by the Federal Legislative Delegation and submitted to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) requesting an extension of the public comment dates in order to provide adequate opportunities for stakeholders in New Hampshire to express their views and seek answers to important questions. The letter has been forwarded to Kinder-Morgan. A copy has been placed on the Town website for public review.

Chairman Harrington thanked Senators Ayotte and Shaheen as well as Congressmen Guinta and Kuster for their attention to this matter. It was noted Town Manager Cabanel continues to actively pursue an individual meeting with Kinder-Morgan and the Town of Merrimack. Any and all information received will be made public.

**Public Comment** - None

### **Review of Proposed FY16 Budget**

#### Library

Town Manager Cabanel noted the Library Board of Trustees has proposed a 2% wage increase for employees. She did not include that in her budget as she had promised all of the unions she would not advocate for anything different than what they received. The 2% represents \$14,715.

Town Manager Cabanel spoke of discussions that have occurred regarding the future of the library, e.g., technology changes, etc. The proposed budget includes the addition of a Digital Services Librarian I – Reference position, to help bring them into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with regard to computer technology/services. This year the Library had a part-time position, and found it difficult to keep the position filled. She stated her support of the position.

1 Joanne Marston, Business Manager, noted, as was stated, the Town Manager removed the proposed 2%  
2 raise for all of the employees. The Library concurs with that decision. However, would like to submit a  
3 \$0.73 raise for part-time employees (approx. budgetary impact of \$7,000). The last time part-time  
4 employees received a raise was in 2010. At that time, both full-time and part-time employees received a  
5 1.5% cost of living raise. It is believed this would help Library staff achieve wage parity with other  
6 Town non-union part-time employees. In 2012, the part-time non-union Town employees received a  
7 \$0.73 raise, and the Library Trustees did not request a similar raise for the part-time Library employees.  
8 2012 was the year the health insurance was re-negotiated; full-time non-union Town employees  
9 including full-time Library employees received a \$1,500 increase in part to offset the added out-of-  
10 pocket expenses.

11  
12 Ms. Marston commented the hope is, going forward, we will continue the good communication that has  
13 been established with the Town Manager and Town Finance Department so that, after this, when  
14 budgeting for raises the Library is able to be part of the discussion.

15  
16 A spreadsheet was prepared comparing the Library's part-time employee salaries with similar  
17 communities. Length of employment was taken into account. The data indicated staff is within range or  
18 at the low end of other staff salaries for similar jobs. All libraries staff based on their community needs,  
19 and the Merrimack Library staff has more cross-trained responsibilities. The higher years of service for  
20 Merrimack Library employees were noted; however, that information was not available for staff of other  
21 libraries.

22  
23 Councilor Boyd noted under Line Item #01-15-8104-0 Wages - Hourly, there are five circulation aides  
24 listed in the budget. The two that concern him are the one that identifies an average hourly wage of  
25 \$17.91 and the other \$14.54. The spreadsheet provided shows current rates for those two positions at  
26 \$14.12 and \$17.39. He questioned the discrepancy.

27  
28 Yvette Couser, Library Director, responded the budget paperwork includes the 2% raise. It has not been  
29 removed from the lines. Ms. Marston stated the individual compensated at the higher rate has been at  
30 the Library since 1996. That individual was also part of a retirement package. There was an agreement  
31 made some years ago, which also changed this individual's rate of pay.

32  
33 Councilor Boyd asked for clarification the spreadsheet provided identified current rates, and was  
34 informed that is correct. The budget book includes the requested 2% raise. Councilor Boyd remarked if  
35 proposing a \$0.73 increase to the \$17.39 that would bring the rate up to \$18.12. If the budget book  
36 reflects a 2% increase, why is the salary listed as \$17.91? Director Micali stated the Library budget is  
37 brought to the Council as presented by the Board of Trustees. The only adjustment that can be made is  
38 to the bottom line number. The Town Manager made the bottom line adjustment of \$14,715 to take into  
39 account the 2% raise proposed by the Library Trustees. The budget has to be presented to the Town  
40 Council in the same manner it was presented to the Town Manager.

41  
42 The budget was put forward inclusive of the 2% proposed raise. In discussions with the Library the  
43 question of the \$0.73 increase for part-time employees was questioned. The current hourly wage for the  
44 position listed at \$17.91 is actually \$17.39. By adding the requested \$0.73 (greater than 2%) to that  
45 position you reach the \$18.12 listed in the budget book.

46  
47 Chairman Harrington remarked although there appear to be three choices; no raise, 2% raise, or \$0.73  
48 raise for part-time employees, in fact the Council cannot dictate changes to individual line items within

1 the Library budget, it can only make an adjustment, up or down, to the bottom line. Where the Library  
2 Board of Trustees chooses to make adjustments to reach the approved bottom line number is up to them.

3  
4 Director Micali noted, although the Board of Trustees has the authority to make adjustments wherever it  
5 sees fit to reach the approved bottom line number, through discussions with the Board, it has been stated  
6 they would remove the 2% raise as they understand and agree with the reasoning for the Town  
7 Manager's recommendation.

8  
9 Vice Chairman Mahon questioned the pay scale, and why one of the Circulation Aides is outside of the  
10 range. Ms. Marston stated the individual has been at the Library since 1996, has accrued raises when  
11 the previous Board has granted cost of living raises, and was part of a retirement package. Vice  
12 Chairman Mahon remarked there is an established range, and the individual is above that range. Ms.  
13 Marston responded she has discussed this with the Trustees. Vice Chairman Mahon commented  
14 predecessor boards have granted pay increases when Town employees get zero, on several occasions.

