



# Town Council Meeting Minutes



Thursday, January 13, 2022, at 7:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Chairman Koenig called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Present at the meeting were Chairman Koenig, Vice Chair Rothhaus, Councilor Harrington, Councilor Healey, Councilor Hunter, Councilor Murphy, Councilor Woods, and Town Manager Paul Micali.

## Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Koenig led the Pledge of Allegiance.

## Announcements

**The Town offices will be closed on Monday, January 17<sup>th</sup> in the observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.**

The Town Council would like to offer our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Betty J. Spence, who died on Saturday, January 8<sup>th</sup>.

Betty's service to the Town of Merrimack is unparalleled - she was an employee of the Town for over 30 years. Betty served as the Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Assistant Town Manager, Interim Welfare Administrator, volunteer firefighter and an emergency medical technician. She also served on the Board of Selectmen and the Town Council, at one point held the position of Vice Chairman of the Board of Selectmen and as the Vice Chairman and the Chairman of the Town Council. We are forever grateful for all the time and effort that Betty provided to the Town of Merrimack.

## Upcoming Town Council Meetings:

- Wednesday, January 19, 2022, 6:30 PM Budget meeting (Snow date is Thursday, January, 20 at 6:30 PM)
- Thursday, January 27, 2022, 7:00 PM Regular meeting
- Thursday, February 10, 2022, 7:00 PM Regular meeting

Starting February 1, there will be a change to what is accepted as part of the single stream recycling. We will no longer be able to accept #3, #4, #6, or #7 plastics. Those plastics should be disposed in the trash stream.

The skating rink at Watson Park is open for the season – as long as temperatures continue to cooperate. The rink is lit from 4:30 to 9:00 each evening.

## Comments from the Press and Public

None.

## Recognitions, Resignations and Retirements

None.

## Appointments

None.

## Public Hearing

None.

1  
2 **Legislative Updates from State Representatives**

3 Legislative Update for January 6, 2022:

4  
5 The NH House has been in session for two full days in Manchester, NH.

6  
7 Today, HB 478 (sponsored by Reps. Mooney, Notter, Healey, Rung, Mayville, Cushing, Rice, Sens. Daniels,  
8 Ricciardi, Sherman, Carson) passed on the House floor. The bill's passage overturned the Judiciary  
9 Committee's recommendation of "ITL." This is very good news for Merrimack. Earlier last year, the  
10 Council wrote a supportive letter for its passage. Link to bill text:

11 [http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill\\_status/billinfo.aspx?id=633&infect=2](http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/billinfo.aspx?id=633&infect=2)

12  
13 The bill is now on its way to the Senate where a hearing will be scheduled. More details to follow. A  
14 special thank you to all eight Merrimack legislators who voted in favor of HB 478.

15  
16 Respectfully submitted,  
17 Rep. Maureen Mooney

18  
19 Emails from Representative Healey:

20 Legislative update: State of the State Finances..aka Taxes and Fees.. as of (12/30/21)

21  
22 Short version: We are \$122m above plan. Aka We took in WAY more money than our State budget plan  
23 called for. 14% more.

24  
25 This bodes well for 2 bills on the Ways and Means Committee this session.

26  
27 HB-1221-FN will lower the Business Profits Tax (BPT) by a whopping .1 from 7.6% to 7.5% and also lower  
28 the Business Enterprise Tax (BPT aka Payroll tax) by .05% from .55% to .50%

29 <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1384&sy=>

30  
31 The other is..

32  
33 HB 1204-FN which will lower the meals and rentals tax from 8.5% to 7.9%, AND will once again Change  
34 the % of M&R tax revenue shared with municipalities and increase it from 30% to 40%, there-by keeping the  
35 promise made when that tax was initially created. That promise was a 40% revenue share.

36 <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/legislation/billinfo.aspx?id=1149&sy=>

37  
38 Just as an FYI, I just received RR&D Schedule for next Wednesday 1/19.

39  
40 From 1:45 PM til the end of the day we will be hearing various PFAS Bills

41  
1:45 p.m. **HB 1167** establishing a maximum contaminant level for perfluorinated chemicals in surface  
water.

