

Town Council Meeting
May 27, 2025

Open Public Hearing: Council Chair Mark Ketch opened the hearing to receive comments from the public regarding the June 10, 2025, Annual Referendum.

Public Comment: Melissa explained the articles presented for the June 10, 2025, referendum:

Article 1: Requesting authorization for the Town Council to expend \$2,039,913 for municipal expenditures.

Article 2: Requesting authorization for the Town Council to receive \$737,686 in revenues, use \$482,450 in reserves (carryforwards), and raise \$819,777 in property taxes.

Article 3: Requesting authorization to apply for, accept, and expend grants or other funds from State, Federal, and other sources.

Article 4: Requesting authorization for the Town Council to regulate the taking of alewives for the year 2026.

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 Hatch, who was excused. Also present were Town Manager Melissa Doane and Fire Chief Eric Gifford

Review of Minutes: Councilor Ketch made a motion to accept the minutes of May 13, 2025, seconded by Councilor Wade, vote 4/0.

Citizens' Request: Resident Ann Delaware stated that at the last luncheon, over 70 meals were served, with 15 of those meals being delivered. Mrs. Delaware also asked if Clifton and Eddington would be participating in the alewife harvest. Melissa stated that she did not anticipate them doing a harvest, as she had not received any communication from them, and the harvest would take place in Bradley.

Managers' Report: Melissa stated that a site evaluator is scheduled to test the back acreage at Viola Rand School on Friday, May 30. In communicating with Matt Cyr, he stated that the RSU Board ideally would like a decision from the Town Council regarding the acquisition of the Viola Rand School by June 19, 2025. Melissa noted that there has been some interest in the property from local developers and believes that there could be potential to sell the front property, which includes the school, parking lot, and playground, and retain the back property. Councilor Ketch asked if an easement or right-of-way would be protected to the back parcel. Melissa stated that if a split of the property were to occur, a right-of-way would be maintained. Resident Tim Lizotte noted that the school now has a septic system that drains through a filtration system into the stream and cautioned that development may not be possible on the property, and that should be disclosed to the buyer. Melissa stated that the sale process would occur through an RFB/RFP process and that all known disclosures would be made. She added that engineers have studied the property for the RSU, and they believe a septic system could be designed there. However, they did not want to invest that type of money in a failing building.

Melissa has spoken to the Maine Municipal Association Risk Management regarding the cost to insure the actual building. They stated that if the Town has no intention of investing funds into building repairs or renovation for another purpose. They cannot provide property coverage on the building. They will provide general liability coverage only. Melissa worked with MMA's reinsurer and received a quote of up to \$12,000 per year for property coverage.

Melissa reminded the Town Council that the meeting regarding the RSU budget is scheduled for tomorrow night, May 28, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. The meeting will take place at Old Town High School.

Melissa reported that the annual town reports are available at the municipal office and the town office. There is also an option to view it online.

Melissa visited several alewife harvests on May 16 and 17. She learned that the harvester will pretty much make whatever location work. She has communicated with the museum and requested that they schedule a meeting with her to discuss the possibility of using their site. Councilor Ketch questioned if the harvest could be done at the Route 178 crossing. Melissa stated that she believed it could, though the museum would be preferred. She noted that the Town owns property from the cemetery to the stream. She also stated that there is a small piece of property on the other side of the stream. She has wondered if they would be interested in selling the property to the Town. Councilor Ketch noted that further research and conversations will be necessary after the vote on June 10.

Melissa spoke with the municipal attorney regarding 114 Cram Street; he was on vacation last week, but he will start working with Attorney Toothaker and the Justice regarding the contempt of court and continued non-compliance.

Melissa will attend a grant workshop with the Department of Conservation on June 3, 2025, in Camden, to explore possible funding for the ballfield project.

Melissa reminded the Town Council that the Viola Rand School Community Celebration will be on June 9th from 5:30 to 7:00.

New Business: Councilor Lugdon stated that the Town Manager's letter in the annual town report was well-written.

Councilor Ketch noted that the Town Council had until the end of June to nominate a person or organization for the Spirit of America award.

Councilor Ketch also wished to thank Mark and Heidi Gifford for placing the flags in Bradley.

Unfinished Business: None

Municipal Warrants: Councilor Ketch made a motion to accept the municipal warrants, seconded by Councilor Clemons, voted 4/0.

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for June 10, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

Online Comment: Melissa stated that a question was asked if the RSU or the parent group had purchased the playground equipment at Viola Rand. Melissa said she did not know that answer but would ask. There were also additional questions about keeping the playground equipment for the town's use. Melissa stated that the insurance carrier, Maine Municipal Association, strongly discouraged use of the playground as it would not be in a park area and would not be maintained or attended to. She noted that municipalities have immunity to liability through the Maine Torts Act. Councilor Ketch asked if the playground would have to be roped or fenced off. Melissa stated that consideration will have to be given to non-use. There were additional questions from the public online inquiring about the possibility of fundraising to establish a town playground. Melissa noted that part of the development project proposed by the students for the ballfield area included a playground, and when that development occurred, fundraising would be welcomed.

Adjourn: Councilor Ketch made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Clemons, vote 4/0.