

**MINUTES
FREEPORT TOWN COUNCIL MEETING #11-20
TUESDAY, MAY 5, 2020
6:30 PM**

This meeting was held online/virtually, using Zoom teleconferencing.

<u>ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS:</u>	PRESENT	ABSENT	EXCUSED
John Egan, 38 Curtis Road (Chair)	x		
Eric Horne, 62 Pine Street	x		
Henry Lawrence, 93 Hunter Road	x		
Daniel Piltch, 25 Quarry Lane	x		
Douglas Reighley, 2 Harbor Ridge Road	x		
Sarah Tracy, 2 Pettengil Road	x		
Tawni Whitney, 56 Baldwin Road (Vice Chair)	x		

Chair Egan called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. via zoom. He mentioned that they are getting more experienced using this platform for public meetings. He explained the ground rules to members of the public that would be followed this evening. He took the roll and all Councilors checked in as well as Town Manager, Peter Joseph.

FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS: Pledge of Allegiance

Viewing the flag at Vice Chair Whitney's home, everyone recited the Pledge.

SECOND ORDER OF BUSINESS: To waive the reading of the minutes of Meeting #10-20 held on April 28, 2020 and to accept the minutes as printed.

MOVED AND SECONDED: To waive the reading of the minutes of Meeting #10-20 held on April 28, 2020 and to accept the minutes as printed. (Reighley & Tracy) **ROLL CALL VOTE:** (7 Ayes) (0 Nays)

THIRD ORDER OF BUSINESS: Announcements

Chair Egan announced:

- Beginning May 5th, the Town of Freeport will begin taking appointments for you to come into Town Hall and register your NEW Boat or your NEW Car on Tuesdays and Wednesdays of each week. Please call 207-865-4743 x106 to set up your appointment today. Renewals can continue to be done online at www.freeportmaine.com.
- The Primary and RSU5 Budget Validation Election will be held on July 14th, 2020. Absentee ballots are now available by going to <https://www.maine.gov/cgi-bin/online/AbsenteeBallot/index.pl> or contacting the Town Clerk at 865-4743 x123.
- Due to the pandemic, the Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony will unfortunately need to be cancelled. Currently a number of officials and community members are working to put together a ceremony which will be aired on our Community Cable channel on Memorial Day, Monday, May 25th. Thanks to Johanna Hanselman, Chair Egan was able to participate yesterday in a portion of

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20

MAY 5, 2020

that filming down at Memorial Park. He requested that residents please tune in since they are putting this together to hold that tradition continuous.

FOURTH ORDER OF BUSINESS: Information Exchange

Councilor Reighley advised that the Complete Streets and Active Living Committee met with representatives from the Department of Transportation in discussion of the bridges coming up and the focus was at the Mallet Road Bridge that extends down to the Desert Road Bridge. Councilor Horne is also a member of this group and can fill in more about this. Councilor Reighley noted that Mr. Bliss led a very nice meeting and he believes having DOT present for this was a positive step.

Councilor Horne agreed it was a productive meeting. The Chairs for Complete Streets and Active Living were there and the message was clear to DOT that there is a lot of interest on behalf of the community to up the game for signalization around the traffic flow particularly at the Mallet Drive Bridge. The hope is that DOT will go back and look at some of the design plans that they have and with luck, they can do some more work and possibly improve the safety if they do put in a pedestrian facility across the Mallet Bridge. Chair Egan agreed it was beneficial to have the DOT staff present. He was surprised at how open and interested they were in local opinion about those things without the retort “we can’t afford that or the design won’t handle that, etc.” He feels Mr. Bliss did a great job directing that meeting and is hopeful that the next iteration from DOT will have some components that address the primary issues which are we can have the nicest looking pedestrian and bicycle walkway on the bridge itself but if you can’t actually approach the bridge from the west side because of traffic on foot or bicycle, those improvements will be far underutilized. He heard that the traffic counts coming from Route 136 do not meet the threshold for a signal, he feels the DOT staff heard loud and clear that the community is interested in some kind of mitigation to slow the traffic and control vehicle traffic even if it doesn’t meet the threshold count for a signal. He found it curious that the traffic counts on the east side of the bridge did meet the threshold for a signal. We’ll see what the next iterations come back as and he was pleased that we had as much input into that process as we did.

Councilor Tracy advised that she attended the PACTS Executive Committee meeting this morning and the CARES Act has distributed somewhere along the lines of 25 billion dollars in funds to transit agencies across the nation. The PACTS region will receive approximately \$54M in transit funds. They have already used about \$14M of that. From what she can tell, it went to the 6-area public transit agencies to address revenue losses associated with the pandemic. The Transit Committee, of which she is not a member, is talking about how to distribute the remaining \$40M. It has bounds around it that the Transit Agencies are the ones to distribute the money so it is directly accessible to towns and cities. It came up that the money could be distributed by those Transit Agencies to offset some of the local match that towns and cities are obligated to provide like we do for the BREEZ. We have a certain match to allow Freeport to be part of that program. This is something to stay tuned to. Kristina Egan is very involved in that discussion and there was support in today’s discussion to use money for some local matches. There was also discussion to use it to innovate the transit system so people will want to ride again after this pandemic. She got assurances that as a result of the pandemic we would not be on the hook for more costs, at least in this upcoming fiscal year there would not be an adjustment in the local match that is required and maybe it could be applied to some of the costs that we do have.

FIFTH ORDER OF BUSINESS: Town Manager’s Report

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20

MAY 5, 2020

Mr. Joseph announced that we are entering a brave new world of technology here and this feed is going out live on Facebook right now. We have 13 people watching live right now and 9 people in the audience. We have 35 people virtually in the room. We also have a piece of software coming that will make the connection between Zoom and our Cable system so people will be able to watch on Channel 3 and this will work and we will find some value in it even after we get back to things in person whenever that happens. It is hoped that it will increase public participation.

He explained that he is working on soft reopening plans for Town buildings right now. They will need more clarification from the Governor's Office in terms of the number of people that can be inside a building at any one time. They have expanded a little bit by appointment access they have had throughout this pandemic in Town Hall due to some regulations that were relaxed at the State level. Boat registrations were not relaxed so they are mandatory and new boat registrations are required to be done in person rather than on line. That means commercial vessels down to pleasure boats have to be registered. Town Hall is open for that. When we go back to full open mode, we will still encourage people to do any functions they can remotely. There will be a list of those out there for people and that includes anything that is a re-registration or renewal. Most of those can be done online but if anyone prefers to not do them online, they can be done by mail. Mail a check with the paperwork to us.

When we reopen public buildings for public access, in addition to limiting the reasons people should be inside, we are likely to include the following steps:

A limitation on the number of people that can be in the building. At Town Hall they are looking to have one person at each counter and hopefully, we can create a place for people to queue without entering the building. The hope is to try to keep people from contact wherever possible. Having people waiting in line a half a foot apart is not going to do anybody any good.

