



Town Council Meeting Minutes



Thursday, March 11, 2021, 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 Boyd, Councilor Harrington, Councilor Rothhaus, Councilor Albert, Councilor Healey, Councilor Woods, and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul T. Micali. Town Manager Eileen Cabanel was excused.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Koenig led the Pledge of Allegiance

Announcements

Chairman Koenig made the following announcements: Upcoming Town Council meeting schedule Thursday, March 25, 2021, 7:00 PM Regular meeting, Thursday, April 8, 2021, 7:00 PM Regular meeting, Election Day is April 13th 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM at all three polling locations and Thursday, April 22, 2021, 7:00 PM Regular meeting.

Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul T. Micali made the following announcements:

- The Assessing Department is accepting applications for the Elderly and Disabled property tax exemptions. The filing deadline is April 15th. More information about each program is available on the Assessing page of the Town’s website or by calling the Assessing Department at 424-5136.
- 2021 Dog Licenses are now available. Per NH State law, all owners of dogs four months and older are required to license their dog by May 1st. Owners must present a valid rabies certificate and a neutering or spaying certificate, if applicable. Licenses are available at the Town Clerk’s office during our normal business hours of 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM. License renewals can also be completed by using the on-line payment services at www.merrimacknh.gov, by mail or by using the drop box. See Dog Licensing in the Town Clerk’s section of the website for more information.
- Home Easter Egg Hunt Kits With COVID-19 restrictions still in place, the Parks & Recreation Department is unable to hold its traditional Easter Egg Hunt this year. Instead, we are offering free Easter Egg Hunt Kits to Merrimack families. On Saturday, March 27th, registered families will come and pick up their Easter Egg Hunt Kits at Merrimack Town Hall between 10:00 am - 12:00 pm. This is a free event but advanced registration is required. Please register on the Parks & Recreation website at www.merrimackparksandrec.org or call 603-882-1046.

Comments from the Press and Public

None

Recognitions, Resignations and Retirements

None

Appointments

1. 2021 Town-wide Reevaluation Update

Submitted by Avitar Associates President / Town Assessor Loren Martin

The Town Council received information related to the 2021 Town-wide reevaluation as required by law under RSA 21-J:11. Loren Martin informed the Town Council that she and the Assessing staff participated in a zoom meeting with the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) to discuss the town wide reevaluation update. She advised the Town Council that the DRA will be in to audit all the assessing records such as property exemptions, veteran tax credits and current use files.

1 Loren Martin spoke about the requirement to value properties at market value. She stated that staff have
2 been out verifying sales which will her to develop a new model. She advised the Town Council that income
3 and expense questionnaires have been sent to the commercial and industrial properties that rent out their real
4 estate. Loren Martin indicated that field review will begin in May. She explained that the field review is a
5 final check that the property records are in good shape. They will not be seeking inspections or taking
6 measurements. She spoke about the Assessing Department's frequently asked questions section on the
7 Town's web page. She informed the Town Council that she and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director
8 Paul Micali will be filming segment that will air on Merrimack TV that will inform the residents of
9 Merrimack about the upcoming revaluation. She stressed that the Assessing Department is being proactive
10 and get as much information out to the residents.
11

12 Loren Martin advised the Town Council that in order to bring property values up to market value as is
13 required by law Merrimack will see a significant increase in property values. She stressed that does not
14 necessarily mean property taxes will go up significantly. She explained that often when reassessments are
15 done she will see that a certain types of property will see a bigger increase than others. She stated that she
16 has run preliminary analysis and found that across the board of different property types there are not big
17 shifts, properties are selling similarly. Loren Martin advised the Town Council that Merrimack's sales ratio
18 for 2020 is 78.4% and her preliminary analysis shows values as of April 1, 2021 are at 72% of market value.
19 She stated that as the Town's value increases by 30% the tax rate should come down proportionally as long
20 as there is not a significant change in spending.
21

