



# Town Council Meeting Minutes



Thursday, December 3, 2020, at 7:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

## Call to Order

Chairman Koenig called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm.

## Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Koenig led the Pledge of Allegiance

## Announcements

Chairman Koenig made the following announcements.

Upcoming Town Council meetings: Thursday, December 17, 2020, 7:00 PM and Regular meeting and Thursday, January 7, 2021, 6:30 PM Budget meeting

Town Manager Eileen Cabanel made the following announcements.

- Property tax bills were mailed on November 23<sup>rd</sup> and are due by December 28<sup>th</sup>. Property owners who have not received their bill should contact the Tax Collector's office for a duplicate.
- The Public Works Department would like to congratulate and welcome Shannon Saari as our new Wastewater Secretary. Shannon comes to Public Works from her current position of Records Clerk with the Police Department. Shannon has big shoes to fill, replacing the soon to be retired Becky Sullivan who has been the Wastewater Secretary for more than 48 years.
- On Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup> we will be holding our modified Holiday Happenings Event. This year instead of our traditional Parade, Santa & Mrs. Claus are going to be riding on a Fire Department vehicle and taking a tour across Merrimack. We are encouraging everyone to come out and wave to Santa & Mrs. Claus from one of our per-determined locations in Town. Santa & Mrs. Claus will pull into the parking lots of these locations for a few minutes to wave to families before moving on to the next location. The event will run from 2:45 – 4:00 pm. Please visit the Parks & Recreation website for the complete schedule at [www.merrimackparksandrec.org](http://www.merrimackparksandrec.org)
- On Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 – 2:00 pm we are going to be holding a **Holiday Drive-Thru Food Drive at Town Hall**. This year more than most; the need is great. We are encouraging people to come by and donate canned food and other non-perishable items to benefit the local food pantries. We will have a special guest appearance by Santa Claus (for anyone that did not get to see him in the Parade on Sunday). We also want people to show off their car all decked out for the holidays for a chance to win a prize. We are working with the Macaroni Kid Newsletter and they will be awarding a family fun gift card gift pack including a \$50 gift card to a local restaurant of choice, Lego Land passes, as well as Altitude passes.
- The Southern New Hampshire Tour of lights is a free event and collaboration among 9 communities in Southern New Hampshire. We are looking for Merrimack families that decorate their homes for the holidays and want to show them off. Residents are encouraged to decorate the exterior of their homes with festive lights this upcoming holiday season and register your address with the Merrimack Parks & Recreation Department no later than Sunday, December 6th. This will guarantee your home is included in the official list of homes on the Southern New Hampshire Tour of Lights. On December 11<sup>th</sup>, the 9 Communities will publicize a master list of all homes who have pre-registered to be on the Tour. Homes that are registered will be eligible to win a raffle for a \$25 Gift Certificate to a local restaurant of their choosing.

- 1 • The Media Division is happy to announce that you will be able to watch all three Merrimack TV  
2 channels in high definition via Roku and Apple TV devices beginning Thursday December 17th. The app  
3 is free to download to your device. Aside from watching the channels live, you will be able to watch  
4 previously recorded meetings and shows as well. Next week, an instructional video demonstration will be  
5 available on our TV channels, YouTube, and social media pages. For any questions or if you need  
6 additional assistance, call the Media Division at 423-8561

7  
8 **Comments from the Press and Public**

9 None

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11 **Recognitions, Resignations and Retirements**

12 None

13  
14 **Appointments**

15 None

16  
17 **Public Hearing**

18 None

19  
20 **Legislative Updates from State Representatives**

21 The following legislative update from Representative Maureen Mooney was read into the record  
22 *Greetings, Town Councilors: The Merrimack State Representative delegation elected on November 3, 2020*  
23 *was sworn into office yesterday and today by Governor Sununu. Dick Hinch of Merrimack was elected*  
24 *Speaker of the NH House during the House session yesterday (12/2/20). This is historic for Merrimack. At*  
25 *present, committee assignments and leadership appointments are being made. The deadline to file House*  
26 *bills has passed, but the deadline to file Senate bills is December 15, 2020. Thank you for all you do.*  
27 *-Rep. Maureen Mooney (R-Merrimack)*

