

**TOWN OF ORONO
COUNCIL VIRTUAL WORKSHOP
MONDAY, JUNE 22, 2020 AT 4:00PM**

WATCH ONLINE AT
<https://zoom.us/j/95425563873>

(LINK AVAILABLE AT ORONO.ORG)

*Comments can be submitted via email before the meeting at info@orono.org
and during the meeting by using Zoom comment features.*

MINUTES

1. Roll Call

Present: Council Chair Cindy Mehnert, Tom Perry, Laurie Osher, Meghan Gardner, Sam Kunz, Cheryl Robertson, Terry Greenier and Town Manager Sophie Wilson.

Cheryl Robertson made a statement about voting against adding the Juneteenth Proclamation to the agenda on June 15, 2020. She clarified she was not voting against the proclamation, but against rushing the proclamation onto the agenda without having had any prior deliberation or thoughtful process about it.

Meghan Gardner explained her reasoning for writing the proclamation and wanting to add it to the agenda, to then discuss..

2. FY21 Revenue and Expense Budget Reviews of Year to Date Activity and Year End Forecast

Ms. Wilson stated the Town is receiving bills that are yet to be paid, and excise tax revenues are coming in. Staff is forecasting the Town (General Fund) projected revenue will be approximately \$150,000 under collected and expenses underspent by approximately \$715,000. This is an estimated budgetary surplus of \$565,000 for revenue and expenses; however, the budget called for \$1,243,608 to be used from fund balance in FY20, which leaves an impact of approximately -\$680,000 to the fund balance (pre-audit adjustments).

Ms. Wilson stated financial reports will be delivered to Councilors on Monday for their review.

3. Discussion: FY21 Municipal, WPCF, and Capital Budget Adoptions

Ms. Wilson said this item has been placed on the agenda to review the public hearing and provide staff with final guidance for the annual budget adoption and financial orders for the June 29th Council Meeting.

Councilors indicated they were happy to proceed forward with the FY21 budget.

Ms. Wilson explained there would be a notice with the budget adoption order, explaining that Council may have to come back to review and revise the budget. Mr. Perry suggested adding that it is due to the economic uncertainty surrounding the State Municipal Revenue Sharing forecast.

Ms. Wilson explained there would be a Council order to approve the Economic Development budget totaling \$873,575 funded by the Tax Increment Financing Development Programs. Council supported the order.

4. Discussion: FY21 Fee Schedule and Annual Budget Related Orders

Ms. Wilson noted this item has been placed on the agenda to review the public hearing and provide staff with final guidance for the annual budget adoption and financial orders for the June 29th Council Meeting.

Council stated they were all set with the FY21 Fee Schedule. Ms. Wilson stated the tax due dates would be late September 2020 and mid-February 2021 with an interest rate of 8% for uncollected taxes and a 4% interest rate for overpayment of taxes.

Ms. Wilson stated she will have orders on the agenda for a police reserve fund for training and college classes and an IT reserve fund for the cabling project. There may also be two poverty abatements for June or July.

5. Discussion: Creation of an Ad Hoc Council Environment Committee

Cheryl Robertson proposed a pilot year for a new Environment/Climate Action Committee:

The Environment/Climate Action Committee would act as an advisory body and action committee reporting to the Town Council. Its responsibilities the first year will include the following: 1) Create a Municipal Climate/Environmental Action Plan; 2) Gather, discuss, and disseminate information pertinent to decreasing the municipality's "environmental footprint," and to convert this information into usable, actionable strategies – both short term and long term according to the Environment/Climate Action Plan; and, 3) Educate and create a page on the Orono Town website that keeps community members apprised of local environmental issues, programs, volunteer opportunities, and State/Federal environmental changes.

The Committee composition: Councilors and appointed Orono residents with related technical expertise with staff support by the Town Manager and staff, as appropriate. The Committee would meet once a month.

Councilors spoke of not wanting another committee or extra work for the staff. Councilors wanted more time to think about it and discuss the financial expectations. Ms. Mehnert suggested the committee/team do the research. Mr. Kunz suggested a subcommittee option.

