

Town Council Meeting Minutes



Thursday, January 13, 2022, at 7:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Chairman Koenig called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Present at the meeting were Chairman Koenig, Vice Chair Rothhaus, Councilor Harrington, Councilor Healey, Councilor Hunter, Councilor Murphy, Councilor Woods, and Town Manager Paul Micali.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Koenig led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcements

The Town offices will be closed on Monday, January 17th in the observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

The Town Council would like to offer our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Betty J. Spence, who died on Saturday, January 8th.

Betty's service to the Town of Merrimack is unparalleled - she was an employee of the Town for over 30 years. Betty served as the Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Assistant Town Manager, Interim Welfare Administrator, volunteer firefighter and an emergency medical technician. She also served on the Board of Selectmen and the Town Council, at one point held the position of Vice Chairman of the Board of Selectmen and as the Vice Chairman and the Chairman of the Town Council. We are forever grateful for all the time and effort that Betty provided to the Town of Merrimack.

Upcoming Town Council Meetings:

- Wednesday, January 19, 2022, 6:30 PM Budget meeting (Snow date is Thursday, January, 20 at 6:30 PM)
- Thursday, January 27, 2022, 7:00 PM Regular meeting
- Thursday, February 10, 2022, 7:00 PM Regular meeting

Starting February 1, there will be a change to what is accepted as part of the single stream recycling. We will no longer be able to accept #3, #4, #6, or #7 plastics. Those plastics should be disposed in the trash stream.

The skating rink at Watson Park is open for the season – as long as temperatures continue to cooperate. The rink is lit from 4:30 to 9:00 each evening.

Comments from the Press and Public

None.

Recognitions, Resignations and Retirements

None.

Appointments

None.

Public Hearing

None.

Legislative Updates from State Representatives

Legislative Update for January 6, 2022:

The NH House has been in session for two full days in Manchester, NH.

Today, HB 478 (sponsored by Reps. Mooney, Notter, Healey, Rung, Mayville, Cushing, Rice, Sens. Daniels, Ricciardi, Sherman, Carson) passed on the House floor. The bill's passage overturned the Judiciary Committee's recommendation of "ITL." This is very good news for Merrimack. Earlier last year, the Council wrote a supportive letter for its passage. Link to bill text: http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill status/billinfo.aspx?id=633&inflect=2

The bill is now on its way to the Senate where a hearing will be scheduled. More details to follow. A special thank you to all eight Merrimack legislators who voted in favor of HB 478.

Respectfully submitted, Rep. Maureen Mooney

Emails from Representative Healey:

Legislative update: State of the State Finances..aka Taxes and Fees.. as of (12/30/21)

Short version: We are \$122m above plan. Aka We took in WAY more money than our State budget plan called for. 14% more.

This bodes well for 2 bills on the Ways and Means Committee this session.

HB-1221-FN will lower the Business Profits Tax (BPT) by a whopping .1 from 7.6% to 7.5% and also lower the Business Enterprise Tax (BPT aka Payroll tax) by .05% from .55% to .50% <a href="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy="http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/ho

The other is...

HB 1204-FN which will lower the meals and rentals tax from 8.5% to 7.9%, AND will once again Change the % of M&R tax revenue shared with municipalities and increase it from 30% to 40%, there-by keeping the promise made when that tax was initially created. That promise was a 40% revenue share. http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1149&sy=

Just as an FYI, I just received RR&D Schedule for next Wednesday 1/19.

From 1:45 PM til the end of the day we will be hearing various PFAS Bills

1:45 p.m. **HB 1167** establishing a maximum contaminant level for perfluorinated chemicals in surface water.

2:30 p.m. **HB 1185** relative to treatment of water contaminated with perfluorinated chemicals.

3:45 p.m. **HB 1602-FN** relative to perfluorinated chemicals in drinking water.

If you or anyone wishes to provide testimony on any of these bills the address it should be sent to is:

HouseResourcesRecreationandDevelopment@leg.state.nh.us

That is unless you want to appear in person at the Statehouse.