22 Loren Martin stated that notices of preliminary values will be sent to property owners in June and informal
23 hearings will be held in July. She stated that it is her hope to have the reval complete by August and that will
24 allow a timely filing of the MS-1 by September 1st for the tax rate setting. She assured the town council that
25 she and the assessing staff will continue to work proactively. She recapped the DRA's monitoring of the
26 assessment update. She explained that the DRA will follow up with a sampling of the sale reviewed and the
27 new construction properties. She explained that the DRA is not conducting interior inspections due to
28 Covid-19 and the DRA is not going into communities with more than 10 active cases of Covid-19. Loren
29 Martin explained how her staff has been addressing the need for interior inspections by use of virtual tours,
30 video calls and pictures. She advised that Town Council that a final decision has not been made regarding
31 hearings. She stated that due to Covid-19 her staff has been holding hearings by phone. She stated that as
32 the process proceeds, she will re-evaluate and determine if phone hearings are still the best choice. She
33 stressed that safety is her highest priority.
34

35 Councilor Albert asked if Merrimack could decline to update values. Loren Martin advised the Town
36 Council that it is required by state law to revalue properties every 5 years. She explained that this process
37 ensures a fair disbursement of state education funds. Councilor Rothhaus asked if the commercial and
38 industrial sector will increase the percentage. Loren Martin confirmed commercial and industrial will see a
39 similar value increase. Vice Chair Boyd asked if this trend is state-wide. Loren Martin stated that the south
40 and southeastern part of the state are trending in this manner. She informed the Town Council that
41 Merrimack has been trending upward since the last update in 2016. She spoke about the seller's market with
42 an average of 10 days on the market and the bidding wars occurring. Vice Chair Boyd asked Assistant Town
43 Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali if the Town would be utilizing Nextel, Facebook and electronic signs
44 thorough out town to inform the residents. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali stated that
45 he will. Councilor Harrington asked Loren Martin to emphasize that the value increase does not mean taxes
46 will increase by the same. She urged Loren Martin to reiterate that point in the public service video.
47 Councilor Harrington would like a direct link to the public service video. Councilor Albert stated that he has
48 been asked by residents why should a resident allow an inspection if it increases their taxes. Loren Martin
49 explained that if an inspection has not been done in several years they will estimate. She stressed that the
50 worst thing that will happen if they are allowed in a home is that the data will be accurate. She stated that no

1 one should be paying more or paying less than their fair share. She assured the Town Council that taxpayers
2 will have the ability to meet with her, discuss their value and correct data as needed.
3

4 **Public Hearing**

5 **1. Public Hearing – Abbie Griffin Memorial Funds (Merrimack Fire & Police Departments)**

6 *Submitted by Fire Chief Matthew Duke and Police Chief Brian Levesque*

7 The Town Council held a public hearing to authorize the acceptance and expenditure of funds from the
8 Abbie Griffin Memorial Fund in the amount of but not to exceed \$ 17,808 for the purchase of replacement
9 cardio fitness equipment for the fire stations (treadmills, stair machine, etc.) for the Fire Department and for
10 body armor plates and gym equipment for the Police Department. In addition, the Police Department will
11 also be purchasing tools for the Special Response Team, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15.
12

13 Police Chief Levesque discussed the body armor plates that would give the Police Department another safety
14 tool. He advised the Town Council that the body armor plates will stop a rifle round. Chief Levesque
15 outlined the exercise equipment that is requested. Councilor Albert asked if the healthcare provider offers
16 reimbursement or incentive to the police officers. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali
17 will ask the healthcare provider. Chairman Koenig explained that the Abbie Griffin Memorial Fund is not
18 taxpayer money. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali confirmed that the AGMF is a fund
19 established by Abbie Griffin prior to her death to help the first responders, welfare department and medical
20 fund to assist those with medical problems. Chief Levesque recapped the items requested by the special
21 response team such as a compact battering ram, pry bar and a steal quick cut blade. Assistant Town
22 Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali advised the Town Council that the Police Department is requesting
23 \$8,904.
24

