



Town Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 12, 2020 at 7:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

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

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Koenig led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcements

The Town Council expressed sincere condolences to the family and friends of Stanley Heinrich who passed away on Friday, February 28th at the age of 68³/₄. Stan was an active volunteer within the community serving as a Red Cross CPR Instructor, volunteer EMT for the Merrimack Ambulance Rescue Service, MYA Little League Umpire, Cub Scout Committee Chair, Parents and Teachers of Thornton's Ferry Craft Fair Coordinator, and enjoyed his role as "Stan-ta" for the Merrimack Early Education Program and PTA Kindergarten.

Stan proudly served as an elected member and frequent Chair of the Merrimack Municipal Budget Committee, and was an elected member of the School District Planning and Building Committee.

The Town Council expressed deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Arthur "Pete" Gagnon who passed away on Friday March 6th at the age of 82. Pete and his wife, Nancy owned Willow Pond Nursery in Merrimack for 30 years. Pete was a member of the Planning Board for over 39 years serving several times as Chairman as well as a member of the Agricultural Commission (9 years). He served his country in the Army National Guard from 1954 to 1969 during the Berlin Crisis and the Vietnam Conflict, and was honorably discharged as a 1st Sergeant.

Stan and Pete's contributions to our community are very much appreciated, and they will forever be remembered.

A moment of silence was observed in honor of their memory.

Voting day; the official Ballot Vote will be conducted on Tuesday, April 14th from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the 3 polling locations in Town; James Masticola Upper Elementary School, Merrimack Middle School, and St. John Neumann Church. Please contact the Town Clerk's Office at 424-3651 or visit the New Hampshire Secretary of State's [website](#) to find your polling location.

Regular meetings of the Town Council will be conducted on Thursday March 26th and April 9th beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the Matthew Thornton Room.

An upcoming Fire and Police Department Car Seat Inspection event will be held March 14th from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at the Central Fire Station located at 432 D.W. Highway. Appointments can be made by emailing CarSeats@merrimacknh.gov.

1 The Assessing office is accepting property tax exemption applications (for the elderly and disabled). The
2 filing deadline is April 15th. Solar exemption applications can be submitted now. The filing deadline is
3 April 15th.

4
5 The first meeting of the Merrimack Coronavirus Preparedness Task Force took place on March 6th. The
6 task force is led by Chief of Police, Denise Roy, and consists of representatives from the Merrimack School
7 District, the Fire Department, Police Department and the Town. Its purpose is to monitor information
8 being released by multiple valid sources, to enhance, consolidate and standardize communications
9 regarding the Coronavirus within the Town and to address a potential response for Merrimack in the event
10 of an outbreak. As it becomes available, information and updates will be posted on the Town website;
11 www.MerrimackNH.gov. The website also has links to the CDC and the State. As they update their
12 websites, the Town's website automatically updates. Councilor Healey is the Town Council representative
13 to the task force.

14
15 **Comments from the Press and Public** - None

16
17 **Recognitions, Resignations and Retirements** - None

18
19 **Appointments** - None

20
21 **Public Hearing** - None

22
23 **Legislative Updates from State Representatives** - None

24
25 **Town Manager's Report**

26
27 The Town received approval to install Purple Heart Community signs on Route 3 and Route 101A at our
28 Town Lines. The Town Council approved Merrimack's inclusion in the Purple Heart Community program
29 in November 2019 to honor Purple Heart Veterans living in Merrimack. Public Works will coordinate the
30 purchase and installation of the signs.

31
32 Though we didn't have a very good ice skating season this year (the rink was only officially open for a
33 handful of days), the new lights for the rink are going to be installed tomorrow. The decorative lights will
34 allow ice skaters to enjoy the rink in evening hours when weather allows. As the lights are new and there is
35 the desire not to wait a year to ensure there are no problems, there will be a burn in period (will be used until
36 the end of April). The lights will be on a timer anticipated to turn off at 9:00 p.m.

