



## Town Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 27, 2022, at 7:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room



### Call to Order

Chairman Rothhaus called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm. Present at the meeting were Chairman Rothhaus, Councilor Healey, Councilor Hunter, Councilor Koenig, Councilor Murphy, Councilor Woods, and Town Manager Paul Micali. Vice Chair Harrington was excused.

### Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Rothhaus led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### Announcements

The State General Election will be held on **Tuesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>** from 7:00 AM - 7:00 PM at your designated polling location. For more information please visit the Town's website.

The Merrimack Town Council would like to extend our deepest and sincerest sympathies to the family and friends of Phillip Straight who passed away on Tuesday, October 25<sup>th</sup> at the age of 76. Phil was a member of the Army National Guard as well as worked and retired from the State of Iowa Soil Conservation reclaiming mines. Phil served as a State Representative for the Town of Merrimack for 2 terms and was a Merrimack Conservation Commission member for 6 years and a member of the Zoning Board of Adjustment for over 8 years. Phil's quick witted dry sense of humor, authenticity and sincerity was truly appreciated by everyone who knew him. He will be missed.

### Upcoming Town Council Meetings:

- No meeting on Thursday, November 3, 2022
- Thursday, November 17, 2022, 7:00 PM Regular meeting
- Thursday, December 1, 2022, 7:00 PM Regular meeting
- Thursday, December 15, 2022, 7:00 PM Regular meeting

The Merrimack Parks & Recreation Department invites you to join them this Saturday, October 29<sup>th</sup> at Wasserman Park from 12 – 3 pm for the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Halloween Party. This year's event will feature a wide variety of free games and crafts, along with the return of the Costume Contest. For complete details, visit the Parks & Recreation Website at [www.merrimackparksandrec.org](http://www.merrimackparksandrec.org) or call 882-1046

The DEA's National Prescription Drug Take Back Day is this coming Saturday, October 29<sup>th</sup>, from 10am - 2pm. Drop off your expired/unused prescription medications in the lobby of the police department. Please, no needles or liquids.

National First Responders Day is Friday, October 28<sup>th</sup> - please be sure to thank your community's First Responders - public works, law enforcement, firefighters, and paramedics!

The library will be holding their Annual Trunk or Treat on Sunday, 10/30 from 1-3 pm in the library's parking lot. All are welcome to attend. Thanks to the Friends of the Library group for sponsoring this event. Please park in the Town Hall lot as the church lot will be unavailable.

The final Household Hazardous Waste Collection for the 2022 season will be Saturday November 5<sup>th</sup> from 8AM to 12PM at 25 Crown Street in Nashua.

The Town offices AND the Transfer Station will be closed Friday, November 11<sup>th</sup> in observance of Veteran's Day.

We would like to invite Merrimack residents to the Construction Ceremony for the Screenings Building located at the Wastewater Treatment Plant in Merrimack (36 Mast Road). The ceremony will be held on November 4, 2022 from 10:00 AM – noontime. In August 2022, the Town applied for and received a \$2 million grant as part of The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). ARPA established funds for wastewater infrastructure projects, and was instrumental in the Town's ability to fund the construction of the new Screenings Facility at the WWTP. The Town would like to thank Congress, State Representatives, the Governor, and NHDES Commissioner for enacting ARPA and expediting the approval of the grant.

### **Comments from the Press and Public**

None.

### **Recognitions, Resignations and Retirements**

None.

### **Appointments**

#### **1. Annual Review with the Town Center Committee**

*Submitted by Town Center Committee Chair Nelson Disco*

Per Town of Merrimack Charter Section 6-6, at least annually, there should be an annual review with the Town Center Committee. This agenda item is to highlight the committee's significant actions, current projects, anticipated actions, and to raise any concerns the Council should know or could act on.

Town Center Committee Chair Nelson Disco was present to share the annual review of the Town Center Committee. He shared that this year, their committee meetings have returned to in person, and current members include Bill Wilkes, Karen Freed, Karen Contos, Matt Shevenell, Bill Cummings, Michael Redding, Kyle Fox, Nicholas Lavalley, and Town Council Chairman Rothhaus. He also shared that they have officially received the go ahead to begin construction on the Souhegan River Trail, which will make a multi-use pedestrian trail from Watson Park under route 3 up to Wildcat Falls. This project is current out to bid with contractors, with the hopes of awarding a contract this calendar year.

Mr. Disco also shared an updated on the Woodbury Street sidewalk project, stating that it was completed late last fall and is now fully open and in use. He also shared that they have set up some information booths for public education and they were recently set up at the pancake breakfast at the VFW. Mr. Disco shared an update on the Wire Road intersection reconstruction project, stating that they are still in the early stages of making a proposal with Quantum Engineering and are still deciding if there should be a T intersection, roundabout, or light set up for the area. Mr. Disco also provided an update on the Safe Routes to School project, stating that they are working on fixing the sidewalks around O'Gara Drive, and they recently had their "Virtual Walk to School Day", which encourages kids to walk to school.