25 Fire Chief Duke explained that the Fire Department is looking to upgrade their fitness equipment such as a
26 stair master and various other equipment and weights. Chief Duke stated the Fire Department is requesting
27 \$8,896. Councilor Albert asked if there is a specific work out program that the fire fighters are asked to
28 follow. Chief Duke explained there is not a specific program but a member of the Fire Department has
29 experience and education in the fitness field and that individual works with staff to design a program that is
30 tailored the a person's individual needs.
31

32 *Chairman Koenig opened the public hearing at 8:06 pm*

33 No public input was given.

34 *Chairman Koenig closed the public hearing at 8:07 pm*

35
36 **MOTION made by Vice Chair Boyd and seconded by Councilor Albert to authorize the expenditure**
37 **of funds from the Abbie Griffin Memorial Fund in the amount of but not to exceed \$ 17,808 for the**
38 **purchase of replacement cardio fitness equipment for the fire stations as outlined in Assistant Chief**
39 **Brechtel's memo dated March 5th and for body armor plates and gym equipment for the Police**
40 **Department as outlined in Police Chief Levesque's memo dated February 25th. In addition, the Police**
41 **Department will also be purchasing tools for the Special Response Team, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b**
42 **and Charter Article 8-15. Furthermore, the Town Manager or her proxy be authorized to sign the**
43 **necessary paperwork to accept and expend. MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**
44

45 **2. Public Hearing – Milfoil Control Efforts**

46 *Submitted by Planning and Zoning Administrator Robert Price*

47 The Town Council held a public hearing to consider the acceptance and authorization of the expenditure of
48 up to \$16,350 for the milfoil treatment program at Horseshoe Pond and Naticook Lake, of which \$6,540 is
49 from a grant from NHDES for milfoil control, and the Town's matching share is \$9,810, to be funded from
50 the Milfoil Expendable Capital Reserve Fund, and to authorize the Town Manager or her designee to execute

1 any and all documents which may be necessary. This request represents funding to allow for treatment of
2 milfoil in Horseshoe Pond & Naticook Lake in 2021. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali
3 explained that this is something that is done every year. He stated that the grant is a 40/60 match. The Town
4 is responsible for 60%. He stated that milfoil is a state-wide problem. Assistant Town Manager/Finance
5 Director Paul Micali explained that Naticook Lake association members are trained to mark the milfoil for
6 treatment and harvesting.

7
8 Councilor Woods asked about the mesh treatment used in the past and he suggested establishing a fishing
9 perimeter to protect the mesh. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali informed the Town
10 Council that this year the mesh is not being used.

11
12 *Chairman Koenig opened the public hearing for public input at 8:13 pm*

13
14 No public input was given.

15
16 *Chairman Koenig closed the public hearing at 8:14 pm*

17
18 **MOTION made by Councilor Albert and seconded by Councilor Healey to accept and authorize the**
19 **expenditure of up to \$16,350 for the milfoil treatment program at Horseshoe Pond and Naticook Lake,**
20 **of which \$6,540 is from a grant from NHDES for milfoil control, and the Town's matching share is**
21 **\$9,810 to be funded from the Milfoil Expendable Capital Reserve Fund, and furthermore, the Town**
22 **Council authorizes the Town Manager or her designee to execute any and all documents which may be**
23 **necessary. MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**

24
25 Vice Chair Boyd thanked the residents of Naticook Lake and Horse Shoe Pond for their continued diligence.
26 Chairman Koenig thanked Amy Smagula from the DES for her continued efforts.

27
28 **Legislative Updates from State Representatives**

29 None

30
31 **Town Manager's Report**

32 Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali reported the following: The Transfer Station and
33 Recycling Center will begin summer operating hours on Thursday, April 8 and continue through Thursday,
34 September 30. During that time, the operating hours on Thursdays at the facility will be from 8:00 AM to
35 7:00 PM. The facility will continue with normal 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM hours on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday
36 and Saturday

37
38 Chairman Koenig stated that at last night's deliberative session there was a special tribute for Town Manager
39 Eileen Cabanel who is retiring at the end of April 2021. Chairman Koenig announced that Assistant Town
40 Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali will be stepping in as Town Manager. He congratulated them both.