28  
29 **Town Manager's Report**

30 None

31  
32 **Consent Agenda**

33 None

34  
35 Chairman Koenig moved New Business item #2 up on the Agenda

36  
37 **2. Fire Chief Position Confirmation**

38 *Submitted by Town Manager Eileen Cabanel*

39 The Town Council confirmed of the appointment of a new Fire Chief, pursuant to Charter Article 7-8. Town  
40 Manager Eileen Cabanel recommended Matt Duke as the new Merrimack Fire Chief. Councilor Rothhaus  
41 stated that he fully supports this recommendation and believes Matt Duke is the right person for the job.

42  
43 **MOTION was made by Councilor Rothhaus and seconded by Councilor Healey to affirm the**  
44 **appointment of Matt Duke as Merrimack Fire Chief. MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**

45  
46 *Discussion on the motion*

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48 Vice Chair Boyd expressed his unequivocal support of Matt Duke. He is explained Matt Duke began in  
49 1998 working up through the ranks. Councilor Albert echoed the comments of Vice Chair Boyd and

1 Councilor Rothhaus. Councilor Harrington appreciates the plans that Matt Duke has for the Merrimack Fire  
2 Department and fully supports the recommendation. Councilor Woods congratulated Matt Duke.

3  
4 Fire Chief Matt Duke and his wife Lisa Duke were asked to stand at which time Lisa Duke pinned her  
5 husbands badge as Fire Chief. Lisa Duke expressed her gratitude to the Town Council for their kind words.  
6 She stated that he has worked very hard through out his career. Their son joined them and congratulated his  
7 father.

## 8 9 **Old Business**

### 10 **1. 275th Anniversary Planning Update**

11 *Submitted by Parks and Recreation Director Matthew Casparius*

12 Matt Casparius Director of Parks and Recreation provided an update on the plans for the Town of  
13 Merrimack's 275th Anniversary and a request for funding. He informed the Town Council that a committee  
14 has been formed to start planning the celebration. He explained that the committee has held two meetings  
15 and are considering holding one event each month from April through October. He stated that the  
16 organizations who are involved will each take on a month hosting the event. The events will be on the  
17 second Saturday of each month with the exception of August which will be on the third Saturday. Matt  
18 Casparius stressed that COVID-19 is a significant factor in the planning process. He hopes by spring or  
19 summer the vaccine will be available.

20  
21 Matt Casparius advised the Town Council that during the last committee meeting there were some  
22 individuals who indicated that they would like to start a fund-raising effort to raise money for a Town gift as  
23 was done 25 years ago with the band stand. He asked the Town Council to consider approving a separate  
24 fund-raising sub-committee. He stated that would allow the original committee to remain focused the  
25 planning of the seven monthly events.

26  
27 Matt Casparius spoke about the need for funding to plan the monthly events. He informed the Town Council  
28 that last year's 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration money in the amount of \$50,000 was not spent due to the pandemic.  
29 He stated that there are several smaller activities that could be held and paid for through Parks and  
30 Recreation budget. The committee would like to hold a bigger celebration in August as an end of summer  
31 party. They would like to incorporate fireworks. Matt Casparius spoke about an idea the committee is  
32 considering, as was done 25 years ago they would like to sell commemorative license plate. The cost of the  
33 license plate is \$11 and could be sold for \$20. To increase awareness they created a 275<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
34 facebook page.

35  
36 Town Manager Eileen Cabanel clarified that the funding requested would come from two budgets; \$50,000  
37 from 2020 and \$50,000 from 2021. She recommends that the funding be approved as needed. Councilor  
38 Woods asked for clarification regarding the fundraising committee: how much is the fundraising committee  
39 hoping to raise and what are they hoping to do. Matt Casparius stated that the fund-raising committee would  
40 be responsible for their own funding. He stated that nothing is definite but one idea was a covered bridge at  
41 Twin Bridge Park.