2:30 p.m. **HB 1185** relative to treatment of water contaminated with perfluorinated chemicals.

3:45 p.m. **HB 1602-FN** relative to perfluorinated chemicals in drinking water.

1 If you or anyone wishes to provide testimony on any of these bills the address it should be sent to is:

2  
3 [HouseResourcesRecreationandDevelopment@leg.state.nh.us](mailto:HouseResourcesRecreationandDevelopment@leg.state.nh.us)

4  
5 That is unless you want to appear in person at the Statehouse.

6  
7 **Town Manager's Report**

- 8
- 9 • The Town is actively going through the hiring process for 7 firefighters. We have candidates in  
10 varying stages of the hiring process and are considering several candidates. The Town does have a  
11 nepotism policy, so we will not be offering positions to family members of current employees unless  
12 we have assurances in place to avoid conflicts of interest and supervision of them by a family  
13 member.
  - 14 • We have 2 that start January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1 in the last phase of the background check, 1 halfway through the  
15 background check. This should take care of the positions approved related to the Safer grant,  
16 effective February 27, 2022. Additionally, we have one candidate who has been extended a  
17 Conditional Offer who we are waiting to hear back from. We have 2 other openings and are  
18 considering candidates for those positions.
- 19

20 **Consent Agenda**

21 None.

22  
23 **Old Business**

24 **1. Flying Eagles Field Enhancement Project Request Follow-up Discussion**

25 *Submitted by Robert Fregault and Tim Sowder*

26 The Town Council to consider The Flying Eagles' request to restore the field to its original  
27 open boundaries by removing a select number of trees located on the Town owned property on  
28 Caron / Griffin Street, known as the Sklar Waterfront Park.

29  
30 Mr. Fregault and Mr. Sowder were present to discuss Patterson field, which is the field they have been flying  
31 in. Mr. Fregault provided a brief overview of their request, and then shared that since November they have  
32 spoken with the Conservation Committee, Planning and Zoning boards, and DPW. He then provided an  
33 updated map highlighting the area of trees they are looking to cut, sharing that the trees are mostly saplings  
34 located on the east side of the field. Towards the south end of the field, there is a notch area that they would  
35 like to cut out. The vegetation in this area is mostly bittersweet and diseased/dying trees. He then stated that  
36 the Commission asked if they would help clean up some of the bittersweet if they are allowed to cut the  
37 notch, in which they agreed they could help with some but cannot do the whole property. Mr. Fregault then  
38 shared noteworthy items from their November 15<sup>th</sup> meeting with the Conservation Commission, which  
39 included:

- 40 • Area to the North of little concern to the Conservation Committee
  - 41 • Esthetics of the area to the East would improve if some trees were removed
  - 42 • A semblance of a boundary on the eastern edge of the field would be desirable
  - 43 • Some concerns about cutting too many trees
  - 44 • Recognized bittersweet infestation as a problem that the project might help with
  - 45 • Some marked trees in the Southern notch were cut prematurely
  - 46 • Would like DPW input on the project
  - 47 • There was general support for the project pending Town Council and DPW input
- 48  
49

1 Mr. Fregault also shared an update from a phone conversation he had with DPW, highlighting the following  
2 points:

- 3 • Spoke by phone with Kyle Fox
- 4 • Mr. Fox stated he has no objections to the project, but that the DPW would not be involved in the  
5 tree clearing process
- 6 • Mr. Fox did mention his concerns that proper safety procedures be observed

7  
8 Mr. Fregault then shared thoughts from the Planning and Zoning boards via email, sharing the following:

- 9 • No issues with Shoreland Protection as it is a 3<sup>rd</sup> order stream (Shoreland applies to 4<sup>th</sup> order or  
10 higher)
- 11 • No issues with SoRLAC as the work area is more than ¼ mile from the Souhegan River
- 12 • Project is within ¼ mile of Merrimack River and so should be presented to LMRLA
- 13 • An intent to cut permit may be required
- 14 • There may be some value in the trees- a forester could be consulted to make that determination
- 15 • No issues from zoning/planning