41
42 **Consent Agenda**

43 None

44
45 **Old Business**

46 **1. Merrimack 275th Anniversary Planning Committee Project Proposal**

47 *Submitted by Merrimack 275th Anniversary Planning Committee Member Chuck Mower*

48 The Town Council considered the Merrimack 275th Anniversary Planning Committee's proposed
49 fundraising project to build a covered bridge at Twin Bridge Park over Baboosic Brook. Assistant Town
50 Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali informed the Town Council that a group of people wanted to give a

1 gift to the Town for its 275th anniversary. The covered bridge was presented to the anniversary
2 committee. He explained that the anniversary committee asked that the covered bridge idea be presented to
3 the Town Center committee. He stated that the Town Center Committee was in favor of the idea of a
4 covered bridge at Twin Bridge Park.

5
6 Mr. Chuck Mower stated the design concept is a replica of the Flume bridge in Franconia Notch. He
7 explained the location that has been selected for the bridge. Mr. Mower stated that the covered bridge will
8 provide a cultural improvement to the park. He stressed that the bridge will provide access to a multi-
9 recreational use of the park and it will provide a revenue producing destination venue for events. Mr. Mower
10 stated that the bridge proposal is consistent with the Town's master plan and town center master plan. Mr.
11 Mower spoke about the historical significance of the area. He stressed the importance of providing and
12 preserving resources in Merrimack for future generations.

13
14 Mr. Mower explained the proposed covered bridge would be a truss (lattice) configuration. He stated the
15 bridge would have camber to avoid future sagging and improved weight disbursement. He informed the
16 Town Council that the 275th anniversary committee received an estimate from Arnold Graton in the amount
17 of \$450,000. Mr. Mower reiterated the benefits that the covered bridge would bring to Merrimack such as an
18 improved bridge and access, shelter, preservation of the first road, preservation of an important piece of
19 history and it will be a revenue producing destination. He stated that the covered bridge model on display is
20 to scale. He reviewed the materials that will be used to construct the covered bridge. He stated that power
21 will be brought to bridge and security features. Mr. Mower explained that this project is not anticipated to be
22 done quickly. He stated that it take a year or more to fundraise and construct.

23
24 Mr. John Lastowka spoke about and outlined the history of the various dams and sawmills that were in
25 Merrimack along the Souhegan River. He stressed the importance of remembering the historical value of the
26 various dams and sawmills. Rosemarie Rung stated that she believes this project will spring board the
27 cultural and economic development of the town center. She recognized the cost is significant but believes it
28 is important to do something bold that ties Merrimack's history to the future. She stressed that she believes
29 this project can be done without a penny of tax dollars. She stated that she is committed to fund raising.

30
31 Councilor Rothhaus acknowledged the price is concerning but realizes that the project does not have to be
32 done quickly. He informed the Town Council that he fully supports the proposal. Chairman Koenig asked if
33 the Mr. Mower could address the need to widen the bridge in attempts to reduce the choke that narrowing a
34 water way has on flood waters. Mr. Mower explain that the permitting process for the covered bridge is the
35 same standards as all other construction. He stated that flow engineering will have to be undertaken to
36 determine the best way to proceed. He informed the Town Council that the covered bridge will be elevated 2
37 feet over the existing bridge. He stated that Graton Associates has assured him that they will follow all the
38 permitting standards. Mr. Mower spoke about flow data available from other bridge reconstructions and the
39 flow data from the Mother's day flood providing additional information. He stated that the flow engineering
40 will provide valuable information to address and reduce flow choke.