We will require people wearing a mask or face covering inside the buildings to be consistent with the Governor's Executive Order is. Once someone is inside our buildings, most of the construction of our buildings will not allow people to maintain 6-10 feet separations from anybody inside the building. There will likely be new traffic and circulation patterns inside the buildings. If a building has multiple entrances, one may be converted to an entrance and another to an exit so that people who are queuing and maintaining separation won't have to have someone walk by them coming in another direction. We are entering into the world of grocery stores and retail stores right now. It is a little stressful but he is certain that most of our employees are eager to get back to in-person work in the building and also doing our best to limit the spread of Corona Virus transmission. We are working this out but don't have a finalized plan. He anticipates that he will be able to provide details in the second week in May. He expects to have a plan publicized in advance of June 1. For now, we are still by appointment only but if there is something that needs to be done in person such as a new car registration, please don't hesitate to give us a call first, set up a time, and then you can come in and do your registration in person. If anyone would prefer to do it outside, they can accommodate you there. They have a way that someone can stay outside the building and pass documents in and they will hand you back the documents you need. They are coming up with a bunch of methods. If anyone has concerns, please call and they will find a way to work with you. If there is a reason that anyone cannot come into a building, please give them a call and they will work something out to take care of your specific concern.

Councilor Reighley explained that he has Library books overdue and is feeling the pain of not being able to turn them in. His constituents need the Library and are willing to do anything. If the queue is 50 miles down the road, they are willing to stand in line for it. Mr. Joseph assured him that they are looking at recommendations from the Maine State Library and are starting to put those things in place. He and the Library Director are talking about the physical changes they will make inside the building and what the limits will be. He anticipates that happening pretty soon. Councilor Tracy echoed that with everybody at

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20

MAY 5, 2020

home, having access to the Library seems like an essential service and she knows there are issues about handing books back. Even if it has to be curbside service, she thinks that is the one place we should try to find a way to open in some fashion as quickly as possible. Mr. Joseph advised that he will work on this post haste.

SIXTH ORDER OF BUSINESS: Public Comment Period – (30 Minutes) (Non-Agenda Items Only)

MOVED AND SECONDED: To open the Public Comment Period. (Reighley & Horne) **ROLL CALL VOTE:** (7 Ayes) (0 Nays)

Keith McBride, FEDC Director, announced that in collaboration with the Chamber and Visit Freeport they will be putting on a series of web events information sessions and discussions for Freeport businesses and stakeholders in Freeport's economy. A lot of these will be informational on responding to COVID and responding to the Governor's recommendations and other regulations and other programs that are out there. Some of them will be informational with speakers who are on the front lines of some of these things. Some will be more collaborative where we allow local businesses to talk to each other and learn what they are all doing to try to get ready to reopen. He feels that everybody is quite literally isolated right now and this will be a good opportunity to try to get some discussion going amongst some of these neighbors who are very much not able to be in their spaces here on Main Street and wherever else their businesses might be located in Freeport. The first of these is taking place this Thursday and our speaker will be David Lockman from L.L. Bean. He has been put in charge of helping some of the L.L. Bean locations in Freeport and worldwide adapt. He will be speaking frankly about what preparations they are making and setting the tone for other businesses, not only in retail but also in warehousing, manufacturing, call centers and everything else L.L. Bean is involved with to help them prepare. Registration is required. Visit Freeport has sent out invitations with the registration link. That link will also be available on the FEDC Facebook page and through their website www.Freeportecon.com and the Greater Freeport Chamber of Commerce website. They welcome anyone that wants to be involved and wants to be part of the discussion. As always, he can be reached by his e-mail and phone number in Town Hall.

Shawna Rogers from the Greater Freeport Chamber of Commerce was not able to be heard so Chair Egan noted we would come back to her.

MOVED AND SECONDED: To close the Public Comment Period. (Reighley & Horne) **ROLL CALL VOTE:** (7 Ayes) (0 Nays)

SEVENTH ORDER OF BUSINESS: To take action on the following items of business as read by the Council Chairperson:

ITEM # 80-20 To consider action relative to adopting the May 5, 2020 Consent Agenda.

BE IT ORDERED: That May 5, 2020 Consent Agenda be adopted. (Whitney & Horne)

Chair Egan reviewed the item for members of the public.

ROLL CALL VOTE: (7 Ayes) (0 Nays)

ITEM # 81-20 To consider action relative to the FY21 Capital Budget. **Public Hearing.**

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20

MAY 5, 2020

MOVED AND SECONDED: To open the Public Hearing. (Reighley & Horne)
ROLL CALL VOTE: (7 Ayes) (0 Nays)

Chair Egan noted that the Council has had a number of conversations on this both in committee and in public discussions. Jessica Maloy, Finance Director provide a summary of where we are. Right now, she explained that the Capital Plan in Year one is \$2,614,900. This includes some of the changes discussed at the last few meetings which are: \$150,000 addition to the Communications Project, a \$140,000 appropriation for the Cousins River Bridge Project, three reductions including the Concord Gully Brook Watershed by \$25,000, the Library fencing by \$10,600 and the Hunter Road Fields parking lot removal of \$60,000. Those are the changes that have been discussed and currently reflected in the amount before you, again at \$2.6M. That is what she has unless the Council is looking for something different.

Mr. Joseph pointed out that we have a business item for action in ITEM #85-20 to consider action relative to adopting the FY21 Capital Program. We can take deliberation either after the Council closes the public hearing under this business item or more appropriately under 85-20 before you make the adoption of the Capital Program as amended.

Councilor Reighley advised that he submitted to the Chair, Vice Chair, Finance Director and the Town Manager a list of suggestions where we could look to save money. He mentioned that Ms. Maloy has touched on some of those items already but asked her to fill in the additional items for him. Ms. Maloy explained that Councilor Reighley sent an e-mail suggesting the removal of the town-wide fencing so nothing for the cemeteries or the Library, removal of the flooring that is being recommended for replacement and the Library Design Study. Those are all under the Municipal Facility Article VII. Under Article VIII, Cable, he recommended the removal of the equipment replacement for \$20,000 and under Boards and Committees, he had Hunter Road Fields parking and removal of the Comprehensive Plan update. He had a question about Winslow Park in the handicap access which she believes was answered for him. Councilor Reighley explained that his question on Winslow Park is whether the Town could provide the access or could we take it out of their reserves which are not shown as part of the Town reserves. The suggestion is yes, it would be appropriate to take it from their reserves which are in a trust fund. Mr. Joseph agreed with that.

Chair Egan noted that as Mr. Joseph mentioned, we have discussion on this as an action item later in the agenda but we are circulating ideas on where we are going with this particular Capital Budget for FY21. He asked if anyone had their hand up wishing to speak in the audience. Mr. Joseph announced that Mr. McBride has his hand up.

Keith McBride explained that he made a request at the previous meeting that a motion be made to amend FY21 under the TIF portion of the Capital Budget for FEDC to \$115,000. Councilor Tracy asked for specific budget data and he forwarded it to the Council this week as an explanation of where they have been in that budget and hopes it will be included in the budget going forward to action if action is going to be taken tonight. He will be here if there are any questions. Chair Egan advised that the Council will address it later in the agenda.

Councilor Reighley pointed out that when Keith's salary was increased to \$60,000 five or six years ago, if we multiplied it out with the standard cost of living increase of 3%, the request for an increase in salary would go to \$69,554.43 which is pretty close to the \$70,000 request for his salary. Chair Egan explained that the Council would pick up this item further down on the agenda when we have a discussion on the Capital Budget.

