

Council Agenda Item #1: Roll Call

The Caribou City Council held a regular City Council Meeting on Monday, February 28, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers with the following members present: Mayor Smith, Deputy Mayor Boma, Councilors Morrell, Morrill, Theriault and Willey. Councilor Goughan was present via Zoom.

Penny Thompson, City Manager was present at the meeting.

Department Managers Kenneth Murchison (CEO/Zoning Administrator), Gary Marquis (Parks & Recreation Superintendent), Scott Susi (Fire Chief), and Carl Grant (Finance Director) were present at the meeting.

Melissa Lizotte of the Aroostook Republican covered the meeting, and it was broadcasted via Spectrum and YouTube.

Council Agenda Item #2: Invocation/Inspirational Thought

Father David Raymond of the Parish of the Precious Blood led an invocation.

Council Agenda Item #3: Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Smith led the Pledge of Allegiance

Council Agenda Item #4: Public Forum

No Comments were made by the public.

Council Agenda Item #9: New Business, Ordinances and Resolutions

a. Resolution regarding the closure of Maine Veterans Home

Councilor Willey read a letter submitted by Nashali Parks:

“Nashali Parks

(Na-Shay-Lee)

February 28, 2022

Caribou Town Meeting-MVH

I love my job, I love what I do. I have a good life and I can speak out against my own president's decisions and not be arrested for it. These men and women fought so hard and lost so much for me to be able to do those things and live the life I live. I can never repay them, but I can do everything in my power to ensure they live their last days in comfort in a place they recognize, the place they call home.

I don't think the importance of either veteran home can be overstated. Just from a moral and ethical position: doing everything we can to help our veterans shouldn't exclusively be a matter of charity and money, but one of respect and pride. Beyond just our citizenship, our towns have a long history of military service and support. Take Loring Airforce Base for instance. It was the absolute pillar of Northern Maine's economy for nearly fifty years. Much of what we have up here even today can find its origins derived from the presence of that base.

The responses that we have received on the petition, people are appalled at the suddenness of the decision. We know nothing of the steps taken or the avenues explored or of any kind of effort taken to prevent these closures. We are a close knit community, no matter how divided we seem on the outside. If given the chance we would have come together to ensure the right thing was done. People are angry that there was no transparency. That we only now discover the issues, AFTER the decision has been made.

Especially now that we have concerns from our congress and senate about the actuality of the financial situation the company faces.

A comment that I particularly like that someone put on the petition that I started says “There is a nationwide bed shortage, it's plain not fair to turn our back on those who fought for us. MVH has 6 core values they remind us of daily. It's time MVH showed **honesty and integrity** to our veterans and staff.. Treat veterans like they are **unique**. **Respect** their home. Show them **excellent** care. Show them a **team** doesn't turn their back on its own players. And **lead the way**, in giving back to those who fought for us.”

People celebrate every year on Veterans day but Veterans don't get just a day, they get a lifetime of our respect, dedication and service. “

Councilor Theriault read an email submitted by Shanae Reed:

“My question is .. why build this new facility if there is declining veteran population, was this you plan all along to displace these veterans from there home and family just to benefit your new home and drive them there since there's no placement in aroostook county?”

Mayor Smith read an email submitted by Heidi LaMothe:

“Hi my name is Heidi LaMothe from Caribou & my 88 year old Dad lives in the Caribou Veterans Home which he calls Home. He loves the employees & the beautiful facility. He always says they take really good care of me! I was so shocked & saddened to hear the closing of this place. After it sunk in some I became upset because it's dishonorable to place our Veterans far away from their loved ones! Its also unjust for the employees who put their time & energy into this place making all residents feel at home to lose their job! For Aroostook County to not have a place for our Veterans is unethical & it feels like Aroostook County isn't part of Maine! I know being a beautician in this area that there are plenty of Veterans around that'll need a facility like this someday & our family community is disappointed in the closure of this needed facility. Our nursing homes around are already full & its detrimental to close the Caribou Veterans Home! Please keep this wonderful facility open & keep our Veterans here in Aroostook County! Thanks for listening!”

Deputy Mayor Boma read an email submitted by Hannah Voisine:

“I am one of just many concerned employees at the Maine Veteran's Home in Caribou, who are in a state of shock, frustration and worry over the possible closure of the Maine Veteran's Home. When we were notified by the CEO of the plan to close our doors, the main reasons we were given for this closure included the projected loss of \$3 million between both the Machias and Caribou MVH's, a shortage in workers, and a decline in our veteran population. Unfortunately, this information has either been shown to be inaccurate, or false. Congress released a letter stating that in 2019, MVH profited \$25 million, as a NON-PROFIT organization. Also, MVH just built a multimillion-dollar home in Augusta.

