

Approved: March 13, 2014

Posted: March 19, 2014



Town Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 27, 2014, at 7:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Chairman Rothhaus called the meeting of the Town Council to order at 7:00 p.m. Present at the meeting were Vice Chairman Yakuboff, Councilor Boyd, Councilor Harrington, Councilor Koenig, Councilor Mahon, Town Manager Eileen Cabanel, and Finance Director Paul Micali. Councilor Dwyer was excused.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Rothhaus lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcements

The first Deliberative Session for the Annual Town Meeting will be conducted on Wednesday, March 12, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. in the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School All-purpose room. Regular meetings of the Town Council will be conducted on Thursday March 13, 2014 and March 27, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. in the Matthew Thornton Room.

Town Manager Cabanel spoke of the possibility to broadcast a segment intended to provide an explanation of the differences between the proposed and default budgets, and stated her belief such a broadcast would be helpful to the citizenry. Chairman Rothhaus stated agreement.

The Merrimack Public Library has an exciting educational opportunity to partner with the Boston College Educational Seismology Project to bring a fully functional seismograph machine to Merrimack. The cost of joining the Project is \$10,218 which purchases the equipment as well as on-site installation, noise studies, and training led by the seismologists. The Library Trustees are seeking funding from businesses and individuals, and have already raised about 50% of the costs. Anyone interested should check out the web site for more information on the program and how to contribute.

Comments from the Press and Public - None

Recognitions, Resignations and Retirements - None

Appointments - None

Public Hearing - None

Legislative Updates from State Representatives - None

Town Manager's Report

On Saturday, February 22, 2014 the Parks & Recreation Department hosted the 22nd Annual Winter Carnival at Wasserman Park. Their sincere appreciation goes out to all of the local non-profit organizations who shared their time making this event so successful. With more than 500 participants in attendance, the event was a tremendous success and they wish to thank the community for its participation.

Mentioned at the last meeting was the desire to schedule a date on which citizens could conduct a walkthrough of the Highway Garage. Town Manager Cabanel questioned whether Saturday March 22, 2014 would be suitable. That date would be after the Deliberative Session and about 3 weeks before the ballot vote. The Council stated agreement with the proposed date.

Consent Agenda - None

Old Business

1. Waiver of Liability - Use of a Portion of South Grater Road

Submitted by Town Council Chair Finlay Rothhaus

To authorize the Town Council Chairman to sign the Notice, Agreement and Release of Municipal Liability and Responsibility which allows Brett Vaughn to use a portion of South Grater Road as a driveway to access Tax Map Parcel 4A/015 for the construction of a single family residence as approved by the Town Council at the January 9, 2014 Town Council meeting.

MOTION made by Councilor Yakuboff and seconded by Councilor Boyd to authorize the Town Council Chairman to sign the Notice, Agreement and Release of Municipal Liability and Responsibility which allows Brett Vaughn to use a portion of South Grater Road as a driveway to access Tax Map Parcel 4A/015 for the construction of a single family residence as approved by the Town Council at the January 9, 2014 Town Council meeting. MOTION CARRIED 6-0-0

New Business

1. Committee Appointments

Submitted by Town Council Chairman Finlay Rothhaus and Vice Chair David G. Yakuboff, Sr.

The Town Council to consider the recommendations to appoint the following individuals to Town committees, pursuant to Charter Article 4-8:

Michael Boisvert - Conservation Commission (Alternate Membership)

Dan Ricker - Parks and Recreation Committee (Full Membership)

Dustin Luikkonen - Technology Committee (Full Membership)

Vice Chairman Yakuboff stated he, Chairman Rothhaus, Councilor Dwyer, and the chairmen of the various committees met and conducted interviews of the candidates. Each of the candidates possesses unique abilities, which will serve their respective committees well.

MOTION made by Councilor Yakuboff and seconded by Councilor Mahon to appoint Michael Boisvert as an Alternate Member of the Conservation Commission. MOTION CARRIED 6-0-0

MOTION made by Councilor Yakuboff and seconded by Councilor Mahon to appoint Dan Ricker as a Full Member of the Parks and Recreation Committee. MOTION CARRIED 6-0-0

MOTION made by Councilor Yakuboff and seconded by Councilor Boyd to appoint Dustin Luikkonen as a Full Member of the Technology Committee. MOTION CARRIED 6-0-0

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Vice Chairman Yakuboff commented it is welcoming to see young individuals volunteering to serve the community in this way.

