

Town Council Meeting
8/27/2024

5:00 43 Highland Avenue

Open Town Council Meeting and Roll Call: Councilor Ketch opened the Town Council meeting; all members were present except for Councilor Lugdon who was excused.

Site Review: Members of the Town Council inspected the property and home of 43 Highland Avenue that was foreclosed on in January of 2024 for non-payment of taxes.

165B Main Street~Bradley Municipal Building: Councilor Ketch stated that the regular Town Council meeting is starting earlier at the municipal building as the board had met at 43 Highland Avenue prior. Discussion regarding the inspection of 43 Highland Avenue will be discussed later in the meeting.

Review of the Minutes: Councilor Ketch made a motion to accept the minutes of 8/13/2024, seconded by Councilor Clemons, Councilor Clemons noted a small change, vote 4/0.

Citizens Request: None

Managers' Report: Melissa stated that she had received an update regarding 114 Cram Street. Guardian ad litem, Jeff Toothaker of Ellsworth has been appointed, though Rudman and Winchell have attempted to contact him and have not been successful. In addition, the judge sent a letter to the attorney general's office asking to refer Mr. Wing to the Department of Human Services for adult protective services. Melissa has asked that Rudman and Winchell to continue to attempt to contact the judge and Mr. Toothaker.

At the last meeting, resident Edward Jackson asked that the Town create a flag program, in which residents could donate funds to purchase flags and be recognized in the annual town report. Melissa spoke with Mark Gifford who volunteers for the Town in the ordering, placement, and removal of the flags. He would be in favor of a program; however, he would like a few stipulations. The flags will only be placed once per year, before Memorial Day, the placement of the flags will begin at the Milford Town Line, in the village district and will be on every pole; after the Town Office the flags will be placed on every other pole, and the only flags that will be put up are American Flags. Mark stated that the town typically purchases 40 to 50 flags every two years, and as that is the life of a flag, the donated flags would not be replenished. The cost of the flag and pole is estimated to be \$40.00. Councilor Ketch asked for clarification on the designation of the donators. Melissa stated she would have the names in the annual town report and could also create a page for the website that could highlight them. Councilor Clemons asked how the donations would be received, Melissa stated they would come through the municipal office and go directly to the flag appropriation account that is already established. Councilor Wade asked that Manager Doane bring forward a flag donation policy for the Town Council to review. Councilor Hatch clarified that the flags are only displayed on Main Street, Melissa provided that permission was only granted for Main Street.

Chief Gifford reported to Melissa that the official hose testing had been completed, and 20 hoses failed. These hoses were inventoried from the 80s and he was expecting a failure. Included in the 24-25 budget was the replacement of the hose.

Melissa reported that she had worked with the City of Old Town on a 2023 FEMA grant to replace the SCBA filling compressor. The compressor that is in the station now belongs to the City of Old Town but is housed here. The grant was awarded in the amount of \$95,000, the two communities will have to pay \$4750 of that amount. She is attending a workshop on September 3 to learn more about grant requirements; however, she has started working on the RFP and will work with the City of Old Town on the funding model and the RFP details.

Melissa also reported she is still working on the phone service, she believes she will be moving forward with HCP, the IT vendor. The amount they quoted was \$155.00 per month for use of the existing internet. She researched increasing internet speeds and the cost would go from \$60.00 per month to \$140.00 per month. She also asked HCP their thoughts on Starlink, they commented that non-wired ISP options are subject to environmental conditions cannot be guaranteed to provide Worry-Free Voice Services, and would not be recommended at this time. Councilor Ketch asked for clarification on the current cost of the phone services, Melissa explained that the current cost is \$240.00 per month which only \$150.00 per month had been budgeted, so there will be an overage on that account. The new service will be close to the budgeted amount. Councilor Clemons mentioned that he had received a call from Fideum inquiring about getting service. Melissa stated that she has been told that Fideum is looking into expanding into Bradley.

Melissa attended a meeting last week to discuss the upgrade needed for the municipal software. The current version uses software that Microsoft no longer supports; therefore, all users need to be upgraded by 2026. The current budget includes a reserve in the amount of \$2500 for the upgrade. Trio is offering a \$2000 discount if municipalities commit to the upgrade and going live by December of 2025. Melissa further explained that the current budget is \$15,920 for the software and \$2500 for the upgrade reserves. In the 25-26 budget she was planning for \$17,035 for the software, \$3500 to complete the upgrade, and \$1500 for the hosting. In the 26-27 budget she would estimate the software to be \$18,400 and the hosting of the software to be \$3250. Councilor Ketch asked if there was another vendor in Maine, Melissa stated that there is a software called Munis which she had not used. Town Council requested that she get an estimate on the cost of the other software. Councilor Hatch noted that it would be helpful to have opinions from other Towns that use Munis.