Ms. Wilson envisioned 3-4 members that would be a working group to do research and assist staff in accomplishing the goals. The first step would be to develop action items for the year. She recommended having three primary tasks. Ms. Wilson suggested bringing in Belle, Rob Yerxa and Joe Madigan to help brainstorm a plan and then bring it back to Council.

Ms. Robertson envisioned a pilot year to see what would organically grow. Ms. Mehnert noted it may also be folded into a standing Committee.

Ms. Wilson stated she would create an order for the July 13, 2020 Council agenda for a formal vote to establish the Committee. Council agreed. They also agreed to appoint the members after establishing the Committee.

Ms. Robertson agreed to tailor the Committee's goals to Orono's needs. Ms. Wilson suggested narrowing the scope for this year.

6. FY21 Town Council Work Plan (Initial Discussion)

Council's overarching goals for FY20 were:

1. Projects from the FY19 work plan.

- **Regulating recreational and medical marijuana commercial activity.**

The draft is complete and was reviewed by the Planning Board with minor comments for Council to review. It is scheduled to return to Council Workshop to discuss comments and determine how to proceed.

Council discussed the next step of sending the ordinance out to referendum. After a thorough discussion of the best timing, **Council agreed to send the ordinance to referendum in March 2021.**

Ms. Wilson stated staff could send the ordinance to Council in September to finalize the language. The public hearing on the ordinance for referendum would be January 2021.

Ms. Wilson asked the Council about the Fluoride Referendum which needs to be held the same day as the Town of Veazie. **Council agreed to hold the Fluoride Referendum in June 2021.**

- **Evaluating Town-owned properties in terms of current use, municipal purpose for ownership, priority for future public access, and appropriateness of returning to the tax rolls.**

In FY20, Council reviewed the appraisal for 98 Penobscot Street (Old Public Works Garage), discussed best use, and sent it back to staff to search for a public/private partnership for redeveloping this property in a manner that will best fit with the neighborhood and meet the goals of the comprehensive plan. Staff had reached out to known contacts but have not garnered any solid commitments. Remaining already identified properties include: Essex Street land only, Old Fire Station on North Main Avenue, and several foreclosed properties.

The Council agreed to have the Finance & Operations Committee discuss the foreclosed properties and the Community Development Committee will discuss the larger town owned properties (including Sailor Development).

2. Items necessary to maintain efficient and effective operations.

- **Evaluating options for making contributions for services more equitable**

This topic will be ripe for discussion once the revaluation project is complete and staff can provide data about exempt/non-exempt properties. With the revaluation project stalled through the spring, this discussion has been delayed and will likely not be able to begin until next spring/summer.

Council agreed to discuss this topic after July 1, 2021 when the data from the revaluation is completed.

- **Codifying Orono Police Department culture and policy**

In progress - asset forfeiture policy adopted; accreditation and professionalism standards have gone to committee for discussion and are back with staff for revision; and other cultural aspects are currently subject of management/labor negotiations to implement a pilot wellness initiative.

*Given the current climate, Council has committed to hosting facilitated listening sessions with the community regarding its needs, desires, and concerns related to Orono's policing policies and practices. The Council Chair and staff are currently working to identify potential professional facilitators and develop a plan for the pre-work that is necessary to support a productive and meaningful process. **The following general schedule is proposed: Pre-planning - July & August; Listening Sessions - August/September/October; Report and Action Planning - October/November/December.***

Ms. Wilson stated staff is moving fairly quickly on this topic. The Police Chief will continue to meet with community members. Policies are in force that the public has not seen. She described a new system that has been purchased, called PowerDMS, which will show the public policy drafts, revisions and adoptions and allows search features and community interaction through the Police website page. She noted it will be available within the next few months.

Council supported the work that has been done on codifying the Police Department's polices and the continued work on the culture.

Ms. Wilson will redraft the bullet point item to address the culture piece.

- **Updating the personnel ordinance and policies to reflect modern expectations.**

This item continues to stall with staff as a result of other priorities and time constraints. Staff suggests removing this from the list and addressing personnel policy revisions in smaller pieces.