15  
16 Vice Chairman Mahon remarked what he has been provided is what salaries might look like if in a  
17 competitive market. This isn't really a competitive market. Ms. Marston replied it is to them. When  
18 asked to explain, she stated if posting a job position those living within commuting distance from any of  
19 the surrounding communities seeking employment would likely choose to go to another library if the  
20 salary offered is greater. When asked how many times that has occurred, she responded she is unsure of  
21 how many times that instance has played out; however, she is aware of employees leaving the  
22 Merrimack Library from this part-time reference position to gain full-time employment elsewhere. That  
23 is more the struggle they are faced with is keeping a professional Librarian in a part-time position. Vice  
24 Chairman Mahon remarked that is a change in classification going from part-time to full-time. That is a  
25 reasonable job move in that circumstance. Vice Chairman Mahon commented he does not consider  
26 Salem or Derry within commuting distance. It was noted neither Nashua nor Amherst were included in  
27 the comparison. Ms. Marston responded those are not good comparatives for Merrimack. Nashua is a  
28 union library. She remarked there are people that commute long distances to get to their job, and library  
29 jobs are few and far between; you go where the work is. She stated they have staff that have been at the  
30 library, are loyal, are being put to work, cross-trained, given additional responsibilities, etc. She is  
31 trying to work with the employees she has at the pay rate they have. If they have been here for 20 years  
32 she cannot begrudge them staying and being loyal to a business for 20 years.

33 Councilor Rothhaus suggested it may be helpful, at some point, to have a better understanding of the  
34 retirement component. He stated the Town did offer a plan, which required a change. He commented it  
35 may be closer to the scale if he had a better understanding of that component.

36  
37 Director Micali stated the Town had its own retirement system prior to changing over to the New  
38 Hampshire Retirement System (NHRS) (2003/2004). NHRS does not allow part-time employees to join  
39 the retirement system, where Merrimack's system had. At that time, the Town Manager and Town  
40 Council decided that these people, since they would no longer be in the retirement system, would be  
41 given a bump in wage as compensation. There have been two other part-time employees that he is  
42 aware of that had this included their wage. They are not in the situation where they are off the scale, just  
43 along the scale a bit further.

44  
45 When asked, Vice Chairman Mahon stated his belief there was no scale/range in place at that time.  
46 Director Micali stated he would work with the Library Director to gather the requested information and  
47 provide it to the Council.

1 Ms. Marston noted the proposed addition of the position of Digital Services Librarian I - Reference. As  
2 a way of reducing the impact on the tax rate, the intent is to combine two existing part-time positions  
3 from the reference department into this full-time position. The only increase would be for the full-time  
4 benefits.

5  
6 Ms. Couser commented the growth of electronic services is a trend that has been seen in libraries over  
7 the past few years, and is definitely being seen in Merrimack. Other libraries in the State have been  
8 adding digital service librarian positions to address this need. Current staff can fit this kind of work in  
9 and address the questions posed, but it is something that divides their time. It is not giving 100% to  
10 researching, implementing, and choosing what is best for our community, e.g., which database is best,  
11 etc. She remarked with turnover in the part-time positions, there is the loss of resources expended to  
12 train those individuals. She stated concern with putting off the hire and being left behind. It is hoped  
13 the position will be able to be filled with someone familiar with troubleshooting hardware/software, etc.  
14 That type of work is currently outsourced.

15  
16 Councilor Boyd questioned whether there is a job description for the position Ms. Couser stated there is,  
17 although it is not yet finalized. She offered to provide a copy. Councilor Boyd remarked he sees the  
18 value to the position because Merrimack is not a young community perse. He explained it may be easier  
19 for an older person having an iPad for example to look to the library for assistance rather than driving to  
20 Nashua to go to a genius bar. Vice Chairman Mahon stated agreement this is long overdue for the  
21 Library. He remarked it is one-half to one and a half times the annual salary to replace an employee  
22 taking into account training, additional supervision, etc.

23  
24 Ms. Marston noted an increase to Line Item #01-15-8300-0 Travel & Meetings, to ensure if the new  
25 position is put in; the individual filling it can attend training classes, etc. Additional monies were added  
26 to Line Item # 01-15-8321-0 Maintenance-Buildings as individual HVAC units require replacement  
27 parts, etc. In addition, the dry sprinkler system is an older system, and the intent is to plan ahead for  
28 those types of repairs. When asked about the individual units, Ms. Marston stated they are units from  
29 1979, and what is being seen is the technology in the unit may or may not be supported by vendors  
30 because their technology is changing. It is on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for a major overhaul  
31 sometime in the future. Monies were added in electrical and plumbing as well. A line was added for  
32 snow removal. The maintenance position, which was formerly a full-time position, is now part-time.  
33 What has been seen over the past year since having a part-time person in the position is that some of the  
34 outside work has had to be outsourced, e.g., landscaping, etc.

35  
36 Councilor Woods questioned whether the cost of snow removal is for labor or materials. Ms. Marston  
37 stated her assumption the cost is for labor. She remarked she is not sure what kind of materials would  
38 be involved. When asked if salt would be included Ms. Marston stated the cost identified was intended  
39 to cover the expense of hiring someone to perform the snow removal. Purchase of salt would be  
40 included within existing line items.

