

Town Council Meeting September 10, 2024

Open Town Council Meeting: Councilor Ketch opened the Town Council meeting; all members were present. Also present was Town Manager Melissa Doane

Review of Minutes: Councilor Ketch made a motion to accept the minutes of 8/27/2024, seconded by Councilor Clemons, Councilor Wade noted changes that were required, vote 4/0 (Councilor Lugdon was absent 9/10/2024).

Citizens Request: Resident Yvonne Guay of 52 Main Street was present. Her property is adjacent to the embankment by the bridge on Bullen Street. She explained that on Labor Day weekend, someone was demolishing the greenery on the embankment. She assumed the town was paying someone to remove it and they would return during the week to remove the debris. The debris has not been removed, and she spoke to Melissa, and it was explained that the contractor would not be doing any more work; it was his opinion that the material should be left there as it helps with erosion and will green back in the spring. Melissa further explained that the work was to remove vegetation coming onto the road, causing pedestrian and vehicle hazards. She explained to Ms. Guay that she could not approve more work, however, she invited her to speak to the Town Council. Councilor Wade explained that the work was done with a flail mower and had seen other towns do the same. Councilor Ketch clarified that her request was to clean up the brush from where it starts to the bridge. Ms. Guay stated she felt it was unsightly. Councilor Lugdon noted that he appreciated her concern and that she keeps her property well-maintained; however, they rely on the contractor's expertise. Melissa explained that similar work was done on Broad and West Street and that there had been no complaints. Councilor Ketch will look at the property. Councilor Hatch asked if residents who would see the trimming were notified. Melissa stated they were not; the only time she contacts residents on road work is if it will impede the use of their property such as exiting their driveway. Ms. Guay asked where the other areas of town were because she doubted it was affecting any residents. Melissa stated that trimming was done on Brown Street and West Street; she also added a tree on Cram Street, which will be trimmed hopefully this week. Ms. Guay asked for clarification on the amount of funds that was allotted for the trimming. Melissa explained that it was part of the entire road construction account and added that it was the municipality's responsibility to try to maintain safe travel. Councilor Ketch agreed that all vegetation should be removed from the roadways, noting that Route 178 should also be addressed.

Resident Louise Magoon asked via Facebook Live if the tree on Cram Street would also be left. Melissa stated it would not, as the tree was coming over the road, not on the side of the road.

Managers' Report: Melissa stated that she had contacted the municipal attorney regarding 43 Highland Avenue. The recommendation is that if the Town Council is going to keep the property for municipal use, an appraisal be done. If the Town determines the building to be dangerous, the case could be made that it was done to lower the value, causing concern for a lawsuit. Melissa also added that the resident at 42 Highland Avenue had contacted her. He is constructing a new septic system, and his contractor discovered a pipe connected to municipal drainage. She stated that Highland Avenue drainage is all underground; she, therefore, had John Milligan look at the area, and it was determined

that the drainage on 42 Highland Avenue should be extended to not interfere with the underdrain system and to handle the amount of gravel that will be placed on top for the septic system. The work has been completed, and John thinks that most of the pipe's water is from 43 Highland Avenue. Melissa believes this repair can be deducted as a maintenance cost for the property. Councilor Lugdon verified that the appraisal cost can be deducted from the property value. Councilor Lugdon motioned to have an appraisal completed on 43 Highland Avenue, seconded by Councilor Wade, vote 4/0 (Hatch abstained).

