



## **TOWN COUNCIL COMMITTEES MEETING**

**MONDAY, AUGUST 28, 2023 AT 5:00 P.M.**

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

### **COUNCIL COMMITTEES MEETING MINUTES**

#### **1. Roll Call**

Present: Council Chair Geoffrey Wingard, Sonja Birthisel, Rob Laraway, Leo Kenney, Sarah Marx, Dan Demeritt, Matt Powers, and Town Manager Sophie Wilson.

#### **2. FINANCE & OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

##### **a. Financial Reports (video record time 0:0:05 - 1:18:25)**

###### ***i. FY23 Unaudited Financial Reports***

The FY23 financial statements have not yet been closed; therefore the figures may vary from the final reports. The Council Committee stated having the financial statements monthly are helpful to see the percentage spent. They would like to have the budget adjustments in this format as well.

###### ***ii. FY24 Year to Date Financial Reports***

The FY24 financial reports cover the period of July 1, 2023 through August 25, 2023 and have not been through the review process for August as all transactions for the month are not complete. The budget adjustments to reflect tax commitment will be posted next week and the budget adjustments for reserve and special fund projects continuing from the prior fiscal year will be posted after staff closes the FY23 financial statements. Ms. Wilson and the committee members discussed the capital reserve and the reason why the Town puts money in those funds instead of doing a carry forward.

###### ***iii. Tax Collector & Treasurer's Reports***

Ms. Wilson informed the Committee that reports were not ready, due to staff being on vacation. Ms. Wilson stated the FY24 taxes were committed and the Town gained \$17M in value. She also stated, when Tyler Technology is completely built, it will bring an additional increase in real estate and personal property tax for FY25.

##### **b. Allocation of Assigned Fund Balance (A-3)**

Ms. Wilson let the Committee know what the Town has accrued interest in fund balance. She asked if the Committee would like to set these funds aside for future projects/needs. Geoff Wingard asked for

Council members to let him or Sophie know what they would like to do by September 5th for the September 11th meeting. Ms. Wilson stated she would like to see funds go towards staffing and staff development.

### **C. Staffing Update**

Ms. Wilson talked with the Committee about the open staff positions in the Town. Ms. Wilson had a conversation about trying to fill the planner position and the difficulties. Ms. Wilson and Mitch Stone met with a contract planner and the plan is to have her work 15-20 hours per week at \$60 an hour. Ms. Wilson will look at an RFQ or some kind of employment process in December. The Committee talked about restructuring the system and asked for the Committee members to reduce their requests of staff, due to the vacancies.

## **3. ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

### ***a. Staff Update***

#### ***i. Climate Action Grant Overview (1:19:23-1:21:44)***

Megan Hess explained what the grant was and the process she went through to get the grant.

#### ***ii. 2nd Annual Efficiency Fair (10/7) (1:21:44- 1:23:50)***

Megan Hess stated that because there was money left over from the Climate Action Grant, she was able to fund the Efficiency fair. She asked the Council Committee for recommendations on vendors in the Bangor area that would want to set up a table.

#### ***iii. Window Dressers Event (10/21-26) (1:23:55-1:25:47)***

Megan Hess updated the Committee on the Window Dresser event that is happening on October 21, 2023. She is hoping to get volunteers from the Efficiency fair for this event. She was able to secure \$2,000 from the New England Grassroots environmental fund to provide free insets to low income or elderly residents. So far, there are 150 insets for Orono residents who signed up. The left-over funding from March of 2022 will be used to hire Miles Martin to help coordinate the event.

## **4. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

### **a. Review Proposed Land Use Ordinance Revision Related to Affordable Housing and Density (1:27:13 -1:49:29)**

Kyle Drexler went over the language changes for the LD 2003 for the Committee to review and give to the Planning Board to make sure it follows State statute.

### **b. OTO Fiber - OTELCO (Go Net Speed) Contract and Obligations to the Town of Orono (1:49:43- 2:03:21)**

Dan Demeritt spoke to the Committee about the fiber network in Orono and wanted to discuss further on how to expand this to more Orono residents. Heidi from Go Net Speed joined via zoom and explained the process of expanding in Orono.

**c. Discussing Proposed Town Charter Change to Move Annual Municipal Elections to November**  
(2:03:21-2:33:36)

The Committee indicated interest in discussing changing the annual municipal election from the second Tuesday of March to the first Tuesday in November. This change would require a Town Charter revision which can only occur through a referendum election held as part of the annual municipal election. Moving forward with this change would require Council to formalize proposed language, hold a public hearing, and call the referendum election. Staff recommends holding a public hearing at the Town Council's Regular Meeting in November and calling the election at its Regular Meeting in December. Ms Wilson is awaiting a call back from the attorney to see if this is a minor charter change or not.

**5. Council Chair and Town Manager's Reports (2:34:11 - 3:05:30)**

Ms. Wilson updated the Committee on the following items:

- The status of the ladder truck and the police cruiser with a blown motor.
- The Land Use violation and the Consent Agreement for Stillwater Avenue.
- The Veazie Town Council has decided not to move forward with Council led fluoridation.
- Tax bills were in the mail and that the Town is working with the software vendor so residents could login and see what was owed in real time and make payments.
- Committee members had a discussion about if the community wanted to change the public comment policy on what is allowed proactively at the Planning Board.

**6. Public Comment**

A resident asked about the residential property assessment schedule. Ms. Wilson was able to answer her question.

**7. Adjourn**

The Committee unanimously agreed to adjourn at 8:08 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