41  
42 Councilor Boyd questioned whether there is opportunity to work with the Library utilizing resources  
43 available at Town Hall. Town Manager Cabanel stated her belief that was occurring. She remarked she  
44 is surprised to hear it is not, and would speak with Rick Seymour, Director, Public Works Department,  
45 and inform the Council of the details of their discussion.

46  
47 Ms. Marston noted Line Item #01-15-8353-0 - Computer Services, was increased. The Library is part of  
48 the Greater Manchester Integrated Library Cooperative System (GMILCS) Consortium. Rates increase  
49 on a yearly basis. That allows the library to run the computers that check materials in and out, provides

1 for a common borrower card, etc. Under Line Item # 01-15-8450-0 Library Materials, a database,  
2 referred to as Atomic Learning, was added. Atomic Learning is a parent company for something called  
3 Atomic Training, which is the software libraries use. The schools utilize a school version of this, which  
4 the library does not have access to. Atomic learning is something that provides unlimited access to  
5 thousands of short videos covering more than 500 software application sources comprised of thousands  
6 of short training videos. Users logging into the library's website can learn how to use that device. It is  
7 also available when the library is closed or if Reference Librarians wish to use it to supplement training  
8 a patron, etc.

9  
10 Vice Chairman Mahon noted Line Item #01-15-8353-0-Computer Services; specifically the reference to  
11 GMILCS consortium + CBC + automation, and questioned whether that represents three separate  
12 components that go into the number cited or all combined into one. Ms. Marston responded they are  
13 different aspects of being part of a consortium. There are consortium dues. There is group purchasing  
14 as part of the consortium. CBC is Common Borrower Card, which allows card holders to use their cards  
15 at any of the libraries within the consortium. The automation is the computer; how everything is  
16 catalogued, holdings, etc. Vice Chairman Mahon requested a breakdown of the cost be provided to the  
17 Council.

18  
19 Councilor Rothhaus questioned how costs are broken out. Ms. Marston stated the library has two  
20 GMILC staff, and when it comes time to pay dues, they create our invoice based on a formula that takes  
21 in account the number of card holders, population, holdings, etc. Vice Chairman Mahon questioned  
22 whether use is calculated, and was informed it is. When asked if that is a component of the structure,  
23 Ms. Marston stated she could provide the formula to the Council.

24  
25 Line Item #01-15-8502-0 – Buildings, was increased based on the amount of repairs being performed  
26 and foreseen, and the desire to be more prepared. The CIP includes planning for roof replacement, etc.  
27 They are trying to rethink the floorplans for some of the projects being performed at this time in the  
28 same way the Lowell Room was changed from just a room that had stacks to a reading and meeting  
29 room. Some costs are being estimated for those projects.

30  
31 Chairman Harrington asked for clarification on the difference between the positions of Director and  
32 Business Manager. Ms. Couser stated, as the Director, her job description says she is the CEO of the  
33 Library and has the authority. She is managing people in the building, finances; ensuring policies are  
34 written and followed. She represents the Library and the Trustees at different meetings throughout the  
35 State. The position of Business Manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations within the  
36 building. The Business Manager is the direct supervisor of maintenance staff. Should an issue arise it is  
37 addressed by the Business Manager before and/or instead of being escalated to the Director. The  
38 Business Manager reports directly to the Director. Ms. Couser commented it may be that they should  
39 speak with the Trustees about changing the title of Business Manager to Office Manager.

#### 40 41 Town Clerk / Tax Collector

42  
43 Town Manager Cabanel stated her recollection the Town Clerk/Tax Collector had included in the  
44 proposed budget a 2% raise for employees, which was not included as part of the Town Manager's  
45 recommendation. However, the requested addition of a part-time position was included.

46  
47 Diane Trippett, Town Clerk/Tax Collector, stated her proposed budget included a request for a wage  
48 increase for clerical staff and Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector position. The clerical staff has, for  
49 quite some time, expressed concern and frustration over the workload and increased demands, which

1 have technical aspects and legal ramifications. The job has changed over the years with regard to the  
2 general knowledge and technical detail required. Ms. Trippett remarked they have seen and been  
3 tracking job ads from various communities. She commented it is important to remember they are doing  
4 two jobs. Communities are hiring for a Clerk in the Tax Office only or a Clerk in the Clerks' Office  
5 only. Some of these communities have starting pay at higher rates than some of our people who have  
6 been here for 15 years. That has been brought forward, and she is supportive of her staff acknowledging  
7 there is some disparity out there.

8  
9 The department had an on-call, part-time individual who left for a neighboring community that offered  
10 her a permanent part-time position with a starting salary \$3.50/hour more than she was making in  
11 Merrimack. Ms. Trippett stated her opinion wages need to be reviewed at some point regardless of  
12 whether or not the Council sees fit to put monies into the budget for the coming year.

13  
14 With regard to the position of Deputy City Clerk, more and more responsibility has been taken on. The  
15 Deputy Clerk has been tasked with a great many things associated with the collection process in taxes  
16 and billing. There are a number of projects they wish to bring forward that they hope will be to the  
17 benefit of the community such as credit cards, online programs, etc. Those responsibilities have been  
18 placed on the Deputy Clerk, e.g., to create a better flow to the department and improve the services to  
19 the community. The Deputy Clerk has been taking on more responsibility of a technical and legal  
20 nature.

