



Town Council Meeting Minutes



Thursday, December 21, 2023, at 7:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Call to Order

Chairman Rothhaus called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm. Present at the meeting were Chairman Rothhaus, Vice Chair Harrington, Councilor Healey, Councilor Hunter, Councilor Koenig, Councilor M. Murphy, Councilor N. Murphy, and Town Manager Paul Micali.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Rothhaus led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcements

The Town Hall offices and Wastewater Facilities will be closed on Monday, December 25th for the observance of Christmas and will also be closed on Monday, January 1st for the observance of New Year's Day. Happy Holidays.

Upcoming Town Council Meetings:

- Wednesday, January 10, 2024, 6:30 PM Budget meeting
- Thursday, January 11, 2024, 7:00 PM Regular meeting
- Wednesday, January 17, 2024, 6:30 PM Budget meeting
- Thursday, January 18, 2024, 6:30 PM Budget meeting

Absentee ballots for the January 23rd Presidential Primary are now available.

The new Transfer Station Stickers for 2024 are now out. They can be obtained at the Transfer Station Office or the DPW Administration Office in the lower level of Town Hall.

If you have not received your tax bill for 2023, please call the Town Clerk Tax Collector to get a new bill reissued. Tax payments are due on Friday, December 29th.

Comments from the Press and Public

None.

Recognitions, Resignations and Retirements

None.

Appointments

None.

Public Hearing

1. Public Hearing – House Bill 2 Merrimack Special One Time Highway Payment

Submitted by Town Manager Paul T. Micali

The Town Council will hold a public hearing to authorize the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$169,943.54, which is a one-time payment received in accordance with House Bill 2 (Block Aid Grant Apportionment A) and through the State of New Hampshire Department of transportation, to be used towards maintenance, construction and reconstruction of Class IV and V highways, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15.

1 Town Manager Paul Micali shared that this money was used last year to pave Wilson Hill Road and parts of
2 Greatstone Drive, and this addition to their paving budget will ensure they can pave additional roads with
3 this money.

4
5 The public hearing was opened at 7:07pm and closed at 7:08pm.

6
7 **MOTION made by Councilor Hunter and seconded by Councilor Healey to authorize the acceptance
8 and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$169,943.54, which is a one-time payment received in
9 accordance with House Bill 2 (Block Aid Grant Apportionment A) and through the State of New
10 Hampshire Department of transportation, to be used towards maintenance, construction and
11 reconstruction of Class IV and V highways, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15.**

12 **MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**

13
14 **2. Public Hearing – House Bill 2 Merrimack Special One Time Bridge Payment**

15 *Submitted by Town Manager Paul T. Micali*

16 The Town Council will hold a public hearing to authorize the acceptance and expenditure of funds in
17 the amount of \$166,569.49, which is a special one-time bridge payment received in accordance with
18 House Bill 2 (Payment for Maintenance, Construction and Reconstruction of Municipally Owned
19 Bridges) and through the State of New Hampshire Department of Transportation, pursuant to RSA
20 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15.

21
22 Mr. Micali shared that this is similar to previous, except this is for the cost of the Pynenburg Route 3 Bridge,
23 which the cost has escalated. This funding will help with having to add as much money into the capital
24 reserve for road infrastructure for this project.

25
26 The public hearing was opened at 7:10pm and closed at 7:11pm.

27
28 **MOTION made by Councilor Koenig and seconded by Councilor Healey to authorize the acceptance
29 and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$166,569.49, which is a special one-time bridge payment
30 received in accordance with House Bill 2 (Payment for Maintenance, Construction and Reconstruction
31 of Municipally Owned Bridges) and through the State of New Hampshire Department of
32 Transportation, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15.**

33 **MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0**

34
35 **Legislative Updates from State Representatives**

36 Representative Wendy Thomas was present to share that the final bills are in and it seems like it will be a
37 very interesting 2024- there are two secession bills, which are to have NH secede from the US, a bill to sell
38 body organs in NH, and a bill to make it legal to own kangaroos in NH. She then shared that their first
39 session is January 3rd, then they meet again on the 4th and 11th. Rep Thomas then shared that she's also the
40 Chair of a group that looks at public health and environmental toxins, so they're getting together all the
41 environmental toxins bills, such as the PFAS bills, and they're figuring out how they're going to support
42 those bills and get the word out about them. She also wanted to wish everyone a happy holiday season, and
43 peace and joy for the New Year.

44 Councilor Murphy shared that there is an opportunity for first responders through a house budget bill passed
45 this year called the "First Responders Program" that provides tuition reimbursement for those in law
46 enforcement, firefighting, and Emergency Medical Services in the granite state. Nashua Community College
47 is spearheading this and it includes tuition and fees for one course per semester at any NH community
48 college for any class. She also wanted to share information on a piece of legislation that she filed this year,
49 House Bill 614, that relates to a full epidemiological health study for the community based on health
50 concerns and exposure to PFAS. In collaboration with DHHS, she submitted the bill as a kidney cancer

1 health study, and \$500,000 was allocated for funding for DHHS to enter into an agreement with a contracted
2 provider, which they chose Dartmouth College, and this was passed. She will have more information soon as
3 this continues to unfold.