For next year, the Committee plans to continue to support the SAU and work on making the high school area safer and more presentable for the public. They will also continue their information booths, as well as working with the media group to get their messages on TV and social media. Mr. Disco also discussed a possible sidewalk project on Church St north of the library, sharing that this is a difficult area to build a sidewalk due to the pitch of the road that intersects with route 3 and safety concerns.

**Public Hearing**

**1. Public Hearing – Homeland Security Grant for the Merrimack Police Department**

*Submitted by Lieutenant Michael Marcotte*

The Town Council will hold a public hearing to authorize the acceptance and expenditure of a Homeland Security grant in the amount of \$14,512 for the Merrimack Police Department, made available through the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management to be used towards the purchase of five (5) Night Vision Goggles (NVG) units for our officers, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15.

Deputy Chief Matt Tarleton was present to review the Homeland Security Grant, sharing that the Department is planning on purchasing 5 additional night vision goggles in addition to the 3 that were previously approved. These goggles will be used for the officers that are joining the regional SWAT team, so it's important that all the goggles are compatible and from the same company. Chairman Koenig asked if these goggles are assigned to specific officers, in which Deputy Chief Tarleton replied that these are helmet-mounted devices that will be issued to specific officers.

The public hearing was opened at 7:45pm and closed at 7:46pm.

**MOTION made by Councilor Koenig and seconded by Councilor Healey to accept the Homeland Security grant in the amount of \$14,512 for the Merrimack Police Department, made available through the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management to be used towards the purchase of five (5) Night Vision Goggles (NVG) units for our officers, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15, and authorize the Town Manager to sign any and all necessary documents.**

**MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0**

**2. Public Hearing - GOFERR & NHDES Grant for Town of Merrimack (PFAS Rebate Program)**

*Submitted by Town Manager Paul T. Micali*

The Town Council will hold a public hearing to authorize the acceptance and expenditure of a grant in the amount of \$1,072,500 for the Town of Merrimack, made available through the Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR) and New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) to be used towards the PFAS Rebate Program, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15.

Mr. Micali shared that he just needs authority to sign this grant for the Town, which is for the Point of Entry/Point of Use project PFAS Rebate Project to connect affected homes to a public water source.

The public hearing was opened at 7:50pm and closed at 7:51pm.

**MOTION made by Councilor Murphy and seconded by Councilor Healey to authorize the acceptance and expenditure of a grant in the amount of \$1,072,500 for the Town of Merrimack, made available through the Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR) and New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) to be used towards the PFAS Rebate Program, pursuant to RSA 31:95-b and Charter Article 8-15, and authorize the Town Manager to sign any and all necessary documents.**

**MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0**

**Legislative Updates from State Representatives**

None.

### **Town Manager's Report**

- The NH Secretary of State's office has been offering a number of training programs throughout the year with the end goal of instilling voter confidence in elections and the election process. The NH Secretary of State's office tracks attendance of election officials at the workshops and training sessions that they offer, both online and in-person. Election officials include clerks, moderators, selectmen, and ballot inspectors. Our Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Diane Trippett, was recently recognized by the Secretary of State's office at the 2022 Annual NH City and Town Clerks' Association conference as one of the top 3 clerks in NH for attendance at these sessions. Diane attended 10 training sessions during the past year.
- The Merrimack Police Department hosted our first Senior Information Fair since 2019 on October 26<sup>th</sup> at the John O'Leary Adult Community Center. It was a good turnout with 22 agencies representing businesses and nonprofits that provided information, freebies and other giveaways to our Senior Adults. The State of NH contracting with On Site Medical Professionals provided COVID bi-variant booster shots to 69 adults that scheduled through the Town Welfare Office and some that were just attending the fair.

### **Consent Agenda**

None.

### **Old Business**

#### **1. 2023-2029 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Follow-up Discussion**

*Submitted by Town Manager Paul T. Micali*

The Town Council to have a follow-up discussion regarding the details of the 2023-2029 CIP.

Mr. Micali began by stating that he went before the Planning Board on October 18<sup>th</sup> to present the town's capital improvement plan, and there were some recommendations made for some of the projects. He further shared that all the projects are necessary, but some were deemed desirable projects: Naticook Road Triangle Drainage Road Improvement, Merrimack boat ramp access of Griffin Street, DW Highway sidewalk improvements, and athletic fields. He stated that the board is focusing on sidewalks, and would like to continue to fund sidewalks throughout the town of Merrimack whenever possible. Mr. Micali also mentioned that there is a lot of money in these plans, with over \$25 million for '23-24, \$15 million of that being on a bond.

