



City of Caribou, Maine

Municipal Building
25 High Street
Caribou, ME 04736
Telephone (207) 493-3324
Fax (207) 498-3954
www.cariboumaine.org

Caribou Planning Board Meeting Minutes Thursday, February 17, 2022 @ 5:30 pm City Council Chambers

Members Present: Dan Bagley, Christine Solman, Amanda Jandreau, Dave Corriveau, Frank McElwain, Eric Hitchcock and Steve Wentworth

Other in Attendance: Ken Murchison – CEO; Denise Lausier – Executive Assistant to City Manager; John Morrill – Councilor Liaison; Hugh Kirkpatrick – CUD General Manager; Penny Thompson – City Manager and Aroostook Republican

- I. **Call Meeting to Order; Determine a Quorum** – Chairman Bagley called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. A quorum was present.
- II. **Public Hearings** – None.
- III. **Approval of Minutes** –
 - a. **Approval of Minutes of the January 13, 2022 Planning Board Meeting** –

Frank McElwain moved to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2022 Planning Board meeting; seconded by Dave Corriveau.

Roll Call Vote:

Steve Wentworth – Yes; Frank McElwain – Yes; Amanda Jandreau – Yes; Christine Solman – Yes; Dave Corriveau – Yes; Eric Hitchcock – Yes.

Motion carried with all in favor.

- IV. **New Business** –

- a. **Planning Board Discussion on Broadband** – CEO Murchison gave an introduction. Broadband is trending across the U.S. especially in rural areas. This is an initiative to tackle this problem. Various solutions across the state. Municipally owned and private sectors vamping up across the state. CEO Murchison included studies in the packet and examples of towns across the U.S., the Caribou Utilities District Broadband overview for local initiative and the CUD Charter amendment.

Chairman Bagley put together a power point to share for discussion purposes. Chairman Bagley stated that it would be beneficial to Caribou, it would spur economic development and would bring businesses to town. Caribou has entertained proposals for fiber to premises Broadband expansion. There is significant grant money available but only for unserved or underserved communities. There would still be a cost share of the City if they received grant funding. Chairman Bagley shared some mapping by Sewall for Broadband in Caribou as well as a survey. Different studies have been looked at. Chairman Bagley reviewed the Highlights of USIgnite Study. There is a range of City involvement from nothing to everything. He shared different business model options. Need to have a detailed cost analysis, need to be flexible about what the conditions are. Challenges and lessons were reviewed. Benchmark cost estimates. Built out costs were looked at. Potentially a long payback period.

Proposals submitted to date were from Spectrum and Consolidated Communications which are closest to model #5. Mostly private, but the City would provide some infrastructure. Would service about 300 homes not being served by Spectrum. Consolidated Communications, another closest to model #5. Proposing buildout new fiber infrastructure to every business and household. Pioneer related to the Business Investment Group's study. 100% fiber to the premises builds out new fiber infrastructure to every business and household. 100% funded by the City and is closest to model #2. Opportunity for significant revenues. Moderate risk and moderate involvement. Fiber everywhere gives opportunity to upgrade to 10 GB.

Hugh Kirkpatrick stated that Pioneer has bundling options for cable and phone as well.

Spectrum and Consolidated Communications will not operate on anything the City would build, will not operate on a network. Pioneer needs to have robust ISP to partner with.

Caribou Utilities District is proposing to own and operate the new fiber infrastructure. CUD General Manager Hugh Kirkpatrick stated they would be leasing space on 3800 poles throughout the City built into their operating costs.

Chairman Bagley gave an overview on the CUD proposal and what that looks like. They operate completely separate from the City. There are many options and considerations for establishing, owning and operating a municipal broadband infrastructure. Many business models to choose from.

Chairman Bagley recommends a broadband committee to oversee studies, review proposals/contracts, conduct planning and advise Council throughout the entire process.

Dave Corriveau questions not being qualified for grant funding for only unserved or underserved. At least 40% of Caribou is unserved or underserved. Councilor Liaison John Morrill said there is a State standard out there that defines unserved or underserved communities.