4 **Town Manager's Report**

5 Mr. Micali wished Merrimack residents a happy holiday season and a happy and safe New Year.

6 **Consent Agenda**

7 None.

8 **Old Business**

9 None.

10 **New Business**

11 **1. Committee Appointments**

12 *Submitted by Town Council Chair Finlay Rothhaus and Vice Chair Nancy Harrington*

13 The Town Council to consider appointing the two recommended residents to serve as representative
14 members on the Community Choice Aggregation Committee (CCAC), pursuant to Charter Article 4-
15 8.

16 The Council briefly discussed how there were four applicants for these positions, but there was a time crunch
17 due to the upcoming ballot. After some discussion, the Council agreed on Wendy Thomas and Jeanine
18 Notter. Ms. Thomas was present and was sworn in after the motion.

19 **MOTION made by Vice Chair Harrington and seconded by Councilor M. Murphy to appoint Wendy
20 Thomas and Jeanine Notter to serve as representative members on the Community Choice
21 Aggregation Committee (CCAC), pursuant to Charter Article 4-8.**

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

23 **2. Presentation of Proposed 2024/2025 Town Manager Budget**

24 *Submitted by Town Manager Paul T. Micali and Finance Director Adam Britten*

25 Town Manager will present his recommended 2024/2025 budget to the Town Council.

26 Mr. Micali shared the following information via PowerPoint presentation:

27 **Budget Highlights**

28 **Revenue**

- 29 • Increase
 - 30 ○ Ambulance Revenue: \$115,000
 - 31 ○ Charges for Service: \$48,600
 - 32 ○ Electronic Recycling: \$10,000
 - 33 ○ Miscellaneous: \$12,681
- 34 • Decrease
 - 35 ○ Insurance Rebates: \$40,000
 - 36 ○ Building Permits: \$25,000
 - 37 ○ Other Revenue: \$51,800

38 **Net Revenue Increase: \$69,481**

39 **Unreserved Fund Balance: \$1,500,000**

40 **Safer Grant: \$286,667**

1
2 **Budget Highlights Cont.**

- 3 • Appropriations
- 4 ○ Health Insurance increase: \$765,000
 - 5 ○ Dental/Short-term Disability/Unemployment/Life: \$4,000
 - 6 ○ Worker’s Compensation: \$18,900
 - 7 ○ General Liability insurance: \$14,000
 - 8 ○ IT budget: \$19,000
 - 9 ○ Asphalt Pile Grinding: \$30,000
 - 10 ○ Legal: \$15,000
 - 11 ○ Nashua Transit: \$34,300
 - 12 ○ Solid Waste tipping fees: \$18,300
 - 13 ■ Recycling- \$0
 - 14 ■ Disposal: \$18,300
 - 15 ○ Elections: \$5,700
 - 16 ○ Electric/Water/Sewer/Natural Gas: \$29,400
 - 17 ○ Vehicle fuel: \$6,100
 - 18 ○ Telephone services/Maint.: \$4,600
 - 19 ○ Office Equipment Maint: \$10,000
 - 20 ○ Maint. Buildings & Grounds: \$16,700
 - 21 ○ Maint. Machinery/Equipment/Vehicles: \$10,000
 - 22 ○ Education & Training and Travel: \$4,500
 - 23 ○ Dues: \$10,450
 - 24 ○ Ammunition: \$32,500
 - 25 ○ Audit/Ambulance Collection: \$13,000
 - 26 ○ Uniforms & Protective clothing: \$27,300
 - 27 ○ Welfare Housing: \$19,500
 - 28 ○ Library Materials: \$6,200
 - 29 ○ Snow Plowing Town lots: \$22,000
 - 30 ○ Miscellaneous: \$31,195
 - 31 ○ **Total: 1,105,255**

32
33 **Budget Highlights Cont.**

- 34 ○ NHRS: \$144,300
- 35 ○ Compensated Absences: \$60,000
- 36 ○ Union Wages (NEPBA12, IAFF, AFSCME 2986 & 3657): \$272,000
- 37 ○ Overtime- Fire (staffing to 11): \$146,000
- 38 ○ Library Raises: \$32,000

39 **Staffing**

- 40 ○ Asst. Tech Coordinator: \$111,000

41 **Part-time to Full-time**

- 42 ○ Custodian: \$40,000
- 43 ○ Animal Control Officer: \$41,700
- 44 ○ EMS Part-time (reduction of hours): \$(20,150)
- 45 ○ Deputy DPW to Civil Engineer: \$(36,500)

