

Council Agenda Item #1: Roll Call

The Caribou City Council held a regular City Council Meeting on Monday, January 26, 2026, at 6:00PM in Council Chambers with the following members present; Mayor Boma, Deputy Mayor Smith, Councilors Bagley, Kelley, Knight Phair, Lovewell, and Watson.

Penny Thompson, City Manager, was present for the meeting.

Department managers Lisa Plourde (Housing Director), Brian Lajoie (Fire Chief), and Carl Grant (Finance Director) were present at the meeting.

The meeting was broadcast via Spectrum and YouTube. Cameron Levasseur of The County covered the meeting.

Council Agenda Item #2: Invocation/Inspirational Thought

Deputy Mayor Smith read the invocation.

Council Agenda Item #3: Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Boma led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Council Agenda Item #4: Declaration of any Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations made.

Council Agenda Item #5: Public Forum

There were no comments made by the public.

Council Agenda Item #6: Acceptance of Minutes

- a. Minutes of the January 2, 2026, Organizational City Council Meeting
- b. Minutes of the January 12, 2026, Regular City Council Meeting

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Smith, seconded by Councilor Watson to move the slate and accept the minutes from January 2 and January 12, 2026 as presented.

Roll Call Vote: D. Bagley – Yes, J. Kelley – Yes, L. Knight Phair – Yes, T. Lovewell – Yes, J. Smith – Yes, P. Watson – Yes, C. Boma– Yes (So voted)

Council Agenda Item #7: Bid Openings, Awards and Appointments

There were no items scheduled for discussion.

Council Agenda Item #8: Public Hearings and Possible Action Items

There were no items scheduled for discussion.

Council Agenda Item #9: Reports by Staff and Committees

a. Age Friendly Caribou presentation

Elizabeth Singer, Community Relation Coordinator with Age-Friendly Caribou Center provided an overview of the 5-year progress report highlighting areas of success and programs available to people in the community.

Some of the successful programs implemented include:

- Safe Steps – Sand Buckets for Seniors: More than 235 sand buckets delivered to older adults since 2020 to improve winter safety and mobility. Has been able to grow due to partnership with Caribou Rotary Club.
- Senior Santa – Giving Tree: More than 650 gifts and greeting cards delivered to older adults to promote connection and reduce social isolation.
- Coffee Talk and Educational Programs: Regular opportunities for social engagement, learning, and community connection
- Caribou Community Garden: An intergenerational space promoting wellness, social participation, and access to fresh food.
- Dementia-Friendly Community Support: Ongoing efforts to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and support individuals living with dementia and their care partners.

Ms. Singer explained that Age Friendly Caribou is connected with state and national programs and has several key partners such as

- AARP National & AARP Maine
- Aroostook Agency on Aging
- Aroostook Elder Law
- Caribou Parks & Recreation
- Caribou Public Library
- Center for the Advancement of Rural Living
- Lifelong Maine
- Nurture by Nature
- Maine Council on Aging
- Positive Aging Community
- Solo Aging Resource Center
- University of Maine Center on Aging
- University of New England - Aging ME GWEP

The group is also working on the ideas of creating “go bags” for disasters, they would include supplies needed for staying at home or evacuating. And ideas for moving forward to keep the program going.

Over the years they have also been able to participate in the Community Garden, read to children, provide dementia patient training with the Fire Department and many other activities in the community.

Councilor Lovewell asked if there was a list of ways to contact people or who may be able to help create a list.

Ms. Singer explained that healthcare facilities cannot help create a list due to HIPPA laws, but they have been looking at different ways to set it up.

Council had a brief discussion regarding housing insecurity, education on taxes and property taxes with Ms. Singer.

Ms. Singer explained that the goal is to keep people at home as it is the best place to be

Councilor Watson explained that AARP is at the VFW during tax season to help provide free tax assistance.

Ms. Singer explained that there are several programs available through different agencies and as always, they are looking for volunteers to help support the cause.

b. December Financials

Carl Grant (Finance Director) reviewed the December 2025 Finance report.