Another interesting fact that we were not made aware of is that congress reached out to the MVH board members to offer support to keep these homes open. The MVH board and CEO declined this help and did NOT notify local and state government officials regarding the closure. They outright refused any assistance offered. One can't help but wonder why.

When it comes to the issue of a decline in the veteran population, there are other options. We have plenty of elderly in Aroostook County who are awaiting placement in a skilled nursing facility. Most nursing homes in the area do not have any empty beds and actually have a waiting list. Why can't we take in these individuals?

Lastly, but most importantly, we are fighting for our Veteran's. These individuals fought for our freedom, our rights, and for this country. The very ground these MVH homes stand on. They deserve nothing but the best care, until their very last day. MVH is not a business, it's a HOME. We, as employees, work in the building many of these residents have known as home for several years. I know first hand, they currently receive the best of care from all employees at the Caribou MVH, which is

nothing short of what they deserve. Shame on those who have taken the sacrifices these individuals have made, and completely disregarded the importance of their own selfish desires.

We will stand up and fight for what these veterans deserve, and we will fight for what is right. It is now our time to return the favor to our nation's heroes. They deserve so much more! Thank you!

Sincerely,

Hannah Voisine”

Councilor Morrill read an email submitted by Kayla Creasey:

“Good evening, I am emailing you to give you a few comments I feel needed to be expressed. First off, thank you for helping voice our concerns for these residents and staff members.

I truly believe that we need the Maine Veterans Home to stay in Caribou. A lot of our residents grew up in the county, have made businesses, and have family and friends here. I feel very upset that they would even consider getting rid of Caribou Veterans Home. The Maine Veterans Home - Caribou, is a wonderful facility for those who need long term care or even skilled care. They are able to have their families and friends come in and see them, they all love the staff and our activities. I cannot see any good reason to get rid of the Veterans Home. This is a primary resource to many veterans of the community. If they break an arm, had a major medical issue, they can stay at the Veterans Home for recovery and then go back home. For our long term residents, many of them have asked if they were bad veterans.. or if they weren't good enough to stay here. There is nothing more heartbreaking than hearing someone ask those questions and knowing that this preventative situation has caused them so much pain. These Veterans have fought for our country, our freedom & rights... I just don't understand why they should worry about shelter security at their age and after everything they have done for us. They deserve so much better than to be displaced away from everyone and everything they know. Please keep our Veterans in the county - where they belong!”

Councilor Morrell read an email submitted by Miranda Ledue:

“My name is Miranda Ledue and I've been a PSS on the Residential Care unit of MVH Caribou for two and a half years. It's where I was able to earn my CNA license, and this job means the world to me. We provide an invaluable service to this community. Our staff are hardworking, compassionate, and dedicated to our residents. We have shown that we are willing to fight for the veterans who fought for us, and who have more than earned their continued comfort and security in these Homes.

Local nursing facilities are stretched thin as it is, many with no open beds and long waiting lists. This planned closure would force our residents to relocate hours away from their families, which would have devastating effects on their mental and emotional wellbeing. We need to do everything we can to keep the Veterans' Home open.

Thank you for your time and consideration.”

Councilor Willey read a letter from Jonna Parks:

” Caribou City Council Members: I am writing to express my opinion on the recent announcement regarding the closing of the Maine Veterans Homes in Caribou. The announcement is devastating news, not just for the veterans who call it home, but for their families, the staff and the greater Caribou community.

I grew up in Aroostook County, and my late father was an Army veteran. I remember him taking us to Loring AFB and teaching us about its importance and value to the community. I, like so many others, am saddened and angered by this sudden decision and the manner in which it was announced. This has been handled in a secretive and somewhat deceptive manner, and I hope our lawmakers will prove it has not been processed legally, as closing any of the Maine Veterans Homes requires legislative approval.

There are six Veterans Homes in Maine, and the decision was made to close two of the most rural locations. MVH representatives cite escalating operational losses as one of the major reasons this decision was made. Perhaps, if they hadn't built such an ornate facility in Augusta, this might not be the case. They also cite the growing scarcity of qualified workforce. I would absolutely disagree with that statement. The Veterans Home in Caribou holds the Silver Quality Award for the outstanding condition of their facility, they had a flawless state inspection, and they have remained Covid-free, which is a major accomplishment during a pandemic that has spanned more than two years. The majority of these workers take great personal pride in their work. They acknowledge the honor and privilege it is to take care of the people who have sacrificed so much for this country. It is more than just a job; many of the staff are extremely close to the folks who live there.