MOVED AND SECONDED: To close the Public Hearing. (Reighley & Whitney) **ROLL CALL VOTE:** (7 Ayes) (0 Nays)

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20

MAY 5, 2020

Mr. Joseph explained that he received an e-mail from Shawna Rogers from the Chamber. She apologized for the technical glitch she was having. He read her message advising that Chambers across the State have put together a collaborative survey for businesses to give feedback on the tiered phase in of reopening Maine's economy. She will have a survey link on the Chamber's website at www.Freeportmainechamber.com available through tomorrow for anybody that wants to participate in that survey.

Chair Egan noted that he has heard that groups are organizing to provide constructive feedback to the State on some finetuning suggestions on the plan to open the economy in hopes of saving our summer tourist season. He feels it is great to see the Chambers organizing that. He encouraged everybody that is a member or even not a member, to go ahead and participate in the survey and let their voices be heard in Augusta.

ITEM # 82-20

To consider action relative to setting a Public Hearing regarding amendments to the Concord Gully Brook Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District Development Program.

BE IT ORDERED: That a Public Hearing be scheduled for May 19, 2020 at 6:30 pm to discuss the amendments to the Concord Gully Brook Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District Development Program.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED: That copies be distributed equally between the Town Clerk's Office, the Town Manager's Office and the Freeport Community Library for inspection by citizens during normal business hours and the notice be placed on Freeport's local cable channel 3 and the Town's website. (Piltch & Horne)

Chair Egan explained that typically when we are setting a public hearing, there is not a lot of discussion on the item and we move on and have the discussion at the public hearing. He knows that we have items to adjust here from conversations we had last week which is why we have a block of time for conversation here. Before we set that public hearing, we have a motion on the floor that has been seconded but before we vote on it, he mentioned that Councilor Tracy has some edits to what might go into this. He asked that she start the conversation and then we will go to Councilor Reighley.

Councilor Tracy explained that at last week's meeting we approved the Tax Increment Financing Plan subject to some suggested amendments which were to be determined. She raised the issue at the last meeting that the Town Development Fund, which is the fund the Town uses from certain recaptured tax money on the L.L. Bean project, had a certain list of uses in the document that were more limited than what she requested to see. She requested that we pause and amend the list to allow for more flexibility for the uses of those funds when they become available. They won't aggregate to much in the near term but over time they will be something on the order of \$8M or \$9M. During the meeting she rattled off some uses but after the meeting she submitted a list of possible other uses for those funds. It does not mean that those funds will be used for anything specifically on that list. It just means that it has to be on the list to qualify without having to amend the TIF with the Department of Economic and Community Developments. It provides a permissive possibility. She asked Mr. Joseph to share the list.

Councilor Reighley pointed out that on Page 16 of our last Minutes there were two amendments that were passed and we had the opportunity to rescind those because we were within the 30-day period and then to have future consideration, we may pass again exactly the same thing we said in those two amendments.

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20

MAY 5, 2020

Because we are having a public hearing, is it time for us to have those off the table and then if they still hold water, we will add at the end of the public hearing. Mr. Joseph noted he would not suggest removing those right now only because he thinks that is what is giving us the binding authority to come back right now and demand prior to submitting as opposed to doing a formal amendment to DECD on the version that was approved a week ago. If we rescind those, the version that you passed last week is the final version and you would have to amend that through DECD or rescind the entire TIF and he thought the goal of the Council was to pass the entire TIF minus the two possible changes to the two areas that Attorney Im suggested language for. As long as we don't have to rescind these, Councilor Reighley explained that he is happy with that. Mr. Joseph advised that the Council can always rescind or amend anything. It is the Council's authority. Mr. Joseph pointed out that he will put out the document that Councilor Tracy e-mailed to him and he put in some sample projects that we could include for potential project costs. These are could include, not have to include. He would suggest that the amendment language we use would say potentially including but not limited to any of the suggestions he put forward or our Town Engineer and he put costs towards. He would suggest the wide language that Councilor Tracy has suggested, if the Council likes these changes. First of all, he would need to know from the entire Council if you support all these things going in. He and Attorney Im will rewrite these in as an amendment to the document that the Council can then pass after the public hearing next week which will be publicly noticed.

Councilor Tracy was asked to walk the Council through them since she compiled them. Councilor Tracy advised that they are based on a review of other TIF uses of Town funds in other TIFs but with the caveat that our Attorney Im recommended some specificity so she is trying to make it wide enough to give us a chance to use it and be flexible in the future but not have it so generic that it gets kicked out by DECD. She asked Mr. Joseph to provide more view of the document because she cannot remember if there are two or three major uses. One is Economic Development, Arts & Cultural and Historic uses, public transit uses and then information and utility infrastructure uses, conversion of utilities and then costs related to construction of those projects. She noted that some of those should actually be indented under utilities. Under the Economic Development topics there are costs of funding programs, projects, infrastructure, events, Arts & Culture and Historic purposes. There is a second category such as public street scape improvements, landscaping, green scaping and signage. Another category is pedestrian improvements such as crosswalks, warning signals and curb treatments. Finally, professional services related to any of those uses. Those would all fall under potential economic development, Arts & Culture and Historic funding. When you get to Public Transit, it could be used for bus shelters, benches, signs and other transit related structures or infrastructures. For Information and Utility Infrastructure uses, high speed wireless, Broadband, fiber optic development. We also talked about bringing utilities underground and then cost related to preparation planning an engineering. We don't have to use it for any of this. We are just trying to provide future Councils the flexibility to take in proposals for a variety of uses for those funds that are in addition to the uses that are already in the TIF such as trails and pedestrian and bike access. Councilor Reighley advised Councilor Tracy that he appreciates her taking this document and expanding it so there is flexibility for the future.

Mr. Joseph added that he and Mr. Bliss looked through and found a couple of projects that are long-term projects. He put a TBD. For Programs, Projects, Infrastructure, Events, Economic Development, Arts & Culture, Historic Purposes is really big and he asked for guidance from the Council on what dollar figure they would like included on that. For High Speed Wireless, Broadband Service and Fiber Optic Development Expansion or Improvement, we have had a little discussion over the past two meetings about what is the priority for Broadband, WiFi versus expanding Fiber Optic and Broadband might be priorities. He needs a little guidance but noted he could step through some of the suggested projects if the Council likes. He clarified that these dollar amounts are just estimates and are not binding. The Council will not be held if the project costs more and can spend more than that. If future Councils choose not to fund these projects, you are not obligated.

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20

MAY 5, 2020

Chair Egan suggested \$250,000 on the first one as a place holder which is off the top of his head. He doesn't know if there is much value for the Council this evening to be pushing and pulling and putting forward dollar amounts without any data. He is happy to have this in the TIF agreement now as a potential consideration recognizing that all of these are included here as a signal to future Councils that this is what was discussed when the TIF was passed. He is happy to add that document to our TIF documentation process. He believes we have a motion on the floor which has been seconded which we can then include in that vote the adoption of this list to be added into the Development Program portion of the TIF document.

Mr. Joseph clarified that the guidance he is taking is that these items would be added unless he hears from Councilors that they would like to remove any of the items that were just up on the screen. These would be added to the table in the Development Program that outlines potential projects and potential project costs. We may have to modify the narrative in a few places to describe these projects in a project description but it would be to the Development Program not to the Credit Enhancement Agreement.

Chair Egan thanked Councilor Tracy for putting this together. Councilor Horne also thanked Councilor Tracy. He feels it was nice work.