42  
43 Councilor Harrington inquired on the make up of the committee. She suggested breaking the committee up  
44 into task groups. Town Manager Eileen Cabanel suggested that if a fund raising committee is established the  
45 money must be payable to the Town of Merrimack and processed through the finance department.

46  
47 **MOTION was made by Councilor Harrington and seconded by Councilor Healey to authorize the**  
48 **formation of sub-committee for the purpose of fundraising for a 275<sup>th</sup> anniversary memorial project.**

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50 *Discussion on the motion*

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2 Councilor Woods stated that he is uneasy forming a fundraising committee without more details as to what  
3 they are fundraising for. Town Manager Eileen Cabanel concurred. Councilor Harrington suggested  
4 amending the motion to include the stipulation that the subcommittee must present their ideas to the Town  
5 Council before fundraising begins.

6  
7 **AMENDED MOTION** was made by Councilor Harrington and seconded by Councilor Healey to  
8 authorize the formation of an exploratory 275<sup>th</sup> anniversary memorial sub-committee for the purpose  
9 of fundraising. Furthermore any specific plans will be brought to the Town Council before  
10 fundraising begins. **MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**

11  
12 *Discussion on the amended motion*

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14 Councilor Healey would like the sub-committee to bring forward a concept, approximate cost and what will  
15 happen if they are unable to raise the money needed. Chairman Koenig asked Matt Casparius if he was  
16 comfortable being in charge of this. Matt Casparius confirmed that he is. Assistant Town Manager/Finance  
17 Director Paul Micali advised the Town Council that during the committee meetings there became two  
18 distinct conversations; fundraising and the planning of the monthly events. He stressed that the original  
19 charge given to the committee will be time consuming and he felt it was best to separate the two.

20  
21 Chairman Koenig agreed with Town Manager Eileen Cabanel's suggestion to approve funding for events as  
22 they are needed. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali asked the Town Council to approve  
23 \$5,000 now for the purchase of commemorative license plates and for additional events that require a  
24 deposit. The Town Council agreed to approve up to \$5,000 to begin the planning of events.

25  
26 **New Business**

27 **1. Donation Acceptance for the Merrimack Police Department**

28 *Submitted by Police Chief Brian Levesque*

29 The Town Council was asked to consider the acceptance and expenditure of a donation in the amount of  
30 \$5,000 from Digital Federal Credit Union (DCU) for the Merrimack Police Department to support efforts in  
31 providing programs and services that make a difference in the community, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and  
32 Charter Article 8-15. Police Chief Brian Levesque explained that this money has typically been used in the  
33 past to fund programs that are not included in the Police Department budget and that foster good  
34 relationships between the Police Department and the community.

35  
36 **MOTION** made by Councilor Woods and seconded by Councilor Albert to accept the donation in the  
37 amount of \$5,000 from Digital Federal Credit Union (DCU) for the Merrimack Police Department to  
38 support efforts in providing programs and services that make a difference in the community, pursuant  
39 to RSA 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15. **MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**

40  
41 **3. 1st Quarter Financial Review**

42 *Submitted by Deputy Finance Director Thomas Boland*

43 Deputy Finance Director Thomas Boland will review the key financial information of the quarter ending  
44 September 30, 2020. Mr. Boland informed the Town Council that the second quarter covers a period from  
45 July 1, 2020 through September 30, 2020. Mr. Boland stated that 2020 has been a year like no other and that  
46 is reflected in the numbers. He explained that the pandemic has presented tremendous challenges for the  
47 town's first responders and all town departments.

48  
49 Mr. Boland highlighted the town's expenditures on health insurance. He advised the Town Council that  
50 costs are up 5% compared to last year's first quarter as a result from a higher number of full time employees.