21  
22 With regard to the part-time position, there was an on-call individual working for the department. She  
23 was the only Clerk in the area, to her knowledge that could come in when needed. The hours she had in  
24 another town were in the evening, and she could accommodate Merrimack during the daytime. She has  
25 taken a position with another town. It has been a struggle to keep up with the workload. The  
26 department has long tenured employees. Taking into consideration vacation time and personal leave  
27 alone, they operate 6 months out of the year short-handed. The department has a part-time person  
28 currently who cannot be offered, due to the Affordable Care Act, more than 28 hours a week. In the  
29 past, if someone was out on long-term leave or vacation the individual could be asked to work the entire  
30 week. That is no longer an option.

31  
32 The department is requesting a part-time position to help keep up with the workload. The volume of  
33 work is increasing. Ms. Trippett spoke of reviewing the phone report, which indicates some of the  
34 employees, including her, are handling more phone calls than entire departments during the course of a  
35 year.

36  
37 Chairman Harrington noted Line Item #01-24-8107-0 Wages - Part-Time, includes two lines; Temp -  
38 Part-time and Temp - Part-time Tax. Ms. Trippett explained the Temp - Part time is the line the funding  
39 is being removed from to create a permanent part-time position (24 hours/week). The Temp - Part-time  
40 Tax is the individual who comes in, mans the express window during tax time, and is used, on occasion,  
41 to cover sick leave, etc. Although that individual is utilized, it is not a perfect scenario as the individual  
42 is not trained to do motor vehicles, etc. When asked where the new position would be accounted for,  
43 Director Micali stated it is identified as Account Clerk II.

44  
45 Line Item #01-24-8201-0 Office Supplies has been increased by \$500. Ms. Trippett noted the State  
46 mandates the type of printer and toner that can be used. They are cutting back on providing the Town  
47 with forms. Most forms are now being printed out on the motor vehicle printer, which is quite costly.

48  
49 Line Item #01-24-8230-0 Postage, has increased due to an expected increase in the cost of postage.

1  
2 With regard to Line Item #01-24-8300-0 Travel & Meetings, Ms. Trippett stated the Deputy City Clerk  
3 is currently attending the New Hampshire Town Clerk and Tax Collector Joint Certification Program.  
4 The Town has not previously budgeted mileage for that travel. With a new employee there will be  
5 additional certifications and trainings that will have to be obtained. Staff is required to attend training a  
6 few times a year with regard to motor vehicles, vital records, elections, etc. to keep up with what they  
7 need to know to be able to service the residents professionally and accurately.

8  
9 Line Item #01-24-8334-0 Maintenance-Office Equipment has been increased as a result of the vendor  
10 support increase.

11  
12 Line Item #01-24-8504-0 Office Equipment includes a request for \$875 to replace computer monitors.  
13 They are currently ten years old and no longer working properly.

14  
15 Vice Chairman Mahon questioned whether dual screens would be a benefit. Ms. Trippett responded she  
16 is not sure. Director Micali remarked there is not sufficient room on the desks to accommodate that.  
17 The suggestion was made there could be the opportunity for a large screen monitor to provide additional  
18 efficiency.

19  
20 Ms. Trippett stated she tracks hours and when transactions are completed. Ninety nine percent of the  
21 time the department is open before 9:00 a.m.

22  
23 Councilor Rothhaus remarked he will vent because he is not willing to add personnel in order to take  
24 care of the problem, but it is very frustrating when you get a new car to have to deal with that. Ms.  
25 Trippett remarked the department receives the second highest incoming number of phone calls; second  
26 behind the Police Department which runs a 24/7 operation. Vice Chairman Mahon commented part of  
27 that is due to the fact when someone calls up and says Town of Merrimack they are sent to the Clerk's  
28 Office. Councilor Rothhaus commented he spoke with Becky Thompson and Kristin Wardner in the  
29 Town Manager's Office who commented when the City Clerk's Office is busy they try to provide  
30 responses to telephone inquiries when they are able.

31  
32 Councilor Rothhaus questioned whether it is known what percentage of time callers are sent to voice  
33 mail. Ms. Trippett responded it depends on workflow, time of month, etc. There could be days when  
34 90% of calls are sent to voicemail. The priority is the customer at the counter first, then the phone, and  
35 then everything else that needs to be done in the office. Councilor Rothhaus commented one of his best  
36 friends is 86 years of age, and his complaint was there was no place to sit down as the line moves  
37 forward. Director Micali responded they have been considering where a chair could be placed.

38  
39 Ms. Trippett remarked the department has expanded its online services in an attempt to reduce the  
40 number of residents having to physically come to Town Hall. Despite that effort, when the transaction  
41 numbers are reviewed they show 70% are face-to-face transactions and the other 30% are in the mail or  
42 online.

#### 43 44 Community Development

45  
46 Town Manager Cabanel stated she made no adjustments to the department's budget as she is of the  
47 opinion the Director has presented a very frugal budget. Within the budget there are decreases identified  
48 under Line Item #01-21-8103-0 Wages – Supervisory, which relate to staff turnover and filling a vacated  
49 position at a lesser salary. Health insurance decreased and Worker's Compensation went down slightly.