ROLL CALL VOTE: (7 Ayes) (0 Nays)

ITEM # 83-20	To consider action relative to setting a public hearing for May 19, 2020 to discuss a supplemental appropriation of \$100,000 from the Destination Freeport Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District Fund for the purposes of establishing a Covid-19 Pandemic Business Relief Fund.
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Chair Egan explained that the Council discussed this last week at its meeting. There is a no tax consequence opportunity for us to move \$100,000 from the Destination TIF Fund Balance to seed a relief fund for businesses. We have also received a significant amount of private donations from the public and this would be an opportunity for us to match some of that.

BE IT ORDERED: That a Public Hearing be scheduled for May 19, 2020 at 6:30 pm to discuss a supplemental appropriation of \$100,000 from the Destination Freeport Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District Fund for the purposes of establishing a Covid-19 Pandemic Business Relief Fund. (Horne & Reighley)

Councilor Tracy pointed out that this is really a loan fund and the expectation is that this money will be paid back. We are not giving \$100,000 to businesses from our Town coffers. It is simply making this money available for a limited period of time while we are in crisis trying to get businesses back on their feet. She asked Mr. Joseph when he expects the funds to be repaid. Mr. Joseph advised that he is working on that right now and would expect that it would be a one-year interest-free period. He will have an actual proposal at the next meeting to go with the appropriation. Ultimately it will be the Council's decision.

Councilor Horne suggested changing the name to Covid-19 Pandemic Business Relief Loan Fund just to put the question to rest. He agrees this is a loan and Councilor Tracy also agreed.

Chair Egan mentioned that a motion is needed to amend the current motion.

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20
MAY 5, 2020

MOVED AND SECONDED: To amend the name of the Covid-19 Pandemic Business Relief Fund to read Covid-19 Pandemic Business Relief *Loan* Fund. (Reighley & Whitney) **ROLL CALL VOTE:** (7 Ayes) (0 Nays)

Councilor Horne offered to read the amended motion:

BE IT ORDERED: That a Public Hearing be scheduled for May 19, 2020 at 6:30 pm to discuss a supplemental appropriation of \$100,000 from the Destination Freeport Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District Fund for the purposes of establishing a Covid-19 Pandemic Business Relief Loan Fund. (Horne & Lawrence)

Councilor Piltch mentioned that at the last meeting, the Council talked about allocating \$50,000 and trying to rise \$50,000 in private funds. Is there a reason for the change to \$100,000? Mr. Joseph explained that the intent right now is to seed \$50,000 and match up to \$50,000 in private donations so the fund could be a total of \$150,000 but the appropriation would be up to \$100,000 from the TIF Fund. If the majority of the Council feels strongly otherwise, let him know now before he puts out the proposal two weeks from now. Councilor Reighley pointed out that he hopes this is all that we would need and there would be no demand for more. Chair Egan feels it is hard to predict what people need but if we can have \$150,000 accumulate in that loan fund, it would be a good step in the right direction. Councilor Tracy mentioned that it would be for Freeport businesses only.

Councilor Piltch explained that Portland passed something similar last night and they had a bunch of rules. He is not sure a year would be enough time for folks to repay their loans depending on how big they are. He noted that the Council could deliberate on rules at the next meeting or after that one as to what businesses would meet the qualifications for funding. It would be great to help businesses we feel will likely survive. Mr. Joseph advised that he has received calls and has calls lined up with our business community. He will be talking to them as well as a few Councilors who have had interest and he would like to tap them for their brain power. He is open to suggestions.

ROLL CALL VOTE ON AMENDED ORDER: (7 Ayes) (0 Nays)

Councilor Lawrence pointed out that a **BE IT FURTHER ORDERED** is necessary pointing out where copies need to be distributed kind of stuff. Mr. Joseph agreed as did other Councilors. Chair Egan explained that this motion is to recognize proper distribution of the Public Hearing on May 19th concerning \$100,000 from Destination TIF Fund.

MOVED AND SECONDED: To add **BE IT FURTHER ORDERED:** That copies be distributed equally between the Town Clerk's Office, the Town Manager's Office and the Freeport Community Library for inspection by citizens during normal business hours and the notice be placed on Freeport's local cable channel 3 and the Town's website. (Horne & Reighley) **ROLL CALL VOTE:** (7 Ayes) (0 Nays)

Chair Egan pointed out that the Council is setting a public hearing with this item and the next item after this is to discuss the Capital Budget so this item is to set the public hearing for these budgets to be heard and commented on.

ITEM # 84-20

To consider action relative to FY21 Operating, Capital and TIF Budget

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20

MAY 5, 2020

BE IT ORDERED: That a Public Hearing be scheduled for June 2, 2020 at 6:30 pm to discuss the proposed Fiscal Year 2020 Operating, Capital and TIF Budgets for the Town of Freeport.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED: That copies be distributed equally between the Town Clerk's Office, the Town Manager's Office and the Freeport Community Library for inspection by citizens during normal business hours and the notice be placed on Freeport's local cable channel 3 and the Town's website. (Tracy & Reighley)

Chair Egan noted the Council is just setting the public hearing and despite all of the interruptions, we are still relatively on time in our typical schedule. Mr. Joseph agreed but pointed out that the Capital Program adoption is one meeting late right now, if you choose to act on it tonight but the budget will be exactly on time.

ROLL CALL VOTE: (7 Ayes) (0 Nays)

ITEM # 85-20

To consider action relative to adopting the FY21 Capital Budget.

BE IT ORDERED: That the proposed Capital Program for FY2021 be approved, as amended. (Lawrence & Reighley)

Chair Egan explained that the Council had a public hearing on this item earlier this evening and has some suggestions for potential additional savings in the proposed FY21 Capital Budget. He asked for Ms. Maloy's presentation and if there are specific items that Councilors feel strongly that we should address, we can take those as individual item motions, pass them individually and eventually if everybody is comfortable, pass the full Capital Budget this evening.

Councilor Piltch wasn't clear on the document he had in front of him and Finance Director Jessica Maloy explained that he has the correct document and there should have been an e-mail to him last week with a supplemental page that gave him the list of changes and that is where her \$2,614,900 comes from with the additional changes that had been loosely voted on to express desire to see either in or out of the plan. Ms. Maloy displayed the document she was referring to for everyone to view. She noted that for the Police Article we are looking at \$100,000, Fire we are looking at \$908,000, Rescue would be \$63,000, Public Works we are looking at \$80,000. For changes from the Manager and proposed to the Council which are labeled at this point as Council approved, she put in \$50,000 for Police, Fire and Rescue each for the total of \$150,000 for Communications. Public Works and Solid Waste remain the same. Comprehensive Town Improvements has the inclusion of \$140,000 which was determined to be the local share for the Cousins River Bridge. There is a decrease in Municipal Facilities which is the removal of the fencing at the Library. The \$60,000 under Other relates to the removal of the Hunter Road Fields Parking Lot Expansion. Those are the only changes recognized at this point.

Councilor Tracy asked about the Hunter Road Fields Parking Lot and if it was bumped to another year. Ms. Maloy replied that it has not been put into another year at this point but if there is desire to schedule it for the next year, she can make the change quickly. Councilor Tracy explained that items in FY2022 seems low so it seems like it would be a good year to put it in. Ms. Maloy agreed.

