



# TOWN COUNCIL – AGENDA REQUEST FORM

THIS FORM WILL BECOME PART OF THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION USED BY THE COUNCIL AND PUBLIC

Please submit Agenda Request Form, **including back up information, 8 days prior** to the requested meeting date. **Public Hearing requests must be submitted 20 days prior to requested meeting date to meet publication deadlines** (exceptions may be authorized by the Town Manager, Chairman/Vice Chair).

## MEETING INFORMATION

Date Submitted: June 1, 2020

Date of Meeting: June 11, 2020

Submitted by: Kim Badessa and Darcie Champagne

Department:

Time Required: 15 minutes

Speakers: Kim Badessa and Darcie Champagne

Background Info. Supplied: Yes:  No:

## CATEGORY OF BUSINESS (PLEASE PLACE AN "X" IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX)

Appointment:

Recognition/Resignation/

Retirement:

**Public Hearing:**

Old Business:

New Business:

Consent Agenda:

Nonpublic:

Other:

## TITLE OF ITEM

The TEARS Foundation - "Angel of Hope" Monument Follow-up Discussion

## DESCRIPTION OF ITEM

The Town Council to have a follow-up discussion about the location for bringing an "Angel of Hope" monument to Merrimack. This monument is a symbol of hope and serves as a place for families to gather to remember and honor their baby who has passed away.

## REFERENCE (IF KNOWN)

RSA:

Warrant Article: \_\_\_\_\_

Charter Article:

Town Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Other:

N/A

## EQUIPMENT REQUIRED (PLEASE PLACE AN "X" IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX)

Projector:

Grant Requirements:

Easel:

Joint Meeting:

Special Seating:

Other:

Laptop:

None:

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Name:

**Darcie & Kim**

Address

newhampshirechapter@thetearsfoundation.org

Phone Number

Email Address

## APPROVAL

Town Manager:

Yes  No:

Chair/Vice Chair:

Yes  No:



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*New Hampshire Chapter of the TEARS Foundation*

National Office: 11102 Sunrise Blvd. E., Suite 102, Puyallup, WA 98374

[www.TheTearsFoundation.org](http://www.TheTearsFoundation.org)

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Dear Chairman Koenig, Vice Chair Boyd, Councilors Albert, Harrington, Healey, Rothhaus, and Woods,  
and Finance Director/ Assistant Town Manager Micali;

Thank you for such a warm welcome at the March Town Council meeting- we were overwhelmed by the Council's kindness and enthusiastic support of bringing the Angel of Hope Monument to Merrimack.

We have given it a lot of thought, and would like to propose having the Angel of Hope in **Abbie Griffin Park**. After the meeting we were able to go around to many of the options mentioned and feel as though this will be the best fit for the monument.

First, it is a beautiful spot. We chose this park because it is easily accessible but also tucked up on the hill- so it is peaceful and serene. We also really like that it is highly visible to the community, being right in front of Town Hall. The Gazebo is lovely and we believe the monument and benches will be a natural addition to the existing granite benches and peaceful setting. We thought it would be nice to install the monument along the tree line, but would of course defer to the Council for selection of the actual location at the site. We also felt it was important to choose a site that did not have a playground, so as to be sensitive to those early in their grief without living children for whom we know seeing little ones playing can be extremely painful. Eventually seeing families and children can be healing, so we are glad this is a space where families gather, but we wanted to avoid this additional potential trigger of a playground for some grieving parents.

We respectfully request that the Angel of Hope Monument be erected in Abbie Griffin Park. We understand the timeline for this may be delayed, especially in light of COVID-19, but we did want to make the formal request in hopes for approval so we could announce this exciting news. We really think it could give many families the boost they so desperately need right now. As you may know or can imagine, losing a child is such an isolating experience and adding social distancing and stay-at-home orders on top that experience can really be a challenge. We have been fortunate to be able to continue to offer our support groups online through Zoom and have managed to still serve and support NH families even in these uncertain times.

We are committed to bringing this meaningful monument to Merrimack and hope we can provide any additional information needed to secure Abbie Griffin Park as its home. We also realize the actual installation and ceremony will be pushed back due to the pandemic and current state of the world, but again- the ability to announce would give a great lift to so many families right now.

Thank you again for your consideration. We hope you and yours are staying healthy and safe.

Warmly,  
Darcie & Kim

Kim Badessa & Darcie Champagne  
*Co-Chapter Leaders and Rachel & Mathilda's Moms*  
NewHampshireChapter@TheTearsFoundation.org



Approved: April 23, 2020

Posted: April 27, 2020

## New Business

### 1. **The TEARS Foundation – “Angel of Hope” Monument Discussion**

Submitted by The TEARS Foundation Co-Chapter Leaders Kim Badessa and Darcie Champagne  
The Town Council to be presented with a request to consider donating space in the Town of Merrimack to serve the community by bringing an “Angel of Hope” monument to New Hampshire. This monument is a symbol of hope and serves as a place for families to gather to remember and honor their baby who has passed away.

