

Town of Brunswick, Maine

**Finance Committee Meeting
Thursday, July 21, 2022 at 6:00 PM
85 Union Street – Council Chambers
and by electronic devices**

Meeting Minutes (Approved)

Elected Officials: Councilor Christopher Watkinson
Councilor Sande Updegraph
Councilor Kathy Wilson

Staff: Julia Henze
Branden Perreault
Taylor Burns

Other: Rob Pontau, BSD General Manager
Charlie Priest, BSD Trustee Board Chair

1. Acknowledgement that meeting was properly noticed

CW called meeting to order. JH confirmed the meeting was properly noticed.

2. Adjustments to agenda / Public comment

None.

3. Review of meeting minutes from 6/23/22

SU moved to accept minutes from 6/23/22. Seconded by CW. Approved unanimously.

4. Brunswick Sewer District Trustee compensation

JH outlined the items provided in the packet, beginning with the request from BSD to the Town Council to approve an increase of the Trustee annual stipend.

- a. BSD request to increase Trustee compensation
- b. BSD Charter, Part 2, Section 13 (Trustees, p3)
- c. Bylaws amendment as proposed (Article VIII: Salaries & Compensation, p3)
- d. Surveys of the stipends received by other elected councils and boards

Rob Pontau explained that the current annual stipend has been in place since 1986. The request is to double that amount, similar to the increases made to the Town Council and School Board effective January 2020.

Charlie Priest explained that the BSD charter requires that the Trustee compensation be recommended by the Trustees, and approved by the Brunswick Town Council.

The FC reviewed the items provided, and asked questions about the composition of the BSD Board of Trustees, the increase in activity of the BSD since 1986, and reviewed the surveys of other councils and boards. CW noted that the BSD stipend is paid by meeting attendance, and asked about average actual annual amounts. RP and CP confirmed that Trustees are active to the same extent, and receive stipends accordingly.

Councilor Wilson moved to recommend that the Town Council approve the BSD's request to increase the Trustee's annual compensation effective January, 2023. Seconded by Councilor Updegraph. Approved unanimously by the FC.

5. LD 290 – An Act to Stabilize Property Taxes for Individuals 65 Years of Age or Older Who Own a Homestead for at Least 10 Years

Taylor Burns, the Brunswick Tax Assessor, gave a presentation on the Property Tax Stabilization Program, outlining the process by which the law passed. He described the eligibility requirements and the guidance currently available from the State. He listed the concerns with the bill, pointed out the challenges anticipated with administering the program, and the questions still remaining.

The FC asked questions and discussed the impact on the Town. Some of the concerns discussed by the FC:

1. The requirement to re-apply each year will likely present problems and require significant outreach by Assessing Department.
2. Transfers from other towns will require coordination between Assessors.
3. The process to adjust tax bills will have to be done manually.
4. The reimbursement from the State may not continue.

6. Review Master Schedule of Revenues, Fees and Fines

JH explained that the Schedule of Fees is part of the Code of Ordinances, and is reviewed by the Finance Committee each year to identify areas that might need update. Most of the fees have been updated within the past 7 years, and don't seem out of line, but JH identified Ch. 14 Streets, Sidewalks, and suggested to ask the Town Engineer to look at the fees for replacement of street openings if the restoration is to be done by public works crew. As these were established in 2015, and are likely based on material costs, it would be appropriate to review the fee amounts.

SU asked about Ch. 17 Weapons - concealed firearm permits. JH noted that these permits are no longer required in Maine. BP confirmed that for people 21 or older, no permit is required.

SU asked about Ch. 9 Emergency Medical Fees. JH stated that these were last updated in 2019, and the fees are currently higher than the Medicare-approved amounts. JH will look at the fees in comparison with other ambulance services' fees.

CW asked about Ch. 8-34 Housing – fee for violation or noncompliance with this article. JH stated that a drawback of the fee schedule is that it refers to the ordinance language, and it is not always clear exactly what the fee is for without looking in the ordinance.

BP reported that Chapter 8 relates to sanitation, public health and safety in housing, so any violation of that ordinance would result in a \$100 fine.

JH brought up Ch. 14-82 Obstruction Permit, noting that it seems that when this ordinance was written, the fees were incorporated into the narrative. This is not consistent with the rest of the ordinance, and JH suggests that the FC propose an amendment to the Town Council.

CW moved, KW seconded that the Finance Director propose amendments to the fee schedule for Ch. 14-73 Excavations, and to the ordinance language and fee schedule for Ch. 14-82 Obstruction Permits. Approved unanimously by the FC.

7. Adjourn