Councilor Reighley suggested reviewing the list he proposed in discussion to see if the Council would want to remove any of them from the budget. In Article VII we talked about town-wide fencing coming out but then he also suggested flooring town-wide and the Library Design Study totaling a decrease of \$37,000. Ms. Maloy advised that if these things were removed, the Council would be removing \$47,400.

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20

MAY 5, 2020

Councilor Horne feels the \$10,000 price for the Library's Design Study is a good deal and he is resistant to removing it. For flooring, he asked Mr. Joseph what is going on. Mr. Joseph mentioned that he was pretty open to most of the suggestions Councilor Reighley e-mailed but a few of the projects we shouldn't delay but a lot of those are definitely delayable, look and feel projects similar to the Town Hall Rehab project. He would not raise a fuss if those items were removed but our Finance Director may and asked her to speak up if that is the case.

Ms. Maloy advised that she is not in total disagreement with some of these suggestions. The only one she would caution on is the town-wide flooring. She would not have an issue pushing the Library flooring out or to another time but the \$6,000 appropriation is for the Public Works flooring and she understands that it is not in the best condition and it was phrased to her that she would probably not want to use the bathroom in that facility. She will leave that in the Council's hands and encouraged them to reduce the \$27,000 to \$6,000. Councilor Tracy asked about the Library flooring and asked if it is a safety issue or an appearance issue. Mr. Joseph advised that the laminate is thin in places but is firmly affixed. Chair Egan noted there is consensus to leave the \$6,000 in for the Public Safety Building and remove the other amounts for town-wide flooring from this calendar year and defer it to the next year. Mr. Joseph explained that he just heard from Earl Gibson saying that the flooring could be deferred but Councilor Tracy feels it should be kept in this year. Councilor Lawrence asked if the Library would have to be closed when their flooring is replaced and Mr. Joseph advised that the work could be done as a day job when they are closed or they can work around people. Councilor Reighley feels the employees at the Public Safety Building will be happier with new flooring.

Councilor Reighley referred to Article VIII Hunter Road Fields Parking Lot Extension and we already discussed removing it. He mentioned the Comprehensive Plan Update under Boards and Commissions and that Mr. Joseph has reasons for retaining it. Mr. Joseph explained that he strongly recommends that the \$25,000 remain in the budget and there may be a discussion for some consideration of that amount being higher as we go along here. He would not recommend that the amount go down at this point.

Vice Chair Whitney explained that we have had some discussion about needing a consultant for Freeport and she and Mr. Joseph met with a consultant about a year and a half ago at L.L. Bean with the topic of what are we going to do with all the empty store fronts. He gave us some leads and ideas but now a year and a half have passed and we are in the midst of a pandemic. He reached out to her and said it is not the time to take your foot off the pedal, it is the time to keep moving forward and work on your economic growth in Freeport by maintaining the businesses you have and then continuing to entice those to come here. He felt we perhaps needed an outside expert. Consultants have seen difficulties like this. She, Mr. Joseph, the FEDC Board and Councilor Tracy have been speaking to George Casey who is free and a friend and someone who is guiding us. She is sorry to add to the budget but this may be the time when we need professional guidance to bring our vitality back. Mr. Joseph clarified that the meeting was at Coffee by Design at L.L. Bean and was not meeting with a consultant from L.L. Bean. Councilor Tracy pointed out that the Council and the community have had an ongoing discussion over the past two years or more about the declining face of retail in the downtown. There has been a notable increase in vacant spaces in the downtown in the past year and a half. It is concerning to community members. This happened before back in the 80s and Freeport brought in people from the outside to brainstorm while it could hit it. She feels this is a good time to restart the pivoting process. We did that about a year ago and asked FEDC to start looking at what can be done in the downtown and they talked to stakeholders in the downtown and it has been helpful to understand what existing businesses see as the barriers. She feels it is time to talk to those who have done this before in other places. There have been other places that have revitalized themselves including towns in Maine. The way they do it is they get people in that know how to do it and have seen what has been done and have ideas that the towns can take as a starting point. She feels we need that kind of expertise and this is a small investment in our future. She feels if we don't do something, we will be very sorry. She feels the town has a role to play in guiding that ongoing discussion.

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20

MAY 5, 2020

The difficulty is that we don't know what the price tag is. At this point maybe we don't put a price tag on it for the moment but just say look, we may need hypothetically \$50,000 to continue to do diligence to talk to people who may be able to provide the services and get a quote but make sure we don't lose another year because it is not in our budget. It would be a whole process with FEDC and stakeholders being involved but it is our job to make sure that the money could be used if the Council decides to use it.

Chair Egan mentioned that it is important to recognize that this activity and this kind of visioning is exactly what the Comprehensive Plan is supposed to be covering so it is an excellent time for us to dovetail these two things together which puts a little bit of gravity on our selection of a consultant to help us with the Comprehensive Plan. It also aligns into a perfectly appropriate timing for us to consider this. He hopes we can amplify this particular line item and he was going to suggest \$15,000 to get us to \$40,000. If there is another dollar amount and Councilor Tracy suggested \$50,000 but we can certainly have a conversation about that.

Councilor Reighley noted that he and Vice Chair Whitney had a discussion on this subject and his suggestion is that we look to bringing the property owners in Freeport together in a discussion first before we go and invest any money because he believes they are the significant ones to pay tribute to bringing in some kind of counsel in this matter. We could spend all the money in the world but if the Freeport property owners are not on board with it, nothing is going to happen. Chair Egan feels it could be hard to get an unbiased opinion about "what's the best for the community?" when those building owners are going to be influenced if not driven in part or majority part by what makes good sense for their investment in real estate. It is an important group for us to hear from but he would be suspect of letting that group set the table for the conversation. We have to be mindful to where people are coming from.

Councilor Piltch feels this is a great idea and is supportive of it. The downtown is near and dear to his heart. It is the legacy that he has been left with. He feels this is a problem that many others have had to solve and agrees we should take advantage of the wisdom that is out there. He would be willing to allocate an additional \$15,000 and add it to the \$25,000.

Councilor Horne agrees. If we were a business, we would be doing something like this to reinvent and pivot. He feels that if we have Capital expenses that are in the look and feel category, he would rather identify efforts like this that are more long range and strategic that will get us to a new place. He is supportive and feels it is money well spent. Councilor Lawrence supports it too but feels we need to focus on the whole town not just the downtown. There is more we can do if we include the whole area. We can only do so much with what we have downtown. We may be able to include other things that need more land. He would like to think bigger.

Chair Egan explained that the Comprehensive Plan is for the comprehensive rest of the town so we can make sure that if we engage in the scope of work with a consultant, we don't ignore the balance of the community necessarily. We will likely have a focus on the downtown which he feels is a good idea but our community fortunately has many other assets that we simply could not and should not ignore.

Councilor Reighley asked if this is something that could come out of TIF money and is this also a future for the South Freeport Community Store? Chair Egan left the first question for Ms. Maloy but advised that he is not sure it is the Council's prerogative to determine what happens with a private business in a privately owned building. Mr. Joseph mentioned that there is an argument to be made that it could be TIF funded but he would lean away from that because he is not 100% sure it will be limited to the downtown area or to economic redevelopment. You could make the motion so that it satisfies conditions of the TIF to take the expenditure out of there but you would have to be putting some potential limitations on what we do with the money which we may decide doesn't fit the project. Chair Egan noted to move this along, what if we were to give direction to Jessica to allocate \$40,000 in this line item to include in the FY2021

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20

MAY 5, 2020

Budget for the Comprehensive Plan. Councilor Tracy did not think \$40,000 would buy us very much. She does not want to spend it unnecessarily but it would make sense to allocate \$50,000. She feels it may be low but it is sufficient to start the process in earnest. If we are looking for money, she reminded the Council that there is a lot of money in the Cable Fund and could accommodate the \$50,000.