Closing two of the most rural facilities will place veterans in areas that are unfamiliar to them and will no doubt cause a hardship on their families who will have to travel much farther to visit them. Veterans deserve to receive care in their home communities. Winters in Maine are harsh, and driving conditions often prevent people from traveling far from their towns. Displacing these folks to Augusta or Bangor will result in their families not being able to visit as much. Veterans have already sacrificed for their country. They shouldn't have to give up their home as well. This is not a matter of money, this is a matter of honor.

Those from The County are all too familiar with the concept of the two Maines. There has always been a system of catering to the larger cities and forgetting about the rural communities. Well, they have poked the wrong bear this time! Folks from The County have a long history of banding together and taking care of their own. I feel confident that given the chance, this situation will be no different. I hope and pray the Maine Legislature makes passing the necessary legislation its top priority. After all, they represent the citizens of Maine, and the citizens (and former residents) of Aroostook County have spoken loudly and clearly in opposition to the closing of this facility.

Thank you for allowing me the time to express my opinion.

Sincerely, Jonna Parks”

Councilor Theriault read an email submitted by Nora Thomas:

“Good evening, I have worked at the Maine Veterans home for 7 years I have worked many other home also but the Maine Veterans Home in caribou is "home" to the many veterans that needed care. They have given and sacrificed so much for their country and fellow man it would not be fair to rip them from their home, family because of money issues that should have been resolved when they started. We have listened to our vets ask questions and cry and feel scared of the unknown. How would anyone of us feel if it happened to us or our family members. My question is how did it get this far without anyone helping our Veterans. Thank you for helping our Veterans and family.

Nora Thomas”

Mayor Smith read an email submitted by Kathy Ellison:

“I don't think it's fair or right to close The Maine Veteran's Home In Caribou. This is where our veteran's live, where their families live and I think we owe it to them to keep them here in the County where they want to be. These people fought for us and our freedom and all they want in return is their right be near their family where they feel safe and comfortable. I think that's the very least we can do for them.”

Deputy Mayor Boma read an email submitted by Ashley Johnston:

“Hello,

My name is Ashley Johnston and I am currently employed as a certified nursing assistant at Maine Veterans Home- Caribou. I work with the long term care residents and have gotten to know them very well over the last few years. I hope that in dealing with this matter, that all parties involved will look at these residents not just as a number, but as people. They are people that have lived full lives and just like you and I have the ability to choose where we want to live- these residents have chosen (for most of their lives) to reside in Aroostook County. To not allow them that privilege after all that they have sacrificed for this country means that we as a county and a state are failing them. There has got to be a better solution than closing the facility. Not only will the decision to close fail us in our duty to the residents and their families who have already sacrificed so much, but fail the employees as well. Imagine acquiring your nursing degree in Maine and planning to settle down in Aroostook county then learning that a major healthcare facility is closing down! Would you choose to establish a home and a career in Aroostook county? Deciding to close MVH-C will not only be damaging to Aroostook County's reputation but the economy as well. Because we love MVH so much and were offered such a generous relocation package, many of us are considering transferring to another MVH facility, downstate, with our families. Because Aroostook county is so rural and we're seeing a steady halt in employment in the able bodied working population in Maine, political leaders should strive to keep as many able bodied people in the workforce (and their families) in Maine & specifically Aroostook county. With the VA clinic relocating to Presque Isle and Maine veterans home closing, there will be far less left in Caribou for employment opportunities.

Finally, to address the staffing issue that is claimed to be one of the biggest reasons for closure: Aroostook county currently has three colleges (UMFK, UMPI, and NMCC). All three colleges offer CNA certification as part of their curriculum and many students have little experience going into the program. I have seen students from all three schools complete clinical rotations at MVH-C. I feel that it would be beneficial for MVH-C to partner with the universities to provide opportunities for nursing students regarding employment at MVH-C with successful completion of the necessary nursing courses/certification (be it CNA or RN). Students are required to keep up with vaccination status while enrolled and need to demonstrate strong values while in nursing school. Those students would make great employees if MVH could partner with those schools.

I have so much more that I'd like to say but I mostly wanted to address these key points that I feel others might not have considered. If there's anything that I can personally do further to help prevent the closure, I am all ears! As are every single one of the other staff members.

Thank you so much for your time!"

Councilor Morrill read a letter sent by Cynthia Marquis:

"To the members of the Caribou City Council....