Melissa stated that she and Mark Gibson spoke with 11 taxpayers regarding potential abatements. She would consider the re-evaluation completed. Mark has recommended five abatements, which Melissa has provided to the Town Council. Melissa added that the payment for the re-evaluation was included in the warrant. Councilor Lugdon asked what happens if an abatement should be denied. Melissa explained that if the Town Council denied an abatement, the appeal would be sent to the County Commissioners. If Mark does not recommend a requested abatement, the taxpayer can bring that abatement forward to the Council. Councilor Ketch asked for clarification on the abatement of 897 Main Street; it states that it is overbuilt. Melissa explained that it is a unique property as it has several garages and homes located on the property. The uniqueness makes it a complex property to sell as it needs a specific buyer. Councilor Lugdon asked why the reduction was not done with the revaluation. Melissa explained that Mark did not visit properties; he applied overall factors to different properties, neighborhoods, etc. Upon request, he has visited properties. Councilor Lugdon questioned the request from 113 Cram Street and if others from that area had requested an abatement. Melissa stated there had not been any additional requests; she had suggested to Mark that a blanket adjustment be made to that area. However, he wanted the taxpayers to make a request. This would provide him with an opportunity for an actual inspection. Councilor Ketch noted that the abatement mentions an adjustment is needed because of a reduced condition. Melissa agreed; however, the abatement also included a reduction because of what is happening on 114 Cram Street and the devaluation of 113 Cram Street. Councilor Lugdon asked how long the Council must act on the abatements; Melissa specified 180 days. Councilor Hatch noted that the property of 897 Main Street had recently sold; Melissa mentioned that prompted the property owner to request an abatement; the sale was less than the property's assessment. Councilor Ketch stated the Town Council relied on Mr. Gibson for the revaluation and was okay with approving the abatements. Councilor Wade noted that the 975 Main Street abatement states that only one well existed when two were originally assessed. Melissa established that there was only one well, and they had been incorrectly assessed prior. Councilor Lugdon asked how much a well adds to the assessment; Melissa stated that was a question for the assessing agent; however, she did note that the property was originally assessed as two properties, which adds value; it is now one owner and one assessment, and the condition of the property required a reduction. Councilor Ketch asked what the implications would be regarding revenue for the abatements. Melissa stated that when the Council set the tax rate, they provided a more significant overlay to accommodate abatement requests. Councilor Ketch motioned to approve an abatement of 137 Penney Lane, Map 7 Lot 16-33 for \$53,900 with a tax amount of \$592.90, seconded by Councilor Clemons, vote 5/0. Councilor Ketch motioned to approve an abatement for 65 Penney Lane, Map 7 Lot 16-5 for \$21,900 with a tax amount of \$240.90, seconded by Councilor Lugdon, vote 5/0. Councilor Lugdon asked that the abatement for 113 Cram Street be tabled and more information be provided regarding the reduction; he would like to know the amount abated due to the blight of the neighborhood and the abatement for the condition of the property. Councilor Ketch motioned to approve an abatement of \$73,300 for 897 Main Street Map 27

Lot 14 with a tax amount of \$806.30, seconded by Councilor Lugdon, vote 4/0 (Councilor Hatch abstained). Councilor Ketch motioned to approve an abatement for 975 Main Street, Map 27 Lot 5, with a tax amount of \$437.80, vote 4/0 (Councilor Hatch abstained).

Melissa has completed the paperwork for porting over the phone with HCP and hopes the transition will occur soon.

Melissa reminded the Town Council that she will work in Houlton for the Maine Municipal Association Executive Committee next week. She will be available via cell phone and remote access.

Melissa sent an email to the Maine manager's Email list and received a few responses regarding the Muni software, which Tyler Technologies provides. She sent an inquiry to Tyler and has not received anything back. The majority of Muni users were from larger cities, and the cost for only one module is significantly higher than the entire Trio package. Councilor Hatch made a motion to approve moving forward with the Trio software upgrade, seconded by Councilor Wade, vote 5/0.

Melissa presented a flag placement and donation policy for Town Council approval that outlines the procedure discussed at the last meeting. Councilor Wade made a motion to approve the policy as presented, seconded by Councilor Clemons, vote 5/0.

Melissa stated that she had created a page on the Town website explaining the library voucher program. Thus far, seven vouchers have been provided to Bradley residents.

New Business: At the next meeting, a public hearing regarding the updated General Assistance appendixes will be necessary.

Councilor Hatch mentioned that he had been approached by a resident who expressed concerns that the planning board was not doing enough to promote business in town. Melissa provided that the planning board and the Town Council try to ensure ordinances are business-friendly and that recruiting business is not the task of the planning board that would be more in line with an economic development position. She added that the planning board does site plan reviews for business applications when they are presented to them. The planning board reviews current ordinances for required updates, works on the comprehensive plan, and discusses Bradley's land use needs; the board has two alternate seats available if any resident is interested in serving. Melissa also added that she has had conversations with people interested in doing business in Bradley. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of developmental space available. A majority of the property in Bradley is residential.

Unfinished Business: Melissa wanted to remind the Town Council that the Community Resilience Partnership workshop is tomorrow at 6:00 p.m. She hopes there will be a decent turnout to provide feedback for the program.

Councilor Lugdon asked for an update regarding 114 Cram Street. Melissa stated that nothing new had occurred since the last meeting.

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 September 24, 2024.

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