1  
2 The only item that stands out has been discussed with the Council through the CIP process; the  
3 additional \$55,000 to be placed into the GIS Capital Reserve Fund.  
4

5 Timothy Thompson, Director, Community Development, remarked, in terms of the overall department,  
6 personnel and operations are down slightly more than 1.5%. Personnel is down about 2.4% due to the  
7 hiring of the new Planning & Zoning Administrator at a lower salary than the previous Administrator.  
8 Most of the operating line items are essentially flat from last year. There have been some minor  
9 adjustments, e.g., the new Administrator is also AICP Certified, which results in additional dues (Line  
10 Item #01-21-8270-0 Dues & Fees).  
11

12 Line Item #01-21-8351-0 Consultants proposes a \$5,000 increase to assist with Master Plan  
13 implementation activities both from the perspective of zoning amendment work to potentially helping  
14 with the sidewalk and pedestrian bicycle Master Plan project that is currently ongoing with a sub-  
15 committee of the Planning Board. That is offset by a decrease in Line Item #01-21-8388-0 Economic  
16 Development. The line was decreased by \$5,000 due to a change in scope of the Economic  
17 Development website project, which originally was going to be a standalone site; however, now that we  
18 are in the process of updating the entire Town website, he will work with Director Micali and the  
19 consultant to work the changes into the structure of the new Town website.  
20

21 A Request for Proposal (RFP) was put out for the website project this past year. About 18 proposals  
22 were received none of which were standouts. At that point he, Director Micali, and a representative  
23 from the Economic Development Citizen Advisory Committee (EDCAC) re-evaluated and decided to  
24 look at the new Town website and see if the funds could be made to go further by integrating the site  
25 into the existing Town website.  
26

27 There is a proposal for \$65,000 to go into the Capital Reserve Fund for the GIS system. That was  
28 originally established last year with an initial deposit of \$10,000. Those funds will hopefully get us to  
29 the point where we can start doing some major data improvements, primarily the aerial photography and  
30 digital orthophoto development, which can be used to create new map layers. The current GIS  
31 consultant, CDM Smith, was asked to provide an estimate for photo and orthophoto development, which  
32 is basically taking the photos and ensuring they are geo referenced to the actual plane of the Earth so  
33 that they are spatially located. Based on the size of Merrimack, the estimate was \$75,000 - \$100,000.  
34 The Town is well on its way with the Capital Reserve Fund, and if the Town continues to deposit as is  
35 scheduled in the CIP it is anticipated some significant improvements will be made in the coming years.  
36

37 Councilor Rothhaus questioned how the Town would anticipate utilizing the photography to its benefit.  
38 Director Thompson stated the largest part is the aerial photographs. All of the mapping that is currently  
39 in the GIS goes back to a flyover that was done in 2007. All of the different data layers can be  
40 extrapolated, e.g., building footprints, pavement, etc., from the photos into new GIS layers that will then  
41 replace the out-of-date data layers. In addition, it is hoped if updated information is provided, we will  
42 be able to start looking at having the Planning Board require digital submissions of final plans and  
43 information so that we can tie information directly from surveying and engineering firms into the GIS so  
44 that we don't have these large gaps moving forward where the information gets so out of date.  
45

46 Councilor Boyd spoke of the change of philosophy going to Economic Development being a part of the  
47 Town website as opposed to a standalone. He remarked several years ago when he served on the  
48 EDCAC that was the drive; that is where internet traffic goes, you need to have a dedicated site. He  
49 remarked he understands the financial benefit, but asked for clarification on the philosophical change.

1 Director Thompson stated the philosophical change is really based on some of the experience some  
2 other communities have had with standalone websites.

3  
4 The Town of Londonderry has actually completely disbanded and abandoned their separate economic  
5 development website. They found the information that was on that site, from a cost and technology  
6 perspective, was not achieving the bang for the buck they believed it would. They have found that  
7 shifting that information to the municipal website provides the ability, through virtual Town Hall, to  
8 give that section of the website the appearance that it is something separate and different from the  
9 overall Town website. He remarked he would not anticipate doing something that is so drastically  
10 different that it wouldn't look like it is Merrimack, but there is the ability to have it formatted in such a  
11 way that it is distinct and able to stand on its own within the structure of the existing framework of the  
12 website. They essentially found that the consulting costs, hosting fees, and everything else associated  
13 were not getting the return on investment they had anticipated.

14  
15 The City of Manchester still has their separate website. Director Thompson remarked it has a different  
16 URL, but he does not believe it is actually separate from the municipal page. Councilor Boyd remarked  
17 it is not like Londonderry is stagnant. He questioned whether there is data available as to what our  
18 current trends are and what is hoped to be accomplished with the website consultant. Director  
19 Thompson responded the biggest thing he wants to see happen is an ability to bring commercial real  
20 estate listings and site selection data into the Town website. There are ways to do that now where you  
21 could essentially re-link to commercial databases, etc., but you have to search by zip code and then do a  
22 lot of digging in order to find information specific to Merrimack.

23  
24 The company that typically does these is Catalyst. They are a commercial real estate web provider that  
25 does commercial listings. They would be able to set up a system that calls information from their  
26 database specific to Merrimack so that people don't have to wade through all of the surrounding  
27 communities to find the information.