Town Manager's Report

- The Town is actively going through the hiring process for 7 firefighters. We have candidates in varying stages of the hiring process and are considering several candidates. The Town does have a nepotism policy, so we will not be offering positions to family members of current employees unless we have assurances in place to avoid conflicts of interest and supervision of them by a family member.
- We have 2 that start January 24th, 1 in the last phase of the background check, 1 halfway through the background check. This should take care of the positions approved related to the Safer grant, effective February 27, 2022. Additionally, we have one candidate who has been extended a Conditional Offer who we are waiting to hear back from. We have 2 other openings and are considering candidates for those positions.

Consent Agenda

None.

Old Business

1. Flying Eagles Field Enhancement Project Request Follow-up Discussion

Submitted by Robert Fregault and Tim Sowder

The Town Council to consider The Flying Eagles' request to restore the field to its original open boundaries by removing a select number of trees located on the Town owned property on Caron / Griffin Street, known as the Sklar Waterfront Park.

Mr. Fregault and Mr. Sowder were present to discuss Patterson field, which is the field they have been flying in. Mr. Fregault provided a brief overview of their request, and then shared that since November they have spoken with the Conservation Committee, Planning and Zoning boards, and DPW. He then provided an updated map highlighting the area of trees they are looking to cut, sharing that the trees are mostly saplings located on the east side of the field. Towards the south end of the field, there is a notch area that they would like to cut out. The vegetation in this area is mostly bittersweet and diseased/dying trees. He then stated that the Commission asked if they would help clean up some of the bittersweet if they are allowed to cut the notch, in which they agreed they could help with some but cannot do the whole property. Mr. Fregault then shared noteworthy items from their November 15th meeting with the Conservation Commission, which included:

- Area to the North of little concern to the Conservation Committee
- Esthetics of the area to the East would improve if some trees were removed
- A semblance of a boundary on the eastern edge of the field would be desirable
- Some concerns about cutting too many trees
- Recognized bittersweet infestation as a problem that the project might help with
- Some marked trees in the Southern notch were cut prematurely
- Would like DPW input on the project
- There was general support for the project pending Town Council and DPW input

Mr. Fregault also shared an update from a phone conversation he had with DPW, highlighting the following points:

- Spoke by phone with Kyle Fox
- Mr. Fox stated he has no objections to the project, but that the DPW would not be involved in the tree clearing process
- Mr. Fox did mention his concerns that proper safety procedures be observed

Mr. Fregault then shared thoughts from the Planning and Zoning boards via email, sharing the following:

- No issues with Shoreland Protection as it is a 3rd order stream (Shoreland applies to 4th order or higher)
- No issues with SoRLAC as the work area is more than 1/4 mile from the Souhegan River
- Project is within 1/4 mile of Merrimack River and so should be presented to LMRLA
- An intent to cut permit may be required
- There may be some value in the trees- a forester could be consulted to make that determination
- No issues from zoning/planning

Mr. Fregault also provided input from the Lower Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee, highlighting the following points:

- Met with LMRLAC on December 9th
- The Committee accepted the Flying Eagles representation that the Naticook Brook would be protected
- The brush surrounding the Brook will be maintained and preserved
- The project represented no threat to the Merrimack River
- The Committee offers no suggested conditions on the town's approving the project

Mr. Fregault then provided a review of the project phases:

East Side of the Field:

- Trees are small in diameter. Will be cut by trained club members
- Risk and liabilities will be assumed by the club
- Tree trunks will be used as border buffering
- Branches will be shredded into mulch and spread as ground cover
- General timeframe: 12-18 months beginning this winter depending on snowfall and manpower availability

South Notch:

- A few remaining trees to cut
- Club will cut these trees this winter leaving trees where they fall as creature habitats
- Trees will be cut by trained club members
- Club will assume risks and liability

Large Pine Trees:

- Will be cut by an insured professional tree service company
- Tree trunks will be used as border buffering along roadway and as closure to ATV trails
- Branches will be shredded into mulch and spread as a ground cover
- General timeframe TBD based on cost, club resources, seasonal issues, and contractor availability
- We will clear the eastern area of the smaller trees before felling the tall pine trees

North Notch:

- Only two trees to cut
- Club will cut these trees this winter leaving trees where they fall as creature habitat
- Trees will be cut by trained club members
- Club will assume risks and liability

Lastly, Mr. Fregault provided his final thoughts, including the following:

