



**COUNCIL COMMITTEES MEETING  
MONDAY, MAY 1, 2023 AT 5:00 P.M.**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, 59 MAIN STREET, ORONO, MAINE**

**MINUTES**

**1. Roll Call**

Present: Council Chair Pro Tem Geoffrey Wingard, Leo Kenney, Cheryl Robertson, Dan Demeritt, Sarah Marx, Rob Laraway, Sonja Birthisel (remote), and Town Manager Sophie Wilson.

**2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**a. Discuss Draft Town Council Resolution supporting the University of Maine System Graduate Student Unionization Effort (Video record time 0:0:23 - 0:20:56)**

Geoffrey Wingard stated, at last week's Council Committee Meeting, a request was made by an Orono resident that the Town Council support the current effort by University of Maine graduate students to form a collective bargaining unit. Ms. Birthisel stated that she and Councilor Demeritt worked together to broaden the language to support the graduate students in the community and respect the University.

Councilors discussed the resolution further. Councilors Robertson and Kenney were opposed to supporting the resolution due to it not being in the purview of Council business.

Councilors Laraway, Marx, and Birthisel spoke in support of the resolution to support members of the community. Mr. Wingard spoke in support of the right of graduate students to unionize, but that the resolution needs to pertain directly to Orono.

Ms. Birthisel agreed to work on the resolution language to make it more Orono centric with Mr. Demeritt's assistance.

Graduate Student Harrison Goldsfield provided an update on their positive discussion with the University and labor board.

**The Committee agreed to have the resolution on the May 8th Council Meeting agenda.**

**b. Town Council Observance of Juneteenth** *(Video record time 0:20:57 - 0:29:10)*

Mr. Wingard stated a request was received from Councilor Marx to add Juneteenth to the Town Council's list of holidays observed by the Town for planning purposes. Ms. Wilson said the Council Committees Meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 19th and there has been a request to either cancel, or move the start time of this meeting, from 5pm to 6:30pm as it currently conflicts with a regional Juneteenth celebration.

**The Committee agreed to reschedule the Council Committees Meeting to Tuesday, June 20, 2023 at 5pm. The Committee also agreed to discuss Juneteenth as a Town Holiday at a later date.**

**3. FINANCE AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

**a. Draft FY24 Municipal Budget Overview** *(Video record time 0:29:12 - 1:47:05)*

Ms. Wilson stated that the FY24 budget budget books have been provided to the Council, the digital copy is in the Council shared drive, and the budget information is available online. She also provided information to Council on the ADP employee payroll over a series of years.

Ms. Wilson provided an overview of the budget information, and she reviewed her budget summary letter. Ms. Wilson noted the proposed budget presents an overall increase of \$209,000 for municipal government, the proposed school increase is approximately \$450,000, and the County increase is \$23,052.

The Council Committee discussed an anticipated \$1.3M increase in State Revenue Sharing and their desire to keep the tax level flat. Ms. Wilson noted that the Council sets the service level. Ms. Wilson recapped the Council Committee's request for the Town Manager to provide two service level scenarios for the next meeting: Tier 1 municipal budget cuts of \$209,159 and Tier 2 municipal budget cuts of \$682,211.

Ms. Wilson provided information about the Capital Infrastructure \$2.2M Bond to clear the bottleneck of projects and the yearly budgeted amount of \$850,000 for future capital infrastructure needs. She spoke of various capital infrastructure projects. The Committee asked for a list of the Capital Infrastructure Reserve balances. The Council Committee also asked about employee pay scales and ARPA funds.

Ms. Wilson explained the one-time expenses used with ARPA funds. She noted that \$708,000 remains in the fund. She noted that one of the proposed uses is to upgrade the sanitary sewer main on Hillside Road.

#### **4. Town Manager's Report** *(Video record time 1:47:06 - 1:59:32)*

Ms. Wilson reported on the following items:

- Congratulations to Zach Turner for obtaining the MMA Treasurer's Certificate.
- UMaine and American flags will be put up on the bridge by UMaine.
- Increased requests for General Assistance
- The Council was supportive of selling the old Fire Engine to another community for \$6,000.
- AFSCME 93 unionization efforts agreed on the positions that would be covered. She noted it is a two-step process: The union composition and then the union employee's election. Ms. Wilson noted the document will be available online.
- Maine Day was a successful and safe event. She recognized and thanked the Town and UMaine Police Departments, President Ferrini-Mundy, and the American Legion.
- UMaine Commencement will be Saturday, May 6, 2023.

#### **5. Public Comment** *(Video record time 1:59:33 - 2:06:27)*

Graduate Student Harrison Goldsfield of Cassidy Lane, spoke of the inequality of the graduate student pay at the University of Maine. He expressed that he felt the graduate students were being taken advantage of by the University. He asked for the Town's support.

#### **6. Adjourn**

The Committee unanimously agreed to adjourn at 7:07 p.m.

Minutes are not verbatim. A video-recorded version is available on the Town's website at [www.orono.org](http://www.orono.org).

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy W. Ward  
Executive Assistant