



Presque Isle City Council Meeting

February 7, 2024

6:00 p.m.

Presque Isle Council Chambers

PICDA Meeting at 5:45 p.m.

Call to Order - Roll Call

Present: Councilors C. Green, G. Nelson, D. Cyr, H. King, J. Carroll, Deputy Chairman J. Willette and Deputy Chairman K. Freeman
Interim City Manager Lewis Cousins and City Clerk Kimberly Finnemore were also present.

Pledge of Allegiance

Public Hearing

1. Approval to Amend Chapter 13 Litter and Illegal Dumping Ordinance.

Chairman K. Freeman opened the public hearing at 6:05 p.m.

Interim City Manager L. Cousins said After reviewing Chapter 13, Litter and Illegal Dumping Ordinance with Fire Chief Darrell White, it was determined that a revision needs to be made. The revision is to add #4 under D of Section 3 Health Nuisances which states: All open burning requires approval from the Presque Isle Fire Department and a written burn permit. Staff recommends approval.

Chief D. White said the permit will cost \$10.00 a year.

No Citizens comments.

Chairman K. Freeman closed the public hearing at 6:08 p.m.

BE IT RESOLVED by Deputy Chairman J. Willette, seconded by Councilor H. King to adopt the Amended Chapter 13 Litter and Illegal Dumping Ordinance.

Vote: 7-0

Citizen Comments

No citizens comment.

Consent Agenda

2. Approve minutes from December 27, 2023, January 3, 2024, January 11, 2024 and January 18, 2024
3. Approve 2023 Warrant #47-#51 totaling \$1,702,136.71 and 2024 Warrant #1-#2 totaling \$1,414,461.97

BE IT RESOLVED by Councilor C. Green, seconded by Chairman K. Freeman to approve consent agenda #2-#3 as presented.

Vote: 7-0

Old Business

4. City Hall Update

Interim City Manager L. Cousins stated that there are still some outstanding projects at City Hall renovation project. We need a new Councilor representative since Mike Chasse is no longer on the Council.

BE IT RESOLVED by Chairman K. Freeman, seconded by Councilor J. Carroll to appoint Councilor Hank King to the City Hall renovation committee.

Vote: 7-0

5. Nomination of Councilors to PIIC Board

BE IT RESOLVED by Councilor C. Green, seconded by Deputy Chairman J. Willette to table the nomination of Councilors to the PIIC Board until the March Council meeting.

Vote:7-0

New Business

6. Announcement of New City Manager.

Chairman K. Freeman thanked Martin Puckett for the 12 years he was our City Manager and Lewis Cousins that has been our Interim City Manager for the last few months.

Chairman K. Freeman announced Tyler Brown as the new City Manager a native of Vermont and current resident of Georgia.

Chairman K. Freeman read a few things about Tyler Brown, a seasoned professional with 20 years of progressive leadership experience at Delta Airlines. Has been proven to be a key contributor to the company's success. Resided in New York his recent role saw him managing over 230 departures daily. Leading a team of over twelve hundred dedicated employees. Affectively with 16 business partners, and serving over thirty thousand customers per day. Tyler's extensive experience includes successful oversight of large operations, skillfully negotiations with a mired of local, federal and union resources. He has a reputation for being a strong leader. With an impressive track record managing multiple large-scale construction projects. Notably he led Delta's acclaimed redesigns in San Jose and Chicago. With the latter he won numerous awards for his innovated designs and functionality. His dedication and leadership have been recognized with in company earning him 2009 Team Excellence Award, and a spot in the 2017 Chairman's Club a prestigious group representing the top one percent of Delta employees. Outside his professional life Tyler's passionate about sports, especially hockey. Which he not only enjoys playing but also coaching. He is committed to nurturing the next generation of leaders thru active mentoring. A fitness enthusiast Tyler often spends his free time running keeping his body as agile as his mind. Tyler shares a blissful married life with his wonderful wife Kristine of 16 years. Both from New England. Tyler from Ludlow Vermont, and Kristine from Bolton Massachusetts. Kristine is a travel consultant for the United Nations, working remotely. She is an avid reader, joy in gardening and pottery. Tyler and Kristine are proud parents of two children Eli that is 14 and Margaret is 12. Eli a budding entrepreneur and computer gaming enthusiast will be entering High School in the fall. Eli is also a Lacrosse player. Margaret is a budding chef, pottery maker. Margaret will be joining the 8th grade, has a keen interest in true crime mysteries. The Brown family truly embodies quite a diverse interest, united by a strong bond of love and support.