37
38 Required action to permit access to the parks after dark to accommodate use of the skate park will come
39 before the Council as part of the revisions to Chapter 111.

40
41 Installation of the first signs will be coordinated with the American Legion and VFW.

42
43 **Consent Agenda** - None

44
45 **Old Business** - None

1 **New Business**

2
3 **1. The TEARS Foundation – “Angel of Hope” Monument Discussion**

4 Submitted by The TEARS Foundation Co-Chapter Leaders Kim Badessa and Darcie Champagne
5 The Town Council to be presented with a request to consider donating space in the Town of Merrimack
6 to serve the community by bringing an “Angel of Hope” monument to New Hampshire. This
7 monument is a symbol of hope and serves as a place for families to gather to remember and honor their
8 baby who has passed away.
9

10 TEARS is a national foundation (not in every state, but in several countries). Each chapter is run by
11 volunteers. It is a non-profit organization that raises money to raise families in the tragic event that their
12 baby has passed. That baby can be 20 weeks gestation up to about 1-year-old. There are several grants to
13 help families with the passing of a baby at that age, and other grants that serve families of older children
14 who pass or who may pass from other tragic circumstances like suicide or substances abuse. They try to
15 help families financially, but also have a large emotional support within the community.
16

17 Kim Badessa and Darcie Champagne, Co-Chapter Leaders, along with a Nurse from the Elliott Hospital
18 run a support group in the community that is held at the Elliot Hospital on the 3rd Wednesday of the month.
19 They have had a large presence since bringing the TEARS chapter to NH at the end of 2017. The first year
20 they held their annual event they honored about 17 babies. This past fall they had their second big
21 fundraising event, and honored over 30.
22

23 Ms. Champagne remarked she and Ms. Badessa do this in honor of their daughters who passed away. Her
24 daughter, Matilda, was her first child, and she passed away in 2016. They have an annual Rock & Walk
25 (300⁺ participants), which is a day where families can come together, feel hope, and remember their babies.
26 The first year they raised over \$20,000. The second year they raised over \$30,000. It shows how their
27 presence in the community has grown. Their visibility is growing, and as families are hearing about them
28 and what they are doing, the outreach is increasing. They have two remembrance activities each year.
29

30 There are 8 other Angel of Hope monuments in the U.S. The monument itself would be donated by
31 Dignity Memorial. In all of the other states where monuments have been placed, they have donated space
32 at one of their funeral homes. Their local location is in Manchester, and they don't have that kind of land
33 there. When their group learned that New Hampshire was chosen as the chapter to receive this beautiful
34 monument, they felt it a real opportunity to have the monument in the community.
35

36 Photos of other monuments in the United States were shared. The monument has a center base with a
37 sculptured angel holding a baby. The two side pieces are butterfly wings. A butterfly is an important
38 symbol with child loss of the metamorphosis that a family takes when they lose a child and that hope and
39 lightness.
40

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

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

3
4 Chairman Koenig questioned what brought the group to Merrimack as opposed to a more centralized
5 portion of the State.

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

8
9 Ms. Badessa noted most of the families they serve are from Manchester and surrounding areas. Merrimack
10 is a centrally located town to serve those families. One of the things that can be really triggering and
11 upsetting for the families is the hospitals where they birthed their families. That would not exist in
12 Merrimack. It is very neutral and healing. Merrimack feels close by, but also a little off the beaten path
13 and quaint. They could potentially look to the seacoast or the lakes region. Most of the families are in this
14 area so Merrimack is at the top of the list.

15
16 It was indicated there is no political or religious affiliation. There is a quote on the brochure that appears
17 somewhat biblical. Ms. Badessa commented they seem to like the quote because it provides comfort. They
18 have talked to them about it as they do not want to have families not come to them for support because of
19 that. They chose to keep it on the brochure because they like the quote and its meaning that we are walking
20 this journey with them and to show that they are not isolated after a loss.