Ms. Wilson noted there is no staff time to do a full revision of the Personnel Ordinance, and instead deal with changes in small sections (i.e. flex time and overtime).

Ms. Mehnert suggested having a note that this item is ongoing.

3. Continue to review and adapt the Town's methods for communicating with its residents.

Staff suggests that this is an ongoing operating process and, perhaps, should be an ongoing general priority as opposed to a work plan item.

Council agreed this section is an ongoing process and is currently part of staff operations. They agreed to take it off the Council Work Plan.

Ms. Wilson and Ms. Ryder explained the process of allowing free speech and also being able to block threatening messages.

- **Improve the current Town website to be more user friendly to the public and allow for more web-based services.**

The website has been redesigned as part of the existing contract incorporating structural recommendations from Pulse Marketing and better meets the intent of the ADA. Staff has implemented online access and payment methods for citizens.

- **Increase use of social media to improve citizen connection to Town operations, and adopt related policies to govern social media use.**

Staff resources have been prioritized to more consistently communicate on social media platforms. The social media policy is currently with the Town Attorney for legal review.

- **Explore options beyond the website and social media for engaging the public**

On-going

4. Organize and prioritize Town resources needed to continue its current scope of operations and planning over the next 25 years.

Ms. Wilson stated she has asked the Town Engineer to give her a quote on infrastructure assessment that will take 3-4 months to complete. She suggested funding the assessment through the infrastructure reserve. Develop a plan and schedule by March 2021. Ms. Wilson saw this item as the Council's #1 priority for the coming year.

Council agreed to keep section 4 on the Work Plan to continue its scope and planning over the next 25 years.

- **Solid waste (related to CDD Landfill) and recycling ordinance amendments to reflect new disposal requirements and reinforce the solid waste hierarchy**

Awaiting operations to settle with the new disposal facility and anticipated changes. Staff expected to pick this up in the late spring; however, as the plant is currently temporarily closed and in default of its contractual obligations, this will be an on-going priority in the coming year.

- **Understanding the Town's assets and developing strategies and priorities for long-term maintenance and stewardship of these assets.**

Council has committed to engaging in an in depth discussion and future planning in the coming year related to operations, service delivery, and capital planning as well as developing plans to address WPCF funding.

5. To begin addressing the following goals of the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan:

a. Improve Orono's connectivity and safety of the traveling public.

Council agreed this is important and also for any grant opportunities for the Main Street sidewalks.

Ms. Wilson stated staff will continue drafting the RFP for engineering services and identify citizens to help with a staff advisory committee. They will come back to Council with a draft plan for the scope and budget. Staff will continue to work with the ACE Committee.

Council supported moving forward on this item as soon as staff can.

- **Continue the Heads Up (Pedestrian/Vehicle Safety) Program aimed at identifying and addressing safety concerns**

Most of the affordable strategies from this initiative have been adopted (signage, crosswalks, etc.). The reconfiguration of the North Main and College Avenue intersection is complete and streetlight project almost complete (99%). The Main Street sidewalk project has been partially funded with staff working to draft the RFP for engineering services and identify individuals to serve on a staff advisory committee that will provide feedback as staff works through the initial planning process.

- **Develop an official map that shows potential future connections including pedestrian only connections**

This is with Planning Staff and will be started as soon as their workload allows.

Ms. Wilson stated this will require community meetings and is on the Town Planner's work plan. His priority is to work on development issues (with ongoing ordinances).

b. Attract families to Orono by encouraging the availability of affordable housing.

Council agreed to continue moving forward on this issue.

- **Consider adoption of Village Overlay District that allows for smaller lots for new construction close to the center of Town (with owner occupancy deed restrictions).**

This item has been discussed on a few occasions with Councilors and staff is currently drafting ordinance language for the Comp Plan Implementation Committee to review at its next meeting (7/6).

Council agreed to keep it on the Work Plan.

c. Address safety and social concerns related to rental properties.