- The project is dependent on the Council's approval before any work can proceed
- The club will work with the town to ensure, as best as it is practical, that the interests of the town are met
- The club believes that this project will enhance both the utilization and the appearance of the property at no cost to the town
- A more open air space will foster a greater interest and participation in the hobby of model aviation
- The project will not endanger either the Naticook Brook or the Merrimack River
- The project will preserve the property's natural vegetation and not involve any more trees than is necessary for safe flight operations

Mr. Micali stated that regarding the liability issue, the town will have to be added as additionally insured on the group's policy for the purpose of cutting trees, and the club would have to talk to their insurance company about this to see if they would insure them for cutting trees. Additionally, the town would need that policy as well as the indemnification policy with signatures for their records. Further, the town would request that the individuals who will be cutting the trees use protective gear (helmets, shields, chaps, etc.). Mr. Fregault stated that he will discuss this further with the club, but they could also consider having somebody commercially cut the trees instead, which Mr. Micali stated that this will be fine as long as there is insurance for whoever is cutting the trees.

Vice Chair Rothhaus shared that he is in favor of this project, but he is uncertain of leaving a large number of trees down for creature habitat. He thinks it would look wonderful if it was cleared to look more like a field. Mr. Fregault shared that the stumps are cut close to the ground but left there because the roots retain soil, and the vegetation that grows is between knee-length and waist-length. Councilor Healey shared concerns of forest fires, asking the fire department that was present at the meeting if this could be an issue. The fire department shared that this is not a concern to them or an increased fire risk.

<u>MOTION</u> made by Vice Chair Rothhaus and seconded by Councilor Healey to approve the project pending resolution of liability and insurance issue with no work to be performed until the approval of the Town Manager or his designee based on receiving the liability insurance or the name of a professional contractor.

Councilor Woods asked if there should be a completion date added onto this, in which Mr. Micali stated that it is up to the Flying Eagles if they think this would be doable for them, in which Mr. Fregault said that depending on club resources, the project could take awhile to complete or be done in stages as resources become available. He proposes being granted project approval with the timeframe being flexible based on their resources, weather, and contractor availability. Chairman Koenig suggested adding a limit date, possibly 18 months, so that if the project goes beyond it can be reviewed and updated. Mr. Fregault is happy to come back to the Council to provide updates, but he is worried about completing the project in the timeframe. Mr. Fregault asked if the timeframe could be 18-24 months, in which Councilor Harrington stated she does not see this as an issue as they are limited by the scope of what they can do in the project based on what is determined tonight. She suggested giving them 3 years (36 months) as it gives them ample time and provides a comfort level for the Council to be able to review if the project goes beyond this date.

Councilor Murphy is in agreement with this, stating that there are factors such as weather and resources that limit the club's ability to complete the project quickly. Councilor Healey agreed with this, stating it may take over 6 months to hire a tree company due to Covid and being busy with other projects.

<u>Amended MOTION</u> made by Vice Chair Rothhaus and seconded by Councilor Healey to approve the project pending resolution of liability and insurance issue with no work to be performed until the approval of the Town Manager or his designee based on receiving the liability insurance or the name of a professional contractor with a 36 month deadline.

MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0

New Business

1. Reappointment of Merrimack Representative to the Nashua Regional Planning Commission Submitted by Town Council Chair Tom Koenig and Vice Chair Finlay Rothhaus

The Town Council to consider the reappointment of Timothy Tenhave as one of Merrimack's representatives to the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC), as recommended by the Merrimack Planning Board and pursuant to RSA 36:46 (III).

<u>MOTION</u> made by Vice Chair Rothhaus and seconded by Councilor Harrington to appoint Timothy Tenhave as one of Merrimack's representatives to the Nashua Regional Planning Commission as recommended by the Merrimack Planning Board and pursuant to RSA 36:46 (III). <u>MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0</u>

2. Cathy Street, Brick Lane & Constance Street Drainage and Right-of-way Easements
Submitted by Deputy Public Works Director / Town Engineer Dawn Tuomala
Town Council to consider the acceptance of drainage and right-of-way easements as part of the 19 subdivision plan for Level Acres I.

