

Town Council Meeting
April 29, 2025

Open Public Hearing: Council chair Mark Ketch opened the public hearing and requested public comment regarding the 2025-2026 Municipal Budget and Animal Control Ordinance.

Public Comment 2025-2026 Municipal Budget: Councilor Ketch asked if there were any changes since the last meeting. Melissa stated that the only changes were those made by the Town Council to decrease the appropriation in the road account and the capital reserve accounts; as the budget is presented, it is \$43,259.55 above the self-imposed budget cap.

Public Comment Animal Control Ordinance: Resident Ann Delaware asked what the changes were in the ordinance. Melissa stated that the most significant change is that if there is an offender of the ordinance, the ACO will issue a warning; if there is a repeat offense, the Town Council will set a fine to be paid directly to the Town. If the offender pays the fine, the hope is that it will hinder further offenses. If the offender chooses not to pay the fine, the Town Council can decide if the matter should proceed with a court proceeding. She added that the ordinance intends to avoid court and legal fees and encourage compliance.

Close Public Hearing: Council chair Mark Ketch closed the public hearing.

Open Town Council Meeting: Council Chair Mark Ketch opened the Town Council meeting. All members were present except for Councilor Clemons, who was excused. Councilor Lugdon participated via Zoom. Town Manager Melissa Doane and Fire Chief Eric Gifford were also present.

Troy Morton, Penobscot County Sheriff Department: Sheriff Morton did not attend the meeting.

Review of Minutes: Councilor Ketch moved to approve the minutes of April 8, 2025, as presented, seconded by Councilor Hatch, and voted 4/0.

Citizens' Request: Resident Ann Delaware stated that 72 meals were served at the last luncheon and that the May luncheon will include breakfast at noon.

Managers' Report: Melissa reported that the Municipal Waste Hub quarterly meeting was held last week. The plant in Hampden is now acting as a transfer station, and 75 tons of trash are processed weekly. The trash is transported to the Norridgewock Landfill. The Town's contractor began delivering there last week, which she hopes will benefit them. The plant owners have applied to the Maine DEP for an amendment to their permits to operate as a material recovery facility. Once approved, the plant will begin processing the solid waste and increase recycling.

With the trash being delivered to the Hampden facility, the contractor must pick up household trash only. Items that are not part of a regular household trash will be left. In addition, Melissa has spoken to the contractor, and he reports that some residents have heavy bags and loose trash in containers. She wants to remind residents that the bags must weigh less than 40 pounds, be secured, and all trash must

be containerized. The contractor also mentioned that often the bags may weigh less than 40 pounds, but the bags rip, causing the entire container to be contaminated. Melissa is asking residents to be mindful of this and be considerate.

Melissa would also like to remind residents that the spring clean-up is this Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to Noon. As of this afternoon, around 30 residents have purchased the pass for the clean-up, and the \$20.00 fee has not been an issue.

Melissa stated that the inspection of 114 Cram Street did take place on April 11. Mr. Wing would not let the town staff enter the property and spent the entire time yelling at them. He did allow the representatives from Carpenter Associates to enter. Melissa spoke to Carpenter Associates last week, and they are still working on a final report. Melissa also noted that the judge has requested that Mr. Wings' appointed attorney file a short report with the court outlining what efforts have been made to move the case along. That was filed on April 11, 2025.

Melissa reported that she contacted Haley Ward and asked them to postpone the survey of 43 Highland Avenue. She wants to see the outcome of the Viola Rand School closing referendum and possibly have that land surveyed for future cemetery development. She spoke to Randy Bragg of Carpenter Associates; it was suggested that the school building, the playground area, and the parking lot could be sold off, and the right-of-way to the back acreage should be kept. He was going to work on a proposal to submit to her.

Maine Municipal Association inspected the Viola Rand School; they stated that it is in poor shape to be a school. However, it was not in that bad shape for other possible uses. The most significant issue was the septic system, and they questioned if a change of ownership would flag Maine DEP to allow for the continuance of an overboard discharge system. Another issue noted was that the heating system only has one zone; the entire building is set for one temperature. They will provide a cost for adding the building to the town's insurance should the Council decide to take ownership. All other buildings in Town were also inspected, and no issues were found. He complimented the town on maintaining the buildings appropriately.