41
42 Councilor Healey clarified that the estimate from Graton Associates does not include any work or
43 engineering to address the flow. She asked who would oversee the bridge after it is completed. Assistant
44 Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali stated it would fall under Parks and Recreation. Councilor
45 Harrington inquired about the what cost and what the cost covered. Mr. Mower stated that there are still
46 some unknowns. He stated that the estimate from Graton Associates is the construction of the bridge. Mr.
47 Mower stated that other items such as land work and electricity would be the Town's responsibility. He
48 stressed that the committee hopes that the fundraising goals will be realized through the community's
49 generosity. He stated that there are other funding avenues that could be applied for. Councilor Harrington
50 encouraged the committee to be more realistic about the cost. She believes it will be more than the estimated

1 cost. Councilor Albert would like staff to explore any possible covenants or restrictions on the parcel. There
2 was a discussion regarding the Town's role and responsibility in the process. Assistant Town
3 Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali explained that Town staff would be involved to make sure the Town's
4 interests are protected. Laurie Rothhaus explained how the bandstand came to fruition 25 years ago. She
5 stated the residents raised the money and built the bandstand not corporate America. She appreciates the
6 passion from the committee and looks forward to the project's completion.

7
8 **MOTION was made by and seconded by to encourage the 275th Anniversary Planning Committee to**
9 **start a fundraising project to build a covered bridge at Twin Bridge Park, to set up an account with**
10 **the Town's finance department to hold those funds. MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**

11
12 Councilor Rothhaus stated that he and his wife Laurie Rothhaus donate \$1,000. Rosemarie Rung also stated
13 that she would be donating \$1,000.

14 15 **New Business**

16 **1. Acceptance of a Donation for Bise Athletic Field**

17 *Submitted by Finance Director Paul T. Micali*

18 The Town Council considered the acceptance and expenditure of a donation in the amount of \$7,500 from
19 Haywards Ice Cream to be used for the purchase of a scoreboard to be installed at Bise Field located at 487
20 DW Highway as well as update outfield fence wrap and signage, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and Charter
21 Article 8-15. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali explained that this would amend the
22 current MYA contract with the Town. He stated that Haywards Ice Cream is giving back to the community.
23 Mr. John Calabro advised the Town Council that the baseball scoreboard is broken and in need of
24 replacement. He appreciates the donation from Haywards Ice Cream. He informed the Town Council that
25 the baseball program would like to update the outfield fence and will be paid for by the baseball program.
26 Examples of both the scoreboard and fence wrap were shown. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director
27 Paul Micali questioned the white color of the fence wrap and how that could affect the batter. Mr. Jason
28 Lancaster assured the Town Council that they will give that consideration and make modifications if
29 necessary.

30
31 Mr. Calabro advised the Town Council that all but two current sponsors are coming back. He advised the
32 Town Council that there are several new sponsors.

33
34 **MOTION was made by Councilor Harrington and seconded by Vice Chair Boyd to accept and expend**
35 **a donation in the amount of \$7,500 from Haywards Ice Cream to be used for the purchase of a**
36 **scoreboard to be installed at Bise Field located at 487 DW Highway as well as update outfield fence**
37 **wrap and signage, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15. Furthermore, approve the**
38 **modifications made to the contract. MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**

39 40 *Discussion on the motion*

41
42 Chairman Koenig raised the question regarding sponsorship asking if the Town Council is comfortable with
43 the list of new sponsors relating to the youth sports. Vice Chair Boyd appreciates the sponsorships from the
44 local businesses. No objections were raised. The Town Council agreed to amend the MYA contract to
45 include the new sponsors.

46
47 Councilor Woods left the meeting at 10:00 pm

1 **2. Ambulance Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) Account Withdrawal Request**

2 *Submitted by Fire Chief Matthew Duke*

3 The Town Council considered Merrimack Fire Rescue's request to withdrawal and expend up to \$157,000
4 from the Ambulance CRF to replace and upgrade all three of the ambulance stretcher systems which are used
5 to decrease injuries and provide a safer transition for the patient into the ambulance. Assistant Fire Chief
6 Harris explained that the replacement stretcher is an automatic lift. He stated that the automatic lift system is
7 safer for the employees and the patients. Assistant Chief Harris advised the Town Council that in the past
8 there was an injury suffered by an employee that cost the Town approximately \$200,000. A video was
9 shown to the Town Council illustrating the new equipment. He advised the Town Council that there is a
10 warranty of 7 years. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali stated that the lift systems are
11 transferrable to new ambulances.