21
22 Ms. Champagne stated she has spoken with the national chapter and let them know that we really want to
23 be as inclusive as possible. She would hate for a family that just lost a child to see that and think it is not
24 for them because of that. They don't talk about politics or religion. She is in the process of having the
25 brochure reprinted with the quote removed, which has been approved by national.

26
27 Asked if there is a particular location in Town that has been considered, Ms. Pouliot commented on how
28 centrally located and beautiful Watson Park is.

29
30 Chairman Koenig noted the restriction of not being able to dig more than 2' down in that location. He
31 agreed it does sound like a good location because it affords some room to bring in a crowd. He questioned
32 if the anticipation would be to bring the walks to Merrimack.

33
34 Last year the walk was conducted at Pinkerton Academy in Derry and the 1st year at Greeley Park in
35 Nashua. The desire is for it to be in south central New Hampshire. It is not tied to the monument. The
36 Rock & Walk is the big fundraising event, which gets a good deal of attendance. The 2 remembrance
37 events typically have approximately 50 attendees. It is likely 1 of those would be held at the monument.
38 There would be a ceremony every year for the people who were getting their baby's name engraved that
39 year. The large unveiling would likely result in approximately 100 attendees.

40
41 Asked how many names the monument can hold, they were uncertain, and indicated they could find out.

42
43 Councilor Albert questioned if there are any restrictions in the parks that would prohibit placement of such
44 a monument. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali stated his belief there are no such
45 restrictions.

1 Vice Chairman Boyd questioned if, in other states where a monument is located, there have been created
2 opportunities to provide comfort through easing the conversation with those families that have lost a child.
3 Ms. Badessa spoke of their hope that the work they do normalizes loss for the community. It is an isolating
4 experience, and when the community around you is afraid to talk about it, it is even more isolating. Putting
5 this monument in a community and in a space that can be shared by everybody really touches and means so
6 much to people.
7

8 Councilor Harrington spoke of the importance of acknowledging that the child existed, validation of that
9 life, and encouraging the family to talk about that child.
10

11 Councilor Woods suggested checking with the PWD, Conservation Commission, and others in regard to
12 location. Asked to provide additional information on Dignity Memorial, Ms. Badessa explained they are
13 the largest North American provider of funeral cremation services. They run funeral homes across the
14 country. They specialize in creating monuments/headstones. They are in the business of helping and
15 supporting grieving. They have a connection with the TEARS Foundation national chapter. They have a
16 partnership and commitment to helping make these monuments happen in the states where there are very
17 active chapters. They have McHugh Funeral Home in Manchester.
18

19 **MOTION made by Vice Chairman Boyd and seconded by Councilor Healey to request the Town
20 Manager and Assistant Town Manager work with other Department Heads and other appropriate
21 governmental bodies in the community to begin the process of identifying locations that would be
22 suitable to accommodate the Angel of Hope monument in Merrimack**
23

24 ON THE QUESTION 25

26 Vice Chairman Boyd commented on the unique opportunity to potentially host a site for individuals from
27 the State to come to our community and be able to celebrate the life of their babies. We should be flattered
28 and honored that a member of our community would come to us and ask us to consider this.
29

30 Chairman Koenig asked for clarification noting the brochure mentions from 20 months to 1-year-old, but
31 they are not restricting anyone from being a part of or joining the organization; that is simply where they
32 have funding to assist with certain things.
33

34 Ms. Champagne responded there are different grants that are offered. That is the biggest population that is
35 served. There are other grants available through the TEARS Foundation for families that lose children
36 through suicide or substance abuse. They do a grant to help families with final costs.
37

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

1 **MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0**

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

4 Submitted by Captain Eric Marquis

5 The Town Council to consider the acceptance of the “radio reprogramming grant reimbursement
6 initiative” from the State of NH Department of Safety, valued at approximately \$5,800, to address
7 portable radio reprogramming with a goal to further build interoperable communications capabilities
8 within the state, county and local police and fire departments during an emergency, pursuant to RSA
9 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15.