Chairman K. Freeman welcomed the new City Manager Tyler Brown to the podium.

Tyler Brown thanked the Council for the opportunity to serve the City. Tyler went over some of the highlights from Chairman K. Freeman's Bio of Tyler. Tyler said he is looking forward to working with the Citizens and the City of Presque Isle employees. Tyler thanked everyone for the warm welcome.

Chairman K. Freeman stated that there were 11 applications. 6 people were interviewed. Said they had applicants from Texas, Georgia, Vermont, Presque Isle, Ellsworth, Portland and Cincinnati. A lot of different skill sets. Very interesting backgrounds on many of the individuals.

7. Announcement of New Police Chief.

Chairman K. Freeman announce the new Police Chief Chris Hayes.

Chief Hayes thanked the City for trusting him with the job. Chief Hayes also thanked the Council for their support.

BE IT RESOLVED by Councilor C. Green, seconded by Councilor H. King to appoint Chris Hayes as the City of Presque Isle's Police Chief.

Vote: 7-0

8. City Lighting Upgrades.

Interim City Manager L. Cousins said there are two parts. Chief Hayes and the Police Department has done a lighting review and correlation to crime (The review is in the Council Packets). 2nd part is stickily Central Drive.

Memo from Dana Fowler, P.E., City Engineer The City Manager has requested that I provide information regarding the cost of installing new street lights on Central Drive from Parsons Street intersection to Edgemont Drive intersection. This issue was first raised during the 2024 budget process in October 2023.

Versant Power was contacted because they own nearly all of the approximately 750 LED street lights in the City. As a general rule, Versant owns the pole and light fixture and performs all maintenance and repairs. Versant stated that they would install wood poles with aerial electric and LED lights on Central Drive for a price not to exceed \$41,000. A written quote would require a 10% non-refundable down payment. Versant would own all of the infrastructure and would be responsible for insurance costs, maintenance, repairs, and replacement. The \$41,000 fee would cover engineering and construction cost, but electrical usage costs would be the City's responsibility at approximately \$11 per month per fixture. The city does own some street lights and these are maintained and repaired by LaJoie Electric & Control Service, Incorporated. LaJoie provided a quote for 10 new aluminum poles, bases and light fixtures for \$98,950. The street lights would be powered by wire in underground conduit, which would be more aesthetically pleasing. The city would be responsible for "ground work prep and material". These lights would be similar to the existing street lights on Maysville Street by Aroostook Centre Mall. The city would be responsible for insurance costs, maintenance, repairs, and replacement plus the metered electrical cost.

The price quotes above are now 2 ½-3 months old, so they may no longer be accurate. However, they are a good indicator of the relative construction cost and a good comparison of the additional cost for metal poles (versus wood) and underground electric (versus aerial).

Chief Hayes read his introduction. In the middle of October, 2023, I was asked to assess the city-wide lighting situation for the city of Presque Isle. Over the years they have been complaints from Presque Isle citizens in regard to how poorly the city is illuminated at night, especially in certain areas and zones. The majority of citizen concerns were in regard to the residential streets, parking lots and the bike path.

As a patrol officer for many years and patrolling on nights, I was able to note how badly illuminated certain areas of the city were at night. It became even more of an issue when it rained due to the wet pavements absorbing the light. The poor lighting made it difficult to identify house numbers as well as citizens walking on the streets, especially if they were wearing dark clothing.

I spoke to my patrol division and asked them to assist me with this project by patrolling every street in Presque Isle and rating the illumination given off by the city light source. I asked patrol to break into squads and divide up the city into zones. We made sure that no streets were missed and the evaluation were done between 3 and 4 in the morning every night, depending on call volume. I set a time line of 14 days to accomplish this task. The patrol division rated illumination under five categories, poor, need improvement, adequate, good and excellent.

Once the lighting review was complete, I investigated if there was any correlation between crime rates and insufficient lighting in the city.

The end goal of this project is to provide the city with the department's opinion about the lighting situation. This is not an expert's opinion, however, as officers we do spend half our lives working nights and have a good understanding on ineffective lighting when it comes to preventing crime and investigating crime. We will evaluate the lighting situation in the city and in addition use crime statistics and forensic mapping analysis to see if there is correlation between increased crime rates and inadequate lighting in our city. To determine the areas with the greatest need for illumination and to investigate the correlation with crime, the Presque Isle Police Department utilized Spillman. Spillman is our in-house crime reporting system. We used this system to research property crimes most effected by poor illumination (Burglary, robbery, criminal mischief, theft) during nighttime hours over the span of 2023. We will also run a comparison between car crashes in poorly illuminated areas to those in illuminated areas to check if there are any notable discrepancies.