Melissa believes that she has an individual who will be available to residents who are elderly or disabled to assist with the cleanup. She asks that residents contact Melissa so she can make the necessary arrangements.

New Business: Councilor Ketch asked for comments regarding 43 Highland Avenue. Councilor Hatch stated that the property was in very bad shape and should likely be demolished and then make a consideration on what to do with the land. Councilor Ketch stated that to have it salvaged would be at a cost to the Town, a lot of work would be involved, and the work could include hazmat and lead mediation the result would benefit only the prior owner. Councilor Clemons asked what would need to

be done for cemetery development. Melissa stated that she would like to have the Town Council's permission to speak with the municipal attorney on how to move forward. The new foreclosure laws require that if the town were to sell the property it needs to be done with the use of a realtor and needs to be up for sale for the highest market value for at least 12 months. If the Town were to keep the property for public use, the property would need to be appraised, and the value minus the costs would be returned to the prior owner. Councilor Wade questioned if a licensed real estate agent would even list that property, as there is a lot of liability in its current state. Melissa added that the land does have some value because of the driveway, public water, and a septic system. Councilor Ketch read a letter from abutters Keith and Angela Cousins that asserted they would like to have an opportunity to purchase some of the property. Melissa stated that if the Town does not keep the property, there will be no options to sell any portion of the land. Melissa also questioned if even the town kept the property and if any sale of the property would have been given to the prior owner. Councilor Ketch asked if there were any special considerations regarding the development of cemeteries, Melissa stated she had done some research and did not find many regulations that would pertain to this property. Councilor Ketch questioned if the costs to remove the septic system and driveway would be a cost that would be returned to the prior owner. Councilor Hatch questioned if the property should be appraised before or after the demo occurred. Melissa stated that these would be questions for the attorney. Town Council provided Melissa permission to discuss 43 Highland Avenue with the municipal attorney.

Resident Jim Zabierek stated that there have been a lot of solicitors in town and he wondered if there was a way to discourage this townwide. Town Council suggested placement of signs on his property, noting that there the Town could do.

Councilor Wade has concerns regarding the sealing that was done on the access road, he believes that as it now will be torn up during plowing and will allow water ice to break it up. Melissa stated she will ask the contractor to add more fill when they come back to do the roads.

Old Town Public Library-Information on Bradley Voucher Program- Librarian Cassandra Pool presented to the Town Council information on what services and programs the Old Town Library provides. Some of the programs include passes to the Children's Museum, Penobscot Theater, Botanical Gardens, and State Park Passes that are free with the library card. She further stated that they have a voucher program with the Town of Milford and Indian Island, in which residents can come to the town and get a voucher and the library will bill the town for membership for \$40.00, this membership would be for the entire household. Currently, 41 Bradley residents have a membership, this includes students of Old Town schools who receive a free individual membership. Melissa asked how much the Town of Milford paid and if there could be a limit on the number of memberships. Ms. Pool stated that Milford pays around \$5000 per year and the limit on cost and membership for each town is up to the town. Melissa added that if the Council were to provide a budget amount, they could make it a policy if there are leftover funds, the funds would carry over to the next year so a reserve could be built. She also stated that this has been brought to the Council before and they were concerned that the budget would not be adequate; the librarian at the time was not willing to limit the number of memberships. Resident Mary Latno stated that the library is very important to her life and is the greatest deal, the cost of one book can be up to \$40. Ms. Pool added that the library borrow program is available in which books from all other libraries in the state can be borrowed. Councilor Wade asked if there were funds available in the

current budget, Melissa stated that the Town Council does have a \$5000 per year surplus that they can use, she however recommends saving that amount for use towards the end of the year for something that may be an emergency. Councilor Ketch asked how the membership worked, they are year to year. There was discussion about offering \$20 towards the membership, accepting community donations to add to the fund, and providing a limited number of vouchers. Councilor Wade made a motion to allocate \$2400 from the Council Surplus to fund 60 vouchers to the Old Town Library, seconded by Council Hatch, vote 4/0. Councilor Ketch noted that there could be the option for the public to donate towards the memberships.

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

Next Meeting: The next meeting was set for September 10, 2024. Melissa also stated that the Community Resilience Workshop is scheduled for September 11, 2024. Melissa explained that the Community Resilience Partnership provides funding to Maine communities to be more resilient to extreme weather events, which includes development of waterfront properties.

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