Oath of Office administered by Chairman Rothhaus to Mr. Dan Ricker.

2. Sale of Ambulance

Submitted by Finance Director Paul T. Micali

The Town Council to consider approval of the request to sell one of the Town's ambulances to the Town of Bedford.

Director Micali informed the Council one of the ambulances belonging to the Town of Bedford was involved in an accident and was totaled. Merrimack has two ambulances it is preparing to trade-in towards the purchase of a new ambulance. An offer has been made by the Town of Bedford to purchase one of these ambulances; a 1999 Ford with over 188,000 miles, for the sum of \$4,500, which is in the ballpark of what could be expected as a trade-in value. He questioned the will of the Council.

MOTION made by Councilor Yakuboff and seconded by Councilor Boyd to approve the sale of the 1999 Ford ambulance (mileage 188,000+) to the Town of Bedford for the sum of Four Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$4,500.00), and authorize the Town Manager or appropriate designee to sign any and all required paperwork. MOTION CARRIED 6-0-0

3. Second Quarter Financial Review

Submitted by Finance Director Paul T. Micali

Finance Director Paul Micali will review the key financial information for the second quarter of the 2013/2014 fiscal year.

Director Micali provided a presentation (copy attached). The presentation provided comparisons (for the quarter ending December 31st) of: 1) overtime by department, 2) auto registrations, interest, and building permits, 3) health insurance, 4) New Hampshire retirement (NHRS), and 5) appropriation by department. When asked, he stated it to be a cumulative comparison (1st and 2nd quarter combined).

In FY14, health insurance costs have reached \$1,543,873.00, which is on track with the not to exceed amount (general fund only). Town Manager Cabanel reminded the Board for FY14 the Town experienced a large increase (15%) in health insurance costs (approximately \$500,000). The percentage of increase will not be as great for FY15 (5%).

Director Micali noted increases seen in costs associated with the NHRS. We are in the first year of the new rates. Those numbers are tracking as expected, and the budget is in good standing.

Speaking with regard to overtime, Director Micali stated there to have been a slight spike in overtime for Police, Communications, and Highway divisions. Overtime in the Highway Department has risen due to weather related events. There have been 40 winter events this year (budget for about 28/year). The line item has been over-expended by about \$45,000 to date. Savings have been gained in salary line items as a result of positions being unfilled for a period of time and positions being filled by individual(s) coming in at a lesser salary than those retiring/departing. The savings will account for a good percentage of the overage. The difference (\$10,000-\$12,000) will be made up through other savings achieved in the department.

The stockpile of sand has been used throughout the year. A recent purchase order was placed for its replenishment. There remains approximately 650 tons of salt in the salt barn (6-10 storms depending on makeup of storm). An order has been placed for an additional 500 tons of salt, which is believed sufficient to get through the remainder of the winter season. Approximately 2,400 tons has been used to date. The shed holds about 3,000 tons, and was almost at capacity at the start of the season. Town Manager Cabanel stated it has been the policy of the Public Works Department to replenish the salt shed to its capacity during the summer months. During the winter season the shed is depleted and replenished as needed. The intent is to fill the shed at the end of the season, if monies remain.

Chairman Rothhaus questioned the reasoning behind the increase in overtime in the Police Department. Director Micali stated it to be the result of a change in practice, e.g., some of the shifts previously covered by special police officers are now covered by overtime. That was a known change due to costs associated with the required training for special officers, and the potential for losing them. Costs involved in utilizing a special police officer were nearly as great as utilizing a full-time police officer. Town Manager Cabanel noted the budget was adjusted accordingly, e.g., line item for specials was removed and funds added to the overtime line item.

Director Micali noted the slight spike in overtime for the Communications Department is due to staffing levels. The department is currently fully staffed, and the overtime figure should come back down. The Solid Waste Department has been working on decreasing overtime from prior years, which appears to be working effectively. Most of their overtime was due to the number of trips to dump refuge. Their procedures have been and continue to be reviewed/revised. The Fire Department overtime budget has changed dramatically, which is the result of overtime incurred last year and reimbursement for through a training grant.

