



**TOWN COUNCIL
WORKSHOP
MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 22, 2011**

Mark Lunt, Chair District 1 2012
Lori Pomelow, Vice Chair At Large 2012
Roger Cote, At Large 2011
Michael Bowie, District 2 2012
Roger Bickford, District 2 2013
Fern Larochelle, Jr., At Large 2013
Gina Mason, District 1 2013

CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE TO THE FLAG. The Chairman, Mark Lunt, called the meeting to order and waived the pledge of allegiance to the flag at 7:00 PM.

ROLL CALL. Members present were Councilors Larochelle, Lunt, Pomelow, and Bickford. Councilor Mason, Bowie, Cote were excused. Also present were Stephen Eldridge, Town Manager; Lisa Ward, Councilor elect; Miriam Morgan-Alexander, Appeals Board; Steve Curtis, Recreation Committee; David Bowie, Ethics Panel; Justin Liudvinaitis, Trails Commission; John Wierzbicki, Budget Advisory Board; Donald Fellows, Budget Advisory Board; Gordon Curtis, Recreation Committee; J. Michael Huston, Assessment Review Board; Jeff Ganong, Planning Board Member; and two other citizens in the audience.

OTHER BUSINESS

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Mr. Eldridge said every year we budget the same amount for some of these boards and committees without really knowing what our needs are so that's one reason we are here. The MTM Board meets every month and discusses what their needs are, and that is how the capital budget is formed. Other committees may need funding, which the Council needs to be made aware of.

Councilor Larochelle said the last meeting was really informative, because a lot of times as Councilors we talk about our boards and committees, but really we may not know what they do. During budget time, we talk about professional development and question whether or not it's worthwhile for every department and so we don't know what's happening, who is using it, or whether there is a need for it. New people on boards and committees may need to be trained or informed about what they are or should be doing so funds for that should be budgeted.

Councilor Larochelle indicated that it would be helpful to the Council going into the budget season to be aware of the concerns and goals of the boards and committees. He said that many good people work hard on these committees only to have the Council say there is no funding available. With better communication those situations could be avoided. He said it is the job of the Council to know what the committees are doing. He said the reason so many people leave committees is because they find they cannot accomplish what they wanted to do. The committees need to know what their budgets are.

Mr. Eldridge said the Planning Board and Appeals Board members are pretty proactive and they attend quite a few workshops put on by AVCOG or MMA, which is very constructive.

Councilor Mason said we need to look at complementing each other, too. Although each board and committee has a certain goal or goals, she said, but I think town wide we need to start looking at projects we can accomplish together and knowing what everybody's goals are would be helpful in that aspect. For example the track grant was an accomplishment completed by several different groups of people. It's something the school could use and we as a community would have. There may be other committees with different projects they want to accomplish that we as a Council can work with and support.

Gordon Curtis said the MTM Board was married into the Recreation Department several years ago. At that time, he said, I thought it would limit the Committee, but it seems to be working fine.

Justin Liudvinatis said the trails budget is funded through the Public Works budget who buys doggie bags, mows lawns, and provides signage. Some projects have been funded by grants. He said he didn't know if having a budget would help right now, but as the trail system gets larger that would be something to think about. Money helps get projects moving, buying signage, but we probably do not need a budget at this time, maybe when our trail system is larger, or we expand we could need money for more maintenance items and mowing. There will be a lot of grass.

He said this is a volunteer group, they are trying to be proactive, and have been concentrating more on planning instead of keeping track of where the next engineering report is coming from. We are working with Woodard & Curran and many others. He said Ryan does an amazing job and that's why things are moving forward so well. He said our committee needs some more projects.

Mr. Eldridge said you work very well with Public Works. He said your committee needs to share their plans with the Council. There is a lot of planning that's tied together with everyone. For instance, discussions with the Planning Board are tied in with the work that Councilor Mason is doing with the downtown revitalization group and economic development. It is important that everyone is on the same page and heading towards the same end product.

Councilor Larochelle said last year the Council discussed snow blowing the trails and snowmobile usage, when the Snowmobile Club and Trails Commission could have played a bigger role in that decision. The Council doesn't really have all the information we should, there's a lot of background history that's needed to go along with making these decisions and we need to lean on these groups more.

Councilor Pomelow said it would be helpful, if there's an issue we know is coming before the Council, to make sure these committee chairs deliver the information so the Council can weigh in on it from that perspective. Also, the Council needs to know what has been earmarked in some of these budgets, the MTM Committee budget is in with the Recreation Department budget and Trails Committee budget is in with the Public Works budget so the Council needs to know what it is in these particular lines you want to accomplish so if we are going to cutting a few thousand dollars in that budget we know exactly what the significance or impact of cutting these line will be. She said, for example, I did not know that the Trails budget was tucked away into the Public Works budget.