#### **2. Town of Merrimack Returned Check or Electronic Means Policy Update [Tabled at the October 13, 2022 Town Council meeting]**

*Submitted by Town Treasurer Xenia Simpson*

The Town Council to consider the recommended changes to the Town of Merrimack Returned Check or Electronic Means Policy.

**MOTION made by Councilor Koenig and seconded by Councilor Healey to take this agenda item off the table.**

**MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0**

Mr. Micali began by stating that the changes have been made, and also clarified that there is a 14-day grace period for motor vehicles if there is a bad check written. Finance Director Tom Boland then shared that clarifying language was added regarding the ability to pay in person, and some language was cleaned up as well to make the policy more straightforward. The Council then reviewed these changes, discussing and

asking questions. Councilor Healey asked about adding language regarding the compiled list of offenders that go to department heads, asking if the section that mentions this should refer to the list on the first page to close the loop. Mr. Micali stated he will add a section that clarifies this better and references where this guideline is.

**MOTION made by Councilor Koenig and seconded by Councilor Hunter to accept the Town of Merrimack Returned Check or Electronic Means Policy update as discussed and implement at this point.**

**MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0**

### **New Business**

#### **1. Direction for 2023/2024 Budget**

*Submitted by Town Manager Paul T. Micali & Finance Director Thomas Boland*

To ask the Town Council to contemplate budget parameters for the 2023/2024 budget season.

Mr. Micali started by stating that the tax rate is delayed, with the rate expected around next week. He then shared the following information about the 2023-2024 budget from a PowerPoint presentation:

- General Fund
  - Decrease in Worker's Compensation Insurance (NTE 8%)
  - Increase in property liability (NTE 5%)
  - Increase in health insurance (11.3% GMR)
  - Increase in short-term disability (3.2%)
  - Three union contracts (3% wage adjustment)
  - Decrease in NHRS rates
  - Decrease in comp. absences
  - Increase in fuel prices
  - Increase in salt and sand
  - Increase in tipping fees
  - Increase in electric supply cost
  - Reduction of debt service (drainage bond)
  - Increase in CRF deposits
  - Paving
  - Increase in communication equipment maintenance contract
  - Natural gas rates- Signed new agreement 0% increase due to long term contract ending (12/2025) (.0671 per therm)
  - Electrical rates- no increase due to long term contract ending (12/2024) ) (.0678 per kilowatt)
- Pending
  - State revenues
    - Rooms & meals
    - Highway block grant
    - AFSCME 2986, AFSCME 3657, and IAFF 2904 contract renewals
    - Non-union wage increase
  - Fund balance use
  - Inflation
- What we know
  - Estimating the municipal tax rate to be \$3.92
  - Worker's comp is a \$11,000 decrease
  - Property liability is a \$15,000 increase
  - Health insurance is \$282,000 or 6 cents on the tax rate

- Short-term disability is \$7,520
- Union wages are about 4 cents on the tax rate
- NHRS rate decrease is \$241,000 or 5 cents on the tax rate
- Gasoline is about a \$97,000 increase, 2 cents on the tax rate
- Solid waste disposal is a penny on the tax rate
- Reduction of drainage bond dept is a 3-cent savings
- Revenue increase of \$375,000, which is a 7 cent reduction on the tax rate
- Overall, so far there is a 21-cent increase on the tax rate without the union contracts or non-union raises, and inflation is running around 8-10%

### **Minutes**

Approve the minutes from the following Town Council meeting:

♦ October 13, 2022

**MOTION** made by Councilor Healey and seconded by Councilor Hunter to approve the minutes from October 13, 2022 as amended.

**MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0**

Amendments:

Page 2 Line 41, capitalize “Department” for Merrimack Fire Department

Page 4, Line 1, capitalize "Department" here as well

### **Comments from the Press**

None.

### **Comments from the Public**

None.

### **Comments from the Council**

The Council discussed poll coverage for Election Day.

Councilor Murphy wanted to thank Diane Trippet and Lynn Christensen, as well as other election officials for the informational presentation they did at Town Hall this morning. She also wanted to thank Detective Bill Vandersyde who coordinated Wednesday’s successful Merrimack Senior Citizen fair at the O’Leary Center. Additionally, she shared that Wreaths Across America is hard at work preparing for the national Wreaths Across America Day, which is Saturday, December 17<sup>th</sup> at Last Rest Cemetery at 12:00pm. This year, the plan is to include every cemetery in Merrimack for all deceased veterans. They are looking for 650 wreaths to be sponsored, with about 173 left to match that goal. For more information, please check out the Merrimack Wreaths Across America Facebook page or [www.wreathsassamerica.org](http://www.wreathsassamerica.org) and search “Last Rest Cemetery”.

Councilor Healey shared that the Turkey Trot 5k is coming up on Thanksgiving Day.

### **Adjourn**

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

**MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0**

The meeting adjourned at 8:36 pm.