There are at least 19 poorly illuminated streets in the city of Presque Isle that should be investigated by the city for possible improvement. General perception of safety and actual safety is extremely important to a person's well-being and mental state. It can govern how they conduct their everyday activities and business ventures. A well illuminated city has the perception of safety. This mindset allows citizens to conduct business longer becoming more productive and spending more on leisure (i.e. restaurants and retail shopping) which would be a financial benefit to the city. Improved lighting signals community investment leading to increased community pride, community cohesiveness, and informal social control.

Dana Fowler spoke on his memo(above)

Councilor J. Carroll asked if Versant was interested or capable of putting in metal poles and underground wiring? Councilor J. Carroll like that versant maintains the poles and all the cost associated to keep them up.

Dana Fowler stated that there has be no monies set aside specifically in this year's budget for the lighting.

Council discussed pros and cons of each style pole.

BE IT RESOLVED by Councilor C. Green, seconded by Councilor J. Carroll to update quotes for 10 poles thru Versant and LaJoie Electric & Control Service.

Vote: 7-0

9. Children's Museum of Aroostook County.

Interim City Manager L. Cousins introduced Elise Perrault Browning. The City received a letter from Mrs. Browning on February 5, 2024 wanting some funding for a New Children's Museum.

Elise Perrault Browning memorandum. Grant request: \$100,000 toward building purchase

Dear members of the City Council, The Children's Museum of Aroostook County (CMAC) would like to request assistance from the City of Presque Isle as it seeks to purchase a building downtown Presque Isle, specifically the "Bonanza" restaurant located at 725 Main St. Local businesses and donors are providing exceptional support to this endeavor; however, the funds pledged so far do not cover the necessary capital to purchase this permanent location.

A Children's museum, as described in this packet, is an essential service present in any thriving community. In Bangor, The Maine Discovery Museum was the nexus of the city's revitalization effort 20 years ago and continues to generate more than \$2 million per year of economic windfall in the areas of tourism, education, and family-centered life. We believe this endeavor is essential to the mission of the City to maintain its regional significance and make Presque Isle a safe, prosperous, and attractive city in which to live, work, and to visit.

In this packet, please find a brief overview of the CMAC's vision as well as financial projections. It is our hope that our community, seeing the benefits of this initiative, will participate whole heartedly in the mission of CMAC so we can become prosperous, long-lasing initiative for the City of Presque Isle's constituents.

Chairman K. Freeman stated that the Council has a goal setting meeting coming up and this would be something Council can talk about at that time.

10. 2023 Airport Department Review.

Scott Wardwell the Airport Director gave a brief department review to Council. Stated that the airport is still seeing an increase in passenger boarding, Passenger arriving, and paid parking from 2022 to 2023 year. Annual boarding's were up by 25% in 2023 from 2022 year. We had the best year for boarding's since the year 2000.

11. Approve 2023 Budget Actuals.

Brad Turner Finance Director explained

At the close of the 2023 Budget Year the City will be able to transfer roughly 1.3 million dollars back into the General Fund due to underspent budgets and increases in revenues. In 2023 the revenue for the City was \$437,404 above the budgeted amount.

The Department of Economic Development had revenue of \$232,228 which was \$151,771 more than anticipated. The Rec Department had \$51,639 more than anticipated due to revenue generated from the Forum Building. Revenue Sharing from the State had increased in 2023 and we received \$266,160 above the State projection. When passing the 2024 budget the Council voted to use just over \$730,000 dollars of this money to go towards the budget and decrease the burden on the taxpayers.