TEARS is a national foundation (not in every state, but in several countries). Each chapter is run by volunteers. It is a non-profit organization that raises money to raise families in the tragic event that their baby has passed. That baby can be 20 weeks gestation up to about 1-year-old. There are several grants to help families with the passing of a baby at that age, and other grants that serve families of older children who pass or who may pass from other tragic circumstances like suicide or substances abuse. They try to help families financially, but also have a large emotional support within the community.

Kim Badessa and Darcie Champagne, Co-Chapter Leaders, along with a Nurse from the Elliott Hospital run a support group in the community that is held at the Elliot Hospital on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month. They have had a large presence since bringing the TEARS chapter to NH at the end of 2017. The first year they held their annual event they honored about 17 babies. This past fall they had their second big fundraising event, and honored over 30.

Ms. Champagne remarked she and Ms. Badessa do this in honor of their daughters who passed away. Her daughter, Matilda, was her first child, and she passed away in 2016. They have an annual Rock & Walk (300<sup>+</sup> participants), which is a day where families can come together, feel hope, and remember their babies. The first year they raised over \$20,000. The second year they raised over \$30,000. It shows how their presence in the community has grown. Their visibility is growing, and as families are hearing about them and what they are doing, the outreach is increasing. They have two remembrance activities each year.

There are 8 other Angel of Hope monuments in the U.S. The monument itself would be donated by Dignity Memorial. In all of the other states where monuments have been placed, they have donated space at one of their funeral homes. Their local location is in Manchester, and they don't have that kind of land there. When their group learned that New Hampshire was chosen as the chapter to receive this beautiful monument, they felt it a real opportunity to have the monument in the community.

Photos of other monuments in the United States were shared. The monument has a center base with a sculptured angel holding a baby. The two side pieces are butterfly wings. A butterfly is an important symbol with child loss of the metamorphosis that a family takes when they lose a child and that hope and lightness.

The unveiling is typically a big event where chapter leaders from across the country attend. The monuments require a 15' x 15' space. Envisioned is a green space of some sort. It would be a permanent monument that would need a concrete foundation poured. There are a few different means of installation. It could be done with a small backhoe or could be hand dug. Dignity has already installed 8 of these. They have done it different ways based on land restrictions, etc.

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Dignity Memorial, in addition to creating and installing the monument, will maintain and care for it in perpetuity.

Chairman Koenig questioned what brought the group to Merrimack as opposed to a more centralized portion of the State.

Jillian Pouliot spoke of having helped start TEARS, and of being a lifelong resident. She commented on the beautiful parks within the community.

Ms. Badessa noted most of the families they serve are from Manchester and surrounding areas. Merrimack is a centrally located town to serve those families. One of the things that can be really triggering and upsetting for the families is the hospitals where they birthed their families. That would not exist in Merrimack. It is very neutral and healing. Merrimack feels close by, but also a little off the beaten path and quaint. They could potentially look to the seacoast or the lakes region. Most of the families are in this area so Merrimack is at the top of the list.

It was indicated there is no political or religious affiliation. There is a quote on the brochure that appears somewhat biblical. Ms. Badessa commented they seem to like the quote because it provides comfort. They have talked to them about it as they do not want to have families not come to them for support because of that. They chose to keep it on the brochure because they like the quote and its meaning that we are walking this journey with them and to show that they are not isolated after a loss.

Ms. Champagne stated she has spoken with the national chapter and let them know that we really want to be as inclusive as possible. She would hate for a family that just lost a child to see that and think it is not for them because of that. They don't talk about politics or religion. She is in the process of having the brochure reprinted with the quote removed, which has been approved by national.

Asked if there is a particular location in Town that has been considered, Ms. Pouliot commented on how centrally located and beautiful Watson Park is.

Chairman Koenig noted the restriction of not being able to dig more than 2' down in that location. He agreed it does sound like a good location because it affords some room to bring in a crowd. He questioned if the anticipation would be to bring the walks to Merrimack.

Last year the walk was conducted at Pinkerton Academy in Derry and the 1<sup>st</sup> year at Greeley Park in Nashua. The desire is for it to be in south central New Hampshire. It is not tied to the monument. The Rock & Walk is the big fundraising event, which gets a good deal of attendance. The 2 remembrance events typically have approximately 50 attendees. It is likely 1 of those would be held at the monument. There would be a ceremony every year for the people who were getting their baby's name engraved that year. The large unveiling would likely result in approximately 100 attendees.

Asked how many names the monument can hold, they were uncertain, and indicated they could find out.

Councilor Albert questioned if there are any restrictions in the parks that would prohibit placement of such a monument. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali stated his belief there are no such restrictions.



