



Town Council Meeting Minutes



Thursday, December 3, 2020, at 7:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Call to Order

Chairman Koenig called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Koenig led the Pledge of Allegiance

Announcements

Chairman Koenig made the following announcements.

Upcoming Town Council meetings: Thursday, December 17, 2020, 7:00 PM and Regular meeting and Thursday, January 7, 2021, 6:30 PM Budget meeting

Town Manager Eileen Cabanel made the following announcements.

- Property tax bills were mailed on November 23rd and are due by December 28th. Property owners who have not received their bill should contact the Tax Collector's office for a duplicate.
- The Public Works Department would like to congratulate and welcome Shannon Saari as our new Wastewater Secretary. Shannon comes to Public Works from her current position of Records Clerk with the Police Department. Shannon has big shoes to fill, replacing the soon to be retired Becky Sullivan who has been the Wastewater Secretary for more than 48 years.
- On Sunday, December 6th we will be holding our modified Holiday Happenings Event. This year instead of our traditional Parade, Santa & Mrs. Claus are going to be riding on a Fire Department vehicle and taking a tour across Merrimack. We are encouraging everyone to come out and wave to Santa & Mrs. Claus from one of our pre-determined locations in Town. Santa & Mrs. Claus will pull into the parking lots of these locations for a few minutes to wave to families before moving on to the next location. The event will run from 2:45 – 4:00 pm. Please visit the Parks & Recreation website for the complete schedule at www.merrimackparksandrec.org
- On Saturday, December 12th from 12:00 – 2:00 pm we are going to be holding a **Holiday Drive-Thru Food Drive at Town Hall**. This year more than most; the need is great. We are encouraging people to come by and donate canned food and other non-perishable items to benefit the local food pantries. We will have a special guest appearance by Santa Claus (for anyone that did not get to see him in the Parade on Sunday). We also want people to show off their car all decked out for the holidays for a chance to win a prize. We are working with the Macaroni Kid Newsletter and they will be awarding a family fun gift card gift pack including a \$50 gift card to a local restaurant of choice, Lego Land passes, as well as Altitude passes.
- The Southern New Hampshire Tour of lights is a free event and collaboration among 9 communities in Southern New Hampshire. We are looking for Merrimack families that decorate their homes for the holidays and want to show them off. Residents are encouraged to decorate the exterior of their homes with festive lights this upcoming holiday season and register your address with the Merrimack Parks & Recreation Department no later than Sunday, December 6th. This will guarantee your home is included in the official list of homes on the Southern New Hampshire Tour of Lights. On December 11th, the 9 Communities will publicize a master list of all homes who have pre-registered to be on the Tour. Homes that are registered will be eligible to win a raffle for a \$25 Gift Certificate to a local restaurant of their choosing.

- The Media Division is happy to announce that you will be able to watch all three Merrimack TV channels in high definition via Roku and Apple TV devices beginning Thursday December 17th. The app is free to download to your device. Aside from watching the channels live, you will be able to watch previously recorded meetings and shows as well. Next week, an instructional video demonstration will be available on our TV channels, YouTube, and social media pages. For any questions or if you need additional assistance, call the Media Division at 423-8561

Comments from the Press and Public

None

Recognitions, Resignations and Retirements

None

Appointments

None

Public Hearing

None

Legislative Updates from State Representatives

The following legislative update from Representative Maureen Mooney was read into the record
Greetings, Town Councilors: The Merrimack State Representative delegation elected on November 3, 2020 was sworn into office yesterday and today by Governor Sununu. Dick Hinch of Merrimack was elected Speaker of the NH House during the House session yesterday (12/2/20). This is historic for Merrimack. At present, committee assignments and leadership appointments are being made. The deadline to file House bills has passed, but the deadline to file Senate bills is December 15, 2020. Thank you for all you do.

-Rep. Maureen Mooney (R-Merrimack)

Town Manager's Report

None

Consent Agenda

None

Chairman Koenig moved New Business item #2 up on the Agenda

2. Fire Chief Position Confirmation

Submitted by Town Manager Eileen Cabanel

The Town Council confirmed of the appointment of a new Fire Chief, pursuant to Charter Article 7-8. Town Manager Eileen Cabanel recommended Matt Duke as the new Merrimack Fire Chief. Councilor Rothhaus stated that he fully supports this recommendation and believes Matt Duke is the right person for the job.

MOTION was made by Councilor Rothhaus and seconded by Councilor Healey to affirm the appointment of Matt Duke as Merrimack Fire Chief. MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0

Discussion on the motion

Vice Chair Boyd expressed his unequivocal support of Matt Duke. He explained Matt Duke began in 1998 working up through the ranks. Councilor Albert echoed the comments of Vice Chair Boyd and Councilor Rothhaus. Councilor Harrington appreciates the plans that Matt Duke has for the Merrimack Fire Department and fully supports the recommendation. Councilor Woods congratulated Matt Duke.

