



TOWN COUNCIL COMMITTEES MEETING

MONDAY, JULY 25, 2022 AT 5:00 P.M.

COUNCIL CHAMBER, 59 MAIN STREET, ORONO, MAINE

MINUTES

1. Roll Call

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

2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

- a. **Update on the Penobscot County Jail Construction/Renovation Project**
(Guests: Penobscot County Commissioner Laura Sanborn and Sheriff Troy Morton)
(Video record time 0:00:15 - 0:56:40)

County Commissioner Laura Sanborn (who represents District 3) and Sheriff Troy Morton provided an overview of the poor condition and the need for construction/expansion of the Penobscot County Jail.

Ms. Wilson noted the County has a process to get input before going to referendum. On behalf of the Council, she asked them to make extra effort to ensure that municipal officials know when the forums are coming up, allow the Town to link to their project page, and commit to an evening information session for the public to understand the expansion and take questions.

Members of the public spoke of addressing mental health and substance abuse issues versus expanding the jail, and the need for community-based resource centers.

Ms. Wilson clarified the next steps: To ask the County for the items mentioned above and to hold a workshop for the public to understand the criminal justice system and expansion needs.

- b. **Discussing Correspondence from the Orono-Veazie Water District regarding a Public Referendum on Fluoridation of the Public Water Supply** *(Video record time 0:56:41 - 1:16:45)*

Ms. Wilson stated that the Town Council received correspondence from Orono-Veazie Water District Board of Trustee Farahad Dastoor asking that the Town Council reconsider its position (articulated in 2021 and early 2022) to not move forward with initiating a public referendum on fluoridation of the public water supply. Ms. Wilson provided some history of this issue. Ms. Wilson noted that moving forward with a referendum initiated by the municipal officers requires majority votes of approval from both the Orono and Veazie Town Councils and explained the

statutory requirements related to adding or removing fluoride from the public water supply, and a timeline to assist with potential decision making. She also explained the public petition process.

Ms. Gardner did not speak for, or against, fluoride in the public water supply, but stated the CDC supports fluoride in the water supply. She noted she would consider taking action if there was a public petition of over 500 signatures requesting fluoride be removed from the water supply.

Farahad Dastoor stated the Orono-Veazie Water District Board of Trustees would like to discuss the issue with the Council.

The Committee agreed they had time to hear from the public regarding a public petition before the next general election, and to meet with the Orono Veazie Water District Board and discuss fluoridation of the public water supply.

Judy Feinstein stated her organization had information to provide to Council.

c. Review of Draft Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Charge *(Video record time 1:16:46 - 1:36:40)*

Ms. Wilson stated the Council Committee discussed the creation of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee on June 6th. Based upon that conversation, staff developed a draft charge for the Committee to discuss. The Committee reviewed the draft charge and generally agreed with the charge.

The Committee members discussed whether or not there should be a residency requirement. After some discussion, Ms. Wilson offered to wordsmith the language to give some preference to Orono residents, while also looking at the applicant's engagement in the community.

The Committee discussed how much staff time and resources will go into this committee.

3. FINANCE AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

a. Discussion of Citizen Request Related to Flags on Main Street *(Video record time 1:36:41 - 1:56:40)*

Ms. Wilson stated that Town Councilors received correspondence from a resident asking to replace a portion of the gateway flags on Main Street (American flags alternating with UMaine flags) with Pride flags. She noted the Town does not own or control the flags on Main Street; UMaine puts up the hardware and flags.

Ms. Wilson spoke of the difference between government speech and freedom of speech. She suggested an alternate approach would be to utilize the 10 flagpoles that line the walkway to the Town Office as an opportunity for government speech. She noted it would require planning and designing banners, and putting them up. Ms. Wilson noted it would also require a Town policy regarding government speech on issues of importance to the Town.

The Committee agreed to have the Town Manager draft a policy regarding government speech on the flagpoles (items of importance to the Town).

b. Initial Discussion of the Town’s Procurement Practices and Proposal to Update the Town Ordinance to Support Open and Efficient Procurement Procedures (*Video record time 1:56:41 - 2:02:03*)

Ms. Wilson stated that staff has identified conflict between the current ordinance language and generally accepted procurement practices. This item is on the agenda to discuss whether the Committee agrees with the concept of updating the Town of Orono Ordinances, Chapter 2, Article V, Finance, Division 2 Purchasing to reflect practice and operational efficiency. Ms. Wilson suggested refining the ordinance, raising the amounts for sole sourcing up to \$75,000, the ability to renew or negotiate sole source contracts, bidding requests for proposals at \$25,000 or higher, and what other communities are doing.

The Committee agreed with bringing the ordinance up-to-date to reflect best practices.

4. Town Manager’s Report (*Video record time 2:02:04 - 2:16:04*)

Ms. Wilson reported on the following items:

- Council/Committee proposed Meeting Schedule and agenda items.
- Stillwater River Bridge is in Old Town and the property of MDOT. It will be two years before it is repaired. Large trucks are not allowed on the Stillwater River Bridge and will be flowing through Orono.
- Route 2 will be closed for 30 days (through the month of August) due to a MDOT large box culvert replacement.
- Town of Orono sued for an accident with the Community Connector. She noted that Orono is not part of the transit district and only buys the services from the City of Bangor.
- ND Paper (Nine Dragon Paper) tour on August 11th at 2pm. Please contact the Manager’s Office if you would like to attend the tour.
- Council survey regarding suggestions on what they want to hear back from the community.
- Community meetings will be held on August 24th and September 1st.
- Survey in the September 2022 Orono Observer on how people are receiving information from the Town.

5. Public Comment - None

6. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Sonja Birthisel and seconded by Cheryl Robertson. All unanimously agreed. The Council Meeting adjourned at 7:16 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