Mr. Eldridge suggested the committee chairs let him know when a potential issue arises that could become a complaint so he can place it on the Council agenda to be discussed before it becomes a complaint. This way everyone can come prepared to talk about it before it becomes an issue. The committees can keep the Council updated this way.

Councilor Larochelle said he liked the pay-as-you go plan and recommended we use the revenues generated from the building, such as is the case with the MTM building, to keep that building up as any business does. Merging isn't always the best thing in every circumstance.

Gordon Curtis said he would like to see the MTM Board remain separate from the Recreation Department. Councilor Larochelle said the question is whether the MTM Board is for the MTM Building or is the Rec for the MTM building. Again, even if you keep them separate, there is no easy answer, because how do you separate the money so that the money generated from that building helps pay for that building. Mr. Curtis said I don't think it would be too hard to do; rental money from renting the rooms is MTM revenue and recreation program revenue is their money.

Councilor Larochelle said some people have said if we don't support fixing the MTM roof then we are not supporting the Recreation Department, but he said it's really not the same issue, but it is, because it's merged into one. He said he would like to see the MTM building paying its own way,

because it would be easier to sell to the townspeople. The only way to do that would be to keep the revenue coming in from it separate, but that's one of those decisions where everyone needs to be involved because we do not want to make that decision on our own without being informed.

Miriam Morgan-Alexander said from an accounting standpoint she agreed with Councilor Larochelle that the revenue generated from the building should go towards keeping the building up and even if you are renting the building to the Recreation Department, the Recreation Department should have to pay you for the use of that building, which would be used to maintain the building; it's actually a paper shuffle, but you need to make sure you have control and that the building is maintained. I agree with Councilor Larochelle totally.

Mr. Eldridge said would it be a fair question to ask that the Recreation Committee and the MTM Board put together a plan to do what Councilor Larochelle has suggested, to create a separate Community Center versus Recreation Department and to show how you might structure that.

Steve Curtis said it should be separate, because at times things are brought up to us about stuff in the MTM building that doesn't concern us, but when we try to push it away it still comes back. It's easy enough to separate the accounting part.

Councilor Larochelle said there is a lot going on with the Rec and it is a very big part of our community and it is not my intent to mess that up, but you would think with all the money coming in there that there would be some money to fix up the building. You would think the building should be self sufficient.

Steve said we consider programs like Zumba and the fitness programs part of our business because we advertise them, maybe not the Driver's Ed part of it.

Councilor Mason said shouldn't these committees sit down together to determine what parts are theirs and what's hanging out there that nobody really knows what belongs to who. She said that determination of what is MTM and what is Rec needs to be made by them, not the Council. It would be nice for each committee to come back to the Council with a list of what they expect of itself.

Councilor Larochelle said the high school facility's committee put together a new capital plan where money doesn't go back into the general fund. It is actually earmarked for building maintenance or building improvement. I know we can't do that for the Rec Department right now.

Mr. Eldridge said they take in about \$80,000 a year in total, which includes programs and rentals. That \$80,000 is actually quite small and would be pretty easy to take out and put into a capital reserve account. Councilor Larochelle asked if a capital reserve account could be set up for the MTM Center so that this money could be set aside year after year and saved for a big project. Mr. Eldridge said, yes, but it would require a Charter change so it would not lapse back into surplus and could be saved for that purpose from one year to the next. We could set that up for a vote on in June if you want.

John Wierzbicki said we need to look at the paperwork side of all that. The budget setup is already very complicated. Is this going to make things more complicated? Mr. Eldridge said basically you are breaking out the revenue and then showing it as a capital expense. He said most of the maintenance or general repairs would be in the Town Buildings budget, which includes all of our buildings, but capital projects are always broken out separately within those departments. Mr. Wierzbicki said that would simplify things for us. If they are easier to find, then that would make it clearer for everyone.

Councilor Lunt asked the Planning Board if they anticipate any future expenses. Jeff Ganong said last week we held a workshop to look at the Comprehensive Plan. We came up with a list of objectives. One of them was the gateway on Route 196. Some things have already been addressed

under the new Access Management Ordinance, but we talked about downtown esthetics, scenic preservation, and workability. As for the budget, we have no idea how much these items will cost the town. We have no idea what it costs the town to have AVCOG works with us, which is one of the things we would like to know.

Mr. Eldridge said over the last three and a half years we have spent between \$15,000 and \$18,000 for their help and guidance on these ordinances, not counting the annual \$9,000 in dues we pay. We pay by the hour when we use them.

Councilor Larochelle said I understood that ordinary services and phone calls are covered under the \$9,000. Mr. Eldridge said, yes, but when you call them for specific ordinances like the Wellhead Protection Ordinance, then we pay by the hour after the first hour.

Mr. Eldridge said this all comes down to planning ahead. The Department Heads are currently working on a planning SWOT analysis and goal settings. My goal is to have the Council finish up on that in January or February so that when we go into the budget we will have identified goals to accomplish. Mr. Benson is looking at smart growth and planning and you have done that through zoning, but at the same time we need direction what kind of businesses we might like to see.