I would like to address a very concerning event that is scheduled to take place in your city.....that being the pending closing of the Maine Veterans Home. To say that I personally am shocked and saddened by this move would be an extreme understatement. I speak tonight as a concerned citizen, as a dedicated educator in the State of Maine (35 years) but mostly as a daughter of a resident of the Maine Veteran's Home in Caribou. Please understand that my Father, Carleton L. Barnes, spent his life serving both his

country and his state. He served in the Korean conflict in the US Army and has been serving the students of the State of Maine as an educator, principal and superintendent of schools throughout his career. He has dedicated himself to the education and well-being of all students in any district he worked and always has said that the bottom line was to “do what was right for the student.” I fail to see how the closing of the Maine Veteran’s Home is doing what is right for any of the residents or for their families. We, as a family, were very comforted when Dad was able to be at the Veteran’s Home as we are aware of the high level of care at this facility. Right now we are heartbroken that this change is being planned. Any change for elderly folks is difficult and this, I fear, will be extremely detrimental. We have seen a negative effect on Dad as he has begun to suspect that there is a change in the offing. To have to move him would be extremely hard on him as it would all other residents. The residents of the Veteran’s Home have served our Country bravely and under no circumstances should be subjected to this turmoil.

The negative effects of this planned closure not only effect the residents, but also the dedicated staff at the Veteran’s home. They are some of the kindest, most dedicated caregivers that I have had the pleasure of meeting. Their lives are being thrown into turmoil as well as their families.

I would urge you to do whatever you can, by whatever means available to you to work against this closure. All of these residents have served their country and do NOT deserve this. If you have any questions for me feel free to contact me at this email address or at [REDACTED] (Home) [REDACTED] (Cell). Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.”

Wilfred Martin wants to know why and what the reasons are for the closure.

Kelley Kash, CEO of Maine Veterans’ Homes was present at the meeting via Zoom. He explained that the main reason for closure of the facilities is due to escalating losses in the facilities. They are estimating a loss of \$1.8 million in Caribou for 2022 and \$1.2 million for Machias. They are a 501C3, and not a state funded agency. They are suspecting a drop in the veteran population by 2/3 in the next 10 years. He also explained that there is also a workforce shortage crisis and a vacancy rate of 1 in 5 positions.

Councilor Morrill asked if it has been looked at as cost per facility or as a whole.

Mr. Kash stated that the comparison has been done both ways.

Councilor Morrill asked about the COVID money and how it was disbursed.

Colonel Kash stated that it was prorated to the facilities depending on number of beds and levels of care.

Ashley Johnston via Zoom submitted a message through Chat stating that there were 35 beds with veterans and 22 with spouses.

Councilor Morrill asked about the lease for the property

Colonel Kash stated that the lease is \$1.00 per year for 99 years.

Troy Haney, Veteran, and Caribou resident stated that he is concerned because the board made a decision and that there are no board members North of Bangor. The VA clinic is moving, Veteran’s Home is closing, and who has ownership of the building?

Colonel Kash stated that they will not close until all the residents find suitable placement of their choosing.

Councilor Theriault wanted clarification on the line of their choosing.

Colonel Kash explained that the residents were provided notices that included list of facilities in a 60-mile radius. The closest Veteran’s Home is in Bangor.

Mayor Smith read a letter from Governor Mills:



STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
1 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0001

February 9, 2022

Maine Veterans' Homes Board of Trustees
Maine Veterans' Homes Central Office
460 Civic Center Drive
Augusta, ME 04330

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees:

I was recently informed of the Board's vote to close the Maine Veterans' Homes in Caribou and Machias and I write to express my deep concern with this drastic move.

As I understand it, the primary justification for the Board's decision is twofold: 1) there has been a steady decrease in the number of veterans these facilities are serving over the years; and 2) like much of the state and nation, the facilities are experiencing a shortage of qualified staff to provide care.

Closure of the facilities in Machias and Caribou would significantly reduce the footprint of Maine Veterans' Homes, leaving no homes Downeast or north of Bangor, and displacing approximately 70 veterans. Even now, the facility planned for Augusta is still in the construction phase.

While I appreciate the Board's commitment to finding other accommodations for our veterans, the impact on the veterans and their families should not be underestimated – particularly with such an aggressive timeline for closure. I believe it is paramount that the Board consider every option to keep the homes open and allow veterans to remain where they are before resorting to closure. As you consider all options, I encourage the Board to conduct a thorough review of existing resources and assets which may be utilized to avoid closure of these homes.