10
11 The State has a goal to improve communications within the State’s public safety agencies including local
12 police, State police, fire EMS as well as the Sheriff’s department. Part of the process is radio
13 reprogramming. They basically want to add a common channel(s) to all agency radios, which would allow
14 agencies to more effectively communicate during a major event.

15
16 The department would have the vendor complete the work on the radios (116) at a cost of \$50/each. The
17 reimbursement to the Town would be \$5,800. The State has indicated reprogramming will be mandatory.
18 Asked if there are any requirements associated with acceptance of the grant, Eric Marquis, Captain,
19 Merrimack Police Department, stated his belief there are not. Asked, he stated, according to the vendor,
20 the \$50 is the entire cost.

21
22 Councilor Albert spoke of reprogramming that was done 5 years prior, and questioned what is being done
23 this time around that is enhancing the system beyond what was done previously. Captain Marquis was
24 uncertain that is understood at this time as the process has just begun. He believes it to be a matter of the
25 addition of 1 or 2 channels that can be accessed by all within the State.

26
27 **MOTION made by Vice Chairman Boyd and seconded by Councilor Healey to approve the**
28 **acceptance of the “radio reprogramming grant reimbursement initiative” from the State of NH**
29 **Department of Safety, valued at approximately Five Thousand Eight Hundred Dollars (\$5,800), to**
30 **address portable radio reprogramming with a goal to further build interoperable communications**
31 **capabilities within the state, county and local police and fire departments during an emergency,**
32 **pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15, and furthermore that the Town Manager or her**
33 **proxy be authorized to sign any documents necessary to accept and expend**

34
35 **ON THE QUESTION**

36
37 Councilor Rothhaus noted information highlighted in the material provided with the agenda relative to
38 additional options not covered by the grant. Captain Marquis responded there are options for additional
39 channels, which is where additional costs would come into play. That is not intended at this time, and is
40 not being requested.

41 **MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0**

1 **3. 2nd Quarter Financial Update**

2 Submitted by Finance Director Paul T. Micali

3 Finance Director Paul Micali will review the key financial information of the quarter ending December
4 31, 2019.

5
6 Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali addressed the 2nd quarter financial report (ending
7 December 31, 2019).

8
9 The information provided is a snapshot in time and provides a comparison of costs to this same period of
10 time in the prior year. Health insurance shows an increase of approximately \$120,000. That is the result of
11 a rate increase and the mix. There are some vacancies throughout the Town; however, staffing was up a
12 little during this period, which contributes to the increased cost as does the mix, e.g., single person, two-
13 person plan, and family plans. There are sufficient allocations to cover the cost.

14
15 Cost associated with the New Hampshire Retirement System is up from the prior year in the Fire
16 Department. This takes into account the November/December timeframe where the Town jumped up to
17 consistent 10 person shifts. The Police Department has been short-staffed, and has been making up for
18 that. There is also overtime that was planned for the Special Investigation Unit and other areas. There is a
19 corresponding drop in the salary line.

20
21 Overtime is up across the board. Increase in overtime in the Highway Department is weather related.
22 Noted was the long storm in the first week of December. Communications overtime is up due to staffing
23 issues. The Town is seeking part-time dispatchers. General Government overtime is up because of staffing
24 issues in the I.T. Department and telephone issues associated with the current provider.

25
26 Revenue from registrations is higher than has been the case in many years. Revenue from building permits
27 is up as well. Revenue for interest is not as high as this time last year, but remains high for the first half of
28 the year. There is not concern with being able to hit the goal of \$800,000 this year. However, with interest
29 rates being cut, and talk of further cuts, there is the need to keep an eye on this.

30
31 Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali stated the Town is in good financial shape. He is
32 keeping an eye on welfare. Remarks made by the President last evening regarding hourly wage earners and
33 the virus will go a long way as those are the individuals who will be hit and the ones that will need to rely
34 on services to get by.