16  
17 Mr. Fregault also provided input from the Lower Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee, highlighting  
18 the following points:

- 19 • Met with LMRLAC on December 9<sup>th</sup>
- 20 • The Committee accepted the Flying Eagles representation that the Naticook Brook would be  
21 protected
- 22 • The brush surrounding the Brook will be maintained and preserved
- 23 • The project represented no threat to the Merrimack River
- 24 • The Committee offers no suggested conditions on the town's approving the project

25  
26 Mr. Fregault then provided a review of the project phases:

27 East Side of the Field:

- 28 • Trees are small in diameter. Will be cut by trained club members
- 29 • Risk and liabilities will be assumed by the club
- 30 • Tree trunks will be used as border buffering
- 31 • Branches will be shredded into mulch and spread as ground cover
- 32 • General timeframe: 12-18 months beginning this winter depending on snowfall and manpower  
33 availability

34  
35 South Notch:

- 36 • A few remaining trees to cut
- 37 • Club will cut these trees this winter leaving trees where they fall as creature habitats
- 38 • Trees will be cut by trained club members
- 39 • Club will assume risks and liability

40  
41 Large Pine Trees:

- 42 • Will be cut by an insured professional tree service company
- 43 • Tree trunks will be used as border buffering along roadway and as closure to ATV trails
- 44 • Branches will be shredded into mulch and spread as a ground cover
- 45 • General timeframe TBD based on cost, club resources, seasonal issues, and contractor  
46 availability
- 47 • We will clear the eastern area of the smaller trees before felling the tall pine trees

1 North Notch:

- 2 • Only two trees to cut
- 3 • Club will cut these trees this winter leaving trees where they fall as creature habitat
- 4 • Trees will be cut by trained club members
- 5 • Club will assume risks and liability

6  
7 Lastly, Mr. Fregault provided his final thoughts, including the following:

- 8 • The project is dependent on the Council's approval before any work can proceed
- 9 • The club will work with the town to ensure, as best as it is practical, that the interests of the town are met
- 10 • The club believes that this project will enhance both the utilization and the appearance of the property at no cost to the town
- 11 • A more open air space will foster a greater interest and participation in the hobby of model aviation
- 12 • The project will not endanger either the Naticook Brook or the Merrimack River
- 13 • The project will preserve the property's natural vegetation and not involve any more trees than is necessary for safe flight operations

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18 Mr. Micali stated that regarding the liability issue, the town will have to be added as additionally insured on the group's policy for the purpose of cutting trees, and the club would have to talk to their insurance company about this to see if they would insure them for cutting trees. Additionally, the town would need that policy as well as the indemnification policy with signatures for their records. Further, the town would request that the individuals who will be cutting the trees use protective gear (helmets, shields, chaps, etc.). Mr. Fregault stated that he will discuss this further with the club, but they could also consider having somebody commercially cut the trees instead, which Mr. Micali stated that this will be fine as long as there is insurance for whomever is cutting the trees.

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27 Vice Chair Rothhaus shared that he is in favor of this project, but he is uncertain of leaving a large number of trees down for creature habitat. He thinks it would look wonderful if it was cleared to look more like a field. Mr. Fregault shared that the stumps are cut close to the ground but left there because the roots retain soil, and the vegetation that grows is between knee-length and waist-length. Councilor Healey shared concerns of forest fires, asking the fire department that was present at the meeting if this could be an issue. The fire department shared that this is not a concern to them or an increased fire risk.

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34 **MOTION made by Vice Chair Rothhaus and seconded by Councilor Healey to approve the project pending resolution of liability and insurance issue with no work to be performed until the approval of the Town Manager or his designee based on receiving the liability insurance or the name of a professional contractor.**

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39 Councilor Woods asked if there should be a completion date added onto this, in which Mr. Micali stated that it is up to the Flying Eagles if they think this would be doable for them, in which Mr. Fregault said that depending on club resources, the project could take awhile to complete or be done in stages as resources become available. He proposes being granted project approval with the timeframe being flexible based on their resources, weather, and contractor availability. Chairman Koenig suggested adding a limit date, possibly 18 months, so that if the project goes beyond it can be reviewed and updated. Mr. Fregault is happy to come back to the Council to provide updates, but he is worried about completing the project in the timeframe. Mr. Fregault asked if the timeframe could be 18-24 months, in which Councilor Harrington stated she does not see this as an issue as they are limited by the scope of what they can do in the project based on what is determined tonight. She suggested giving them 3 years (36 months) as it gives them ample time and provides a comfort level for the Council to be able to review if the project goes beyond this date.

