

Town Council Meeting

January 17, 2023

Open Town Council Meeting: Council Chair Mark Ketch opened the Town Council meeting; all council members were present. Town Manager Melissa Doane and Fire Chief Eric Gifford were also present.

Review of Minutes: Councilor Ketch made a motion to accept the 01/03/2023 Town Council minutes as presented, seconded by Councilor Wade, vote 5/0.

Citizens Request: Town of Bradley residents Mary Spreng and Jeremy Spreng were present and addressed their concerns about the closing of VRS and having the students attend Old Town Schools. Mrs. Spreng mentioned one of the reasons she and her husband bought their home in Bradley was because of the small community and the small school here. Their home is within walking distance to VRS and she really loved the idea of being able to walk her children to school or to the park. Mrs. Spreng also mentioned that they came to Bradley for the option of school choice. Mrs. Spreng voiced her concerns that the starter home she and her husband bought would lose property value if the Town of Bradley phases out school choice. Council Chair Mark Ketch was pleased that Mrs. Spreng was there and voiced her opinion with the Council members. Councilor Ketch mentioned that the School Board was having their meeting tonight as well and he believed a proposal was going to be presented to the school board tonight. Town Manager Doane recommended that if Mrs. Spreng wanted to; she could write a letter to the superintendent as well as sending a copy of the letter to the school board members voicing her concerns. Councilor Ketch mentions that changes of use for VRS is based on the school's budget for the next fiscal year. Town Manager Doane explained the budgetary procedure in which the final budget is approved in an open meeting in May. She noted that residents from the Town of Bradley are welcomed to participate in the school board budget meeting and voice their opinions on the budget. To make significant changes a resident/voter would need to have budgetary amounts and facts. Melissa also stated that the Town Council has been discussing options to opt out of school choice for several years, that too is a budgetary concern. The amount for tuition that the Town of Bradley pays has steadily increased over the years and the budgetary item only supports a handful of students. Melissa also noted that any change would need to be approved by the voters and the Town Council has made it a point to make sure no student's education would ever change. The Council would like to have the school choice phased out, maintaining the option to current property owners and students at the time of the vote.

Managers' Report: Town Manager Melissa Doane recapped the school faculty meeting from 01/09/2023, she stated that a group of 3-4 parents have come to the meetings. The faculty members insinuated that the parents are ok with the change in the future, they just don't want

it right now. They have suggested in the meeting that the change be phased in and not be a direct change. Mr. Cyr and Mr. Doty are hoping to have more information in February, as they will know what funding they are getting from the State.. Mr. Cyr is also expecting to have some retirement announcements. Manager Doane also mentioned that the RSU will be working towards having VRS reviewed for replacement at the State level. She reported that if VRS is recommended for replacement, it is unlikely that it would be replaced. The funds would likely be used to add to a school in Old Town that is newer. Town Manager Doane also mentioned that the RSU is planning on doing budget workshops in which the VRS use change would be discussed. No action is taken in those workshops, however it is directed back to the school board. . Councilor Ketch mentioned that he believed it really does come down to the school budget in which they will have. He also feels that the RSU is looking for a longer-term solution. Councilor Wade was pleased to see the couple that came into tonight's meeting to bring their concerns to the Town Council. Councilor Wade was disappointed that the school board members from Bradley do not participate or inform the Town Council more. Manager Doane stated that if the Council asked the board members to attend, she was certain they would. Councilor Delaware mentioned that she has invited them to join the meetings, only one member has come and that was to one meeting. Manager Doane and Town Council discussed civil engagement and how hard it is to actually get residents/votes to participate.

In December, Town Manager Melissa Doane gave Council a memo regarding power rates. Manager Doane mentioned that the Town of Bradley previously had a contract with Consolidated Energy, which had expired. Versant power did not catch this due to billing issues. The Town of Bradley has been getting charged a higher rate. Town Manager Doane reached out to Maine Power Options and presented the term rates to Council. The short term was for 10 months and the longest term was 58 months. Councilor Ketch clarified that the short-term option the price rates are cheaper and long-term the prices would be more expensive. Councilors Clemons and Wade stated that they believed the long-term would be the best choice due to uncertainty in the electricity markets; Councilor Lugdon made the motion to accept the 58 month term, seconded by Councilor Delaware, vote 5/0.

Town Manager Doane has received notification from MMA about the monthly Town & City Magazine that each member of the council receives, at this time they all get a printed copy, they are now offering an email option. Manger Doane needs to let MMA know who would like a printed copy or an emailed copy. Councilor Ketch asked Manager Doane if there was a difference in cost in which Manager Doane replied that there is no cost difference, just a matter of preference. Councilor Clemon's and Councilor Ketch would like for it to be emailed and all other members would still like a printed copy.

New Business: Councilor Ann Delaware just wanted to remind everyone about the senior luncheon 01/18/2023 at St. Anne's at 11:30. They will be serving homemade tomato soup, grilled cheese and apple crisp.

Unfinished Business: Councilor Clemon's thanked Manager Doane for fixing the lights in the parking lot. Councilor Lugdon asked if there had been any updates on 114 Cram Street in which Manager Doane stated that there have been no updates, however, more pictures have been taken and sent to the municipal attorney. She added she will not be taking vacation in February and will be attending the court hearing.

Municipal Warrants: Councilor Ketch made a motion to accept the municipal warrants as presented, seconded by Councilor Delaware, vote 5/0.

Next Meeting: The next meeting is set for January 31, 2023. Councilor Delaware will be absent but plans on using the zoom option.

Executive Session: Councilor Ketch made motion to enter into executive session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A § 405 (6) (A) to review the performance of the Town Manager, seconded by Councilor Lugdon, vote 5/0. Councilor Wade made a motion to exit the executive session, seconded by Councilor Clemons.

Motion to adjourn: Councilor Wade made motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Ketch, vote 5/0.