I urge the Board to reconsider its recent vote to close the homes and instead allow veterans in Aroostook and Washington counties to have access to the care they have earned and they deserve. At the very least, I request that the Board postpone any closure for two years to provide ample time for continued dialogue and to plan for the future of the facilities and for the continued care of the many veterans who call them home. I have also directed my Administration, including the



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Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management and the Department of Health and Human Services, to provide assistance as you consider other options.

Thank you for your consideration of my request and for your service on behalf of Maine veterans. I know you share an unflagging commitment to caring for them, and I trust we may work together to provide continued care.

Sincerely,



Janet T. Mills
Governor



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Senator Jackson stated that he has great respect for Mr. Kash. He explained that he is not a service member and that it does not give him pleasure to go against them. He stated that he believed that on February 16th he was notified by Kris Doody that there was a possibility of the Veteran's Homes in Caribou and Machias may close, and that he had no knowledge of it before hand. He explained that Nursing Homes are very important for our State and our communities. He explained that people typically contact him regarding concerns. The only conversations that have been had with Mr. Kash and his lobbyists about the Veteran's Homes in three years was shortly after Kris had notified him. They wanted to come in later to meet, and he asked to meet as soon as possible. He stated that every time he has contacted them to help place someone there, he is always told that it is full. He stated that he did not agree with the fact that Veteran's in Aroostook County are diminishing to that extent, and even if they are, he does not see that as a reason to close the facility.

Colonel Kash explained that the Governor has appointed 4 new board members, reappointed 4 members and appointed one as ex-officio and has not acted on one board member on another member to reappoint.

Councilor Morrill asked that regardless of what the Senator does, that they may not have to listen and can go in and shut the places down.

Senator Jackson stated that he does not believe so and he believes that they would have never come forward to have the towns come forward to be removed from the enabling statute if that were the case.

The bill that stripped the names of the towns out of the Statute also listed Caribou and Machias for modernization. LD 1524 in the 127th legislature is the bill that made the changes removing the towns from the statute.

Councilor Morrell stated that he has not looked at the finances, but that he would take his word that it is a loss. He raised the question of how we can keep the organization liquid so they can operate.

Senator Jackson stated that the legislature has a funding mechanism, they are not sure exactly what is needed, but there is a stream there with an appropriation amount. He stated that right now it almost sounds like there is no amount of money that would keep it open, but they are going to try.

Councilor Morrill explained that in his experience he has seen long term facilities have another company come in to look at the facility and its operations to see if there are any changes that can be made to help straighten things out.

Representative Bernard stated that she has had the opportunity to meet with Colonel Kash last week, but she has additional questions to ask. How was the decision made in October, but the information was not made public until March. She stated that she understands the business aspect of it, with not wanting to have employees leave. She explained that it is very disturbing to her that nobody was made aware and that they are connected to the hospital with bricks and mortar. In conversation with Kris Doody, she was told the hospital was only made aware a couple of weeks ago. Her biggest question would be is there a dollar amount that would help you to stay open, maybe not indefinitely but to kick the can down the road.

Colonel Kash stated that the Governor wrote the board and asked them to reconsider. He stated that no amount of money is going to change the underlying issue that they are dealing with from the declining population and workforce challenges that they are facing. He explained that he has met with Kris Doody several times, starting in early December to tell her what the intentions were. They are hopeful that tomorrow when they meet with the Governor that they can find out what she wants and work on coming to more of a mutual understanding of the situation. He stated that now they have been able to get the administrations attention (meaning the Governor and her predecessors).

Deputy Mayor Boma read a letter from the Congress of the United States:

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 24, 2022

Maine Veterans' Homes Board of Trustees
Maine Veterans' Homes Central Office
460 Civic Center Drive
Augusta, ME 04330

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees:

We write to express our significant disappointment and deep concern regarding the Maine Veterans' Homes (MVH) Board of Trustees' recent decision to close the Machias and Caribou homes on April 15 and May 1, respectively. The closure of these homes will have a devastating impact on the 82 veterans and spouses of veterans who reside in these facilities. These veterans have rendered honorable service to our Nation, often during times of war. Their families, the 123 staff members who currently provide care to these veterans, as well as the surrounding communities and local hospitals will also be adversely affected by these unexpected closures.