Councilor Boyd questioned the number of weekend weather events that resulted in overtime. Director Micali noted the prior week's event began with snow on Tuesday followed by ice on Thursday and water on Friday, which resulted in overtime on Saturday due to drainage problems. The week prior brought with it a storm which began on Saturday and lasted into Sunday. He remarked even with a storm on a weekday, employees are putting in 8 hours of regular time, and if plowing for 18 hours, ten of that is overtime.

Town Manager Cabanel informed the Council she and the Fire Chief have been working on a method by which they can stabilize overtime. Over the past few years four firefighters have been removed from the budget. The department was trying to continue to staff to that level. They are making gains in this area.

With regard to the chart depicting the revenue comparison, Director Micali stated the first column (interest/pooled cash) should be removed. He noted a discussion he had with a banker who offered him .4%. Although difficult to get excited about .4%, when earning .015, it is an improvement. Building permits are up as are auto registrations. The forecast is auto registrations will end the year well above the \$3.9 million estimated revenue projected in the budget.

Director Micali stated his belief there are sufficient appropriations to get through the year. Revenues are looking up and the goals should be reached.

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Councilor Koenig spoke of the Summary by Department Expenditure Report; specifically, the last column, which depicts the percentage of the budget remaining. He requested a column be added identifying the average percentage expended by this time period. He provided the example of the Library, which appears to have expended nearly 57% of its budget in the first half of the fiscal year, and debt service, which has only 10.86% of its yearly budget remaining. He stated his presumption that relates to the timing of payments that are made. Director Micali stated that to be correct. He stated a column could be added to provide historic information.

Councilor Koenig noted the 31.33% remaining in the Highway Department budget. Director Micali remarked a large portion of that (\$700,000) has been encumbered for the road paving projects for the spring, which was put out to bid in the past few days. When asked about the 11.51% remaining for Solid Waste Disposal, he stated there to be monies encumbered through an open purchase order for tipping fees (for the year).

Minutes

Approve the minutes from the following Town Council meetings: February 13, 2014

MOTION made by Councilor Boyd and seconded by Councilor Harrington to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2014 Town Council Meeting as presented

ON THE QUESTION

Vice Chairman Yakuboff questioned whether acceptance of the meeting minutes should be postponed until the minutes of the February 18, 2014 meeting are available for review, given the February 13, 2014 meeting was recessed until that date. Chairman Rothhaus stated his agreement acceptance should be postponed.

MOTION WITHDRAWN

There being no objection, Chairman Rothhaus stated acceptance of the February 13, 2014 meeting minutes would be postponed until the Council's next regularly scheduled meeting.

Comments from the Press - None

Comments from the Public - None

Comments from the Council

Councilor Boyd congratulated the Merrimack Tomahawk Boys Hockey Team on their recent victory against Alvirne. They will face off against undefeated Bedford Saturday night at West Arena at 6:15 p.m., which will probably be a precursor to them meeting again in the playoffs down the road.

Councilor Boyd recognized Nancy Larson who has taken on a new position with the City of Concord. He commented it will be a wonderful opportunity for her and fits her personality and skillset very well. He remarked a lot of the success of the growth in Merrimack can easily be attributed to Nancy's presence both at the Zoning and Planning Board levels. He stated he has had the opportunity to work with her and pose questions on not just the Merrimack Premium Outlets project, but a myriad of

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projects that have come before the Planning Board. He commented Nancy will be sorely missed as she has been an asset to the community. He wished her the best of luck in her future endeavors, and thanked her for all of the hard work she has given to the Town of Merrimack.

Director Micali spoke of the Granite State Challenge noting it occurs every year although there has been a hiatus for a few years. The Granite State Challenge is high school students who compete in a team jeopardy event, which will go on for the next 8 weeks or so. Saturday, March 1st Merrimack High School will face Bishop Guertin High School at 6:30 p.m. He suggested residents watch the event on PBS (channel 11). At the end (April/May) there will be a bowl between the champion from New Hampshire and the champion from Massachusetts.

MOTION made by Councilor Boyd and seconded by Councilor Mahon to adjourn the meeting.
MOTION CARRIED 6-0-0

The February 27, 2014 meeting of the Town Council was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Submitted by Dawn MacMillan