Fire Chief Matt Duke and his wife Lisa Duke were asked to stand at which time Lisa Duke pinned her husband's badge as Fire Chief. Lisa Duke expressed her gratitude to the Town Council for their kind words. She stated that he has worked very hard through out his career. Their son joined them and congratulated his father.

Old Business

1. 275th Anniversary Planning Update

Submitted by Parks and Recreation Director Matthew Casparius

Matt Casparius Director of Parks and Recreation provided an update on the plans for the Town of Merrimack's 275th Anniversary and a request for funding. He informed the Town Council that a committee has been formed to start planning the celebration. He explained that the committee has held two meetings and are considering holding one event each month from April through October. He stated that the organizations who are involved will each take on a month hosting the event. The events will be on the second Saturday of each month with the exception of August which will be on the third Saturday. Matt Casparius stressed that COVID-19 is a significant factor in the planning process. He hopes by spring or summer the vaccine will be available.

Matt Casparius advised the Town Council that during the last committee meeting there were some individuals who indicated that they would like to start a fund-raising effort to raise money for a Town gift as was done 25 years ago with the band stand. He asked the Town Council to consider approving a separate fund-raising sub-committee. He stated that would allow the original committee to remain focused the planning of the seven monthly events.

Matt Casparius spoke about the need for funding to plan the monthly events. He informed the Town Council that last year's 4th of July celebration money in the amount of \$50,000 was not spent due to the pandemic. He stated that there are several smaller activities that could be held and paid for through Parks and Recreation budget. The committee would like to hold a bigger celebration in August as an end of summer party. They would like to incorporate fireworks. Matt Casparius spoke about an idea the committee is considering, as was done 25 years ago they would like to sell commemorative license plate. The cost of the license plate is \$11 and could be sold for \$20. To increase awareness they created a 275th anniversary Facebook page.

Town Manager Eileen Cabanel clarified that the funding requested would come from two budgets; \$50,000 from 2020 and \$50,000 from 2021. She recommends that the funding be approved as needed. Councilor Woods asked for clarification regarding the fundraising committee: how much is the fundraising committee hoping to raise and what are they hoping to do. Matt Casparius stated that the fund-raising committee would be responsible for their own funding. He stated that nothing is definite but one idea was a covered bridge at Twin Bridge Park.

Councilor Harrington inquired on the make up of the committee. She suggested breaking the committee up into task groups. Town Manager Eileen Cabanel suggested that if a fund raising committee is established the money must be payable to the Town of Merrimack and processed through the finance department.

MOTION was made by Councilor Harrington and seconded by Councilor Healey to authorize the formation of sub-committee for the purpose of fundraising for a 275th anniversary memorial project.

Discussion on the motion

Councilor Woods stated that he is uneasy forming a fundraising committee without more details as to what they are fundraising for. Town Manager Eileen Cabanel concurred. Councilor Harrington suggested amending the motion to include the stipulation that the subcommittee must present their ideas to the Town Council before fundraising begins.

AMENDED MOTION was made by Councilor Harrington and seconded by Councilor Healey to authorize the formation of an exploratory 275th anniversary memorial sub-committee for the purpose of fundraising. Furthermore any specific plans will be brought to the Town Council before fundraising begins. **MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**

Discussion on the amended motion

Councilor Healey would like the sub-committee to bring forward a concept, approximate cost and what will happen if they are unable to raise the money needed. Chairman Koenig asked Matt Casparius if he was comfortable being in charge of this. Matt Casparius confirmed that he is. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali advised the Town Council that during the committee meetings there became two distinct conversations; fundraising and the planning of the monthly events. He stressed that the original charge given to the committee will be time consuming and he felt it was best to separate the two.

Chairman Koenig agreed with Town Manager Eileen Cabanel's suggestion to approve funding for events as they are needed. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali asked the Town Council to approve \$5,000 now for the purchase of commemorative license plates and for additional events that require a deposit. The Town Council agreed to approve up to \$5,000 to begin the planning of events.

New Business

1. Donation Acceptance for the Merrimack Police Department

Submitted by Police Chief Brian Levesque

The Town Council was asked to consider the acceptance and expenditure of a donation in the amount of \$5,000 from Digital Federal Credit Union (DCU) for the Merrimack Police Department to support efforts in providing programs and services that make a difference in the community, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15. Police Chief Brian Levesque explained that this money has typically been used in the past to fund programs that are not included in the Police Department budget and that foster good relationships between the Police Department and the community.