Although we acknowledge that operating these homes in the long-term may pose challenges given expected demographic changes and the current nationwide shortage of trained, available health care workers, we urge the Board to reconsider its decision and consider all potential options short of closure so that veterans at these facilities have access to the care they have earned in their service to our Nation. This should include consideration of options such as expanding the eligibility for admission to a broader pool of veterans, including broader eligibility for members of the Maine National Guard. We also note that MVH's public 2019 tax return appears to show a gross operating profit of nearly \$25 million, which calls into question the urgent need to shutter these homes and warrants a fuller explanation of MVH's current financial position.

Maine's congressional delegation has always worked to support the needs of MVH and Maine veterans. In recent years, this support has included helping MVH secure a \$50 million grant to support the construction of a new home in Augusta, providing emergency COVID-19 funding for MVH from the *CARES Act*, and ensuring the passage of the *State Veterans Homes Domiciliary Care Flexibility Act* in December 2020 to provide the VA with needed flexibility to adequately care for veterans with early-stage dementia.

There is strong support for the Machias and Caribou facilities in Maine. We understand that Governor Mills recently directed her Administration, including the Maine Departments of Defense, Veterans, and Emergency Management, to provide assistance should you consider alternatives to closure. Additionally, Maine Senate President Troy Jackson recently introduced a bill to provide funding for the Machias and Caribou facilities.

We request that you accept the Governor's offer of assistance and take the time necessary to fully explore all options short of closing the Machias and Caribou MVHs. Furthermore, given the

strong support for Maine Veterans Homes from the Governor, the Maine Legislature, as well as its congressional delegation, we request that the Board meet with the delegation and Governor Mills, along with leadership from relevant state agencies, to discuss all options to maintain the Machias and Caribou homes.

We thank you for your consideration of our requests and for your many years of service on behalf of Maine's veterans.

Sincerely,



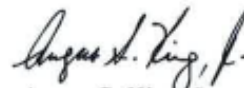
Jared F. Golden
Member of Congress



Susan M. Collins
U.S. Senator



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Angus S. King, Jr.
U.S. Senator

Tim Todd, Clerk of the Cary Hospital District Board explained that he is not part of the operating board. He expressed concern because the City owns buildings and grounds. He explained that he had previously not been able to come to the City Council to provide details because of a non-disclosure clause that the board had in the bylaws. They have made changes to the bylaws, and he now plans to meet quarterly with the City Council to update them and have an open line of communication. He explained that they can not take a hit, there are lights, water, sewer, heat and much more to think about with the possible closure.

Mayor Smith read Resolution 02-02-2022

Motion made by Councilor Morrill, seconded by Councilor Willey to accept Resolution 02-02-2022

Roll Call Vote: C. Boma – Yes, R.M. Goughan – Yes, D. Morrell – Yes, J. Morrill – Yes, J. Theriault – Yes, L. Willey – Yes, J. Smith – Yes. (So voted)

Motion made by Councilor Morrell to bring Kris Doody and the Hospital District Board in to demand answers.

Motion failed for lack of a second.

Brian Cullins, Treasurer for the Caribou Hospital District Board - explained that with the recent changes to the bylaws they will now be able to come to the Council to keep them informed to what is going on at the hospital. He explained that they had not been getting the information before, but with the changes they should have a more open line of communication between Cary Medical Center and the Council.

Council Agenda Item #5: Minutes

There were no minutes submitted for approval.

Council Agenda Item #6: Bid Openings, Awards, and Appointments

- a. Rec Department bids for metal siding installation (Parks & Recreation Superintendent)

Motion made to table the discussion regarding Rec Department bids for metal siding installation bids to a future meeting.

- b. Caribou Congregate Housing, per by-laws City Council must appoint two members

Motion made by Councilor Willey, seconded by Councilor Theriault to appoint Lisa Plourde & Kenneth Murchison to the Caribou Congregate Housing Board.

Roll Call Vote: C. Boma – Yes, R.M. Goughan – Yes, D. Morrell – Yes, J. Morrill – Yes, J. Theriault – Yes, L. Willey – Yes, J. Smith – Yes. (So voted)

Council Agenda Item #7: Public Hearings and Possible Action Items

- a. Ordinance 3, 2022 Series Amending Chapter 13 Land Use Ordinance (Home Operations)

Public Hearing Opened at 8:10 p.m.

Troy Haney, Caribou resident and business owner expressed his concerns regarding the proposed changes to Chapter 13. He explained that it is starting to look like micromanaging home businesses. It has items such as the size of the sign that is allowable, how many customers they can have been being limited to two per hour, or eight visits per day. Vehicles to go there have a max gross vehicle weight of 23,000 pounds. This would limit deliveries to the premises that the business may need to have to be able to operate. The information also states that there can be no more than one non-resident employee and that it needs to be in a single-family dwelling unit only.

