

Town Council Meeting
April 8, 2025

Open Town Council Meeting: Councilor Chair Ketch opened the Town Council meeting, which all members, Town Manager Melissa Doane, and Fire Chief Eric Gifford attended.

Review of Minutes: Councilor Wade motioned to approve the minutes of 3/25/2023 as presented, seconded by Councilor Clemons, vote 4/0 (Ketch was excused from the meeting).

Citizens' Request: None

Managers' Report: Melissa would like the Town Council's thoughts on taking ownership of the Viola Rand School if the voters approve the closure. Melissa noted that no budgetary amounts in the 2025-2026 budget would cover maintaining the property. She is not sure what that amount would be. The finance director from the RSU provided her with oil, water, and electricity amounts from FY20-FY25. The current amount is \$18,337.05. The town's insurance company plans to inspect the property the week of April 21. She does not know what the cost of insurance and liability will be. There is a playground on the property, which she knows will increase insurance costs, especially as it is unmonitored. In addition, there is plowing and mowing. Melissa has considered adding a warrant article to the June referendum, asking if the voters would like to own the property and, if so, if they would approve removing funds from the undesignated fund balance to do so. Councilor Wade did not feel it prudent to take ownership of the property; the inspection reports provided by the RSU detailed the repairs needed. Councilor Lugdon agreed, adding that if a warrant article is added to the June ballot, the Town Council could be forced to take the property without more public input; he suggested that the board wait until the outcome of the May 12 referendum is known. Councilor Lugdon also proposed that the Town Council could have a special election to ask for voter approval for funding. Councilor Hatch asked if there would be time for a public hearing after the May 12 vote, and what the cost of a special election would be. Melissa stated that the Town Council can host a public hearing easily, and an election costs typically \$1200 to \$1500. Councilor Ketch asked if the RSU had provided a timeline for the town to decide; Melissa stated they had not specifically, but the closure date, if approved, is August 31, 2025. Councilor Ketch noted that he felt there was value in the property; there are 8 acres of land, and the town could take ownership and sell the property. Melissa stated it was wet when she walked to the back of the property several years ago. Still, she wondered if that property would be more suitable for cemetery development than the 43 Highland Property the town took ownership of due to tax foreclosure. She noted that the survey on 43 Highland Avenue had not been completed due to the weather, and perhaps it would be better suited if it were done on the school property. Councilor Clemons questioned if the town could sell a portion of the property, like the building, and keep the other portion. Melissa stated she would ask the Code Enforcement Officer. There was further discussion on the RSU options for the property. Melissa believed that the RSU would offer it to a Charter School, and if not acquired, they would move forward with a sale. The consensus of the Council was that it would be necessary to wait until after the May 12, 2025, RSU election before deciding what to do.

Melissa stated that the inspection of 114 Cram Street is set for Friday, April 11, 2025, at 1:00 pm. Those in attendance include a Penobscot County Sheriff Deputy, two engineers from Carpentar Associates, the

Code Enforcement Officer, the Licensed Plumbing Inspector, Fire Chief Gifford, the municipal attorney, and Melissa. Melissa does not expect the inspection to go well or be well received.

Melissa wanted to inform the Town Council that the Municipal Review Committee has been going through a rebranding process. The new name is Municipal WasteHub. In other news regarding the plant, they accepted trash yesterday; the garbage is not currently being processed; however, it is being transferred to the Norridgewock landfill. The plant is anticipated to be processing the trash for recyclables and biogas by the end of this year.

New Business: Councilor Lugdon stated that he was contacted by Brewer Mayor Michelle Labree Daniels, asking if the Town Council would like to tour the Penobscot County Jail. Melissa stated that she was at a luncheon today with the Penobscot County Commissioners and Penobscot County Managers. It is expected that an announcement will be made soon regarding a new jail and a request for bond approval. She added that it was explained to her that the jail is full and the County sends inmates to other facilities for \$100 per day; it costs over 2 million dollars each year. She also noted that Sheriff Troy Morton will be at the April 29, 2025, meeting; he can provide more information on the jails. She added that Sheriff Morton will discuss adding Sheriff Patrol with the Town of Milford, Eddington, and Clifton. Town Council members noted to Councilor Lugdon that they would like to tour the jail.

Unfinished Business: Melissa noted the change in meeting dates for future meetings.

2025-2026 Municipal Budget: Councilor Ketch suggested that the Town Council consider making budget cuts to the municipal road accounts, municipal capital reserves, and fire department capital reserves. The road budget request is \$90,000, providing a reserve of \$490,000. He asked if Melissa had concerns regarding his request to lessen the amount. Melissa stated that she would like to do a shim and chip seal on Cram Street, Boynton Street, and Highland Avenue to preserve the pavement. The estimate she received in January was \$198,000. Though the chip seal was controversial when it was done on Ten Road and Baker Lane, it has done a great job preserving the roads. While she likes to build up reserves for future projects, she understands wanting to lessen the budget. After further discussion, Councilor Lugdon motioned to lower the budget amount for municipal roads to \$45,000, seconded by Councilor Wade. Councilor Hatch asked why he had decided on the \$45,000. Councilor Lugdon stated that he wanted to add something to the road reserve, vote 5/0. Councilor Ketch asked for the balances of the capital reserve accounts; Melissa noted that there is \$153,038 in municipal capital reserves and \$122,568 in fire department capital reserves. The Council reviewed the capital improvement plan and pointed out that the only unknown would be the boilers at the Post Office. Councilor Ketch motioned to lessen the municipal capital reserve budget to \$10,000 and the fire department capital reserves budget to \$10,000, seconded by Councilor Lugdon, vote 5/0. Melissa stated that the charter allowed for an increase of 2.5%, which is the COLA; this amount equates to \$18,939.45. It is challenging not to go above that amount; the County tax increased \$21,139, the ambulance increased \$23,350, solid waste disposal increased \$14,125, and health insurance costs increased \$9,425; these are some of the items that are beyond the control of the town. Councilor Hatch asked how old the Charter was. Melissa stated it was approved in 1995, and while she doesn't particularly care about the COLA increase requirement, she does like that it provides some balance and the taxpayers a safety net for significant tax increases.

Councilor Hatch suggested that the Town Council could research different options for Charter requirements in the future, focusing on appropriate tax increases.

Municipal Warrants: Councilor Ketch motioned to accept the municipal warrants as presented, seconded by Councilor Wade, vote 5/0.

Next Meeting: The next meeting, which will include a public hearing regarding the municipal budget and the animal control ordinance, is set for April 29, 2027.

Adjourn: Councilor Ketch motioned to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Wade, vote 5/0.