Deputy Mayor Smith asked about any carryover funds that would be available to help with the 2026 taxes.

Mr. Grant explained that there were no motions to carry any funds to offset the 2026 taxes.

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Smith, seconded by Councilor Lovewell to move \$27,894.61 to account 456-04 2026 Tax relief fund.

Roll Call Vote: D. Bagley – Yes, J. Kelley – Yes, L. Knight Phair – Yes, T. Lovewell – Yes, J. Smith – Yes, P. Watson – Yes, C. Boma– Yes (So voted)

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Smith, seconded by Councilor Watson to accept the financials as presented.

Roll Call Vote: D. Bagley – Yes, J. Kelley – Yes, L. Knight Phair – Yes, T. Lovewell – Yes, J. Smith – Yes, P. Watson – Yes, C. Boma– Yes (So voted)

c. City Manager's Report

Manager Thompson provided the Council with the City Manager's report dated January 26, 2026.

Councilor Watson asked Manager Thompson to look at a bill out of Washington County regarding municipalities being able to file bankruptcy and what that would mean for the city. He explained that he is worried that it may cause interest rates to rise for the municipality.

Council Agenda Item #10: Unfinished Business

a. Discussion on adopting a resolution to adopt a Code of Conduct for the 2026 Caribou City Council

Mayor Boma explained that in November 2024, the citizens of Caribou voted to amend the Caribou City Charter, stating, “The City Council will adopt by resolution, a Code of Conduct, annually, prior to January 31. This Code of Conduct will apply to the members of the Caribou City Council.

Deputy Mayor Smith stated that he is good with last years, and that they are policing themselves.

Councilor Lovewell stated that she agrees and that it is a good foundation.

Mayor Boma stated that it is important that they conduct as they should be, to be mindful and to try to be there in person.

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Smith, seconded by Councilor Lovewell to adopt the code of conduct as used from last year (2025).

Councilor Bagley noted that section two number five mentions that all members will cooperate in the implementation is vague, and he can support it if five is removed.

Councilor Bagley amended the motion to accept the last year’s with the deletion of article five under section two. (Motion failed due to lack of second)

Roll Call Vote: D. Bagley – No, J. Kelley – Yes, L. Knight Phair – Yes, T. Lovewell – Yes, J. Smith – Yes, P. Watson – Yes, C. Boma– Yes (So voted)

Council Agenda Item #11: New Business, Ordinances and Resolutions

a. Fire Station Project, Design Development approval

Amanda Jandreau, the Project Manager for the Fire Station project and Senior Structural Engineer at Harriman reviewed the Design Development documents, budget and narrative for the Fire Station project.

Deputy Mayor Smith commented that an excellent job has been done in the planning phase for the updates to the buildings and station.

Councilor Bagley asked why the Health & Fitness rooms were placed where they are.

Ms. Jandreau explained that placement of the fitness room depended on where space was available, and with the changes to the dormitory area it left this area. She also explained that the basement area is a red zone and that is why they cannot use that area.

Council also had a brief discussion regarding conference rooms and small meeting spaces that are in the design and why those would be needed.

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Smith, seconded by Councilor Watson to approve the design development documents as presented by Harriman.

Roll Call Vote: D. Bagley – Yes, J. Kelley – Yes, L. Knight Phair – Yes, T. Lovewell – Yes, J. Smith – Yes, P. Watson – Yes, C. Boma– Yes (So voted)

b. Approval of the 2023 Oak Leaf Systems Contract

Manager Thompson explained that there have not been any changes made to the contract, and no increases. She also explained that Mr. Sowers has been working on assisting with the phones being changed over from GWI and has a new provision for hardware and management services.

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Smith, seconded by Councilor Watson to accept the 2026 Contract for Computer Network Support Services with Oak Leaf and authorize City Manager Penny Thompson to execute the contract for 2026.

Roll Call Vote: D. Bagley – Yes, J. Kelley – Yes, L. Knight Phair – Yes, T. Lovewell – Yes, J. Smith – Yes, P. Watson – Yes, C. Boma– Yes (So voted)

c. Approval of the Collective Bargaining Agreement with NEPBA Local 605

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Smith, seconded by Councilor Lovewell to accept the contract as presented.