46
47 **Total: \$791,250**

48
49 **Budget Highlights Cont.**

- 50 • Master Plan: \$150,000

- 1 • Exterior building repairs: \$100,000
- 2 • Voting machines: \$80,000
- 3 • Phase II beach: \$100,000
- 4 • Office/Operating Equipment: \$21,600
- 5 • Solid Waste Office Trailer: \$27,000
- 6 • CRF Deposits: \$302,750
- 7 • **Total: \$781,350**
- 8 • **Total GF Increase: \$2,677,855**

9

10 **Savings**

- 11 • Town Hall Sprinklers: \$150,000
- 12 • Church Parking Lot: \$92,000
- 13 • Police vehicles: \$15,000
- 14 • Updated fuel dist. system: \$1,400,000
- 15 • Paving: \$325,000
- 16 • Brine Storage Tank: \$25,000
- 17 • Street Sweeping & Pavement Marking: \$40,000
- 18 • Solid Waste Office Trailer: \$97,000
- 19 • **Total: \$2,144,000**
- 20 • **Total GF Increase: \$533,855**

21

22 **Fund Balance**

Fiscal Year	2021/22 actual	2022/23	2023/24 est.	2024/25 projected
Unreserved Fund balance BOY	8,714,637	8,979,537	10,586,458	8,101,958
Revenue Surplus and Unexpended Appropriations	1,914,900	2,956,921		
Reductions: Reduce taxes	(942,800)	(984,500)	(984,500)	(984,500)
Offset Capital Projects	(407,200)	(365,500)	(1,400,000)	
Extra use of Unreserved Fund Balance	(300,000)		(100,000)	
Total Reduction to Fund Unreserved Balance	(1,650,000)	(1,350,000)	(2,484,500)	(984,500)
Unreserved Fund Balance (Estimated) EOY	8,979,537	10,586,458	8,101,958	7,117,458
Percentage Of Unreserved Fund balance	9.24%	10.48%	7.23%	6.35%

- 23
- 24 • **Total Expenditures (grand total warrant article budget): \$39,880,055**
- 25 • **CRF Funds: \$2,800,000**
- 26 • **Other Capital: \$833,500**
- 27 • **Road/Sidewalk Infrastructure: \$1,635,000**

- **Safer Grant Expenditures: \$573,333**
- **TM Operating Request: \$36,838,222**
- **Grand Total: \$42,680,055**

Total Appropriations

Self-Supporting Funds

Fire Protection	\$112,000	\$112,306	10,306	9.20%
Outside Details	\$486,279	\$485,510	(\$769)	-0.16%
Library	\$12,000	\$17,200	\$5,200	43.33%
Fire Outside Detail	\$12,795	\$12,795	\$0	0.00%
Media	\$386,675	\$392,428	\$5,753	1.49%
Wastewater	\$4,445,219	\$4,807,699	\$362,480	8.15%
Wastewater CRF	\$550,000	\$550,000	\$0	0.00%
Wastewater Debt	\$438,101	\$431,147	(\$6,954)	-1.59%
Subtotal Self Sup. Funds	\$6,443,069	\$6,819,085	\$376,016	5.84%
Grand Total All Funds	\$41,770,184	\$42,680,055	\$909,872	2.18%

2024 Estimated Tax Rate

- Voted 2023-24: \$4.05
- Proposed 2024-25: \$4.50
- \$ Difference: \$0.45
- % Difference: 11.13%

2024-25 Pending Budget Items

- Pending
 - State Budget (2nd year of the Biennial budget)
 - State Revenues
 - Rooms & Meals
 - Highway Block Grant
 - Non-Union Raises
 - 3 Union Contracts (Teamsters & NEPBA 12, and NEPBA 112)
 - Inflation
 - Safety Complex

Important dates:

- February 9th- Petition Bonds are due by 5pm
- February 13th- Petition Warrant Articles are due by 5pm
- February 15th- Public Hearing on the budget (special Town Council meeting)
- March 13th- Deliberative Session
- 2nd Tuesday in April- voting

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27

Minutes

Approve the minutes from the following Town Council meeting:

◆ December 7, 2023

MOTION made by Councilor Koenig and seconded by Councilor M. Murphy to approve the minutes from December 7, 2023 as written.

MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0

Comments from the Press

None.

Comments from the Public

None.

Comments from the Council

Councilor Healey wished the Merrimack residents a happy Christmas and New Year, and hopes everyone had a happy Hanukkah. For those who are alone for the holidays, she shared that the VFW is hosting its annual Christmas dinner at 1:00pm, and all guests are welcome. More information is available on their Facebook page.

Adjourn

MOTION made by Councilor Healey and seconded by Councilor Koenig to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION CARRIES 7-0-0

The meeting adjourned at 8:24 pm.