In general, staff and Council have been moving forward on several aspects of rental property regulations; however, staff has identified inconsistencies in the vision and approach leading it to schedule a conversation with Council about the large scope vision for regulating (or not) rental properties in Orono. It was expected that this conversation would occur in March and provide guidance to staff that will allow the proposed ordinance revisions to move forward for meaningful consideration this summer/fall. Given the public health emergency, this work was set aside and needs to be rescheduled for FY21.

- **Continue to revise the Rental Registration Ordinance.**
- **Adopt National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Codes, and revise Town ordinances, in order to provide for a more robust and risk centered life safety inspection program.**
- **Adopt ordinance revisions that address concerns in the “Disorderly Property” and “Fee for Police Services” sections to more effectively resolve unruly gatherings.**

Ms. Wilson stated staff has done a lot of work and there is more to do. Staff is working to facilitate a discussion with the Council and how it impacts services, etc. She noted this is a multi-step process with other ordinances to make it all fit. Staff will facilitate a discussion that incorporates these issues and more. Ms. Wilson suggested doing this after the community police listening sessions.

She suggested having the staff discussion on these topics in Nov, Dec or January. Council agreed.

d. Utilize Orono’s outdoor recreation features to attract people to live, work, and play in Orono.

- **Participate in a regional effort to improve trail connectivity in order to create a destination for outdoor recreation (hiking, biking, and paddling) enthusiasts.**

Draft easements and revocable licenses have been drafted and staff has been collaborating with neighboring communities; however, the public health emergency has stalled this work.

Ms. Wilson stated the next step is to knock on doors and have public meetings, which will be delayed due to Covid-19. Ms. Gardner requested having the trail map scanned and made available. Ms. Wilson noted the trails/map are still being worked on. **She suggested linking the Orono Land Trust trails to the website, which are the bulk of the trails.**

- **Develop plans to improve or construct recreation open space and amenities (including playgrounds).**

Staff has met multiple times with the Sailor neighborhood and once with the Webster neighborhood to discuss redevelopment/use of the existing Town owned open and recreational

space in these areas. This currently sits with Community Development and will be brought back for further discussions as soon as staff time and Council's workload allows.

Ms. Wilson suggested making this part of the Infrastructure Planning discussion. The Council agreed.

PROPOSED COUNCIL FORUMS/GATHERINGS FOR FY20:

○ **Meeting with UMaine President**

Staff made this request with the President's Chief of Staff - and, following no response, is slated to renew the request. It was met favorably which leads staff to think that it's a matter of schedule not desire to meet. This has been delayed in response to the public health emergency.

○ **Council Sponsored Community Civil Rights Presentation**

This has been assigned to staff to arrange - likely in the spring when weather will be more welcoming for a community gathering. This meeting was not held given the public health emergency. Council may want to set this aside as it works through other priorities related to social justice, equality, and inclusivity in the coming year.

○ **Joint Workshop with RSU #26 Board of Directors**

This will be scheduled - usually in early April. This meeting did not occur this year due to the public health emergency. It might make sense to meet with the RSU Board earlier in FY21 once its initial discussions about revenue forecasts, Town services, and capital investments have resulted in more formal planning.

○ **1st Annual Landlord/Council Forum**

Staff is awaiting the outcome of the rental regulatory discussions to schedule this meeting in hopes of having something Council can discuss with landlords.

Council supported all of the gathering/forums to be continued in the future.

PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED AND AGREED TO FOR FY20/21:

● **Building a Relationship between the Town and Penobscot Nation**

Educational Opportunities to Understand Orono's History and How it Impacts/Should be Represented in Current Operations and Marketing

Ms. Mehnert stated she will continue the work that was started before Covid-19.

● **Facilitated Listening Sessions and Action Planning regarding Orono Police Services**

This is already scheduled for August, September and October.

- **Formalizing an Annual Plan for Recognizing June as Pride Month**

Ms. Wilson will work with the Comp Plan/Community Development Chairs to identify a few people to help draft a proposal for the Community Development Committee/Council to consider by September. Council agreed.