Dave Corriveau prefers the open concept model. Chairman Bagley asked the Planning Board what would be most beneficial to the City. Dave Corriveau stated it needs to benefit everyone, every taxpayer.

Amanda Jandreau questioned if there are any towns that Pioneer has installed fiber for. Hugh Kirkpatrick answered Houlton and parts of Presque Isle. Chairman Bagley said up on the Base as well.

Steve Wentworth commented that he has been listening to Senator King and Governor Mills and the aggressive goal is that the State of Maine will have Broadband service to all residents. There are not enough technicians to install the lines at this point. Mr. Wentworth questioned that if the State is coming with new offerings supporting expanding the growth of Broadband, are we premature in this? Should we wait to see what the State decides? Are there alternative technologies to provide remote homes internet service, satellite perhaps? Rapid technology changes, how long will we need Broadband service in the future if it is possible if parallel technology has been developed. Mr. Wentworth questions dish and satellites instead of installing infrastructure. Mr. Wentworth said he is thinking about how land lines have disappeared with cellphones. Are there other ways to bring in high speed internet?

Dave Corriveau replied that there are services, but very expensive. Steve Wentworth said many are satisfied with internet service now and there are very few outside in the rural area that would need to be serviced.

Eric Hitchcock has a concern with the reliability of services that are limited to speed and gigabytes per month.

Steve Wentworth commented that prices drop as things are developed and applied. Mr. Wentworth asked does it need to include the entire residential parts of Caribou, or only perhaps the rural parts of Caribou?

Amanda Jandreau commented that a lot of people are working from home. If there is no internet, they cannot work. Most important is reliable internet to work from home. Remote schooling as well needs reliable internet.

Frank McElwain stated that we need a robust internet service for all. Everyone should have access. Internet needs to be for all, needs to be robust, whatever plan or resource we have. Mr. McElwain supports watching what the State is doing on this as well.

Dave Corriveau commented that he believes waiting may not be the best option.

Chairman Bagley stated that the Board should send recommendations as we go forward as a community to the City Council.

Councilor Liaison John Morrill said it is redundant to send recommendations to the City Council before packages are presented. There is a lot that goes into building a broadband internet. There is a Council workshop coming up and the Planning Board is invited to attend to discuss. Everyone needs internet, it's a great thing. Need to look at what is the best value as a whole, if any internet providers expand, will help economic development. This is going to take time, waiting for information. It's a big deal.

CEO Murchison asked if the Planning Board has a defined role they want to take.

Christine Solman said this is advocating for the community. For the Comprehensive Plan, could have that included for education and to spread the word. This has been beneficial.

Chairman Bagley envisions the Planning Board's role is to give the City Council another set of eyes and ears and to send a recommendation to the City Council.

Chairman Bagley went over some recommendations to go to the City Council. Carefully consider pros & cons of each proposal. Consider reinstituting a Broadband Committee to oversee studies, review proposals/contracts, etc. if a City owned capability is chosen.

Hugh Kirkpatrick stated that the Business Investment Group (BIG) picked up pieces from the Broadband Coalition and started over. There are benefits of lessons learned from Calais and Baileyville.

Frank McElwain stated that unmet needs for remote learning would be available at the school department.

The Board reviewed recommendations to forward to the City Council. Chairman Bagley stated that if the Planning Board could be of any service to the City Council, the Board is available.

The Council Workshop on Broadband is next Tuesday, February 22nd at 6:00 pm.

Steve Wentworth commented that this can stimulate new growth and development.

a. Continued Discussion on Economic Development –

CEO Murchison said some basics for Economic Development was put together and reviewed.

What does the Planning Board want their role to be in economic development. Workshops, committee?

Dave Corriveau said he would like to see the Planning Board supply the City Council with finer points of focusing on economic development. Consider in the budget to have an economic development person as a paid position. Would entail some grant writing.

Councilor Liaison John Morrill stated that the City Council recognizes this and is working on this to create. The City Council realizes it is a weak point, budgetary constraints in the past are no longer. The City is lacking specifically in grant writing. The City Council will be answering this question quite soon. A multi-functional type position. The City Council has had very vivid discussion.

Chairman Bagley commented that multi-functional loading gets distorted. Eric Hitchcock agreed. Too many things with the one position, things don't get the attention they need.