1 He stated that the New Hampshire Retirement System (NHRS) numbers are up as well for the same reason,  
2 higher number of fulltime employees. Another reason the NHRS numbers are up is the significant increase  
3 in over time which increases the Town's contribution. Town Manager Eileen Cabanel stated that the Town  
4 will be reimbursed for the overtime.  
5

6 Mr. Boland reviewed the first quarter revenues. He stated that vehicle registration is up, building permits are  
7 flat and interest revenue is down. He advised the Town Council that interest revenue estimates will be down  
8 by a couple hundred thousand dollars. Chairman Koenig recapped that overall the Town is doing well  
9 financially but it would be prudent to watch it closely given the current situation.  
10

#### 11 **4. Review of 2021/2022 Budget Schedule**

12 *Submitted by Town Manager Eileen Cabanel and Finance Director Paul T. Micali*

13 The Town Council to review the 2021/22 budget schedule. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul  
14 Micali advised the Town Council that the Budget presentations will on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and January 20<sup>th</sup>. He  
15 has included two snow days just in case. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali informed  
16 the Town Council that the Town's deliberative session and the school district's deliberative will be in the  
17 same week this year and next year. He explained that the Town Charter dictates the time period when the  
18 Town must hold deliberative session which is after the second Tuesday in March through the following  
19 Saturday. He said the Town has just four days where the school district has a full week. He stated that  
20 Town meeting is April 13<sup>th</sup>.  
21

22 Chairman Koenig stated that the Town Council will be presented with the proposed budget on December  
23 17<sup>th</sup>. Councilor Harrington urged everyone to review the proposed schedule in the near future and inform  
24 Town Manager Eileen Cabanel as soon as possible in case changes need to be made. Vice Chair Boyd spoke  
25 about the need for a contingency plan for deliberative session. Councilor Rothhaus stated that years ago the  
26 Town held deliberative session in three rooms and if needed the Town could do the same.  
27

#### 28 **5. Investment Policy**

29 *Submitted by Deputy Finance Director Thomas Boland*

30 The Town Council reviewed and considered the approval of the Town's Investment Policy, for the  
31 investment of public funds held by the Town Treasurer, in accordance with RSA 35:9 and RSA 41:29 for FY  
32 2021-22. Mr. Boland stated that this is a housekeeping matter at the direction of the Town auditor. He  
33 stated that the investment policy needs to be reviewed annually so at that the Town will remain in  
34 compliance. Mr. Boland recapped the current investment policy. Chairman Koenig stressed that the  
35 Town adheres to the very strict criteria regarding the ability to deposit money.  
36

37 **MOTION made by Vice Chair Boyd and seconded by Councilor Albert to approve the Town's**  
38 **Investment Policy, for the investment of public funds held by the Town Treasurer, in accordance with**  
39 **RSA 35:9 and RSA 41:29 for FY 2021-22. MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**  
40

#### 41 **Minutes**

42 None  
43

#### 44 **Comments from the Press**

45 None  
46

#### 47 **Comments from the Public**

48 None  
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50

1 **Comments from the Council**

2 Councilor Harrington asked about the vaccine distribution for first responders. Town Manager Eileen  
3 Cabanel will look into it tomorrow.  
4

5 Councilor Albert recognized the Fire Department for their response to the three house fires in the last two  
6 weeks. Chairman Koenig echoed Councilor Albert comments.  
7

8 Vice Chair Boyd concurred with Councilor Albert comments. He asked any resident who is interested in  
9 serving on a town board or committee to contact Becky Thompson. He stressed that volunteers are needed.  
10

11 Councilor Healey reiterated that Merrimack TV is now available on Roku (on demand service). She  
12 congratulated the Media department for a job well done.  
13

14 Chairman Koenig explained that the Town Council has spread out at tonight's meeting to adhere to the social  
15 distancing guidance relative to Covid-19. Town Manager Eileen Cabanel cautioned everyone that currently  
16 Merrimack currently has over 100 active cases of Covid-19. She spoke about how Covid has impacted town  
17 staff and their families. She spoke about staff shortage and coverage challenges. Chairman Koenig urged  
18 residents to remain vigilant to be patient and understanding if they come to Town Hall.  
19

20 **Adjourn**

21 **MOTION** made by Vice Chair Boyd and seconded by Councilor Healey to adjourn the meeting.

22 **MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**  
23

24 The meeting adjourned at 9:07 pm

25 Respectfully submitted by Tracy Doherty  
26  
27