28  
29 Councilor Boyd spoke of the Master Plan implementation. He questioned how close the sub-committee  
30 is to completing its tasks and how the findings will be implemented in the community as it relates to the  
31 Master Plan. Director Thompson responded any funds he anticipates next year for that sub-committee  
32 would not be significant. It would probably utilize the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC)  
33 for some mapping services and some GIS data that they have that we don't have on our current in-house  
34 system. He does not anticipate going out to a consultant to write the plan. The plan continues to be  
35 worked by existing in-house staff. He remarked he is aware the Chair of that sub-committee has e-  
36 mailed the Town Manager Cabanel and Director Micali about meeting to try to get some feedback  
37 before coming to the Council to start throwing out ideas. He stated his expectation it is likely a draft  
38 will be prepared in the summer and hopefully by fall/early winter there will be final resolution on the  
39 plan. It would be basically a standalone plan that would then be incorporated into the existing Master  
40 Plan by the Planning Board.

41  
42 Councilor Boyd remarked at the last regular Town Council meeting Tim Tenhave, Chairman,  
43 Conservation Commission, provided an annual update, and in doing so noted the need for staff support  
44 in updating Chapter 111. He questioned whether the Community Development Department is ready to  
45 assist the Commission. Director Thompson stated department personal would certainly be able to assist  
46 if anything is within the abilities of the staff. He remarked he is not familiar with what Chapter 11  
47 entails, but if there is something they can help with and contribute to they would be more than willing to  
48 do so. When asked, he stated he does not believe there would be impact to staffing.

1 Director Thompson spoke of what is being looked at in terms of agenda for the Planning and Zoning  
2 boards; there were 135 agenda items between the two boards during 2014 and the amount of time spent  
3 staffing those meetings went up from 77.5 hours to 115.5 hours from 2013-2014. There has been an  
4 uptick in the length of meetings and the number of applications seen over the course of the past year.  
5 Vice Chairman Mahon stated Chapter 111 is related to recreation properties. There are a great many  
6 elements in the deeds, covenants, restrictions, etc.

## 7 8 Media

9  
10 Town Manager Cabanel stated the Media Division shows a decrease of \$3,582 from last year. A lot of  
11 that has to do with the decrease in health insurance as is seen in other departments. There is an increase  
12 in office equipment.

13  
14 Nicholas Lavallo, Media Services Coordinator, stated the focus in the budget with regard to Line Item  
15 #32-32-8504-0 Office Equipment, is the desire to take the time necessary to work on the Memorial  
16 Conference Room. Compared to the Matthew Thornton Room, it is significantly different not only for  
17 those conducting meetings but also for those watching at home. There are newer cameras and newer  
18 switches that have been in place for a few years, but aesthetically some things need to change. That  
19 starts with some lighting, audio equipment that has not yet been replaced, and some furnishings. The  
20 Matthew Thornton room is set up with a projector and a drop-down screen. Presently that is set up  
21 piecemeal in the Memorial Conference Room.

22  
23 A standard amount is always included in the budget for other CATV equipment in case there is the need  
24 for replacement. This year alone there were two different hard drives that failed. There is the intent to  
25 purchase newer public access cameras and audio equipment for volunteers to utilize, and new hardware  
26 for staff. He remarked department employees are using laptops that will be nearing 7 years of age at the  
27 start of the next fiscal year. They are video and graphic intense computers that take a beating.

28  
29 Vice Chairman Mahon spoke of individuals/applicants appearing before the Conservation Commission  
30 who may have plans, etc., and there being no equipment such as easels in the room to accommodate  
31 displaying the items. Mr. Lavallo stated he would be happy to reach out to the Chairs of the various  
32 groups that utilize the room to see what needs exist.

33  
34 Town Manager Cabanel remarked over the past three years some of the cable franchise fee has been  
35 moved to the general fund as offsetting revenue. Last year \$68,000 of the cable franchise fee was  
36 transferred into the general fund. This year the proposal is to transfer \$100,000 into the general fund to  
37 offset property taxes.

## 38 39 Assessing

40  
41 Town Manager Cabanel stated the department shows a decrease of \$6,285 from last year. The largest  
42 expenses relate to personnel, which have no increases outside of step increases. Other outside services,  
43 Avatar, is showing a slight decrease.

44  
45 Vice Chairman Mahon questioned the \$800 reduction in Line Item #01-02-8270-0 Dues & Fees.  
46 Director Micali responded the Marshall Swift subscription services were running about \$1,000. A  
47 review was done to determine what will be needed, which is believed to be the \$140. When asked what  
48 was being purchased previously, Director Micali remarked there were other add-ons that were sitting on

1 a shelf and not being used as anticipated. The decision was reached to only purchase what is currently  
2 being used.

3  
4 Councilor Boyd remarked the Assessor was at his home a few months ago, and left a card. He likes the  
5 approach as it informed the property owner someone from the Town was on the property. The card was  
6 professional and non-confrontational.

7  
8 General Government

9  
10 Town Manager Cabanel stated there is very little change in General Government relative to wages. Line  
11 Item #01-01-8107-0 Wages - Part-Time, covers Town Council minutes and the Computer Tech. who  
12 was offered a wage on the high end when he took the position, which resulted in the need to increase the  
13 budget. Town Manager Cabanel remarked the cost of retirements is up and health and dental insurance  
14 is down. Compensated absences is the area where costs are captured for those who are eligible for  
15 retirement, e.g., costs the Town would have to incur to cover accumulated vacation/sick time, etc. The  
16 funds are captured in this area rather than the individual departments.