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Vice Chairman Boyd questioned if, in other states where a monument is located, there have been created opportunities to provide comfort through easing the conversation with those families that have lost a child. Ms. Badessa spoke of their hope that the work they do normalizes loss for the community. It is an isolating experience, and when the community around you is afraid to talk about it, it is even more isolating. Putting this monument in a community and in a space that can be shared by everybody really touches and means so much to people.

Councilor Harrington spoke of the importance of acknowledging that the child existed, validation of that life, and encouraging the family to talk about that child.

Councilor Woods suggested checking with the PWD, Conservation Commission, and others in regard to location. Asked to provide additional information on Dignity Memorial, Ms. Badessa explained they are the largest North American provider of funeral cremation services. They run funeral homes across the country. They specialize in creating monuments/headstones. They are in the business of helping and supporting grieving. They have a connection with the TEARS Foundation national chapter. They have a partnership and commitment to helping make these monuments happen in the states where there are very active chapters. They have McHugh Funeral Home in Manchester.

**MOTION made by Vice Chairman Boyd and seconded by Councilor Healey to request the Town Manager and Assistant Town Manager work with other Department Heads and other appropriate governmental bodies in the community to begin the process of identifying locations that would be suitable to accommodate the Angel of Hope monument in Merrimack**

#### ON THE QUESTION

Vice Chairman Boyd commented on the unique opportunity to potentially host a site for individuals from the State to come to our community and be able to celebrate the life of their babies. We should be flattered and honored that a member of our community would come to us and ask us to consider this.

Chairman Koenig asked for clarification noting the brochure mentions from 20 months to 1-year-old, but they are not restricting anyone from being a part of or joining the organization; that is simply where they have funding to assist with certain things.

Ms. Champagne responded there are different grants that are offered. That is the biggest population that is served. There are other grants available through the TEARS Foundation for families that lose children through suicide or substance abuse. They do a grant to help families with final costs.

Councilor Healey suggested the information be shared with Patricia Murphy, Administrator, Welfare Department. Asked how someone going through such a loss would get in touch with the organization, Ms. Badessa stated they were invited to be part of the Perinatal Bereavement Task Force in the State. They meet quarterly where all of the nurses, social workers and representatives from each hospital go over how they are making an impact in the community and ensuring they are up to date and doing all they can for those lost families. She believes they are the only non-hospital attendees there. Their materials are provided to families at the time of loss. They can choose to reach out in their own time and for whatever type of support they need. They can attend a support group or reach out through the website, [thetearsfoundation.org](http://thetearsfoundation.org). There is an application they can use to identify what they are looking for in terms of support. They also have a Facebook page where families can follow the events (NHtears). The website



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provides cell phone numbers for Ms. Badessa and Ms. Champagne and an email address;  
[NHChapter@thetearsfoundation.org](mailto:NHChapter@thetearsfoundation.org).

**MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0**

## **2. Grant Acceptance for the Merrimack Police Department**

Submitted by Captain Eric Marquis

The Town Council to consider the acceptance of the “radio reprogramming grant reimbursement initiative” from the State of NH Department of Safety, valued at approximately \$5,800, to address portable radio reprogramming with a goal to further build interoperable communications capabilities within the state, county and local police and fire departments during an emergency, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15.

The State has a goal to improve communications within the State’s public safety agencies including local police, State police, fire EMS as well as the Sheriff’s department. Part of the process is radio reprogramming. They basically want to add a common channel(s) to all agency radios, which would allow agencies to more effectively communicate during a major event.

The department would have the vendor complete the work on the radios (116) at a cost of \$50/each. The reimbursement to the Town would be \$5,800. The State has indicated reprogramming will be mandatory. Asked if there are any requirements associated with acceptance of the grant, Eric Marquis, Captain, Merrimack Police Department, stated his belief there are not. Asked, he stated, according to the vendor, the \$50 is the entire cost.

Councilor Albert spoke of reprogramming that was done 5 years prior, and questioned what is being done this time around that is enhancing the system beyond what was done previously. Captain Marquis was uncertain that is understood at this time as the process has just begun. He believes it to be a matter of the addition of 1 or 2 channels that can be accessed by all within the State.

**MOTION made by Vice Chairman Boyd and seconded by Councilor Healey to approve the acceptance of the “radio reprogramming grant reimbursement initiative” from the State of NH Department of Safety, valued at approximately Five Thousand Eight Hundred Dollars (\$5,800), to address portable radio reprogramming with a goal to further build interoperable communications capabilities within the state, county and local police and fire departments during an emergency, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15, and furthermore that the Town Manager or her proxy be authorized to sign any documents necessary to accept and expend**

### **ON THE QUESTION**

Councilor Rothhaus noted information highlighted in the material provided with the agenda relative to additional options not covered by the grant. Captain Marquis responded there are options for additional channels, which is where additional costs would come into play. That is not intended at this time, and is not being requested.

**MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0**