After the close of the 2023 budget year the expenses were \$936,202 under the amount budgeted. We had several departments that weren't fully staffed and ended up \$523,277 under the budgeted amount for compensation and benefits. During the tax commitment it was voted to increase overlay to \$268,492 and the City only used \$17,170 creating this line item to be \$251,322 under budget. At year-end if any of the departmental budgets as approved by City Council are overspent, the City Council must act on these amounts. Based upon preliminary numbers for the year 2023, eight departments have over-spent their budgets:

- DECD--\$6,533; Due to a staff member getting done and paying out the accrued vacation time.
- Finance--\$5,425; An increase in our Audit costs due to the single audit.
- Fire--\$49,655; This was due to an increase in the overtime costs.
- Library--\$3,356; An increase in wages due to new hires.
- Public Safety Bldg--\$5,994; An increase in the building repairs and maint. Costs for 2023.
- Insurance--\$1,897; Property insurance increase for new PD Cruisers.
- City Clerk--\$1,948; An increase in expenses during the election season.
- Echo Lake--\$721; An increase in some of the repair costs for 2023

Based upon preliminary results of operations (Attachment A)

- Expenses were \$936,202 below budget
- Revenues were \$437,404 above budget, for a net of
- \$1,373,606 below budget for the City Budget

These numbers are preliminary and unaudited; there may be additional adjustments but they should be minor. Based upon the City's overall performance in 2023, it is my recommendation that the City Council approve these amounts that were over-spent by the individual departments.

BE IT RESOLVED by Councilor J. Carroll, seconded by Deputy Chairman J. Willette that the City authorize the following departmental over-spending for 2023

DECD - \$6,533

Finance - \$5,425

Fire - \$49,655

Library - \$3,356

Public Safety Bldg. - \$5,994
Insurance - \$1,897
City Clerk - \$1,948
Echo Lake - \$721

Vote: 7-0

12. Property Tax Stabilization Law Update.

Interim City Manager L. Cousin stated the Property Tax Stabilization Law that was affective 2023 tax commitment is no longer in place. The expected 100% reimbursement municipalities were promised at the onset of Public Law, 36 M.R.S.A. § 6281 (5) The Property Tax Stabilization law, has been reduced to 56% due to lack of funding in the state budget. The anticipated 100% reimbursement to the city is \$10,279.49.

The Legislature and Governor added \$15,000,000 to the fund for reimbursements to the municipalities for the lost revenue in 2023. The claims submitted from the municipalities has totaled \$26,500,000 as of 1/18/2024.

Maine Revenue is requesting an additional \$15,000,000 be added to the upcoming supplemental state budget to cover the shortfall.

Suggested Resolve: Contact Legislative Representatives, Send written input to Legislative Representatives.

Interim City Manager L. Cousin passed a letter around for City Council to sign to send to Elected Representatives.

13. Office Space Lease at City Hall.

Interim City Manager L. Cousins informed Council. The Aroostook County Sherriff's Office has contacted the City asking if we would have an office space they could rent. They have a need for a person who works as a Bail Supervisor to have a local place to work privately with access to WIFI. We have two vacant offices on the second floor suitable for their intended purpose.

BE IT RESOLVED by Deputy Chairman J. Willette, seconded by Councilor H. King to approve the lease of office space in City Hall to the Aroostook County Sheriff's Department.

Vote: 7-0

14. 2023 Aroostook Visitation Statistics.

Kim Smith of Aroostook County of Tourism did a brief presentation on the 2023 Visitation statistics for Aroostook County according to Maine Office on Tourism.

15. Homeless Services of Aroostook Tax Abatement.

Interim City Manager L. Cousins presented the Council. The Homeless Shelter of Aroostook was gifted a taxable property from Northern Maine Community College in August of 2022. They were unaware of the status of the property as taxable and did receive a bill for the 2023 commitment.

Upon receipt of the bill they called the assessing office and questioned the status. They were informed the property was always taxed and because no exemption request has ever been made it remained on the tax role as assessable. An exemption request was filed immediately and approved for 2024.

Management of the shelter is requesting relief from the 2023 tax due to an omission as allowed by M.R.S.A. Title 36 § 841 (1). The amount of tax is \$5,412.70 plus any accrued interest.

BE IT RESOLVED by Councilor C. Green, seconded by Councilor J. Carroll to abate the 2023 property taxes for Homeless Services of Aroostook.

Vote: 7-0

16. Goal Setting.

Interim City Manager's Report

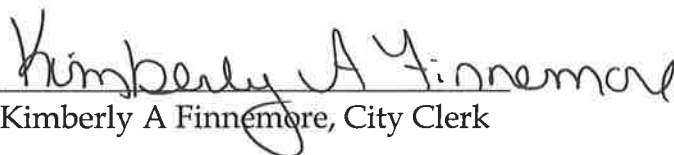
Announcements

Adjournment

BE IT RESOLVED by Councilor C. Green, seconded by Councilor J. Willette to adjourn at 6:30 p.m.

Vote: 5-0

Executive Session

Attested by: 
Kimberly A Finnemore, City Clerk