CEO Murchison shared on grants and said that the City does do work on economic development.

- Façade Improvement Grants – signage, siding, paint, windows, entrance doors.
- TIF Program – Caribou has one of the largest TIF Districts in Northern Maine.
- Business Assistance
- BIG, NMDC, CEGC

Chairman Bagley and Planning Board member Dave Corriveau will work on a package to send to the City Council on economic development with some recommendations.

b. Discussion on Maine Marijuana Statutes and Rules – CEO Murchison stated that there is interest regarding retail store medical marijuana type applications. The City has not opted into Maine law. Non-profit dispensaries are allowed and grow facilities for the dispensaries are allowed. Retail stores are prohibited. Caribou does not have an ordinance to regulate the industry if the City Council decides to opt into the State law. Cannot regulate medical marijuana caregivers. CEO Murchison wants the Planning Board to be prepared. A moratorium can be put in place if needed to give the Planning Board time to draft an ordinance if the City Council opts into State law. CEO Murchison gave models to the Planning Board of other town's ordinances.

Chairman Bagley commented that they had reached a consensus to not have this in the City.

b. Discussion, Designate Riverfront Development District, Address Land Use Table and Zoning – CEO Murchison stated there was a letter from the Riverfront Renaissance Committee, asking the Planning Board to work on a development district as an overlay district. Use existing zoning, overlay would allow to apply further benefit or restrictions. There is the Shoreland Zone and flood plain. The steam plant, diesel plant, old power plant complex, will be eventually torn down. Creating a unique land use table for this district. Let people know something is happening here.

Amanda Jandreau questioned if the Committee entertained reaching out to any planners or other communities who have done riverfront redevelopment. CEO Murchison commented that a consultant would be good to create a master plan and that he would like to see the Council and Committees work together.

V. **Old Business** – None.

VI. **Staff Report – CEO Ken Murchison –**

a. **Dangerous Buildings** – 37 Home Farm Road was declared a dangerous building in 2021. Owner has received notice to move items out of the house. The Caribou Trailer Park has six tenants left, two have abandoned trailers and moved out. Two tenants were notified late. Four people left and two are receiving assistance from the Caribou Housing Authority to find a place to live.

West Gate Villa – there are six trailers left, each will be declared dangerous buildings. The City does not have to retain ownership and can bill the owners for cost of cleaning up.

Tahoe Gaming LLC – letter unopened and undeliverable.

Tax Acquired Properties – there are a few that could be demoed.

b. **Article in the Aroostook Republican About the Ongoing Limestone Street Kacie's Campground Project and Riverfront Renaissance** – thank you to Melissa at the Aroostook Republican for the nice article about the City's campground ordinance, Troy Haney's project and on riverfront redevelopment.

CEO Murchison stated that they need to be thinking about a solar array ordinance. There are two proposed for this spring, one in the C-1 zone in the business district. Buffers and setbacks need to be addressed in an ordinance.

Chairman Bagley brought up the need to change the land use table for campgrounds in the R-2 zone. Also to look at tiny homes and short term rentals.

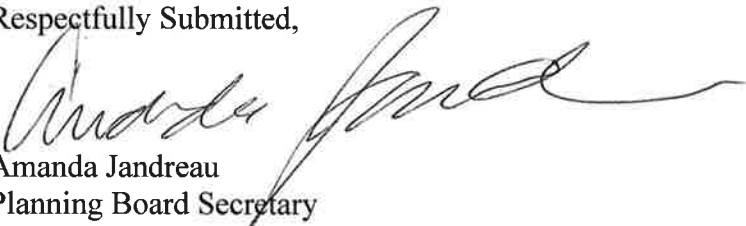
VII. **Adjournment** – Amanda Jandreau moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:39 pm; seconded by Frank McElwain.

Roll Call Vote:

Steve Wentworth – Yes; Frank McElwain – Yes; Amanda Jandreau – Yes; Christine Solman – Yes; Dave Corriveau – Yes; Eric Hitchcock – Yes.

Motion carried with all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,



Amanda Jandreau
Planning Board Secretary

AJ/dl

