



## Town Council Special Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 3, 2022, at 7:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room



### Call to Order

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

#### **Upcoming Town Council Meetings:**

- Thursday, February 10, 2022, 7:00 PM Regular meeting to include Public Hearing re: Operating Budget
- Thursday, February 24, 2022, 7:00 PM Regular meeting
- Wednesday, February 23, 2022, thru Friday, March 4, 2022 at 5:00 PM Filing period for Town Offices to be elected at Town Meeting on April 12, 2022
- Wednesday, March 9, 2022, 7:00 PM, in the All-Purpose Room at James Mastricola Upper Elementary School located at 26 Baboosic Lake Road Deliberative Session

NH Department of Health Human Services (DHHS) is doing another COVID Vaccination Clinic. The following dates have been scheduled at the Merrimack John O'Leary Adult Community Center:

1. Wednesday, 2/16/22 from 1-5pm
2. Wednesday, 3/16/22 from 1-4pm (return clinic if needed)

Staff or residents needing to schedule their vaccination can call 603-420-1440 or email [welfare@merrimacknh.gov](mailto:welfare@merrimacknh.gov) to do so.

For the clinic, DHHS' mobile team will be offering the following vaccination series:

- Pediatric Doses for Ages 5 – 11: Pfizer (2-doses) (COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens | CDC)
- Primary Doses for Ages 12 – 17: Pfizer (2-doses) (COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens | CDC)
- Primary Doses for Ages 18+: Pfizer (2-doses), Moderna (2-doses), and J&J (1-dose) (Your COVID-19 Vaccination | CDC)

### Comments from the Press and Public

None.

### New Business

#### **1. Review of Revenue**

*Submitted by Town Manager Paul T. Micali*

The Town Council to review the revenues as presented as part of the 2022/23 Operating Budget.

Town Manager Paul Micali began by recapping that this is in regard to the Media fund, specifically if they should transfer \$250,000 to the general fund. If this fund were to run out, the fund balance in the Media fund would be a deficit of \$42,000. Mr. Micali then provided the following options for revenue adjustments to the Council:

Option 1:

- Cable franchise fees general fund- \$250,000
- Increase building permits- \$35,000
- Increase restaurant license fees to state per ordinance- \$12,000
- Current use- \$125,000
- Ambulance revenues (Medicare rates 5% increase and increased ambulance calls)- \$65,000
- Balance cable franchise fees to general fund: \$13,000
- This option will not affect the tax rate

Councilor Hunter asked Mr. Micali to go over the current use. Mr. Micali stated that there was an anticipated project that is not going to happen in this fiscal year, so right now current use sits at \$1 million in the conservation fund (fund 53). 100% of current use then goes to the Town of Merrimack.

Option 2:

- Increase franchise fees from 3.75% to 4.5% (allowed once a year per contract)
  - Increase revenue would be estimated at \$51,000
- Increase ambulance billing rate to Medicare plus 75%
  - This increase would raise an estimated \$155,000 in additional revenue

Councilor Harrington asked if it is known what other towns do for ambulance billing, in which Mr. Micali stated that Merrimack is the lowest, and most of the surrounding towns are on average 125%-200%. He then went on to say that if residents cannot afford to pay their bill, Merrimack will go out of their way to get the resident to fill out an abatement form or show proof of income to give to welfare, and there are payment plan options available as well. He stressed that the town actively works with residents to help them with payments and will not go after an estate if the resident were to pass away. Councilor Healey asked how assist calls get billed out, since residents are not really taking an ambulance ride, in which Mr. Micali stated that if they do not take a ride they do not get billed.

Councilor Healey shared that she is unsure about the franchise fee, stating that she sees this as another tax. She understands it pays for the Media department but is asking Mr. Micali what the numbers would look like if the rate was at 4% instead of 4.5%, in which Mr. Micali stated this would be around \$12,000. Vice Chair Rothhaus shared that he thinks the town is in a bit of a dilemma, with cable usage expected to decrease over the next few years and how to not increase the tax rate. Chairman Koenig agreed, stating that he does not see how they can raise the rates of cable subscribers to pay for media anymore. He then shared that regarding ambulance billing, he is wondering why residents are paying several hundred dollars for an ambulance ride that most people will only use once or twice in a lifetime when they are already paying for the fire department in their taxes. Councilor Murphy asked about the ambulance billing, specifically if this is just for transportation or if this includes treatment/medications. Mr. Micali stated that there are different rates depending on the needs, and there are additional fees for treatments or medications given, as well as a mileage fee (\$12.03 per mile). Councilor Woods asked if there is enough data available to build a profile that would show support from insurance regarding ambulance billing, as well as the frequency of use by demographics. Mr. Micali stated he is not sure about this; they use a third party biller (Comstar) so he can ask questions about this to get an answer.

## **2. Ratification of Collective Bargaining Agreement(s)**

*Submitted by Town Manager Paul T. Micali*

Town Council to consider ratification of tentative collective bargaining agreement(s).

Mr. Micali began by stating that he wanted to thank the Teamsters Local 633 for negotiating a tentative agreement with the town. He shared that Local 633 includes the supervisors of the DPW group, which are supervisors and secretaries in Wastewater, Equipment Maintenance, Solid Waste, and Highway. He then stated that this is a two year contract, and some of the cost items for the contract include:

- Increasing life insurance benefits for spouse from \$1,000 to \$10,000, and children benefits from \$500 to \$5,000
- Wages for 2022-2023 will have a 2.5% increase with an additional \$0.48 cents per hour for the base hourly rate for employees, effective the first full pay period in 2022-2023
- In FY 2023-2024, there will be a 3% raise increase
- Employees on call during a holiday will receive an extra 2 hours of on-call pay at their base hourly rate
- The Town will provide \$125 for prescription safety glasses once every 3 years beginning July 2022
- The cost in the first year of this contract is \$49,754, or approximately 1 cent on the tax rate
- The cost for year two is \$35,555, or a little less than 1 cent on the tax rate

**MOTION made by Councilor Harrington and seconded by Councilor Murphy to ratify the agreement with Teamsters Local 633 and vote to move this agreement to the warrant.**

**MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**

Vice Chair Rothhaus wanted to thank the Teamsters for working on this negotiation with the town, and Mr. Micali wanted to thank Sharon Marunicz, HR Director, for sitting in on these negotiations and for all her help and efforts during the negotiations.

### **Comments from the Press**

None.

### **Comments from the Public**

None.

### **Comments from the Council**

None.

### **Adjourn**

**MOTION made by Councilor Woods and seconded by Councilor Healey to adjourn the meeting.**

**MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Steagald