Roll Call Vote: D. Bagley – Yes, J. Kelley – Yes, L. Knight Phair – Yes, T. Lovewell – Yes, J. Smith – Yes, P. Watson – Yes, C. Boma– Yes (So voted)

d. Discussion of the 2026 Municipal Budget

Manager Thompson explained that at this time needed reports cannot be created until the financials for the month of December 2025 have been approved, but that the Council can still make some decisions about the budget.

Manager Thompson provided examples of the different items that can be discussed such as:

- What priorities have the City Council identified that affect the spending priorities for 2026?
- In 2024 and 2025, the City Council voted not to fund any contributions. Does the City Council want to consider requests for contributions in 2026?

- In 2025, there was a discussion about increasing funding for cemetery maintenance, due to the rising costs.
- In 2025, funding for the Caribou Emergency Management stipend was cut, could that be revisited?
- In 2025, much of the lapsed appropriation was again from unfilled open positions. Should there be a discussion about recruitment and retention for key positions?
- One priority that has been identified by members of the Caribou City Council is a stable or flat tax rate. What programs and services should be scaled back to meet this objective?

Deputy Mayor Smith stated that they can be conservative, but not unreasonable. He also explained that the Capital Budget Committee will be meeting tomorrow.

Councilor Lovewell stated that she believes that not funding the reserves is a big issue.

Councilor Watson would like to look at the option of a hybrid fleet, and the possibility of leasing.

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Smith, seconded by Councilor Lovewell to not fund contributions this year.

Roll Call Vote: D. Bagley – Yes, J. Kelley – Yes, L. Knight Phair – Yes, T. Lovewell – Yes, J. Smith – Yes, P. Watson – Yes, C. Boma– Yes (So voted)

Council Agenda Item #12: Reports and Discussion by Mayor and Council Members

Deputy Mayor Smith stated that he would like to look at switching to a fiscal year.

Council Agenda Item #13: Next Regular Meeting: February 9, 2026

Council Agenda Item #14: Executive Session(s) (May be called to discuss matters identified under MRSA, Title 1, §405.6)

a. Executive Session for union negotiations pursuant to 1 MRSA §405.6.D (Fire Department Union)

Motion made by Councilor Lovewell, seconded by Councilor Watson to enter into executive session at 7:27PM for union negotiations pursuant to 1 MRSA §405.6.D Fire Department Union

Roll Call Vote: D. Bagley – Yes, J. Kelley – Yes, L. Knight Phair – Yes, T. Lovewell – Yes, J. Smith – Yes, P. Watson – Yes, C. Boma– Yes (So voted)

Present in person: all Councilors present
 Fire Chief Lajoie
 Finance Director Grant
 Manager Thompson

Present via zoom: Ann Freeman of Bernstein Shur, legal counsel

Council exited executive session at 8:39 PM, guidance was given to Ann Freeman of Bernstein Shur.

Councilor Jennifer Kelley and Fire Chief Brian Lajoie left the meeting at 8:40pm.

b. Executive Session for union negotiations pursuant to 1 MRSA §405.6.D(Police Department Union)

Motion made by Deputy Mayor Smith, seconded by Councilor Watson at 8:42pm to go into executive session for 1 MRSA §405.6.D for Police Department Sergeant's union negotiations.

Roll Call Vote: D. Bagley – Yes, L. Knight Phair – Yes, T. Lovewell – Yes, J. Smith – Yes, P. Watson – Yes, C. Boma– Yes (So voted)

Council exited executive session at 8:55pm, guidance was given to bring back at red line contract to next meeting.

Council Agenda Item #15: Adjournment

Motion made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Knight Phair to adjourn the meeting at 8:56pm.

Roll Call Vote: D. Bagley – Yes, L. Knight Phair – Yes, T. Lovewell – Yes, J. Smith – Yes, P. Watson – Yes, C. Boma– Yes (So voted)

Danielle Brissette, Secretary