35
36 Councilor Albert questioned if it is a concern that the Highway Department and Solid Waste Disposal are at
37 33% and 36% of their budget remaining. Explained was that the trash contract for Solid Waste is
38 encumbered. The Highway Department has a great deal of funding tied up in purchase orders associated
39 with the Bedford Road bridge project.

40
41 Councilor Harrington questioned if work on the Bedford Road Bridge will begin sometime soon. Assistant
42 Town Manager/Finance Director Micali indicated they will be gearing up in the near future. The one
43 problem they have at this time is the same one they had in December; waiting for utility companies to do
44 their work.

1 **Minutes**

2

3 **February 13, 2020**

4

5 *The following amendments were offered:*

6

7 Page 23, Line 1; replace “implies” with “collects”

8 Page 23, Line 6; replace “down” with “in place”

9 Page 24, Line 37; identify Councilor “Harrington” as having seconded the motion”

10

11 **MOTION** made by Vice Chairman Boyd and seconded by Councilor Albert to approve the meeting
12 minutes of the Special Town Council meeting of February 13, 2020, as amended. **MOTION**

13 **CARRIED 7-0-0**

14

15 **February 27, 2020**

16

17 *The following amendments were offered:*

18

19 Page 8, Line 10; correct the spelling of “Geoff Daly”

20 Page 8, Line 23; correct the spelling of “Farrell”

21 Page 13, Line 13; replace “Quasi Adjudicatory” with “quasi-adjudicatory”

22 Page 24, Line 16; consider replacing “toll” with “waive”

23 Page 28; replace “of” with “or” following “VIP”

24 Page 28; replace “STIP” with “TIP”

25

26 *Chairman Koenig noted the need for the Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Petition to Appeal Town of*
27 *Merrimack Industrial User Permit #20 and the email received on February 27th in regard to the appeal to*
28 *be attached to the minutes of the Town Council meeting of February 27, 2020.*

29

30 **MOTION** made by Vice Chairman Boyd and seconded by Councilor Harrington to approve the
31 meeting minutes of the Special Town Council meeting of February 6, 2020, as amended. **MOTION**

32 **CARRIED 6-0-1**

33 *Councilor Rothhaus Abstained*

34

35 **Comments from the Press** - None

36

37 **Comments from the Public** - None

38

39 **Comments from the Council**

40

41 Vice Chairman Boyd serves as the Governor’s designee to the New Hampshire Drinking Water and
42 Groundwater Advisory Commission (Commission). They had their monthly meeting on Monday. Robert
43 Scott, Commissioner, New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES), floated an idea
44 that is being bandied about at the staff level at the NHDES. They are putting together a proposal to submit
45 to the Groundwater Trust Fund that would request a specific amount of funding be allocated to NHDES to
46 administer and test private wells in the State. They were seeking a consensus of the Commission as to
47 whether it would be, at a minimum, receptive to the proposal being brought forward. There was unanimous
48 support.

49

1 There are no details behind what the proposal will entail. The philosophy at the Commission level has been
2 for municipalities to have skin in the game. He is cautiously optimistic the proposal will come forward.

3
4 Councilor Healey commented on the recent meeting of the Londonderry Town Council during which there
5 was discussion of their approaching the State and Commission for that exact same thing. She suggested
6 that may be why the interest was being voiced. If successful, Merrimack ought to consider what that means
7 for its community. Vice Chairman Boyd stated he is not familiar with any conversation between the Town
8 of Londonderry and the NHDES.

9
10 **Adjourn**

11
12 **MOTION made by Vice Chairman Boyd and seconded by Councilor Healey to adjourn the meeting.**

13 **MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0**

14
15 *The March 12, 2020 meeting of the Town Council was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.*

16
17
18
19 Submitted by Dawn MacMillan

DRAFT