Councilor Reighley agreed with Councilor Tracy. If we are going to invest in it, we want somebody that is capable. Councilor Horne mentions he likes the idea of pulling the funds from the Cable Fund and wonders if we could do a hybrid and take some Destination TIF money and mix it with other funds so that there is at least partial funding from the Destination TIF. That would be his second choice. His first choice is to use the Cable money since there is so much still left over.

Ms. Maloy clarified that the Comprehensive Plan update is currently earmarked in the Capital Plan for the next three years to have appropriations. She asked if we are looking to reallocate from future years back into 2021. 2023 has \$75,000 appropriated in it. Is the Council looking to pull \$25,000 out of it and front load this process? Mr. Joseph explained he discussed doing some of the downtown envisioning work contemporaneously with the Comp Plan update incorporating it potentially into the Comp Plan update so it would not be necessarily the Comp Plan that we would be waiting three years for but this would be a study that would be useful in the comprehensive plan process and the bulk of it is completed in Year 2 and finished in Year 3 of the 5-year program. It would likely be a different consultant than the one we originally planned to use for the Comp Plan facilitation process this year. Councilor Tracy noted that she understands we will be taking \$50,000 from what we decide if it is Cable or Cable and TIF and would add it into the Comp Plan line item for this year but it would not alter any of the Comp Plan line items for subsequent years because this work needs to be done soon.

Councilor Horne is worried about the look and feel piece and appreciates Mr. Joseph's opinion on that but would be interested to hear of the \$75,000 Town Hall Beautification project, what we can pull out of there to make it palatable. Mr. Joseph noted it is on the chopping block and is being offered up sacrificially for this year, not permanently. He has resigned himself that it would come out. There is a little grant money left over. There has not been a motion to take it out.

Councilor Reighley pointed out that in his list, underneath the TIF page there was the School Street Southwest sidewalk listed at \$45,000 and then the Town Hall Site Beautification of \$75,000 as items to come out. Mr. Joseph did not object strenuously to these two suggestions. Ms. Maloy explained that TIF Funds are completely separate than our reserves so any cuts the Council makes here are not going to impact what we have in reserves. This is specific tax money held aside and the money is going to be there whether it is spent or not. Mr. Joseph explained that he would have less of an issue moving out the Town Hall Site Improvements first and the sidewalk second if at all. He mentioned that TIF money is very restrictive on what it can be used for.

Chair Egan mentioned that earlier this evening we just had a conversation about potential future Capital items we want to have included in a plan in the TIF development and these are exactly, fast forward six years from now, a Council will be doing the same thing we are doing right now in trying to decide what will be funded in the Capital Plan and what can be funded by the TIF. For him, he was strongly in favor of how we structured that TIF that was passed last week, so we would have the flexibility to do these things right now and so we have a TIF Fund that Jessica identified where we can do some public things as well as those other activities we talked about without having a burden on the taxpayer or the reserves for future Capital accounts. He is not sure there is a fiscal value of trimming those items out of the TIF portion of the Capital Plan.

Councilor Tracy agreed with Chair Egan and appreciated Council Horne's efforts to be fiscally conservative. There are a limited number of levers the Council can pull to make our downtown attractive

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20

MAY 5, 2020

and Town Hall is one of them. How this town looks she feels directly correlates to the visitor experience and this town clearly operates on visitor experience. She feels the Town Hall could use some improvement. She would support spending money on the face of our downtown on the buildings we can control.

Mr. Joseph explained what is involved in the Town Hall Beautification Project. He mentioned that it could be scaled down. Councilor Horne appreciated the conversation and wanted his constituents to know that we are doing everything we can to be as conservative as possible.

Chair Egan asked Ms. Maloy where we are in terms of a tally now in the Capital Plan. Ms. Maloy explained that right now we are at \$2,643,900 for the Total Capital Plan. The only outstanding item she sees is the increase of \$15,000 to FEDC which is not included in this amount.

Councilor Reighley brought up FEDC and did a simple calculation for the Director's salary from 2016-2021 which is what we are considering. It talks about \$10,000 of the \$15,000 in the original request. Chair Egan advised that the Winslow Park item comes out of the Winslow Park reserves.

Vice Chair Whitney suggested taking out the street signs in South Freeport for \$15,000. If we were to do that and increased FEDC, we could have the budget remain the same. Chair Egan asked if the FEDC budget is inside the Destination TIF and Ms. Maloy replied that it is and this would just be a \$15,000 appropriation to come out of the TIF. Chair Egan noted that because it comes out of the TIF fund, it does not have an impact on the taxpayer or the reserve amount balances. It is, however, a decision that we are spending those TIF dollars on that particular item so rather than trying to find a replacement for the \$15,000, we should focus on the value of aligning that dollar amount to the FEDC portion of the Capital Budget. Vice Chair Whitney explained that it was just a suggestion trying to keep things the same.

Councilor Tracy mentioned she would support the additional \$15,000 for the majority of the increase to the FEDC Director's salary. The salary is very reasonable and we have been talking about a lot of things which will require FEDC's participation and full engagement. She would support FEDC's Board's decision to increase the salary with the caveat that we really need more and different functions in this new world. FEDC has been a good partner but now we need another gear which is a visioning gear and will need somebody like Keith to help spearhead that process. She hopes that just as Freeport is pivoting, FEDC can pivot and really engage in that process and think creatively. Councilor Reighley noted that now in this current process we have gone through with Bean's, you can really see the worth and value that Keith brings to the community. He strongly supports the increase.

MOVED AND SECONDED: To increase the Capital Budget to \$2,658,900. (Reighley & Whitney)

Ms. Maloy offered to give a final compilation of the changes to the current year so the Council will know what has been reflected and make sure that everything is up-to-date.

\$150,000 Communications Project
\$15,000 Increase for FEDC Funding
\$140,000 Increase for the Cousins River Bridge
\$50,000 Increase for the Comprehensive Plan Update
\$25,000 Reduction for the Concord Gully Brook
\$10,600 Reduction for the Library Fencing
\$21,000 Reduction for the Library Flooring
\$60,000 Reduction for the Hunter Road Fields Parking Lot

For a net change of \$238,400 bringing the **Total Capital Plan for FY2021 to \$2,658,900.**

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20
MAY 5, 2020

Councilor Tracy suggested that the \$50,000 that we added be a separate line item for Downtown Revisioning or something like that, so it doesn't get sucked into Comprehensive Plan. It will be a long drawn out process and it needs to be clear that this is something parallel but different. Ms. Maloy agreed.

ROLL CALL VOTE ON THE 2021 CAPITAL BUDGET: (7 Ayes) (0 Nays)

ITEM # 86-20 To consider action relative to the appointment of Caroline Pelletier as the Freeport Town Planner.