MOTION made by Councilor Woods and seconded by Councilor Albert to accept the donation in the amount of \$5,000 from Digital Federal Credit Union (DCU) for the Merrimack Police Department to support efforts in providing programs and services that make a difference in the community, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15. **MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**

3. 1st Quarter Financial Review

Submitted by Deputy Finance Director Thomas Boland

Deputy Finance Director Thomas Boland will review the key financial information of the quarter ending September 30, 2020. Mr. Boland informed the Town Council that the second quarter covers a period from July 1, 2020 through September 30, 2020. Mr. Boland stated that 2020 has been a year like no other and that is reflected in the numbers. He explained that the pandemic has presented tremendous challenges for the town's first responders and all town departments.

Mr. Boland highlighted the town's expenditures on health insurance. He advised the Town Council that costs are up 5% compared to last year's first quarter as a result from a higher number of full time employees. He stated that the New Hampshire Retirement System (NHRS) numbers are up as well for the same reason, higher number of fulltime employees. Another reason the NHRS numbers are up is the significant increase in over time which increases the Town's contribution. Town Manager Eileen Cabanel stated that the Town will be reimbursed for the overtime.

Mr. Boland reviewed the first quarter revenues. He stated that vehicle registration is up, building permits are flat and interest revenue is down. He advised the Town Council that interest revenue estimates will be down by a couple hundred thousand dollars. Chairman Koenig recapped that overall the Town is doing well financially but it would be prudent to watch it closely given the current situation.

4. Review of 2021/2022 Budget Schedule

Submitted by Town Manager Eileen Cabanel and Finance Director Paul T. Micali

The Town Council to review the 2021/22 budget schedule. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali advised the Town Council that the Budget presentations will on January 7th, 13th and January 20th. He has included two snow days just in case. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali informed the Town Council that the Town's deliberative session and the school district's deliberative will be in the same week this year and next year. He explained that the Town Charter dictates the time period when the Town must hold deliberative session which is after the second Tuesday in March through the following Saturday. He said the Town has just four days where the school district has a full week. He stated that Town meeting is April 13th.

Chairman Koenig stated that the Town Council will be presented with the proposed budget on December 17th. Councilor Harrington urged everyone to review the proposed schedule in the near future and inform Town Manager Eileen Cabanel as soon as possible in case changes need to be made. Vice Chair Boyd spoke about the need for a contingency plan for deliberative session. Councilor Rothhaus stated that years ago the Town held deliberative session in three rooms and if needed the Town could do the same.

5. Investment Policy

Submitted by Deputy Finance Director Thomas Boland

The Town Council reviewed and considered the approval of the Town's Investment Policy, for the investment of public funds held by the Town Treasurer, in accordance with RSA 35:9 and RSA 41:29 for FY 2021-22. Mr. Boland stated that this is a housekeeping matter at the direction of the Town auditor. He stated that the investment policy needs to be reviewed annually so at that the Town will remain in compliance. Mr. Boland recapped the current investment policy. Chairman Koenig stressed that the Town adheres to the very strict criteria regarding the ability to deposit money.

Approved: December 21, 2020

Posted: December 23, 2020

MOTION made by Vice Chair Boyd and seconded by Councilor Albert to approve the Town's Investment Policy, for the investment of public funds held by the Town Treasurer, in accordance with RSA 35:9 and RSA 41:29 for FY 2021-22. MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0

Minutes

None

Comments from the Press

None

Comments from the Public

None

Comments from the Council

Councilor Harrington asked about the vaccine distribution for first responders. Town Manager Eileen Cabanel will look into it tomorrow.

Councilor Albert recognized the Fire Department for their response to the three house fires in the last two weeks. Chairman Koenig echoed Councilor Albert comments.

Vice Chair Boyd concurred with Councilor Albert comments. He asked any resident who is interested in serving on a town board or committee to contact Becky Thompson. He stressed that volunteers are needed.

Councilor Healey reiterated that Merrimack TV is now available on Roku (on demand service). She congratulated the Media department for a job well done.

Chairman Koenig explained that the Town Council has spread out at tonight's meeting to adhere to the social distancing guidance relative to Covid-19. Town Manager Eileen Cabanel cautioned everyone that currently Merrimack currently has over 100 active cases of Covid-19. She spoke about how Covid has impacted town staff and their families. She spoke about staff shortage and coverage challenges. Chairman Koenig urged residents to remain vigilant to be patient and understanding if they come to Town Hall.

Adjourn

MOTION made by Vice Chair Boyd and seconded by Councilor Healey to adjourn the meeting. MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 pm

Respectfully submitted by Tracy Doherty