

A regular meeting of the Caribou City Council was held 6:00 p.m. on Monday, November 9, 2015 in Council Chambers with following members present: Mayor Gary Aiken, Deputy Mayor David Martin, Philip McDonough II, Joan L. Theriault, Shane McDougall, Tiffany J. Stewart and Jody R. Smith.

Councilor-Elect: Timothy C. Guerrette.

Austin Bleess, City Manager was present.

Department Managers: Penny G. Thompson, Tax Assessor; Michael Gahagan, Police Chief; Lisa Shaw, Library Director; Scott Susi, Fire Chief; Wanda Raymond, Finance Director; Dave Ouellette, Public Works Director; Lisa Plourde, Housing Director; and Gary Marquis, Supt. of Parks and Recreation.

Chris Bouchard, representing the Aroostook Republican and Time Warner Cable covered the meeting.

Council Agenda Item #1: Public Input

Michael Quinlan, asked if the meeting was being broadcasted and, if so, was the sound going through. Manager Bleess stated that it appears so and that as far as he knows the sound is going through. Mr. Quinlan commented on how poor the service has been. He was told that the problems that have been occurring are not the City's but rather Time Warner Cable's. Time Warner Cable has replaced most of their equipment both inside and outside City Office.

Mr. Quinlan is not in favor of excluding the Chamber of Commerce from the 2016 Budget. Mayor Aiken suggested that Mr. Quinlan hold his 2016 Budget remarks as the Public Hearing that will be held later in the meeting.

Council Agenda Item #2: Declaration of Conflicts of Interest from the City Council regarding any agenda item.

None.

Council Agenda Item #3: Consider authorizing the minutes of the following meetings:

- a) July 7, 2015 City Council Workshop
- b) October 26, 2015 City Council Meeting
- c) October 21, 2015 Budget Public Forum

Motion made by S. McDougall, seconded by J. Smith, to approve the minutes of the July 7, 2015 City Council Workshop, October 26, 2015 City Council Meeting, and October 21, 2015 Budget Public Forum as presented. (6 yes) So voted.

Councilor McDonough noted that he voted to approve the minutes of the July 7, 2015 City Council Workshop even though he didn't attend.

Council Agenda Item #4: Consent Agenda

- a) October 2015 Library Report
- b) October 2015 Fire Department Report
- c) October 2015 Police Department Report
- d) Approval of License
 - 1. American Legion Post #15 – Liquor License and Special Amusement

Motion made by P. McDonough, seconded by D. Martin, to approve Consent Agenda Items with business items A-D as presented. (6 yes) So voted.

Council Agenda Item #5: City Owned Property

Administration has prepared a list of City owned property. The list includes some identified by the City Manager as properties that could be sold, other parcels may have little or no value as they are not buildable, and properties that are tax acquired with current payment arrangements.

Councilor Theriault pointed out one payment arrangement was made in 2011 and the current tax year they are paying is 1999. They owe \$29,351, pay \$100 a month, and it will take 25 years to pay off without counting what is accruing for taxes going forward. They are paying \$1200 a year and if they were paying taxes the amount would be \$1447 a year. The Councilor wants to know who did this. Councilor Theriault noted that there is another property that has a \$50 payment arrangement and it too will take 25 years for the taxes to be paid off. They are paying \$600 a year and the taxes are accruing at \$1055 a year. She stated that there are 11 properties with balances totaling \$84,480. The Councilor questions how the City got to this point. Finance Director Raymond stated that the individuals on this list are paying their monthly payment arrangement amounts and those arrangements were made prior to her working for the City. The Finance Department does call to see if individuals can increase their payment amounts. Prior Councils have directed the Finance Department to work with individuals so individuals' homes aren't taken. If monthly payments are missed, the Finance Department calls to remind them. Raymond's policy is to get individuals caught up within a year but this wasn't the case before her arrival.

Councilor McDonough wants to know what the City's legal obligations are related to those that have a payment arrangement. Raymond stated the written arrangement includes language about missing payments could result in voiding the contract. Before the Council put any of these properties out to bid, the Finance Director requested additional time to break them down a little further. She noted that some are working very hard to get caught up.

The Mayor suggested that a list be made of those that aren't going to get caught up, for the Council to work with them within a set timeframe such as six months to develop a viable plan.

Council Agenda Item #6: General Assistance Ordinance

6:17 p.m. public hearing opened.

Each year the City receives from DHHS required amendments to the General Assistance Ordinance. Ms. Farrin pointed out the proposed changes which include increases to the Overall Maximums and Housing Maximums, and one change to the Electricity Maximum for Household with Electrically Heated Hot Water.

No one from the public spoke.

6:19 p.m. public hearing closed.

Motion made by J. Smith, seconded by P. McDonough, to adopt Ordinance No. 12, 2015 Series, An Ordinance amending Chapter 17 General Assistance, Short Title: An Ordinance Amending General Assistance Guidelines. (6 yes) So voted.

Council Agenda Item #7: 2016 Budget

Manager Bless stated that the budget presented this evening has a few changes compared to the budget originally presented.

Changes:

- Health insurance increase reduced from 7% to 5%.
- Public Works Capital Improvement amount removed.
- Janitorial services for Municipal Building added in.
- Assistant City Manager position added in.
- Total of \$75,000 placed in Fire Department Reserve account.
- \$25,000 Compensated Absences amount removed.

The budget is still approximately \$86,000 from having no tax increase for 2016.

6:23 p.m. public hearing opened.

Michael Quinlan spoke in support of funding the Chamber of Commerce. He asked if it was true that TIF funds are there and if used to fund the Chamber of Commerce would not increase taxes. The Mayor said it is true for property tax owners not within the TIF district. The City Manager stated that the amount captured in the district is based on the mil rate. The most cost efficient way for the City is to capture 100% of what we can, as this offsets what the City pays the County and schools.

Mr. Quinlan has completed some research trying to determine how other communities fund chambers. He contacted twelve chambers and found out that nine of the twelve received some municipal funding ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000. As the Council works on the Budget, he asked the Council to consider what in the budget speaks to fact that we are "Certified Business Friendly".

The Mayor stated that the City is very business friendly and that a lot of time and effort is put into attracting businesses to Caribou. Current the City does support the Chamber to the tune of \$9,000 by paying the heat, electricity, and phone bills.

Mr. Quinlan questioned what line items in the budget do support that Caribou is business friendly. Councilor Martin offered that one-half of the Manager's salary is paid from economic development as he spends one-half his time working on that.

Councilor McDougall has also completed his own research on topic, and the only savings he could see is to contract with the Central Aroostook Chamber.

Gail Hagelstein spoke in favor of adding monies to the Library budget to add a second professional staff member. Ms. Hagelstein stated the library is operating at a survival level, how librarians recognize the difference between "needs" and "wants" and librarians ask for "needs" and there is a need for a second professional staff member at the Caribou Library.

Councilor Smith stated that in his opinion this budget is a move backwards and not a step forward.

Councilor Theriault wants citizens to know that there are unfunded mandates from the State that total \$166,240. These are items that the City has to pay for and doesn't get reimbursed by the State. She

is afraid that we will have to look at a little bit of a tax increase whether we like it or not. She doesn't feel that we can cut anyone else and operate this City effectively.

6:43 p.m. public hearing closed.

Council Agenda Item #8: Other Business

None.

Motion made by T. Stewart, seconded by J. Theriault, to adjourn the meeting at 6:43 p.m.

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

Regular City Council Meeting November 23, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.

Regular City Council Meeting December 14, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.

Jayne R. Farrin, Secretary