

**TOWN OF ORONO
COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2016 AT 6:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBER – MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

Minutes

1. Roll Call

Present: Geoff Gordon (Community Development Chair), Sam Kunz (Operations Chair), Cindy Mehnert (Council Chair), Clint Relyea, Judy Sullivan, Tom Spitz, Town Manager Sophie Wilson, Police Chief Josh Ewing, Fire Chief Rob St. Louis, and State Legislator Ryan Tipping-Spitz.

Community Development

2. Council Position(s) on State Referendum Election Questions (11/8/2016)

Ms. Mehnert provided the Committee with a summary document from Maine Municipal Association on the referendum ballot questions. She noted that MMA's Executive Committee only took an affirmative position on Question 3 (Firearms Background Checks) supporting the Chiefs of Police.

The Committee discussed whether the Town should take a position on any of the State Referendum Election Ballot Questions. Several committee members felt the Town should not take a position.

Ms. Wilson stated she wanted the Committee to have the opportunity to weigh in on any of the ballot questions. She noted that Council usually only weighs in on issues that are municipally focused. The Committee confirmed that to be true and stated they do not want to take a position on referendum questions unless there is a direct impact on municipal government.

The Committee agreed to take no position on the November Election ballot questions.

Mr. Kunz suggested helping the public become more educated on the issues. Ms. Wilson was willing to link the issues on the Town's website, as long as there was information available on both sides of the issues.

3. Political Reports in Town Report

Ms. Wilson stated that staff is in the process of preparing the FY16 Annual Report. She noted that historically the Report has included letters provided by elected officials.

She noted that last year, questions were raised regarding a letter provided to the Town that supported public policy goals that were in direct conflict with stated Council positions.

The Committee discussed whether or not to include the letters in the annual report. State Representative Ryan Tipping-Spitz spoke of the historical value of the letters in the reports.

The Committee agreed to keep the Congressional and State political reports in the Town Report.

Operations

4. Public Safety Update

Police Chief Ewing and Fire Chief St. Louis updated Councilors on the Town's public safety trends and concerns. They provided an overview of the increased call volume and severity of medical issues that are occurring due to drug (heroin) and alcohol abuse.

Ms. Sullivan suggested informing the public about what is happening in the community. Ms. Wilson stated that Lauri Sidelko, Director of the UMaine Student Wellness Resource Center, will be giving a presentation and providing information at the October 17, 2016 Council Meeting on prevention and intervention of opiate overdoses.

Police Chief Ewing reported on the increased call volume and police presence required to address alcohol related issues during September. He also noted an increase in traffic issues and vehicle accidents on Park Street. Ms. Wilson stated one of the solutions will be the MaineDOT roundabout at Park Street and Rangeley Road. Ms. Wilson spoke of the difficulty in making a left hand turn onto Main Street due to the Route 2 traffic saturation at peak times. She also noted that the Park Street Moratorium Ordinance will help address the upper portion of Park Street.

She reported that staff has looked at traffic concerns at Westwood Avenue due to the difficulty of making a left hand turn onto Main Street. She noted that it is an important issue for RSU26. Several ideas were examined: creating a right hand lane, however there is not enough public land; creating a one-way traffic pattern up Goodridge Drive and down Westwood Drive, however this would require more time to examine the neighborhood impact; Ryan Tipping offered looking into changing the legislative rules that would allow crossing guards to direct traffic.

Ms. Wilson noted that there was no quick fix. Ms. Wilson noted that any changes would take time and require funding from the RSU for a traffic study and road improvements.

The Committee discussed whether the traffic issue was a convenience issue and also whether the school or residents could alter their times of dropping off and picking up students.

Ms. Wilson noted that the long-term solution is inter-connectivity of neighboring streets.

The Committee agreed to have the Town Manager tell the RSU that no major changes will be made immediately and to encourage the RSU to make operational changes. The Committee also supported having the Town Manager look into identifying long-term

solutions that would include a public process and RSU26's financial participation in the solution.

Mr. Gordon suggested measuring the traffic situation with a traffic study to determine the extent of the problem (i.e. 10 minute issue twice a day).

5. Brief Town Manager's Update

Ms. Wilson gave a brief update regarding on the following issues:

- Legal issues: Campus Crest, an ambulance case and settlement of MRC's lawsuit.
- Westwood Drive: solution with "no left turn" suggestion signs.
- Staffing changes with regards to the Assessor retiring.
- Tax bill due date of October 21, 2016.

6. Adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Minutes are not verbatim. A tape-recorded version is available in the Town Office.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy W. Ward
Administrative Assistant