BE IT ORDERED: That Caroline Pelletier be appointed as the Freeport Town Planner. (Whitney & Reighley & Horne)

Mr. Joseph mentioned that we lost our long-term Town Planner last year and at the time they talked to Caroline who had been working in the Planning Department for 16 years. He wouldn't say there wasn't an interest in her taking the position but there was some apprehension and a desire to see if there were people out there better qualified to take over. They went through a recruitment process and for a couple of different reasons, it didn't work out. We decided to hold off and Caroline agreed at that time to take on the Interim Town Planner title. She did at least one and a half times the amount of work she had been doing previously for the past nine months and has really stepped up. She handled the staffing for both the Planning and Project Review Boards. With this appointment, we intend to bring on a replacement Assistant Planner to fill Caroline's current position and reduce our use of outside consulting help. We have done an interview process and have some good candidates but have not hired anyone yet due to the pandemic. At the time we did the hiring process, Caroline really felt comfortable and is confident we are going to bring in the right help underneath her to do the job. Somehow, she convinced herself and we convinced her and she convinced us that she wants the position. He feels she is the right fit for it.

Councilor Reighley added that he is fully supportive of Caroline. He has talked to her many times about the fact that she should have accepted a long time ago. Councilor Tracy noted it was clear to her when she was Chair and in Donna's departure, we had a wonderful replacement in house and the only downside was that Caroline wasn't sure she wanted to slide into that position for various reasons. She never questioned that Caroline wasn't entirely appropriate for the role. She is professional, calm, clear, answers the questions that are asked and has the kind of demeanor that we want the face of our Town Planner to be. It is for great pleasure for her that Caroline finally came around. She looks forward to another 20 years with her at the Planning Department.

ROLL CALL VOTE: (7 Ayes) (0 Nays)

Chair Egan congratulated Caroline. He is glad to be a part of making it official. Caroline thanked everyone. She mentioned that the community has been very supportive. She wanted to make sure this was the right thing for Freeport as well as her. She looks forward to working on the new vision with FEDC for the downtown.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Chair Egan suggested a 3-Minute Break at 8:50 p.m.

Manager and Finance Director Present Operating, Capital and TIF Budget

Chair Egan noted that this is a presentation on the Operating Budget. We just talked about the Capital

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20

MAY 5, 2020

Budget and approved it. The Winslow Park Fund is also in this discussion but he would like to focus on the Operating Budget.

Ms. Maloy explained that tonight is just the presentation of the budget with eight slides and it takes you through the General Fund but it does touch upon the other governmental bodies that make up the total tax rate but it does not discuss NET or Winslow Park at all.

She presented to the Council the Town of Freeport Operating Budget for FY2021. Their goal is to develop a budget proposal that minimizes the impact to the taxpayers and is able to maintain a stable Municipal tax rate while trying to balance being able to continue to provide the highest quality of service possible within the resources we have available. She explained that to begin with FY2021 she had some different budget considerations before us this year. In light of COVID-19 we had a few budgetary adjustments they instituted in this budget that we would not have normally otherwise. Each year the Town of Freeport engages in a cost of living adjustment study of our sister communities and typically take the average COLA adjustment between those sixteen communities and typically honors that average wage adjustment to its employees. That COLA Study this year indicated that a 2 ½ % wage adjustment was going to be given across the sixteen communities. However, Freeport's FY2021 Budget reflects a 0% COLA to employees outside of contractual or step increases. This equates to a savings of about \$115,800.

They also did a paving reduction. We typically budget at \$400,000 but we budgeted at \$250,000. From a revenue impact, we increased the use of our impact fee for projects that impact our roads from \$80,000 to \$170,000 which definitely is a one-time impact or use because that essentially will use the majority of the funds available in that account. On the revenue side, we also had a decrease in the State Revenue Sharing. Freeport was projected to receive about \$700,000 for this coming fiscal year and we are projecting a 29%-30% reduction from that projection in light of COVID-19 so we reduced that to \$495,000.

They are also evaluating further budget actions that might be coming before the Council through this budget process. They are hoping to reduce our electricity line based on our solar usage. We had our first CMP bill this month showing our savings so we need to do some analysis and see where we will end up and see what we can project for FY2021. They are hoping to bring forth some reduction out of the electricity lines in this budget as well as reviewing some service levels within each department to see what our needs are in light of the pandemic state we are in.

Mr. Joseph advised that Jessica points these out because they may be items that they come back to the Council with some additional recommendations throughout the budget process as they shape up a little more. He is thinking downward trends not necessarily upward trends. Jessica explained that the budgeted expenditure impact this year is a \$90,744 increase over last year. The major drivers are that Salaries have an increase of \$135,000 and takes into consideration a 0% COLA, and the impact of all pay scale steps and any contractual changes that were agreed to. It includes increased valuation impact for Bustin's Island of about \$27,700 and an increase for public utilities for the hydrant rental fees of \$20,400. She did a Miscellaneous Service Line where we have an increase in trees, vehicle maintenance, legal services and stormwater impact of \$38,300 all offset by our decrease in paving. This is due to what they are anticipating for pricing impacts as well as what we can do from a work boat perspective. Again \$90,744. Our revenues on the other hand, she is going to project a \$96,900 increase that includes a \$100,000 decrease in revenue sharing, a \$55,000 decrease in interest income but we do have room for an increase with BETE and what we receive through that program. As indicated earlier, we increased the impact fee by \$95,000 and also increased Excise Tax by \$100,000.

To put it all together, the Municipal Tax Rate impact would be a decrease of \$6,156.00 or .12% where our mil rate, if everything would stay the same for the town, would go from 3.14 to 3.13. To look at it on a

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20

MAY 5, 2020

cumulative basis, the Cumberland County Tax is a projected increase to the mil rate of 3 cents. They have a \$51,000 levy increase. She has not heard a final change from the RSU. The last she heard from them is still the \$857,676 levy impact which would be 49 cents. Mr. Joseph advised that at their Board meeting they sked the Superintendent to go back and look at the numbers so he is anticipating that they perhaps go down. Even a 0% increase would mean we would still see a slight increase.

Ms. Maloy noted we still have the inclusion of the Transit Tax which is the transfer of our relationship with METRO from a General Fund operating expense to its own governing body adding \$77,934 for about a 5-cent impact. The projected Total Mil Impact for FY2021 would be 56 cents per thousand dollars. The only ones that would change would be the Town of Freeport or RSU5. Pending those two staying the same, we would have a projected 56-cent impact to the mil rate assuming evaluation doesn't change. Finally, for further budgetary considerations for things that were talked about but were not included in this budget, the Police have asked for an additional staff person. With wages and benefits that would equate to about \$87,000. We are also looking for Ordinance review work at \$25,000. Chief Jordan asked for a \$5,000 donation to the Yarmouth Fire Company because they are building a fire tower that we have the potential use of for training. He feels a donation would be a nice gesture but we have not put it in the budget at this time.

Mr. Joseph added that he and Jessica discussed but did not have the authority to make it is the potential use of the Tax Stabilization Fund. Whether it is appropriate or not is a Council decision. We keep a million dollars in Fund Balance and the policy states that it is to be tapped if the tax rate impact goes over 5% in any one year which we do not meet that threshold now. It is an internal policy that the Council by majority vote change, modify or suspend at any given time. He wanted to throw this out for discussion.

