

**TOWN OF ORONO
COUNCIL COMMITTEES MEETING
MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2022 AT 5:00PM**

IN-PERSON: COUNCIL CHAMBER – MUNICIPAL BUILDING

ZOOM WEBINAR ON-LINE: <https://zoom.us/j/93115469632>

DIAL IN TO ZOOM WEBINAR: 1(312) 626-6799 ID: 931 1546 9632

MINUTES

1. Roll Call

Present: (In Person) Council Chair Tom Perry, Geoffrey Wingard, Terry Greenier, and Town Manager Sophie Wilson. (Via Zoom) Laurie Osher and Meghan Gardner. Absent: Cheryl Robertson.

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

a. Report on Webster Neighborhood Meeting *(Video record time 00:36 - 53:46)*

On December 8th, staff and two Council representatives met with property owners and residents from the Webster Neighborhood to gain a better understanding of the general complaint Councilors had heard that the neighborhood was unsafe and/or unlivable. The meeting was well attended and provided an opportunity for residents to share their concerns and provide greater detail to allow staff to better understand the issues. Over 200 invitations were mailed and 31 people attended. Staff did not try to problem solve; they were there to hear and understand what the issues were in order to provide a report back to the neighborhood.

General concerns shared by the public related to pedestrian sidewalk safety, speeding, property maintenance and code with properties in disrepair, noise, parties, and late night groups in Webster Park .

Immediately after the neighborhood meeting, Ms. Wilson convened an internal team made up of the Public Safety, Recreation, Life Safety and Police Departments to look at the items on the list created. Staff noted they will continue to make their approaches more proactive. The Police Department had already stepped up patrols through the neighborhood. The Town Arborist addressed some trees in Webster Park. The next steps from staff's perspective will be to post a formal report on the Town's website with links to various departments. Staff will continue Maine Day planning with UMaine and landlords. Information regarding expectations about renting in Orono will be sent out and available on the website.

Council will address some of the cost prohibitive issues through the 5-year Capital Plan and budget discussion process. More information and education will be available on the website.

b. Implementing Regular Community Conversation Groups with Key Staff *(Video record time 53:47 - 1:05:25)*

Ms. Wilson recommended that Council consider scheduling four Community meetings per year. Key staff personnel could be brought in to have open conversations with people. The meetings could be in person or virtual. The first meeting could start in May. Committee members suggested evaluating the value of the meetings after the first meeting.

Councilor Perry liked the idea of having targeting meetings to control the size and the neighborhood for conducting two-way conversations. Councilor Gardner supported the idea of a group meeting to discuss issues with the Town. She suggested creating a brand so people will know it is an informal ongoing conversation.

3. FINANCE AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

a. Proposal to Increase Council Pay *(Video record time 1:05:25 - 1:25:56)*

Ms. Wilson said Councilor Robertson wanted to consider increasing Councilor's pay. Ms. Wilson noted the Town Charter allows the Council to establish the rate of pay. She had staff reach out to other communities to see a pay comparison: The lowest Council pay was \$600/year and the highest was \$4,000/year, with the majority of towns in the \$1,000 to \$1,500/year range. Councilors noted that different towns involve different amounts of time commitments.

Councilors discussed the volunteer nature of the work, the equity issue for future Councilors, and the view of spending taxpayer money on the town. Council will discuss this item further next month.

b. Review of Financials *(Video record time 1:25:58 - 1:44:11)*

i. Tax Collections

Ms. Wilson reported that 52% of the first half of taxes have been collected. The second half of taxes are due on 2/10/2022.

ii. Budget Report and Brief Review of Draft FY21 Audit

Ms. Wilson stated the Town had a positive audit report. She suggested Councilors review the draft FY21 report. Councilor Perry said the auditors spoke highly of the staff. It was noted that the fund balance has increased this year by \$1.5M. The final audit will be available in about three weeks.

iii. Treasurer's Report

Ms. Wilson provided a treasurer's report. Ms. Wilson noted the increased overtime in the Fire Department budget. Overall, the Town is looking good.

4. Town Manager's Report

Ms. Wilson reported on the following items:

- A minor accident on Main Street damaging a streetlight pole.
- The After School Recreation program is working extremely well. The Town has a contract with UMaine. RSU#26 is allowing the use of the ASA Adams gym or cafeteria. There are an average of 16 kids in attendance each day. A survey was sent out and there was positive feedback about the program and staff.

5. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:55 p.m.

Minutes are summary only. A video-recorded version is available on the Town's website at www.orono.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy W. Ward
Executive Assistant