1 Councilor Murphy is in agreement with this, stating that there are factors such as weather and resources that  
2 limit the club's ability to complete the project quickly. Councilor Healey agreed with this, stating it may take  
3 over 6 months to hire a tree company due to Covid and being busy with other projects.  
4

5 **Amended MOTION made by Vice Chair Rothhaus and seconded by Councilor Healey to approve the**  
6 **project pending resolution of liability and insurance issue with no work to be performed until the**  
7 **approval of the Town Manager or his designee based on receiving the liability insurance or the name**  
8 **of a professional contractor with a 36 month deadline.**

9 **MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**  
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11 **New Business**

12 **1. Reappointment of Merrimack Representative to the Nashua Regional Planning Commission**

13 *Submitted by Town Council Chair Tom Koenig and Vice Chair Finlay Rothhaus*

14 The Town Council to consider the reappointment of Timothy Tenhave as one of Merrimack's  
15 representatives to the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC), as recommended by the  
16 Merrimack Planning Board and pursuant to RSA 36:46 (III).  
17

18 **MOTION made by Vice Chair Rothhaus and seconded by Councilor Harrington to appoint Timothy**  
19 **Tenhave as one of Merrimack's representatives to the Nashua Regional Planning Commission as**  
20 **recommended by the Merrimack Planning Board and pursuant to RSA 36:46 (III).**

21 **MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**  
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23 **2. Cathy Street, Brick Lane & Constance Street Drainage and Right-of-way Easements**

24 *Submitted by Deputy Public Works Director / Town Engineer Dawn Tuomala*

25 Town Council to consider the acceptance of drainage and right-of-way easements as part of the  
26 19 subdivision plan for Level Acres I.  
27

28 Deputy Public Works Director / Town Engineer Dawn Tuomala was present along with Paul Chisholm of  
29 Keach-Nordstrom Associates, Inc. to present a PowerPoint on the right-of-way easements. She presented a  
30 map of the northern Merrimack area, highlighting the areas in question. She shared that there are two  
31 different types of easements they are looking at: road widening, which will add 5 ft on each side to make the  
32 road 50 ft wide, and drainage, which is needed to improve the roads in order to eventually sell the lots. She  
33 shared that she talked with the Planning Board, and they did not feel they had any input in this as the  
34 subdivision is so old and the DPW has been dealing with Mr. Chisholm in the upgrade of this section.  
35 Additionally, there is a sewer easement that is in this area and comes down from Reeds Ferry school onto  
36 Constance St. and Down Brick Ln. to the swamp area out back.  
37

38 Chairman Koenig asked Ms. Tuomala to explain why the Council has to accept an easement, in which she  
39 replied that this is because they are using the extra 5 ft for road widening purposes and they need to have the  
40 actual deeds in order to have the roads in this position before the houses can be sold. Councilor Healey  
41 wanted to validate that all of the lots that are being shown on the map are not currently inhabited, in which  
42 Mr. Chisholm said he does not believe anyone is living in the lots yet. Ms. Tuomala and Mr. Chisholm then  
43 briefly described the area in general and how some lots have been under construction, and how some did not  
44 need improvements made to the right-of-way or drainage.  
45

46 **MOTION made by Councilor Healey and seconded by Councilor Hunter to accept the drainage and**  
47 **right-of-way easements as part of the 19 subdivision plan for Level Acres I, and to allow the Town**  
48 **Manager to sign and any all appropriate paperwork.**

49 **MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**  
50

1 **3. Consideration of Acceptance of Portion of Old Blood Road**

2 *Submitted by Deputy Public Works Director / Town Engineer Dawn Tuomala*

3 The Town Council to consider the acceptance of the last 1,210 foot section of Old Blood Road that  
4 ends in a hammerhead turn around area.