17  
18 The biggest changes relate to negotiations. Line Item #01-01-8293-0 Legal-Other has a proposed  
19 increase of \$25,000 as it is believed there will be 6 union contracts up for negotiation. In conjunction  
20 with that, Line Item #01-01-8351-0 Consultants, has a proposed \$5,000 increase, which is actually the  
21 health insurance consultant. The next round of negotiations will have to involve a lot of complicated  
22 health insurance changes and modifications to language. The consultant will help us to understand how  
23 the Affordable Care Act will impact the Town and how it is changing as well as make recommendations  
24 on different types of health insurance plans that include health savings accounts, etc. Town Manager  
25 Cabanel commented she anticipates the legal costs to cover the cost of a paralegal providing information  
26 on what other communities have negotiated, how the language can be written to avoid putting the Town  
27 at risk for the 40% penalty, etc. She spoke of the Affordable Care Act and the Cadillac tax, which will  
28 come in 2018. It is likely one of the most important topics to be discussed in terms of potential cost  
29 increases, penalties, etc.

30  
31 Line Item #01-01-8504-0 Office Equipment is down. The FY15 budget included costs to purchase a  
32 copy machine. Line Item #01-01-8460-0 Other Operating Expenses shows an \$18,000 increase. That  
33 amount is offset with revenues (Merrimack Rocks).

34  
35 Line Item #01-01-8510-0 Transfer To Other Funds deposits are decreased slightly. Director Micali  
36 spoke of the Milfoil Trust noting \$15,000 is being deposited, which coincides with what actual expenses  
37 have been for the dive teams. The Board will be provided a presentation on the 2015 program for  
38 Milfoil in February. Beyond that is the need to deposit monies into the property insurance deductible  
39 and trust fund. Line Item #01-01-8910-0 Capital Reserve Fund Purchases is down by \$15,000 as the  
40 Town is catching up on software licenses.

41  
42 Councilor Woods questioned Line Item #01-01-8351-0 Consultants; if there is reason to believe effort  
43 should be put into the budget for the Northeast Direct project. Town Manager Cabanel stated that could  
44 be considered. She remarked the greatest participation she can see from this very far away distance, is  
45 to update our information on our conservation properties, e.g., endangered species, etc. The Merrimack  
46 Village District should be updating information on wellhead protection areas, etc. Whatever we submit  
47 to the Federal Government as comments for or against must contain factual data.

1 Councilor Woods stated his understanding of the state of flux in terms of when or when not we might be  
2 looking for some help. He commented the Conservation Commission has suggested they have begun  
3 discussions with outside help. Vice Chairman Mahon remarked, based on the prior evening's meeting,  
4 while pretty extensive, it is not complete. One of the things the attorney for the site management group  
5 stated was when they go through their hearing process it is always better to have a witness that could  
6 provide direct testimony and be cross-examined at the hearing they conduct toward the end of their  
7 process. The down side to that is the fact the developer has, in the past, claimed that particular group  
8 has no jurisdiction over them, but they will go through the process. It was noted that is part of the State  
9 process.

10  
11 Town Manager Cabanel remarked there is also the Federal process for which the Town has the ability to  
12 submit comment/information. Vice Chairman Mahon remarked the Administrative Hearing that is  
13 conducted would become part of the State record and would be provided to the Federal Government. At  
14 an Administrative Hearing there are no rules of evidence, and they have total discretion as to the weight  
15 of the evidence and the credibility of witnesses. They are using the least restrictive burden of proof,  
16 which is the preponderance of the evidence. He suggested the Council may consider putting some  
17 monies aside to cover costs should it be deemed appropriate to call someone to come in and testify on  
18 our behalf. At this time, it doesn't appear that would be necessary. Presently it appears the biggest part  
19 would be work done on the endangered species piece; however, there may be something else that comes  
20 to light.

21  
22 Councilor Boyd remarked based on his look at the proposed route; the impacts are on Conservation  
23 Commission property with the Horse Hill Nature Preserve being the largest property with the greatest  
24 impact. If the Town were to allocate monies, he questioned whether those funds would be better placed  
25 under General Government or the consultant line of the Commission so that it is administered through  
26 the Community Development budget. Vice Chairman Mahon remarked the Commission has at its  
27 disposal \$1.3 million. Director Micali added the Commission has another fund in the \$50,000 - \$70,000  
28 range. Councilor Boyd commented it was just stated it would not bad idea to have monies set aside.  
29 Vice Chairman Mahon clarified his intent was for consideration of putting funds aside to address other  
30 issues that may arise.

31  
32 Town Manager Cabanel stated she would prefer funds be placed in the General Government budget.  
33 Doing so would place them under her direct supervision. Vice Chairman Mahon noted, in the past,  
34 when an appropriation has been made on a contingency basis, funds have been placed under General  
35 Government.

36  
37 Councilor Boyd stated he is not opposed to setting funds aside in this manner, and questioned the  
38 appropriate amount for a contingency. Town Manager Cabanel suggested a starting point of \$10,000.  
39 Vice Chairman Mahon agreed commenting that would be a minimum amount.

40  
41 For the sake of the viewing audience, Chairman Harrington stated a lot of the neighboring towns that are  
42 involved with the pipeline will collaborate as a group. Vice Chairman Mahon and Councilor Boyd have  
43 volunteered their time to be involved in that effort. Town Manager Cabanel informed the Council of a  
44 call she received earlier in the day from the Town Administrator of Brookline. They are going forward  
45 with their meeting, which includes various towns. She stated her intent to attend.