- **Financial and Capital Planning & Stewardship**

Council agreed this would be a good Council Workshop item. Ms. Wilson will work with the Finance Chair and it would cover several meetings. Council agreed.

FEEDBACK FROM COUNCIL FOR FY21 COUNCIL WORK PLAN:

Several Councilors suggested that the current work plan was quite full with items left from FY20 and items that have already been identified as needs for FY21.

Several Councilors indicated a desire for the highest priority be placed upon:

- **Financial Planning - particularly developing a plan for infrastructure investments**
- **Community Discussions and Follow Up Related to Police Services**
- **Formal Plan for Annually Recognizing Pride Month**
- **Finishing the FY20 Work Plan Items**

Council agreed the above items have previously been addressed.

- **Another item echoed by a few Councilors was the implementation of a policy providing guidelines for Council's process related to the adoption of proclamations.**

Ms. Wilson stated she would draft a policy for Finance and Operations to review on guidelines for how Council decides to use its government speech. Council agreed.

- **Review and discussion of the suggestions Councilor Osher proposed to improve our environment for LGBTQIA people and other residents who are members of often marginalized groups.**

The Council agreed with including this with the Civil Rights or Social Justice Committee that will report to the Town Council, instead of having another group.

- **Presentations by staff and solar energy companies and discussion of how Orono will reduce dependence on fossil fuel generated electricity and increase the % of Solar electricity used. Creation of a goal (when we'll be collecting or purchasing that energy) and a timeline to reach that goal.**

Council agreed this would be discussed at the Ad Hoc Council Environment Committee.

- Update on the progress of the consultant that was going to evaluate the Town's buildings and energy use to identify ways to lower the Town's C footprint. Creation of reduction goals and plan and timeline to reach those goals.

Ms. Wilson stated Council discussed having an energy audit last year which was moved to FY22 due to the lack of funds.

- Creation of a Civil Rights or Social Justice Committee that will report to the Town Council. This committee would advise the council on how to do better. Ideally, the committee will include POC and members of the tribes and LGBTQIA folks who are residents of Orono. The committee would meet regularly, and evaluate our practices with an anti-racism and anti-homophobia lens. Statement of the goal and a timeline to reach that goal. (Councilor Osher sent an email to Council regarding this item.)

The Council agreed to the creation of the committee.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STAFF WORK PLAN/PRIORITIES:

- Quarterly Updates to Council on Revaluation Project

To the appropriate committee.

- Monthly Review and Discussion of Financial Reports and Tax/Sewer Collections
Finance Committee

To the Finance and Operations Committee.

- More Frequent Updates on Operations (Including Stormwater, Landfill, and WPCF License Compliance Efforts)

To the Finance and Operations Committee.

Ms. Wilson provided an update on the discussion with Revision Energy regarding net metering contracts that would include the school and water district. The next step would require writing an RFP for an energy power purchase agreement, which would require help.

To the appropriate committee.

- Make a Final Push for Foreclosed Property Redemption or Sales (Calendar Year 2020)

Council agreed to having the Work Plan Updated for adoption at the July 13th Council Meeting.

7. Brief Town Manager Report

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

- Nadeau/Savoy Park - Boat launch available to the public. Nadeau/Savoy Park available to Orono residents only. Staff will be discussing the changes with Alan Nadeau. Ms. Wilson noted that Council will need to develop a policy; she will put this item on the June 29th Council agenda to discuss further.

- First Amendment to the EnvisioNet TIF - The application has been sent to DECD for review and acceptance.
- PILOT from The Housing Foundation - A Payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) has been received from The Housing Foundation.
- Council Meetings for July and August - The Town meetings have garnered quite a few people that are watching the Council meetings on Zoom. Ms. Wilson would like to start up Committee meetings for July and August. The meetings would start at 4PM. Council agreed.
- Comp Plan Committee Meeting to be held on July 6th at 4PM via Zoom.

8. Adjournment

The Council Workshop adjourned at 6:34pm.

Minutes are not verbatim. A video-recorded version is available on the Town's website at www.orono.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy W. Ward
Executive Assistant