Mr. Fellows said Jeff Ganong and I have an ongoing discussion about the role of the Planning Board. If we are going to have more of a role than just giving conditional approvals, and maybe draft some ordinances and pick our own goals, then I'm the kind of person who wants to know what authority we have? What I've found is that the Planning Board can be a Comprehensive Planning Authority, but it has to be specifically designated that by the Town Council. I asked Steve and found out that we have not been given that authority so we have to define what relationship we do have. If the Planning Board wants to get proactive with the downtown redevelopment, then where do we stand and how can we do that.

Councilor Larochelle said it's really hard for volunteer groups to take on something like the gateway project. It would be great if the Planning Board got involved, because they know the ordinances in ways that these separate smaller groups do not.

Councilor Mason said in today's paper an article tells about Auburn dealing with that same gateway issue. Gateways are very important to communities. People remember the aesthetics when coming into a community and it drives other things in the community. The Comprehensive Plan presented in 2007 I feel it is outdated now and some of these things have already been accomplished.

Mr. Fellows said the Comprehensive Plan is supposed to be readopted every ten years. In the meantime, we looked at it too when we were doing the ordinances and there actually are some changes to it pending out there, but they are all pending changing formalizing the zoning which is about halfway through that process right now so when that's done the next thing you get is the Comprehensive Plan.

Councilor Mason said often towns do the visioning process and the planning process before they do the Comprehensive Plan. We didn't put a lot of planning into what we wanted to do with the trails or how we wanted our gateway to look. Most towns do those kinds of planning things before they complete their Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Eldridge said Lisbon is being looked at very hard. At a business leaders meeting a few weeks ago I heard that our site plan review process is much easier to go through than Topsham, Brunswick, or Freeport. We have good ordinances and yet we have not made it really difficult for business to come here. Business leaders are looking at our community since Lisbon is the only town around the area that's going to have a business park. Hopefully, as the economy improves we will see a lot more activity here, not just in the business park, but in Lisbon Falls and the Village. If you have a plan in place it makes it more advantageous for businesses to come here.

Councilor Mason said we are very lucky to have these things in place, but we need to continue to formulate those a little bit more.

Councilor Larochelle said if the Planning Board wants to get involved with the Comprehensive Plan, then how does that work?

Mr. Eldridge said the Council can either appoint a Comprehensive Planning Committee to review the plan or document as it is or, as Mr. Fellows pointed out to me, the Council can assign that task to the Planning Board. You can have the Planning Board or Comprehensive Planning Committee begin with looking at it to see what has already been accomplished so that material can be removed. When you start setting goals they are probably going to be very different from what is in the Plan now.

Mr. Fellows said this afternoon Jeff Ganong mentioned a really good idea about the Route 196 corridor. It was like stabbing in dark, on the Planning Board's part, to have a goal beyond doing conditional approvals, and if we do take on the role as the Comprehensive Planning Authority, then it needs to be officially done. At the same time, it can't be all on the shoulders of the volunteers, we need a consultant of some kind contract with a Planner.

Mr. Eldridge said yes, and you need to involve everyone sitting at this table, because this planning will impact the MTM Board, Trails Commission, the Recreation Department, Public Works, this building and so on, so everybody needs to weigh in on this and be a part of the process.

Councilor Mason said signage was mentioned earlier and this is something the revitalization group has looked into quite heavily. The trail comes out downtown by the Railroad Tavern. There's a huge plan for signage downtown. We had someone come in for that, plus we got a grant. She asked if the Trail Commission even knew about that.

Justin Liudvinatis said, yes, and we also have volunteers from Bates College working on signage for us for our trail. They will be making a presentation on their progress at next Tuesday's meeting at 7PM. The focus for these college students is economic development.

Councilor Larochelle said once we had a discussion about these gateway signs being in disrepair and then we found out that they were under the responsibility of the Economic Development person, who at the time was Rosie Bradley who wasn't even aware of the signs. That shows us how certain things get done, but are never followed up on. Mr. Eldridge said that brings up a good point, like the Economic Developer being in charge of all of the gardens, which is really not a function of that job and should fall under the Park Ranger or Public Works so we are look at restructuring some things to have someone else do that.

There are two vacancies on the Recreation Committee, one on the MTM Board, and one alternate on the Planning Board.

It was decided that a template should be put together for each committee to complete and return to the Manager's office.

It was recommended before Council appointments are made that applications be forwarded to the Chair of the board or committee first and that applicants must attend that board or committee meeting to meet the board or committee.

It was recommended that we re-write the Budget Advisory Board's job description in order to give it more substance.

It was recommended that Department Heads communicate better with boards and committees.

ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 9:10 **PM**.

Stephen Eldridge, Town Manager

Date Approved: _____