Dan Bagley, Chairman of the Planning Board explained that this was intended to make home businesses easier, to streamline the process and to make it easier and less onerous for home businesses to be created and be operated. The strategy in doing that we are looking at across the board for other changes to Chapter 13. We are working on grouping the businesses between two categories. One category would be very simple home-based low impact that could be approved by the CEO directly, and then they would not have to come to the Planning Board, and a large majority of the home occupations that they have seen that come to the Planning Board and go through the whole Planning Board process and public hearing are minor things that could be approved by the CEO. These changes allow that to happen, and so the Planning Board will only hear those higher impact type of home businesses. To stratify those into two categories we had established some criteria.

Councilor Theriault asked if the places need a permit and if there is a fee for them.

Kenneth Murchison, CEO/Zoning Administrator explained that for Home Occupancy there is a fee and that he believes that it is \$90.

Closed Public Hearing: 8:25 p.m.

Council Agenda Item #8: Reports by Staff and Committees

- a. January 2022 Financials (Finance Director)

Carl Grant, Finance Director reviewed the January 2022 Financial Report.

Motion made by Councilor Morrill seconded by Deputy Mayor Boma to accept the January 2022 Financials as presented.

Roll Call Vote: C. Boma – Yes, R.M. Goughan – Yes, D. Morrell – Yes, J. Morrill – Yes, J. Theriault – Yes, L. Willey – Yes, J. Smith – Yes. (So voted)

b. Tax Acquired property Bid List

Carl Grant, Finance Director reviewed the bid list with the Council and explained how the calculations are calculated to find the minimum sale amounts on the properties. This was presented as a first read.

c. Manager's Report

Manager Thompson reviewed the City Manager's Report dated February 28, 2022.

Council Agenda Item #9: New Business Ordinances and Resolutions

b. Consider request by the American Legion to hold an additional night of Bingo

Motion made by Councilor Morrill, seconded by Deputy Mayor Boma to approve the American Legion's request to hold an additional night of Bingo.

Roll Call Vote: C. Boma – Yes, R.M. Goughan – Yes, D. Morrell – Yes, J. Morrill – Yes, J. Theriault – Yes, L. Willey – Yes, J. Smith – Yes. (So voted)

c. Ambulance Billing – third party billing contract

Scott Susi, Fire Chief explained the changes happening to the Ambulance Billing Department. He explained that Caribou has always had its own billing department, and he wouldn't want to get rid of it because it is ours, and at this time there is only one employee in the department. With natural attrition and the employee retiring they have been researching and talking to different places and the best one that they have come up with and the biggest bang for their buck is Comstar. They come highly recommended, and they have individual departments that deal with each type of insurance, therefore it's not just one person doing it, it is multiple, and all the transactions would happen electronically with them. They would charge 4% of the revenue that they get for them. There would be significant savings to the City by outsourcing this to somebody else. The only hard part is that it would take about a year to clear up the accounts because they will not take on anything that you have already done, and the department has been very busy. The overlap is a means to solving something for them moving forward. They would have to finance the 4% this year which would come out of the revenue side this year but the savings moving would be roughly \$153,000 to the budget. He explained that they would like to start them and get the ball rolling and start April 1st.

Motion made by Councilor Morrill, seconded by Councilor Theriault to accept the Ambulance Third Party Billing Contract as presented.

Roll Call Vote: C. Boma – Yes, R.M. Goughan – Yes, D. Morrell – Yes, J. Morrill – Yes, J. Theriault – Yes, L. Willey – Yes, J. Smith – Yes. (So voted)

d. Administrative Correction to Land Use Table – Campgrounds

Motion made by Councilor Morrill, seconded by Councilor Theriault to accept the Administrative Correction to Land Use Table – Campgrounds as presented.

Roll Call Vote: C. Boma – Yes, R.M. Goughan – Yes, D. Morrell – Yes, J. Morrill – Yes, J. Theriault – Yes, L. Willey – Yes, J. Smith – Yes. (So voted)

e. Police Station Referendum Question

Councilor Morrell asked if there were final numbers yet, he would like to know what the number is that the committee would like to spend on it.

Deputy Mayor Boma stated that they would like to ask the same question as the last time, but have it be a binding question rather than a survey question as it was before.

Councilor Theriault explained that we have the architects estimate and it is quite detailed.

Motion made by Councilor Theriault, seconded by Deputy Mayor Boma to place question as presented to referendum in June.

