

**Town Council Meeting**  
**2/27/2024**

**Open Town Council Meeting:** Council chair Mark Ketch opened the Town Council meeting; all members were present. Also present was Town Manager Melissa Doane and Fire Chief Eric Gifford

**Review of Minutes:** Councilor Ketch made a motion to accept the minutes of February 15, 2024, seconded by Councilor Wade vote 5/0.

**Citizens Request:** Molly Cormier was present to request a reimbursement for excise tax. Manager Doane explained that she had provided information to the Town Council for their review. The premise for the request is that a law was passed in 2021 that provides an excise tax exemption for 100% disabled veterans. When the law was originally passed the information on policy from BMV was that the veteran could only receive this exemption on one vehicle, this resident had that exemption on another vehicle. The policy from BMV was updated in November of 2023 and clarifies that there is no vehicle limitation. As excise tax is a municipal revenue BMV has stated that municipalities can make independent decisions. The excise tax that is in question was paid in February of 2023. Melissa is looking for guidance from the Town Council on if they would like to issue a reimbursement. Councilor Ketch asked what due diligence was needed to determine eligibility. Melissa stated that the veteran is required to provide a letter and the agent must verify that the letter is BMV or VA. Councilor Lugdon asked if there had been other requests, Melissa stated that there had not been thus far, and this may prompt more requests. She also added that she asked April how many veterans that meet the criteria there were and she thought there was a handful. Councilor Wade asked for clarification regarding ownership, Melissa informed the Council that the veteran needed to be a titled owner and it could be a joint ownership. Councilor Wade also asked if there was state reimbursement; Melissa stated there was not and she intended to find out why as the Maine Constitution provides at least a 50% reimbursement. Councilor Lugdon made a motion to approve the reimbursement, seconded by Councilor Wade, vote 5/0. Councilor Hatch made a motion that if other requests were made that meet this criteria, Manager Doane has the authorization to issue the reimbursement, seconded by Councilor Ketch, vote 5/0.

**Managers' Report:** Melissa stated that it appears the town was successful in the land use violation case regarding 114 Cram Street. The court requested our attorneys submit an affidavit for the attorney fees which they did on February 8 totaling \$11,833.74. Mr. Wings appointed attorney filed an objection regarding that amount of February 15, 2024. In his objection, he cited that the affidavit submitted only provided a summary of hours spent on the case did not give exact dates of service, did not list tasks performed, who performed the work, or break down how much time each task took. He suggested that the judge consider \$1500 in attorney fees. In speaking with Rudman and Winchell they are waiting to hear from the judge to see if additional information is needed. Melissa stated that she was surprised as Rudman submits these affidavits frequently without issue.

Melissa also provided to Town Council with a memo that discussed a law that was implemented on January 1, 2024, in regards to Affordable Housing. The new law intends to allow more dwelling units and structures on existing properties to provide more housing. The Town of Bradley Land Use Ordinance as written already allows generously for this type of development, however, Melissa

reviewed the law and guidance and wrote a summary. This summary has been reviewed by the Planning Board; they will be making changes to the land use ordinance that reflect the new law.

Melissa noted that the Town desperately needs Planning Board members, in the last few meetings there has not been a quorum. If Town Council members know of any registered voters in the Town of Bradley that may be interested in serving, please have them contact Melissa or Dean. The time commitment is typically less than 2 hours per month, in addition, the board does not meet every month.

Melissa provided to Town Council details regarding the deductibles for the municipal insurance. Councilor Lugdon noted that the contents for the municipal building and fire station were covered for only \$20,000 each building and wondered if that was enough. Melissa stated that items of significant value are under the schedules and are covered separately. The uncovered items would be furniture and computers. The renewal documents for the policy will be completed next month and she will ask for more details from MMA.

The Foreclosure Policy that was updated last October did receive legal review. Melissa had some additional questions about the review before presenting it to the Town Council. She anticipates the policy will be available by the next meeting.

**New Business:** Councilor Ketch noted that the roads were posted, Melissa stated she did so before vacation as the weather looked to be warm while she was away.

Councilor Lugdon asked if there had been any further conversation with the owners of 3 Cram Street, Melissa stated that there had not and she would ask Dean to follow up. She added that the land use violation is with the household trash.

**Unfinished Business:** 2024-2025 Municipal Budget. Melissa stated that she requested additional information regarding the ambulance budget and call volume; she has yet to receive it. Representatives from BACTS will be at the March 26<sup>th</sup> meeting to discuss the Safer Streets grant. The Council asked Chief Gifford for details regarding his budget request. He stated that increases outside the normal of electricity and fuel increases are the cost of gear, which has increased to \$4500 each, and air quality testing for the SCBA compressor is necessary for \$800. He added that the largest increase was that he included in a budget that a company would come and test all the hoses and ladders. This testing is required by the State of Maine and takes all summer to do it. The volunteers do not get trained for fire suppression during the summer as their time is spent testing. Councilor Hatch asked how the cost correlated with the wage paid. Melissa explained that the stipend amount for the entire department of 25 volunteers is only \$12,000. This amount is divided out to each member according to how many trainings they participate in, how many calls they respond and how many business meetings they attend. The amount the volunteers receive is very minimal, too low. In addition, the volunteers would prefer to train for fire suppression rather than hose test so it takes more time as fewer volunteers are participating. Chief Gifford also added that the company provides a certification of the testing, this certificate will prohibit fines. Councilor Ketch noted that the Town Council has two more meetings before the public hearing. Melissa also noted that as that time comes closer, she will review this year's budget for funds that will be available for next year, therefore closing the gap.

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

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting was set for March 26, 2024. Melissa asked the Town Council to make an effort to sign the warrants on March 12.

**Adjourn:** Councilor Wade made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Clemons vote 5/0.