12
13 **MOTION was made by Councilor Harrington and seconded by Councilor Healey to approve**
14 **withdrawal and expend up to \$157,000 from the Ambulance CRF to replace and upgrade all three of**
15 **the ambulance stretcher systems which are used to decrease injuries and provide a safer transition for**
16 **the patient into the ambulance. MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0**

17
18 **3. Fire Equipment Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) Withdrawal Request for Gas Monitoring Equipment**
19 **for the Merrimack Fire Department** *Submitted by Fire Chief Matthew Duke*

20 The Town Council considered Merrimack Fire Rescue's request to withdrawal and expend \$24,000 from the
21 Fire Equipment Capital Reserve Fund for the purchase of new and/or replacement gas monitoring equipment.
22 Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali advised the Town Council that this item was included
23 in the budget but because the Department of Revenue has instructed the Town to keep capital reserve
24 withdrawals separate Captain Bickford is requesting to expend \$24,000 for this equipment.

25
26 Lieutenant Bickford stated that it behooves the Town to upgrade the new engines that are coming in with the
27 gas monitoring equipment. He outlined the gas monitoring changes and upgrades that will be included on
28 the new engines. Lieutenant Bickford stated that there will be additional education/training for the
29 department on the gas monitors. Councilor Rothhaus asked for clarification on the difference in money
30 between the \$24,000 and the \$16,000 in the back up materials. Lieutenant Bickford stated that the
31 information/costs in the agenda is the nuts and bolts of the request and he will come back for the remainder.
32 Councilor Albert supports the request.

33
34 **MOTION made by Vice Chair Boyd and seconded by Councilor Healey to withdrawal and expend**
35 **\$16,087 from the Fire Equipment Capital Reserve Fund for the purchase of new and/or replacement**
36 **gas monitoring equipment outlined in the March 4, 2021 memorandum from Fire Chief Matt Duke.**
37 **Furthermore, that the Town Manager or her proxy be authorized to sign the necessary documents.**
38 **MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0**

39
40 **4. Withdrawal Request from the Reevaluation Capital Reserve Fund (CRF)**

41 *Submitted by Finance Director Paul T. Micali*

42 The Town Council authorized the expenditure of \$96,700 for the 2021 Town-wide reevaluation of which
43 \$21,700 to come from the 2020-2021 Operating Budget and the remaining amount of \$75,000 to be
44 withdrawn from the Reevaluation Capital Reserve Fund. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul
45 Micali explained that \$21,700 will come from the current budget and the remaining \$75,000 will be
46 withdrawn from the CRF.

47
48 **MOTION made by Vice Chair Boyd and seconded by Councilor Albert to authorize the expenditure**
49 **of \$96,700 for the 2021 Town-wide reevaluation of which \$21,700 to come from the 2020-2021**

1 **Operating Budget and the remaining amount of \$75,000 to be withdrawn from the Reevaluation**
2 **Capital Reserve Fund. MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0**

3
4 **Minutes**

5 Approve the minutes from the following Town Council meetings: ♦ January 28, 2021 ♦ February 11, 2021
6 ♦ February 18, 2021

7
8 **MOTION made by Vice Chair Boyd and seconded by Councilor Harrington to table the Town**
9 **Council meeting minutes from January 28, 2021, February 11, 2021 and February 18, 2021 until the**
10 **March 25, 2021 Town Council meeting. MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0**

11
12 **Comments from the Press**

13 None

14
15 **Comments from the Public**

16 None

17
18 **Comments from the Council**

19 None

20
21 **Adjourn**

22 **MOTION made by Councilor Harrington and seconded by Vice Chair Boyd to adjourn the meeting.**
23 **MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0**

24
25 The meeting adjourned at 10:45 pm

26
27 Respectfully submitted by Tracy Doherty