NON-BINDING SURVEY QUESTION FOR THE VOTERS OF CARIBOU

Question:

Do you favor borrowing money to provide an amount not to exceed \$10,000,000 to pay costs of expenditures for the construction and equipping of a new police station for the City of Caribou provided that the money is authorized by Caribou City Council and a referendum approved as specified in the Charter?

YES

NO

Financial Disclosure
Based on the Estimate Calculator
Maine Municipal Bond Bank website
(Rate varies based on term, may not prepay loan)

Type	Term	Principal	Interest	Total	Annual Debt Service	Estimated 1 st year mill Increase*
Level Debt	20-year	\$10,000,000	\$2,492,885	\$12,492,885	\$624,669	1.7846
Level Principal	20-year	\$10,000,000	\$2,302,044	\$12,302,044	Declines annually 1 st year: \$672,519	1.9213
Level Debt	30-year	\$10,000,000	\$4,857,240	\$14,857,240	\$495,263	1.4149
Level Principal	30-year	\$10,000,000	\$4,214,605	\$14,214,605	Declines annually 1 st year: \$552,623	1.5788

*For 2021 tax commitment, 1 mill = \$350,035.80 2021 millage rate: 23.55

Councilor Morrell stated that in his opinion we cannot afford a 10-million-dollar police station.

Councilor Theriault explained that there have been several architects that have looked at the options that have been presented. There were several options presented and all of them for one reason or another would not work as far as renovations and that there would be too much to do. The figure that the architect had given was just over.

Councilor Goughan would like to know why there are no minutes regarding committee meeting. He expressed concern about not having plans for the Police Station.

Deputy Mayor Boma explained that the Website has information regarding the plans for the Police Station, but there are no minutes for Committee meetings. She explained that we have had an open house, and that the site designs have been available for the public to see.

Councilor Morrell stated that he believes the fundamental problem with this is that it is laying on the employees that want it and the committee that wants to see it done.

Councilor Goughan stated that if you really want to know the pulse of the community, wait until November.

Roll Call Vote: C. Boma – Yes, R.M. Goughan – No, D. Morrell – No, J. Morrill – Yes, J. Theriault – Yes, L. Willey – Yes, J. Smith – No. (So voted)

Council Agenda Item #10: Old Business

a. Broadband discussion

Mayor Smith explained that there had recently been a workshop with the CUD and there was a resolution developed to show support for the CUD. The resolution is not a commitment from the City for funds, it just shows support for the project the CUD.

Mayor Smith read Resolution 2-3-2022

Motion made by Councilor Morrill, seconded by Councilor Willey to approve Resolution 2-3-2022 as presented.

Roll Call Vote: C. Boma – Yes, R.M. Goughan – Yes, D. Morrell – Yes, J. Morrill – Yes, J. Theriault – Yes, L. Willey – Yes, J. Smith – Yes. (So voted)

b. 2022 Priorities and Goals Discussion

Mayor Smith decided to skip the item.

c. 2022 Municipal Budget Presentations

Council had a brief discussion and stated that there would be a Capital Committee meeting on Friday at 3:30.

Manager Thompson explained that there is a public hearing scheduled for the next meeting. She asked the Council for any guidance or input they may have.

Councilor Goughan urged everyone to look at their fuel costs and electric costs on their budgets.

Councilor Theriault suggested maybe looking at adding an assistant manager position.

Manager Thompson explained that she has looked at the possibility and once you put all the numbers together with salary and benefits it would be close to \$100,000 per year.

Council Agenda Item #11: Reports and Discussion by Mayor and Council Members

Councilor Willey stated that the CRRC met on February 15th as part of their discussion Ken Murchison reviewed his telephone discussions with area managers concerning development of the Riverfront. Presque

Isle, Washburn, Fort Fairfield and Limestone were all interested in meeting to discuss developing the trails and walking paths along the railroad corridor that could be part of a central Aroostook project.

Council Agenda Item #12: Next Regular Meetings: February 28, March 14 & 28

Council Agenda Item #13: Executive Session(s) (May be called to discuss matters identified under MRSA, Title 1 §405.6

Council did not enter executive session. Items that were scheduled will be moved to the next regular Council meeting agenda.

Council Agenda Item #14: Adjournment

Motion made by Councilor Morrill, seconded by Deputy Mayor Boma to adjourn the meeting at 9:17 p.m.

Vote: C. Boma – Yes, R.M. Goughan – Yes, D. Morrell – Yes, J. Morrill – Yes, J. Theriault – Yes, L. Willey – Yes, J. Smith – Yes. (So voted)

Danielle Brissette, Secretary