1 Revenues

2  
3 Town Manager Cabanel explained when the Town goes to assess a tax bill they take the general fund  
4 budget, subtract out about \$8 million received from other sources, and reach an amount to be raised by  
5 taxes. This non-tax revenue offsets expenditures. This year it is about \$8,500,000 of which almost \$4  
6 million is motor vehicle permit fees.  
7

8 With regard to the revenue gained from the insurance rebate from the health trust, she remarked in prior  
9 years nothing was received. In FY15, \$75,000 was returned to the Town. This year it is anticipated the  
10 total revenue received will be \$340,000, some of which will go back to the employees, bringing the  
11 Town's revenue to \$315,000. Town Manager Cabanel stated, understanding this revenue stream may  
12 not be available in future years, and not wanting to see the tax rate fluctuate from year to year, rather  
13 than using the revenue to reduce the tax rate this year, she looked to set the monies aside for a capital  
14 reserve fund for police communications. The Police Department has proposed two large allotments into  
15 a capital reserve account in FY17.  
16

17 Director Micali stated interest on tax liens is projected to increase by approximately \$20,000.  
18 Administrative charges to other funds decreased about \$20,000. State Rooms & Meals Tax was  
19 reinstated whereby if the State receives \$5 million more than the prior year, up to \$5 million would be  
20 returned to towns throughout the State. That equates to about \$45,000 for the Town of Merrimack.  
21 They did hit that milestone last year, and the Town will receive the maximum, which is the baseline  
22 number going forward.  
23

24 Current Use Tax has been increased by \$50,000 due to two major developments; Old Blood property  
25 and Tomasian Farm property off of Amherst Road.  
26

27 Motor vehicle permits are running higher for the third year. The line was increased by \$25,000.  
28 Although motor vehicle permits are running higher, the number of vehicles being registered has  
29 remained steady. The Motor vehicle road infrastructure revenue is decreased by \$10,000 because the  
30 Town has been receiving about \$125,000 a year in revenues instead of the \$135,000. It is a \$5 fee per  
31 transaction.  
32

33 Proposed Issuance of Debt

34  
35 Director Micali stated there is no new issuance of debt in the proposed budget. One bond is being  
36 retired; Line Item #31-27-8602-0 - Interest – Long-Term Debt, 1196 Organic Waste Composting  
37 Facility Bond. The last payment will be made on the compost facility this year (old facility). There is a  
38 ten-year bond going forward to rehab the compost facility. The bonds are paid for by sewer user fees.  
39

40 Director Micali commented at the last Council meeting a discussion took place with regard to whether or  
41 not to bond for the Highway garage. The Council wished to understand the cost of not bonding at this  
42 time. A spreadsheet was provided, which identified the bond request at \$3.3 million. With a 25 year  
43 term and a 5% interest rate, total cost of bonding would be \$5,426,250. If the decision were made to  
44 wait a year to bond, inflation of construction costs would have to be taken into account. Construction  
45 inflation is running about 5%. For a \$3.3 million bond let in FY17, the total cost of the bond would be  
46 \$3,464,500 (Principal). Total bond costs after 25 years, at the same 5% interest rate, would be  
47 \$5,716,438 or a \$290,000 delta. That is the cost of waiting a year to bond.  
48

1 Current value would be \$0.10 over the life of the bond. For a home valued at \$300,000, it would be an  
2 additional \$30 over the life of the bond.

3  
4 If waiting two years to bond the same inflationary cost of 5% would occur, total bond if bonding in  
5 FY18 would be \$3,637,225 for a 25 year term, with a 5% interest rate, resulting in a total cost of  
6 \$6,001,421. The delta would be \$575,121 or over the life of the bond \$0.20, which equates to roughly  
7 \$60 on a \$300,000 home.

8  
9 The projected impact on the tax rate if bonding in FY16 would be \$0.03 for the first year and \$0.10 in  
10 following years.

11  
12 Councilor Boyd questioned what the impact on the tax rate would have been had the bond passed last  
13 year. Director Micali stated it would have been the initial \$3,300,000 bond. Vice Chairman Mahon  
14 stated had it been bonded in the current year \$0.03 of the tax rate would be attributable to the bond.

15  
16 Director Micali noted in FY18 about \$290,000 will come off the books due to retirement of the 2002  
17 Greens Pond Bond. Beyond that the next bond to retire would be in FY22.

18  
19 Chairman Harrington questioned the will of the Council with regard to bonding for the Highway Garage  
20 project.

21  
22 Councilor Rothhaus stated he sees it as a critical project; however, does not believe there is the  
23 necessary time to do justice to the work that has to be done to bring it forward.

24  
25 Vice Chairman Mahon noted two members of the Council were absent, and would not be able to  
26 participate if a vote were taken. Director Micali stated the vote could take place at the Council's  
27 meeting on January 26<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Harrington stated her agreement with remarks made by Councilor  
28 Rothhaus. Councilor Boyd noted he and Councilor Dwyer spoke earlier in the evening, and he  
29 expressed his desire to see it on the ballot. Councilor Boyd requested the item be placed on the  
30 Council's agenda for its January 19, 2015 meeting.

31  
32 The consensus of the Council was for a vote to be taken at the January 19, 2015 meeting.

33  
34 **MOTION made by Councilor Boyd and seconded by Councilor Mahon to adjourn the meeting.**  
35 **MOTION CARRIED 5-0-0**

36  
37 *The January 15, 2015 meeting of the Town Council was adjourned at 8:19 p.m.*

38  
39  
40 Submitted by Dawn MacMillan