

**TOWN OF ORONO
FINANCE & OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING**

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2020 AT 4:00PM
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

MINUTES

1. Roll Call

Present: Tom Perry (Finance Chair), Council Chair Cindy Mehnert, Laurie Osher, Meghan Gardner, Terry Greenier, Town Manager Sophie Wilson, Police Chief Josh Ewing, Parks & Recreation Director Mitch Stone, Community Development Director Dave Milan, Public Works Director Rob Yerxa, Assessor Mike Noble and Finance Director Connie Thorne.

2. Police Cruiser

Police Chief Josh Ewing explained the need for a new cruiser due to the old cruiser's motor malfunction. He requested ordering a cruiser in March (versus July) for summer delivery versus winter delivery.

The Committee agreed with the need to order a cruiser in March for a July delivery and payment. The Committee agreed to forward it to the Council for full discussion.

Ms. Mehnert suggested doubling up the cruiser purchases to get back on track. Ms. Wilson stated she could show what it would look like in the FY21 Capital Equipment budget and bring it forward for Council.

3. Parks and Recreation Department Staffing Plan

Ms. Wilson presented the multi-step transition plan related to Parks and Recreation and Community Development. This plan addressed the succession of the Economic Development Director (who also serves as the Department Head of Community Development) as well as to serve Parks and Recreation with limited resources, recognizing its on-going operational contribution to economic development. Staff anticipates that the Economic Development Director will be retiring December 31, 2021 and management has identified an internal transition aimed at creating a more seamless transition and providing a Parks and Recreation Coordinator.

Ms. Wilson stated the plan is for the Deputy Community Development Director to significantly step up the support and attention for Community/Economic Development as of July 1, 2020, leaving a budget year and half to implement the remainder of the transition. Ms. Wilson proposed adjusting the current budget and allowing for the new Coordinator to be hired in mid-May or June with \$10,000 from the Downtown Transit-oriented TIF. Ms. Wilson envisioned the Rec Coordinator to be an entry position for a skilled individual to oversee projects/programs, work independently, and exercise discretion.

Councilors expressed the desire for a person with higher than entry level skills that can address citizen's concerns and promote the program.

The Committee supported the Parks and Recreation staffing concept and plan and use of TIF funds. Staff will review the position requirements.

4. Update on the Streetlight Conversion Project

Public Works Director Rob Yerxa provided an update on the LED streetlight conversion. He stated the project was started in October 2019 and is mostly complete. Staff is currently working with the contractor to convert the decorative lights downtown. The final solution for the lights may require a contract change order. Staff has identified funds within the approved FY20 Capital Infrastructure Budget allocated for miscellaneous lighting improvements that could be used for this purpose (approximate cost \$23,000).

He noted a significant reduction in electrical costs from October-December 2018 (\$18,239) to 2019 (\$10,608). The debt service should be paid in seven years. He also acknowledged a reduction in the estimated maintenance cost in using the services of the City of Bangor versus Tanko.

5. Public Works Department Truck Purchase

Mr. Yerxa explained that the bid was awarded to Daigle and Houghton for the purchase of a new heavy duty (wheeler) truck chassis for a net cost of \$82,024. This truck has been ordered; however, prior to publishing a request for proposals for the body, staff learned that Daigle and Houghton was awarded the State of Maine bid. As a result of this statewide bid, Daigle and Houghton has priced a truck identical to the one the Town just purchased for \$108,000.

Since the adopted Capital Investment Plan includes the purchase of heavy duty truck chassis and body in FY21, staff is inquiring as to whether it would be feasible to award and order the FY21 truck now for delivery in late summer and bid the two bodies together to potentially gain a savings with the volume.

The Committee agreed to forward the purchase of two truck bodies and one chassis to the March Council agenda.

6. Pool Vacuum Purchase

Ms. Wilson explained the need for a new vacuum for the pool. She noted the vacuum will cost less than \$5,000 with funding from the FY20 approved operating budget. She noted this purchase may require Council action to move funds remaining in the Parks & Recreation and various facility related budgets to balance the pool budget at year end.

The Committee agreed with the purchase of a new pool vacuum.

7. Update on Townwide Revaluation Project

Assessor Mike Noble stated the revaluation will not be completed on time. Vision will have field personnel available in April/May to help with data collection and staff anticipates finishing with the listing in late summer. Fall to early winter will be used for internal review, notifying taxpayers of values, and holding hearings to review valuations with concerned taxpayers. This schedule will allow staff a few months to work out any kinks with the software interface and finalize new town-wide values as of April 1, 2021. Staff recommends delaying the due date and generating a superior product that will serve the Town of Orono well for many years to come.

Ms. Wilson noted with property cards and solid data, it will be easier to run the assessing office. She stated the Assessor is working hard and doing a great job; the Town just underestimated the workload. Mr. Noble commented the property assessments were accurate, it is the backup data that is missing.

The Committee agreed it was more important to have a quality product than to rush through the process.

8. Tax Collector's Report

- a. December/January Tax Collections**
- b. Update on Tax Abatements and Supplements Issued**
- c. Lien and Foreclosure Timelines for Taxes & Sewer**

Ms. Wilson provided an update on tax collections, tax abatements and lien foreclosures. Tax collections are at 91%. Dirigo Pines will receive an abatement for the land being taxed twice. The Town reached a settlement before mediation with CD/Park 7 (The Avenue) for a \$2M reduction in value for 2019, for a total tax revenue loss of \$185,000.

Ms. Wilson stated there are five properties in foreclosure. She is working with four of the property owners. She provided information about the condition of the property at 25 College Heights. She noted the attorney has advised not giving the property back to the previous owner.

She suggested holding a public hearing to determine whether or not to put it out to sale. The Committee agreed.

9. Treasurer's Report

- a. Cash Position and Items of Interest**
- b. January Financial Reports**

Ms. Wilson reviewed the cash position and January financial reports with the Committee.

10. Brief Town Manager's Update

Ms. Wilson gave a brief update on the following items:

- City of Bangor grant application for a new Black Bear Express bus
- A virus is going through the Town Office staff
- Community Development is holding a Rental Workshop
- Safety of holding the Democratic Caucus
- Fluoride information will be on the Town's website

11. Schedule Next Meeting – March 24, 2020 at 8:00AM

12. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:45pm.

Minutes are summary only. An audio recording of the meeting is available on the Town's website at www.orono.org under Agendas and Minutes.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy W. Ward
Executive Assistant