Chair Egan explained a couple of individual perspectives on his part and then would ask Councilors to chime in. We are not deciding this tonight. He would be in favor of a draw on the Tax Rate Stabilization Account because it is there for extraordinary circumstances and he doesn't know how much more of an extraordinary circumstance we could have in a worldwide virus pandemic that has shut our State economy down. He would be in favor of a suggested amount to help offset the potential increase to our overall taxpayer burden even though the Town Staff has shown diligence to propose a budget that is actually a decrease from what it was last year. He feels strongly that we function as well as we do with precision, follow-up and professional manner largely because of the people we have employed at the Town. He recognizes the Manager's and Finance Director's efforts to curtail spending in this budget but the elimination of the \$115,000 to a 0% COLA may be too severe and he would be supportive of restoring that since we have the ability to offset some of that with a draw on the Tax Rate Stabilization Fund. At this point we might see some movement on the burden for the RSU in our tax bill but their budget is almost three-quarters of the tax burden for the Freeport residents so if we have the ability to mitigate that, he is suggesting that we try to do that as much as possible. Mr. Joseph clarified that the Finance Director had nothing to do with the decision to take the cost of living adjustment out of the budget because her view point aligns with Chair Egan's. If the Council wants to take advantage of additional funds that are out there and restore that, he feels no one will complain. He was trying to be respectful to taxpayers and possibly 10% of them are unemployed at this time and the number might go higher.

Councilor Horne asked the Chair if he was looking to go to the Tax Stabilization Fund for the COLA amount or did he have a different amount in mind. Chair Egan replied that he doesn't have a dollar amount in front of him but was going to suggest that we try and draw from that as much as we could to offset the levy burden of the RSU amount on the overall taxpayer bill but does not know if it is possible to do a wholesale exchange. Mr. Joseph added that depending on where they land, it might not be possible. Right now, they are at \$800,000+ levy increase and the policy is to tap up to \$500,000 a year for two years.

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20
MAY 5, 2020

Councilor Horne noted he is not opposed to using some of the Tax Stabilization money but is thinking on a more modest scale. He wonders if the repercussions of the crisis will be more felt 12 months from now. Not knowing how long this unclear environment will continue, he wants to be judicious with the use of those funds. Councilor Tracy agrees with Councilor Horne's point. We are trying to mitigate the impact of the RSU5 budget increase. She thinks that rather than just trying to mitigate it, we have an opportunity to chime in on their budgeting process and communicate the efforts we have gone to in trying to fund our budget and communicate an expectation that they too should and we hope that they will pare down where they can. With schools closed, there should be some savings even if it is not in salaries. Before we talk about using our extra money, she feels we should go to the source and put a little pressure. Chair Egan advised that he doesn't disagree with Councilor Tracy but he doesn't know if there is enough time for us to ponder what we might ask them to do. He knows they are considering something now but he does not believe they are in a position to open up their line item discussions as a Board on what they might consider. Councilor Tracy pointed out that if their Board is asking their Superintendent to go back, there must be some flexibility somewhere. She doesn't know if it is appropriate to make a specific request but more of a general request such as "here is what we are doing and we hope that you too will exercise whatever authority you have to shave where you can". We will have weighed in on behalf of our taxpayers. Chair Egan suggested that we transmit communication through the Manager with a couple of paragraphs to that effect and articulate some of the constraint measures Jessica outlined in her presentation of the summary of the Operating Budget and we can articulate the bottom line which is at this point we are contemplating a slight decrease in our mil rate burden from Town operations pending a final decision and ask that in a general sense.

Councilor Tracy asked if other Councilors agree. Vice Chair Whitney agreed and like Councilor Horne fears we might see the worst of it a year from now. Councilor Reighley mentioned that we should advise them of what we are doing for our budget and this is what we are willing to do for their budget.

Councilor Horne mentioned that when he heard Chair Egan's point of wanting to restore the COLA, he felt badly for the employees but he also felt it was a welcome sight for folks that are struggling out there and wonders if it could be an example to the RSU that this is what we are doing and perhaps it will give us some leverage in those conversations. Chair Egan mentioned he is mindful of using the COLA increase of our staff as the lever for another governing taxation body out there. He doesn't know if that is the right tool we want to highlight. If we decide to go forward with the Manager's recommendation which we have heard is just the Manager's recommendation, he thinks we could outline that plus a number of other items and not lead with the headline that we have put the COLA increase for our employees at zero as a challenge for you, the RSU to do the same or something like that. Councilor Horne noted that he did not mean that as the banner headline. He was thinking it as an example that would be worth citing. Councilor Lawrence agreed with everything that has been said. He suggested going to them and saying, "look, we reduced our budget and you need to look at something particularly since your facilities have been closed for two months now and there must be a savings there and we don't know what will happen in the fall. Councilor Piltch finds it hard to go to the RSU and ask them to reduce their budget without taking the time to have a look at it. It appears that some of the increase is due to demographics. We have more students and the costs will go up. Salary and benefit increases are the bulk of the budget and he doesn't know the history that he doesn't know about but is sure teachers are not overpaid. He doesn't know enough about the budget to say it is too high or too low but feels it would be reasonable to go back and say this is a bad time to ask for a large increase in the budget and our collective constituents would appreciate a hard look at what was adopted. We are all in the same boat. Chair Egan advised that a significant portion of the personnel salary and benefit increase is driven by their labor contracts.

Vice Chair Whitney mentioned she watched the School Board meeting the other day on Facebook and they are trying to reduce it so a letter from the Manager would be a great nudge right now. Councilor

COUNCIL MEETING #11-20

MAY 5, 2020

Tracy pointed out that we have three towns with a fleet of busses that haven't run for two months and possibly another month, and they probably won't be running for summer programs. The fuel alone for that has to be something. Those kinds of things would not have been recognized in the budget but due to circumstances, have changed. It is worth a try to see what they can find. Chair Egan mentioned that they may have already accounted for that.

Chair Egan asked Vice Chair Whitney to help the Manager craft a couple of paragraphs and put them in a letter to the School Board Chair. She agreed and Councilor Tracy offered to help as well.

Jessica pointed out that Winslow Park and the NET funds will be a flat budget from the prior year. Even though Winslow Park is not up and running, we are budgeting as if it will and budgeting as if we will have the same amount of revenues. If they are not open, we will not be spending but we will not be bringing anything in. Mr. Joseph advised that he talked to Neil and learned that he is running the park himself along with two grounds workers to keep the grass mowed and the day use open. We don't have any workers there; we are not taking reservations because we are still not clear if we can open on June 1st for Maine people or July 1st for out of state people. Neil is not making money right now but he is also spending little money, just the bare necessities for maintenance. Just saying the park is closed for all of next year, essentially the operating budget would be probably less than \$100,000 for the whole park. They have between \$500,000 and \$600,000 in reserves right now so they could operate at this level for five years before we would start wondering if we could keep the lights on and the grass mowed. Neil is responsible about not spending a dime because he knows there is no money coming in down there. He is recommending to full budget it with the understanding that we won't put the staff on and incur expenses until we have revenue booked to come in. We will know what the rental situation is on July 1 and Neil will do the reservations in the books himself.

Chair Egan thanked Jessica for her nice informative presentation.

MOVED AND SECONDED: To adjourn at 9:30 p.m. (Reighley & Horne)
ROLL CALL VOTE: (7 Ayes) (0 Nays)

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Coffin, Council Secretary