**COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

**GARDINER CITY COUNCIL**

**WEDNESDAY, March 1, 2023**

**6:00 PM**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Hart at 6:00 p.m.

**1) ROLL CALL / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

City Council Present: Councilor Brown, Councilor Frey, Councilor Greenleaf, and Councilor West

City Council Absent: Councilor Berry, Councilor Cusick

City Council Present Remotely: Councilor Rines

Also present: Andy Carlton, City Manager; Michelle Snowden, Deputy City Clerk; Doug Clark, Wastewater Director; Denise Brown, Finance Director; Chief Rick Sieberg, Gardiner Fire; John Leslie, Casella Waste Services; George Belmont, Casella Waste Services; Kris McNeill, Code Enforcement; Mike Lajoie; Jessica Lowell, Kennebec Journal

**2)** **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

Mayor Hart recognized a Boy Scout in the audience who is working on a merit badge.

**3)** **PETITIONS/PUBLIC HEARINGS/PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS**

None

**4) NEW BUSINESS**

**a)** Discussion with Wastewater Director Doug Clark and Representatives from Casella Waste Services regarding LD1639, its impact to Gardiner and the State of Maine

**John Leslie and George Belmont from Casella Waste Services spoke about how LD1639 and LD1611 affect Gardiner.**

**Casella Waste Service is the contracted hauler of the sludge from the Waste Water treatment plant. This service and disposal of the sludge is vital to the operation of our Waste Water collection system. Because of LD 1639 we are looking at a 38% increase in our costs to dispose of the sludge created at the plant. Not unexpected. When LD 1639 took effect on February 8 provisions in the law effectively bans all waste generated from out of state. CWS took construction demo debris (mostly out of state) from a facility in Lewiston called Re Energy (formerly KTI) that ground it up and gave it to Casella Waste who mixed it in with treatment plant sludge “bulking” it up so it had structural stability and could be stacked up and placed in the Juniper Ridge Landfill. Now, with the ban in place, there will not be enough of that “free” bulking material for JRLF. One option is for CWS to then have to purchase suitable material to accomplish the bulking if it can even be found. If not, then that effectively bans all sludge from Juniper Ridge. Composting is no longer an option due to the new PFAS rules.**

**There is a possibility that this could mean we have to take our sludge out of state or even out of the country which would result in a very painful cost increase for our rate payers.**

**Mayor Hart thanked Doug, John, and George for attending. Manager Carlton stated that he has reached out to our local legislators to discuss this important issue.**

**b) Consent to Language Change in Section VIII.F.3.c of the Employee Handbook**

Manager Carlton stated that the City has a history of allowing nonunion employees to retire in place after working 25 years. They can retire, draw their pension and continue to work. The handbook currently has a clause that states that *an employee is eligible for rehire at 95% of their salary*. Manager Carlton is requesting that we strike the aforementioned 95% language and replace with “100%”.

**Action:** **Councilor West moved to approve the language change in section VIII.F.3.c of the employee handbook. Councilor Greenleaf seconded the motion. A roll call vote was conducted: Councilor Brown – yes; Councilor Greenleaf; Councilor Rines – yes; Councilor Frey – yes; Councilor West – yes; Mayor Hart – yes. The motion passed 6-0.**

**c)** **Advise and Consent to Rehire Fire Chief Rick Sieberg as of March 1, 2023 as a “Retire in Place”.**

Of note, Chief Sieberg has served 25 years with the City of Gardiner.

**Action: Councilor Greenleaf moved to rehire Chief Rick Sieberg as of March 1, 2023 as a Retire in Place. Councilor Frey seconded the motion. A roll call vote was conducted: Councilor West – yes; Councilor Frey – yes; Councilor Rines – yes; Councilor Greenleaf –yes; Councilor Brown – yes; Mayor Hart – yes. The motion passed 6-0.**

**d)** Consideration of Sending Ordinance Review: A change to the sign ordinance in traditional downtown to allow variations in the size of wall signs when all floors of the building are occupied by the same organization.

**Action: Councilor Greenleaf moved to send the sign ordinance to the Ordinance Review Committee, Councilor Brown seconded the motion. A roll call vote was conducted: Councilor Brown – yes; Councilor Greenleaf – yes; Councilor Rines – yes; Councilor Frey – yes; Councilor West – yes; Mayor Hart – yes. The motion passed 6-0.**

**e) Consideration of Bids for Tax Acquired Properties**

Manager Carlton stated that bids have suggested that this agenda item be tabled to a meeting in which all councilors are in attendance. All agreed.

**f) Budget Timeline**

Manager Carlton introduced the FY24 budget timeline. Councilors will receive their budget books on April 5. Mayor Hart suggested that the public hearing be held sometime in April, date forthcoming.

1. **CITY MANAGER REPORT**

* Manager Carlton reported that the facility committee met on February 22 and they reviewed the engineering report on City Hall. Portland Architecture is looking at costs of potentially rehabilitating this building. City Council will receive a copy of these reports. Mr. Carlt
* Manager Carlton stated that he, Melissa Lindley, and John Cameron met with representatives of Johnson Hall regarding work that needs to be done on Mechanic Street. Jim Coffin is working on an engineering plan.
* Manager Andy Carlton announced that he and Finance Director, Denise Brown have started the budget process and begun meeting with department heads. Council will receive their budget books in April. It is Manager Carlton’s hope to work through the budget only at regularly scheduled Council meetings. Mayor Hart added that a chance for public comment is typically held sometime in April.
* Manager Carlton and Melissa Lindley, Economic Development Director, met with Scott Wilson from Senator Kings office regarding Congressional Direct Spending opportunities.
* Manager Carlton, Fire Chief Sieberg, and Interim Police Chief Todd Pilsbury met with citizens last week at the Gardiner Food Coop. It was reported that some good conversations were had. The next event will be tours of the Gardiner Wastewater Plant on Friday, March 17, 8:00 – 9:30.
* Lastly, Manager Carlton reported that the Council goals workshop was fantastic. He noted that some great goals and working agreements were defined and they will be on the next agenda.

1. **CITY COUNCIL REPORT**

* Councilor West – none
* Councilor Rines – none
* Councilor Greenleaf - none
* Councilor Brown - none
* Mayor Hart thanked City Councilors and Manager Carlton for attending the goal setting meeting last week. Goals and objectives will be posted soon.
* Mayor Hart reported that Tamara Whitmore has been hired as the executive director of Main Street Gardiner. Tamara was previously with Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed.
* Mayor Hart also mentioned that a citizen recently inquired about the Age Friendly Group; she will work with Manager Carlton and the Group to plan a ribbon cutting for McKay Park.
* Lastly, Mayor expressed her condolences to the family of Dan Davis; he was the master distiller and co-founder of Sebago Lake Distillery. He will be missed.

**8) ADJORN**

**Councilor West moved to adjourn, Councilor Greenleaf seconded the motion. A roll call vote was conducted: Councilor Brown – yes; Councilor Greenleaf – yes; Councilor Rines – yes; Councilor Frey – yes; Councilor West – yes; Mayor Hart – yes. The motion passed 6.0.**

**The City Council meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted:

Michelle Snowden, Deputy Clerk