



COUNCIL COMMITTEES MEETING MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2023 AT 5:00 P.M.

COUNCIL CHAMBER, 59 MAIN STREET, ORONO, MAINE

MINUTES

1. Roll Call

Present: Council Chair Tom Perry, Meghan Gardner, Leo Kenney, Cheryl Robertson, Geoffrey Wingard, Sonja Birthisel, Robert Laraway, and Town Manager Sopic Wilson.

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

a. Brief Report on the Permanent Commission of the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Populations Listening Session *(Video record time 0:00:22 - 0:03:05)*

Councilor Birthisel reported on the listening session she attended on December 19, 2022 on the Permanent Commission of the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Populations. The purpose of the session was to hear directly from the indigenous and tribal populations about their lived experiences related to the disparity caused by structural racism in Maine. The goals were to build capacity, to be identifying issues that affect people, and to build solidarity, strength, and networking across communities. She noted there were opportunities to share information with people.

3. FINANCE AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

a. Revamping the Town Council Environment Committee Structure *(Video record time 0:03:06 - 0:13:11)*

Ms. Wilson provided an overview of the Environment Committee's current structure and the fact that the Town now has an Environmental Services Coordinator. She suggested restructuring the Environment Committee to operate like the Trails Committee that meets with the staff representative to discuss issues and gain public input, then bring the issues to the Council Committees structure when action is needed.

Ms. Robertson stated the Committee will continue to look at environmental issues and grant opportunities with Environmental Services Coordinator Megan Hess' assistance. The Committee agreed.

Ms. Wilson noted the next step for the group will be to talk with Ms. Hess about budget issues and appear on the Council Committees Agenda as needed.

b. High Level Policy Expectations for the Internal Controls Manual Revision (*Video record time 0:13:12 - 0:44:52*)

Ms. Wilson provided an overview of the current internal control manual and three highlighted high level policy items for Committee consideration:

- 1) Level of expense permissions - Currently, staff can expend up to \$1,000 with the current work plan without a purchase order. Ms. Wilson suggested raising the amount to \$2,500 due to the increased costs. Mr. Perry suggested raising the department head limit from \$1,000 to \$1,999 and the Council approval limit from \$5,000 to \$7,499. The Committee agreed.
- 2) Daily deposits - Currently, checks get deposited daily. However, more people are using debit/credit cards so cash volume is lower. She recommended changing the policy to allow for weekly deposits, unless the amount is over \$1,000 and would be deposited that day.
- 3) Capital asset - Currently, capital equipment is considered an asset if it is worth \$5,000 or more. Most communities state a capital asset, is an asset that has a \$5,000 value or more and has a 5-year lifespan or more. The Committee agreed to define a capital assets having a \$5,000 value or more, or a 5-year lifespan or more.

c. Use of Opioid Settlement Funds and New Settlement Opportunity (*Video record time 0:44:53 - 0:51:20*)

Ms. Wilson stated that last year, the Town Council authorized the Town's participation in two class action opioid settlements. She reviewed the anticipated funding and restrictions for its use for potential projects, programs, and partnerships. She suggested waiting to see what the options would be and if other communities want to pool funds. Ms. Wilson asked whether the Committee supports moving forward with another new settlement agreement. The Committee agreed to move forward with the new settlement agreement, and to wait to use the funds.

d. FY24 Budget Priorities - Articulating Council's Desired Service Level Expectations (*Video record time 0:52:11 - 1:25:20*)

The Committee continued working through its priorities and desired service levels for the FY24 municipal budget.

When asked about ambulance transports, Ms. Wilson stated the Town has the ability to do the transports, but does not have the staff resources. The Committee was willing to wait and hear from the Public Safety Director Geoff Low about his perspective on regional emergency needs and transports.

Ms. Wilson asked about the goals regarding community events. Committee members stated they wanted to have opportunities to bring people together for events, like the Orono Land Trust Caribou Bog event, Lights on the Stillwater River Trail, Artsapalooza, Trunk or Treat (events that can be coordinated with the Town). Ms. Wilson suggested having more frequent one-off events for Parks and Recreation (sledding, ice skating, senior citizen events, etc).

4. Town Manager's Report (*Video record time 1:25:21 - 1:33:14*)

Ms. Wilson noted she would provide Council with a written Town Manager's report.

She stated she would like to have a discussion about the School Resource Officer program which is paid 50% by the Town and 50% by the school. The Committee agreed to wait to have this discussion until spring.

5. Public Comment - None

6. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Leo Kenney and seconded by Rob Laraway. All unanimously agreed. The Council Meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Minutes are not verbatim. A video-recorded version is available on the Town's website at www.orono.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy W. Ward,
Executive Assistant