Deputy Public Works Director / Town Engineer Dawn Tuomala was present along with Paul Chisholm of Keach-Nordstrom Associates, Inc. to present a PowerPoint on the right-of-way easements. She presented a map of the northern Merrimack area, highlighting the areas in question. She shared that there are two different types of easements they are looking at: road widening, which will add 5 ft on each side to make the road 50 ft wide, and drainage, which is needed to improve the roads in order to eventually sell the lots. She shared that she talked with the Planning Board, and they did not feel they had any input in this as the subdivision is so old and the DPW has been dealing with Mr. Chisholm in the upgrade of this section. Additionally, there is a sewer easement that is in this area and comes down from Reeds Ferry school onto Constance St. and Down Brick Ln. to the swamp area out back.

Chairman Koenig asked Ms. Tuomala to explain why the Council has to accept an easement, in which she replied that this is because they are using the extra 5 ft for road widening purposes and they need to have the actual deeds in order to have the roads in this position before the houses can be sold. Councilor Healey wanted to validate that all of the lots that are being shown on the map are not currently inhabited, in which Mr. Chisholm said he does not believe anyone is living in the lots yet. Ms. Tuomala and Mr. Chisholm then briefly described the area in general and how some lots have been under construction, and how some did not need improvements made to the right-of-way or drainage.

<u>MOTION</u> made by Councilor Healey and seconded by Councilor Hunter to accept the drainage and right-of-way easements as part of the 19 subdivision plan for Level Acres I, and to allow the Town Manager to sign and any all appropriate paperwork.

MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0

3. Consideration of Acceptance of Portion of Old Blood Road

Submitted by Deputy Public Works Director / Town Engineer Dawn Tuomala
The Town Council to consider the acceptance of the last 1,210 foot section of Old Blood Road that ends in a hammerhead turn around area.

Ms. Tuomala presented a map of the area in question to provide clarity to the Council. She shared that this area was a compilation of several different subdivisions, and this is more specifically about the last 1,210 ft of road on Old Blood Rd. She provided some history on the area and shared that the Old Blood properties on the west side had undedications, and there were no definitions on either side to define what Old Blood Rd. was, so she had difficulty understanding the plans. They have recently gotten a new plan that reflects what the deed says, so she is asking the Council to accept this as well as the drainage easements that come out for these properties. She did ask the Planning Board for approval for this and was told they need to have a maintenance bond in place for the entire property for the next two years. This bond is \$11,535, and the Planning Board voted in acceptance of having this new bond put into place. She stated that if the Council grants this acceptance, Mr. Tenhave will bring in the check to be able to help hold as the bond tomorrow. She also talked this over with the town attorney, who is in agreement with this, and she has sent the last revisions for review today which she expects will be approved.

<u>MOTION</u> made by Councilor Harrington and seconded by Councilor Woods to accept the last 1,210 foot section of Old Blood Road as presented, and to allow the Town Manager to sign and any all appropriate paperwork.

<u>MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0</u>

4. Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrade Phase V

Submitted by Assistant Director of Public Works / Wastewater Sarita Croce
The Town Council to be presented with the Wastewater Treatment Facility Phase V upgrade. This upgrade consists of items that were removed from the initial phase III and IV upgrades approved by the voters due to cost considerations.

Assistant Director of Public Works / Wastewater Sarita Croce was present to provide some updates on the Wastewater Treatment Facility Phase V upgrade. Before she presented, Mr. Micali stated that they have previously had issues with biddings, and they were going to use some of the ARPA money to do a screenings building, but that plan fell through. He then stated that they went to the state to ask for some federal money to help out with this project, but that also did not come to fruition. Ms. Croce then shared a PowerPoint overview of the Wastewater Treatment Plant and a brief overview of the budget and project to refresh the Council's memory. She then shared the Phase V project cost, which is as follows:

- Screenings Building- \$3,200,000
- Wash water Piping- \$585,000
- Compost Facility- \$2,600,000
- Headworks Building- \$2,400,000
- Construction Cost Total- \$8,785,000
- Contingency 5%- \$439,250
- Engineering 10% \$878,500

Total Project Cost- \$10,102,750

Ms. Croce then highlighted some Clean Water ARPA grant offers, such as:

- NHDES announced the availability of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for all clean water ARPA grant offers
- The town submitted an SRF pre-application to qualify for the ARPA grant

- The town of Merrimack has been preapproved for 20% ARPA grant up to \$2,000,000
- With the ARPA grant, they would be requesting a loan of \$8.1 million
- Funding for debt repayment on the bond will come from sewer user fees, not property taxes

Ms. Croce then provided an example of a 20 year loan repayment schedule at 2.5% interest. She also wanted to include two other upgrades in the project that she has not yet talked about: an electrical upgrade in the chlorine building and some sludge pumping, as well as the sawdust building. She would like to come back to discuss these at a future meeting. Mr. Micali then discussed what they can potentially use the ARPA money for as to not lower their bond amount. Vice Chair Rothhaus asked about rate adjustments since this was done based on Phase 3 and 4, in which Mr. Micali stated they will be okay with the current rate, and they are in process of doing a new rate study in the summer. Councilor Healey asked about the pricing increases, and if there is anything in the proposal that can be delayed with the hope that pricing goes down over time. Ms. Croce stated that it's expected that costs will increase again substantially when the infrastructure money becomes available, as well as the cost of materials.

5. Merrimack Fire Rescue Ladder Truck

Submitted by Fire Chief Mark DiFronzo

The Town Council to consider the purchase of a new ladder truck for the replacement of the current 2002 American LaFrance ladder truck. In addition, the Council will receive financing options to purchase the new ladder truck.

Chief DiFronzo was present to discuss the need for a new ladder truck. Before he began, Mr. Micali provided a brief synopsis of the importance of ladder trucks for saving lives and reducing the damage caused by fires. He also shared that American LaFrance is no longer in business, so it is nearly impossible to find parts for their current truck, and there are several repairs needed on this truck that have taken months to complete because of this. Mr. Micali also shared that it would be cheaper to get a 5-year bond as opposed to leasing a new truck due to interest rates. Chief DiFronzo then shared a PowerPoint presentation, highlighting the following:

- The town has had a ladder truck since 1972
- American LaFrance went out of business in 2014, making it very difficult to find parts
- The current ladder truck is almost 20 years old
- Average out of service time for 2021 was about 140 days for repairs, being out of service for 8 different times
- The cost of repairs from January 1, 2017 to November 30, 2021 was \$75,097, with the average annual cost \$15,019
- In September 2021, the swivel unit failed, costing over \$30,000 in repairs
- The body of the truck has had to be repainted 3 times, which is unheard of for firetrucks
- An evaluation by the DPW showed that there were several issues with the truck, including several rust spots, body corrosion and corroded rear air bag mounts, hydraulic hose and cylinders are getting old, engine had blow-by, and the brakes and tries had normal wear and tear
- Despite these issues, the truck provides for firefighter safety during roof operations and is safer for victim removal from exterior. Additionally, there is the ability for large volumes of water if needed
- Having a ladder truck decreases the fire department's insurance rates
- The cost for a new truck would be \$1,473,994. Pay up front savings would be \$40,724, making the final truck cost \$1,433,270. The remaining dollars (\$66,730) will be to replace antiquated equipment and anything additional

After his presentation, Chief DiFronzo shared that it will take almost 2 years to get a new truck, so he would like to get this done sooner rather than later. He also shared that they could get a demo truck in April as an option as well, but he has not looked at it yet so he's not sure if it would meet their needs or not.

Councilor Healey asked if they would have to load the new truck with new equipment, in which Chief DiFronzo stated that the equipment can transfer into the new truck because it is not very old, and the equipment is reusable. She then asked if parts on the current truck can be sold, but he is not sure about that since the parts are about 20 years old and have years of use on them. Councilor Harrington asked if there is any money in the capital reserve fund for this, in which Mr. Micali stated that the money in the CRF is already on a set schedule for other vehicle replacements. Councilor Hunter asked if there is a mechanism or if the Council has the authority to put something in place so that when a developer builds a building that will require a ladder truck (or other expensive equipment) that they contribute towards the cost of the equipment. Chairman Koenig stated that the conditional use permit allows them to look at the financial aspects and requires the developer to develop a plan of how this is going to impact the town as far as services, schools, etc. Councilor Healey asked if there are any funds from grants that can be used towards this purchase, in which Mr. Micali replied that they are all tied to their respective section of town and cannot be used towards this.