Melissa stated that the open house celebration regarding Viola Rand School will be held on June 9, 2025, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Councilor Ketch asked if this would still occur if the closure is not approved; Melissa did not know.

Melissa reminded the Town Council that the public hearing regarding the closure of the Viola Rand School referendum is tomorrow evening, April 30, 2025, at 6:30 p.m., at Leonard Middle School. Melissa will attend.

On March 26, 2025, Melissa sent Richard Campbell a notice of intent to sell the property the town foreclosed on in January 2025 for nonpayment of real estate taxes. This letter was sent certified mail, and Mr. Campbell did not claim it. On the 23rd of April, Melissa had a Penobscot County Sheriff hand deliver the letter to him. He called today and stated he would be in this week to make payment in full for all three years delinquent.

Councilor Ketch asked what the benefit was for the contractor to dispose of the trash at the Hampden facility. Melissa stated that the contractor must drive on the landfill at Juniper Ridge; there is no dumping area. In addition, the wait times can be long. She added that the contractor has never complained about Juniper Ridge; she hopes the new facility will be more convenient for him.

New Business: Councilor Ketch noted a letter that Melissa provided regarding a resident's request to remove sand from their land area. Melissa stated that the lawn had a deposit of sand from the plowing, and the area is in the right-of-way. She also noted that several other areas in town are in the same situation; the town does not clean up the sand. Councilor Ketch asked if the street sweeping would be done this year. Melissa stated she spoke to the contractor last week; it is scheduled for the 2nd or 3rd week of May. Councilor Ketch asked if there had been any response to the request for sidewalk sweeping. Melissa stated that two teenage girls are planning on doing it.

Unfinished Business: Melissa said she participated in a Zoom meeting with the UMO students, professors, and engineers from various companies on Tuesday evening last week. She shared the final presentation with the Town Council. She stated that the cost estimates are low as they were using material costs, not labor. However, it is an excellent start for searching for funding. Councilor Hatch asked what the professional engineers had to comment on regarding the project. Melissa stated that they asked why the walk area was designed for eight feet; the students explained that the public input desired a wide walking path. They also questioned the parking lot area and the slab used for the gazebo. The Town Council was impressed with the presentation; Councilor Wade suggested sending a thank you to the University of Maine.

Councilor Ketch motioned to present the 2025-2026 municipal budget as developed and presented to the Annual Referendum on June 10, 2025, seconded by Councilor Wade, vote 4/0. Councilor Hatch noted the email that the Town Council has received from the RSU Superintendent regarding the proposed increase in the RSU assessment due to the valuation change in the City of Old Town. He questioned if that would affect the municipal budget. Melissa stated that the RSU budget is separate from the municipal budget; the change will affect the tax rate. Councilor Ketch noted in the email that Mr. Cyr would recommend using surplus to cover some of the increase. Melissa stated that the RSU board will meet again on May 14 to discuss the budget further.

Councilor Wade moved to approve the animal control ordinance as presented, seconded by Councilor Ketch, who voted 4/0.

Municipal Warrants: Councilor Ketch motioned to accept the municipal warrants as presented, seconded by Councilor Wade, vote 4/0.

Online Comment Public: Michael Eastman stated that Robert Wing has purchased a new van, which should be considered when the fines are assessed; it is always noted that he does not have money for fines. Melissa stated that the court sets the fines. Paula Oakes commented that the Town is responsible for damage to property 30 feet from the center line. Melissa noted that the right-of-way is generally 25 feet from the center line, and the town has never cleaned up winter sand from private land; Councilor

Ketch agreed that it was part of winter cleanup. Emily Tenney suggested that more parking lots be designed for a ballfield and that signage be added for handicap parking. Melissa stated that the presentation provided by the capstone project is just the beginning. If development takes place, much public comment and participation will be needed.

Next Meeting: The next meeting was set for May 13, 2025. Councilor Ketch stated that the RSU Referendum regarding the school closure was on May 12, 2025. Melissa added that the election will be from 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 pm at the fire station, and absentee ballots are available now. Councilor Ketch asked when absentee ballots would be available for the Town Council positions and budget referendum. Melissa stated that the nomination papers are due on May 6, 2025, and the absentee ballots will be ready on May 9, 2025. The referendum will be held on June 10, 2025, from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm at the fire station.

Adjourn: Councilor Ketch motioned to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Wade, vote 4/0.