

Town Council Meeting

July 5, 2023

Open Town Council Meeting: Town Manager Melissa Doane opened the Town Council meeting; all Town Councilors were present.

New Business: Councilor Wade made a motion to nominate Councilor Ketch as Council Chair for FY 23-24, seconded by Councilor Clemons vote 5/0.

Councilor Ketch made a motion to approve the Treasurers Disbursement Warrant for Employee Wages and Benefits, seconded by Councilor Wade. Councilor Ketch explained that the policy allows for payroll disbursement and release of state funds with only one Town Council signature, which occurs on the off weeks or if a Town Council meeting is changed. Councilor Lugdon questioned why the policy expires each year. Manager Doane explained that each year the Town gets a new Council and that Council may not support such a policy. Councilor Ketch mentioned that if it becomes an issue and a signature can't be obtained, perhaps an email approval can be done. Melissa stated she will monitor it as the year goes on.

Melissa had provided a memo to the Town Council regarding the 2023-2024 tax commitment. She explained that each year the State of Maine comes to the office and reviews sales and transfers of real estate, the State then sets a valuation. She further explained that the town values are much lower than the market values, therefore the States set a certified ratio of 80% for the Town of Bradley. She provided two examples of real estate sales in the last 30 days, one property sold for \$199,000 and the town value is \$102,100 another sold for \$505,000 and the town value is \$280,000. Melissa explained that at the end of the day, X amount of dollars are needed to run the Town, if the home values increase the mill rate will lower, if the values stay as is, the mill rate will increase. In the end the residential tax bill will be the same.

Councilor Wade asked if more school reimbursement would come to Bradley if the Town was valued at the 100% ratio. Melissa explained that the State of Maine sets the valuation and that is what the reimbursement is based on, it is also what Revenue Sharing and County Tax is based on.

Councilor Lugdon asked if a re-evaluation was something the Town Council should consider. Melissa stated it was a discussion that needed to take place, she suggested inviting the assessment agent, Mark Gibson to a meeting. Melissa also stated that she and Mark have had several conversations regarding the valuation. Mark believes he can do a full re-evaluation easier and less expensive than the one in 2009 as he looks at each property when building permits are issued, so a full house-to-house valuation would not be needed. He would need to spend some time thoroughly researching home sales to come up with a fair and equitable value. Melissa explained that it is not possible to simply change the value of the property from \$202,000 to \$505,000; all properties need to be valued at the same market.

Councilor Wade noted that because of the 80% ratio, the homestead reimbursement will be 20% lower. Councilor Ketch noted that Manager Doane had provided four options regarding the tax commitment, they went from not using any of the RSU fund balance which has a balance of \$114,913, to using

upwards of \$70,000. Councilor Hatch asked what the historical use of the funds had been and if they could be used for something different. Councilor Ketch stated that the funds came from when the Town joined the RSU, the fund balance was \$472,000. That transferred to the RSU and can be used to offset the RSU assessment. Melissa further explained that the Town Council has the authority to use it; it cannot be used for a specific project. A history of the use was provided to the Town Council, noting that more was added when the 55% reimbursement was achieved. Councilor Wade made a motion to use \$60,000 of the RSU fund balance and set the tax rate of 16.50 per thousand of valuation, seconded by Councilor Lugdon, vote 5/0.

Councilor Ketch made a motion to set the interest rate for delinquent taxes for the 2023-2024 Tax Commitment at a rate of 8%, seconded by Councilor Lugdon, vote 5/0.

Councilor Ketch made a motion to set the interest rate payable on approved abatements for the 2023-2024 Tax Commitment at a rate of 5%, seconded by Councilor Clemons, vote 5/0.

Councilor Ketch made a motion to set the interest rate payable on prepayments of 2024-2025 taxes collected at 0%, seconded by Councilor Lugdon vote 5/0.

Councilor Lugdon made a motion to set the due dates for the 2023-2024 tax commitment as September 29, 2023, and February 23, 2024, seconded by Councilor Clemons vote 5/0.

Manager Doane stated she will contact Mark Gibson next week to arrange to do the actual tax commitment and tax billing.

Councilor Hatch asked if the Town was taking advantage of any community solar pricing. Manager Doane explained that the Town had entered a contract several months ago for savings of 15%. She further explained that the project is not completed and there has been no savings thus far.

Review of Minutes: Councilor Ketch made a motion to accept the 6/20/2023 Town Council minutes as presented, seconded by Councilor Wade, Councilor Hatch noted a change, vote 4/0 (Lugdon excused 6/20/23).