5  
6 Ms. Tuomala presented a map of the area in question to provide clarity to the Council. She shared that this  
7 area was a compilation of several different subdivisions, and this is more specifically about the last 1,210 ft  
8 of road on Old Blood Rd. She provided some history on the area and shared that the Old Blood properties on  
9 the west side had undedications, and there were no definitions on either side to define what Old Blood Rd.  
10 was, so she had difficulty understanding the plans. They have recently gotten a new plan that reflects what  
11 the deed says, so she is asking the Council to accept this as well as the drainage easements that come out for  
12 these properties. She did ask the Planning Board for approval for this and was told they need to have a  
13 maintenance bond in place for the entire property for the next two years. This bond is \$11,535, and the  
14 Planning Board voted in acceptance of having this new bond put into place. She stated that if the Council  
15 grants this acceptance, Mr. Tenhave of the Planning Board will bring in the check to be able to help hold as  
16 the bond tomorrow. She also talked this over with the town attorney, who is in agreement with this, and she  
17 has sent the last revisions for review today which she expects will be approved.

18  
19 **MOTION made by Councilor Harrington and seconded by Councilor Woods to accept the last 1,210**  
20 **foot section of Old Blood Road as presented, and to allow the Town Manager to sign and any all**  
21 **appropriate paperwork.**

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

23  
24 **4. Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrade Phase V**

25 *Submitted by Assistant Director of Public Works / Wastewater Sarita Croce*

26 The Town Council to be presented with the Wastewater Treatment Facility Phase V upgrade. This  
27 upgrade consists of items that were removed from the initial phase III and IV upgrades approved by  
28 the voters due to cost considerations.

29  
30 Assistant Director of Public Works / Wastewater Sarita Croce was present to provide some updates on the  
31 Wastewater Treatment Facility Phase V upgrade. Before she presented, Mr. Micali stated that they have  
32 previously had issues with biddings, and they were going to use some of the ARPA money to do a screenings  
33 building, but that plan fell through. He then stated that they went to the state to ask for some federal money  
34 to help out with this project, but that also did not come to fruition. Ms. Croce then shared a PowerPoint  
35 overview of the Wastewater Treatment Plant and a brief overview of the budget and project to refresh the  
36 Council's memory. She then shared the Phase V project cost, which is as follows:

- 37 • Screenings Building- \$3,200,000
- 38 • Wash water Piping- \$585,000
- 39 • Compost Facility- \$2,600,000
- 40 • Headworks Building- \$2,400,000
- 41 • Construction Cost Total- \$8,785,000
- 42 • Contingency 5%- \$439,250
- 43 • Engineering 10% \$878,500

44 **Total Project Cost- \$10,102,750**

45  
46 Ms. Croce then highlighted some Clean Water ARPA grant offers, such as:

- 47 • NHDES announced the availability of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for all clean water  
48 ARPA grant offers
- 49 • The town submitted an SRF pre-application to qualify for the ARPA grant
- 50 • The town of Merrimack has been preapproved for 20% ARPA grant up to \$2,000,000

- With the ARPA grant, they would be requesting a loan of \$8.1 million
- Funding for debt repayment on the bond will come from sewer user fees, not property taxes

Ms. Croce then provided an example of a 20 year loan repayment schedule at 2.5% interest. She also wanted to include two other upgrades in the project that she has not yet talked about: an electrical upgrade in the chlorine building and some sludge pumping, as well as the sawdust building. She would like to come back to discuss these at a future meeting. Mr. Micali then discussed what they can potentially use the ARPA money for as to not lower their bond amount. Vice Chair Rothhaus asked about rate adjustments since this was done based on Phase 3 and 4, in which Mr. Micali stated they will be okay with the current rate, and they are in process of doing a new rate study in the summer. Councilor Healey asked about the pricing increases, and if there is anything in the proposal that can be delayed with the hope that pricing goes down over time. Ms. Croce stated that it's expected that costs will increase again substantially when the infrastructure money becomes available, as well as the cost of materials.