Chairman Koenig asked Chief DiFronzo to explain the difference between leasing vs bonding for the truck. Mr. Micali shared that the lease option involves a 4 year lease-to-own with a principal balance of \$1,500,000 and interest rate assumption of 2.29%. The 5-year bond option costs the same but has a cheaper interest rate of 1.25%.

6. Role of the Town Council Regarding Public Health

Submitted by Town Councilor Nancy Murphy
The Town Council to discuss and consider potential actions and options to protect public health in light of the ever changing status of Covid-19 and CDC guidelines.

<u>MOTION</u> made by Councilor Healey and seconded by Councilor Harrington to continue the meeting beyond 10:00 pm. <u>MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0</u>

Councilor Murphy began by stating that she wanted to provide the Council with handouts and resources regarding this public health issue. She wants to be sure that as a governing body, the Council is doing everything they can to reduce transmission in the community. She then shared that Merrimack is quickly becoming one of the top counties in New Hampshire in regard to covid transmission rates. These high rates have negatively impacted the community, particularly the schools and businesses. She then shared that DHHS reported yesterday that 82% of inpatient beds and 86% of ICU beds across the state were occupied, but these numbers change daily. She believes the Council needs to be part of the solution in any way they can and see if there is anything that can be done to help educate the community, such as updating the website with Covid information and encouraging mask wearing and social distancing.

Councilor Harrington wanted to clarify what the Council should do with the list of universal best practices that Councilor Murphy provided them, in which Councilor Murphy stated this is to encourage and recommend best practices to the public. Councilor Harrington wanted to stress that the public has the final choice with what they decide to do and focusing on sharing information with the community is the best option. Councilor Murphy agreed, stating that educating the community and sharing information is the main goal of this. Councilor Healey shared that she thinks it's important to consolidate the information and share with the public the main points to protect themselves from Covid, but ultimately the decision is with the

individual. There was then some discussion between the Councilors and Mr. Micali regarding Covid protocols, such as mask wearing, social distancing, and plexiglass in town hall. The Council then discussed the best practices list, stating that they have no control over vaccinations as that is at a state level, and do not want to mandate masks for the community. The consensus was that individuals have the ability to make their own choices, and if they do not feel safe going out, they are encouraged to use alternatives such as having someone run errands for them or use e-services when able to. Councilor Murphy stressed that she wants to take action to contribute to help reduce covid transmission and the stress that goes along with it. Councilor Murphy and the Council agreed that the economy cannot afford to shut down again or lengthen quarantine times, so the goal of this is just to see what the Council can do to help the community deal with this pandemic and increase education and health measures. Mr. Micali wanted to highlight that the town has taken safety very seriously during the pandemic, and they try to do their best to maintain social distancing and follow CDC guidelines to keep Town Hall as safe as possible for residents. He also shared that all deliveries go to the finance department so as to avoid delivery drivers walking through Town Hall and potentially spreading the virus.

Minutes

Approve the minutes from the following Town Council meeting:

♦ December 16, 2021

<u>MOTION</u> made by Councilor Harrington and seconded by Councilor Woods to approve the minutes of December 16, 2021, as amended.

MOTION CARRIES 6-0-1 with Vice Chair Rothhaus abstaining

Amendments:

Page 8, line 35: Should say "the years of 2009 to 2018"

Page 8 line 33: Should say "HB 737 Commission", not BH 737 Commission Page 8 line 45: Capitalize "H" in Merrimack Visiting Nurses and Hospice

Comments from the Press

None.

Comments from the Public

None.

Comments from the Council

Councilor Harrington wanted to comment about Betty Spence, stating that she is the one who got her involved in the Selectmen and was pivotal in talking her into applying and holds a special place in her heart. She hopes she rests in peace.

Councilor Murphy wanted to discuss Wreaths Across America, stating that this will be done next year as well, and they will match every donation made up until tomorrow.

Adjourn

<u>MOTION</u> made by Councilor Woods and seconded by Councilor Healey to adjourn the meeting. <u>MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0</u>

The meeting adjourned at 10:47pm