Citizens Request: None

Manager's Report: Manager Doane stated that there has been a desire to have a bridge crossing Great Works Stream at Back Mills Road. That road is located off Cram Street and goes to the Great Works Stream Dam. In the past there has also been a desire to have improvements done to the boat landing, however, there was no clear easement, therefore the State would not allow it. Last week she met with officials from the Department of Conservation and started the discussion regarding the easement and the bridge. The bridge would allow recreational use of Bradley Conservation lands that are located across the stream. The easement issue is a very small portion of the road is owned by a private landowner. Councilor Lugdon suggested that the landowner may want to donate that section of the road. Manager Doane agreed adding that there had been some conversation that the Town of Bradley would also donate the small parcel on the Back Mills Road to the State of Maine; with those donations,

the State of Maine could maintain the road without seeking permission. Manager Doane stated that nothing was needed from the Town Council at this time, in the future the Town may act as an applicant for grant funding.

Dean and Melissa met with EDF Renewables to discuss the potential solar project. The company has obtained a lease of 2000 acres in a very rural area of Bradley. The area is accessed through Milford off Baker Brook Road. The project itself is slated to be up to 600 acres and would generate 70 to 100 megawatts. EDF stated that the project is like the Three Rivers Solar located in a township in Hancock County. They also stated that this project is not a community solar project therefore it is fully taxable and will likely also provide community benefit funds. The process starts with an RFP procurement with the State of Maine, if approved the permitting at the State level takes place, then eventually Bradley permitting. The project is an allowable use in the area they described. Melissa and Dean spoke of the residential concerns of loss of rural character and noise. EDF will be sending maps that overlay the tax maps so a better picture is obtained of what the project entails. Councilor Wade had been approached by a camp owner and there was concern about access to their camps being discontinued. Melissa reported that she could not specifically address that, however, EDF did state that they will be hosting open houses and will be available for residential questions. Dean provided contact information from abutters that have already spoken to him about potential issues. Councilor Hatch asked if a public hearing should take place before the project is started. Melissa stated there has been no application made to Bradley, a public hearing cannot be done on a project that is not identified.

The Municipal Review Committee signed agreements with Innovate Resource Recovery last week. As explained in the past MRC will maintain 10% ownership. MRC still is the name on the permits as well, this was done to assist with having information on the operations. Melissa stated she is very optimistic about the prospect of investor ownership which seems to put forth what they state, they invested a significant amount of funds prior to the signing of the agreements. The CEO James Condela has over 25 years of upcycling of solid waste and is very excited about all the opportunities the partnership can bring.

Melissa noted that she has sent Robert Wing of 114 Cram Street a letter encouraging him to speak to her. He has once again become non-compliant due to the high amount of signage. Melissa sent a certified letter on Friday, June 30, 2023; as of today, he has not claimed the letter. She has made numerous attempts to see him at this property, however, she has not been successful. Ironically Jon Hamer the municipal attorney contacted her Friday and asked what the status of the property was, as the court had asked about the continuance. Melissa informed him that the court case should be continued until at least next week, if she does not make contact with Mr. Wing and is not successful in him removing the obsessive signage, it will be necessary for to move forward with court proceedings.

Maine Municipal Association has a grant opportunity tailored to reduce property risk. Melissa would like to have Town Council's authorization to submit a grant request to purchase security cameras for the municipal complex. The maximum grant award is \$3000 and she estimates the cost of the cameras to be around \$5500. There is \$2000 security system appropriation as this was something that the Town Council had considered in previous budgets however because of the cost, there was no move forward. Councilor Ketch asked what the recording capabilities would be. Melissa was not unsure as it

had been a while since she had looked at equipment specifications, however, if the grant is received, the equipment will have those specifications. Councilor Wade made a motion to allow Manager Doane to move forward with the grant application, seconded by Councilor Clemons, which vote 5/0.

Melissa reported that the end of the fiscal year closing went well. She left the office a little after 3 on the 30th, with a note on the door notifying anyone in need that they could reach her via email. She did not receive any requests. The financial audit for the 2022-2023 year has been scheduled for September 7th.

The roof repair projects for both the municipal building and the post office are complete. The final cost for both buildings was \$41,804.84, which included increased ventilation. Manager Doane added that there were no issues or complaints with the project.

Unfinished Business: Melissa requested that the Town Council approve the new policies regarding employee safety as presented, these included the Fire Extinguisher Policy, The Video Display Ergonomics Policy, the Building Emergency Action Plan, the Back Injury Prevention and Safe Lifting Policy, the Hazard Communication Policy and the Town of Bradley Slip, Trip, and Fall Prevention Policy. Councilor Clemons suggested a few edits to the policies, Councilor Lugdon made a motion to approve those changes, seconded by Councilor Wade vote 5/0.

Councilor Wade stated that there appears to be some type of camping situation taking place at Spencer's Ice Cream, he questioned if this was allowable and if it was permitted. He also noted that at 297 Main Street, there is a camper located on the property that people are living in. Manager Doane stated she will have the Code Enforcement Officer provide information to the Council.

Municipal Warrants: Councilor Ketch made a motion to accept the municipal warrants as presented, seconded by Councilor Lugdon vote 5/0.

Next Meeting: The next meeting was set for July 18, 2023

Adjourn: Councilor Ketch made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Lugdon vote 5/0.