##### **5. Merrimack Fire Rescue Ladder Truck**

*Submitted by Fire Chief Mark DiFronzo*

The Town Council to consider the purchase of a new ladder truck for the replacement of the current 2002 American LaFrance ladder truck. In addition, the Council will receive financing options to purchase the new ladder truck.

Chief DiFronzo was present to discuss the need for a new ladder truck. Before he began, Mr. Micali provided a brief synopsis of the importance of ladder trucks for saving lives and reducing the damage caused by fires. He also shared that American LaFrance is no longer in business, so it is nearly impossible to find parts for their current truck, and there are several repairs needed on this truck that have taken months to complete because of this. Mr. Micali also shared that it would be cheaper to get a 5-year bond as opposed to leasing a new truck due to interest rates. Chief DiFronzo then shared a PowerPoint presentation, highlighting the following:

- The town has had a ladder truck since 1972
- American LaFrance went out of business in 2014, making it very difficult to find parts
- The current ladder truck is almost 20 years old
- Average out of service time for 2021 was about 140 days for repairs, being out of service for 8 different times
- The cost of repairs from January 1, 2017 to November 30, 2021 was \$75,097, with the average annual cost \$15,019
- In September 2021, the swivel unit failed, costing over \$30,000 in repairs
- The body of the truck has had to be repainted 3 times, which is unheard of for firetrucks
- An evaluation by the DPW showed that there were several issues with the truck, including several rust spots, body corrosion and corroded rear air bag mounts, hydraulic hose and cylinders are getting old, engine had blow-by, and the brakes and tires had normal wear and tear
- Despite these issues, the truck provides for firefighter safety during roof operations and is safer for victim removal from exterior. Additionally, there is the ability for large volumes of water if needed
- Having a ladder truck decreases the fire department's insurance rates
- The cost for a new truck would be \$1,473,994. Pay up front savings would be \$40,724, making the final truck cost \$1,433,270. The remaining dollars (\$66,730) will be to replace antiquated equipment and anything additional

After his presentation, Chief DiFronzo shared that it will take almost 2 years to get a new truck, so he would like to get this done sooner rather than later. He also shared that they could get a demo truck in April as an option as well, but he has not looked at it yet so he's not sure if it would meet their needs or not.



1 Councilor Healey asked if they would have to load the new truck with new equipment, in which Chief  
2 DiFronzo stated that the equipment can transfer into the new truck because it is not very old, and the  
3 equipment is reusable. She then asked if parts on the current truck can be sold, but he is not sure about that  
4 since the parts are about 20 years old and have years of use on them. Councilor Harrington asked if there is  
5 any money in the capital reserve fund for this, in which Mr. Micali stated that the money in the CRF is  
6 already on a set schedule for other vehicle replacements. Councilor Hunter asked if there is a mechanism or  
7 if the Council has the authority to put something in place so that when a developer builds a building that will  
8 require a ladder truck (or other expensive equipment) that they contribute towards the cost of the equipment.  
9 Chairman Koenig stated that the conditional use permit allows them to look at the financial aspects and  
10 requires the developer to develop a plan of how this is going to impact the town as far as services, schools,  
11 etc. Councilor Healey asked if there are any funds from grants that can be used towards this purchase, in  
12 which Mr. Micali replied that they are all tied to their respective section of town and cannot be used towards  
13 this.

14  
15 Chairman Koenig asked Chief DiFronzo to explain the difference between leasing vs bonding for the truck.  
16 Mr. Micali shared that the lease option involves a 4 year lease-to-own with a principal balance of \$1,500,000  
17 and interest rate assumption of 2.29%. The 5-year bond option costs the same but has a cheaper interest rate  
18 of 1.25%.

## 20 **6. Role of the Town Council Regarding Public Health**

21 *Submitted by Town Councilor Nancy Murphy*

22 The Town Council to discuss and consider potential actions and options to protect public health in  
23 light of the ever changing status of Covid-19 and CDC guidelines.

24  
25 **MOTION made by Councilor Healey and seconded by Councilor Harrington to continue the meeting**  
26 **beyond 10:00 pm.**

27 **MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**

28  
29 Councilor Murphy began by stating that she wanted to provide the Council with handouts and resources  
30 regarding this public health issue. She wants to be sure that as a governing body, the Council is doing  
31 everything they can to reduce transmission in the community. She then shared that Merrimack is quickly  
32 becoming one of the top counties in New Hampshire in regard to covid transmission rates. These high rates  
33 have negatively impacted the community, particularly the schools and businesses. She then shared that  
34 DHHS reported yesterday that 82% of inpatient beds and 86% of ICU beds across the state were occupied,  
35 but these numbers change daily. She believes the Council needs to be part of the solution in any way they  
36 can and see if there is anything that can be done to help educate the community, such as updating the website  
37 with Covid information and encouraging mask wearing and social distancing.

38  
39 Councilor Harrington wanted to clarify what the Council should do with the list of universal best practices  
40 that Councilor Murphy provided them, in which Councilor Murphy stated this is to encourage and  
41 recommend best practices to the public. Councilor Harrington wanted to stress that the public has the final  
42 choice with what they decide to do and focusing on sharing information with the community is the best  
43 option. Councilor Murphy agreed, stating that educating the community and sharing information is the main  
44 goal of this. Councilor Healey shared that she thinks it's important to consolidate the information and share  
45 with the public the main points to protect themselves from Covid, but ultimately the decision is with the  
46 individual. There was then some discussion between the Councilors and Mr. Micali regarding Covid  
47 protocols, such as mask wearing, social distancing, and plexiglass in town hall. The Council then discussed  
48 the best practices list, stating that they have no control over vaccinations as that is at a state level, and do not  
49 want to mandate masks for the community. The consensus was that individuals have the ability to make their  
50 own choices, and if they do not feel safe going out, they are encouraged to use alternatives such as having

1 someone run errands for them or use e-services when able to. Councilor Murphy stressed that she wants to  
2 take action to contribute to help reduce covid transmission and the stress that goes along with it. Councilor  
3 Murphy and the Council agreed that the economy cannot afford to shut down again or lengthen quarantine  
4 times, so the goal of this is just to see what the Council can do to help the community deal with this  
5 pandemic and increase education and health measures. Mr. Micali wanted to highlight that the town has  
6 taken safety very seriously during the pandemic, and they try to do their best to maintain social distancing  
7 and follow CDC guidelines to keep Town Hall as safe as possible for residents. He also shared that all  
8 deliveries go to the finance department so as to avoid delivery drivers walking through Town Hall and  
9 potentially spreading the virus.

### 10 11 **Minutes**

12 Approve the minutes from the following Town Council meeting:

13 ♦ December 16, 2021

14  
15 **MOTION made by Councilor Harrington and seconded by Councilor Woods to approve the minutes  
16 of December 16, 2021, as amended.**

17 **MOTION CARRIES 6-0-1 with Vice Chair Rothhaus abstaining**

18  
19 Amendments:

20 Page 8, line 35: Should say “the years of 2009 to 2018”

21 Page 8 line 33: Should say “HB 737 Commission”, not BH 737 Commission

22 Page 8 line 45: Capitalize “H” in Merrimack Visiting Nurses and Hospice

### 23 24 **Comments from the Press**

25 None.

### 26 27 **Comments from the Public**

28 None.

### 29 30 **Comments from the Council**

31 Councilor Harrington wanted to comment about Betty Spence, stating that she is the one who got her  
32 involved in the Selectmen and was pivotal in talking her into applying and holds a special place in her heart.  
33 She hopes she rests in peace.

34  
35 Councilor Murphy wanted to discuss Wreaths Across America, stating that this will be done next year as  
36 well, and they will match every donation made up until tomorrow.

### 37 38 **Adjourn**

39  
40 **MOTION made by Councilor Woods and seconded by Councilor Healey to adjourn the meeting.**

41 **MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**

42  
43 The meeting adjourned at 10:47pm

44  
45  
46 Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Steagald