

MINUTES
FREEPORT TOWN COUNCIL MEETING #21-22
TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 30 MAIN STREET, FREEPORT
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2022
6:00 PM

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm

	PRESENT	ABSENT	EXCUSED
Councilor Chair Daniel Piltch, 25 Quarry Lane	X		
Council Vice Chair, John Egan, 38 Curtis Road	X		
Councilor Matthew Pillsbury, 36 Todd Brook Rd			X
Councilor Chip Lawrence, 93 Hunter Road	X		
Councilor Darrel Fournier, 3 Fournier Drive	X		
Councilor Jake Daniele, 264 Pownal Road	X		
Councilor Edward Bradley, 242 Flying Point Road	X		

FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS: Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance

SECOND ORDER OF BUSINESS: To waive the reading of the minutes of Meeting # 19-22 held on October 18, 2022 and #20-22 held on November 15, 2022 and to accept the minutes as printed.

Councilor Bradley: there is an error on first page. The Town Councilors that will meet and work with the Sewer Department should read Councilor Fournier and Councilor Bradley, remove Councilor Lawrence.

MOVED AND SECONDED: To waive the reading of the minutes of Meeting # 19-22 held on October 18, 2022 and #20-22 held on November 15, 2022 and to approve as amended **VOTE:** (Bradley & Lawrence)(5-Ayes)(1-Abstain Egan)(1- Excused-Pillsbury)

THIRD ORDER OF BUSINESS: Announcements (15 minutes)

- The Town is partnering with the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) to develop Freeport's Climate Action Plan. A Climate Action Plan is a plan to address impacts from climate change and build a more sustainable Freeport. Municipalities use Climate Action Plans as roadmaps to make informed decisions and prioritize actions. We are in the early phase of this project, but there will be opportunities for the public to be involved in this planning process! The public can sign up to receive project updates and meeting notices, through the "Climate Action Plan" tab on the Freeport Sustainability Advisory Board's page on the town's website.
- **Nominations are now being accepted for 2022 Citizen of the Year:**
Each year the Freeport Town Council presents a Citizen of the Year Award to honor those who have significantly contributed to the quality of the Town. Nomination forms

COUNCIL MEETING #21-22
NOVEMBER 29, 2022

are available at the Town Office and on the Town's website at www.freeportmaine.com.
Deadline for nominations is January 5, 2023.

Freeport Sustainability Advisory Board will be hosting a lecture December 5th at the Library at 6:30. The topic is EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) and Recycling.

The Freeport Players are doing a live show this weekend at the FPAC titled "It's Radio" at 7:30 pm Friday and Saturday and 2 pm on Sunday.

FOURTH ORDER OF BUSINESS: Information Exchange (15 minutes)

Councilor Bradley: As a result of the discussion at the last meeting about transportation, a small group has met and worked on the idea of transportation along Main Street and around town. He has asked Chair Piltch to put it on the agenda for some decision at the next meeting. The two things need to be decided; whether to take this extended golf cart vehicle and use it along Main Street and if you do, it needs to be registered and insured. We would need council consensus. This will be very small dollars and they envision doing it as a pop up on weekends and busy times to see how it works. The initial cost is \$250 and that's the deal with The Desert of Maine. The Manager can find this money and it should be a discussion item on the next agenda because there are things the town will have to take on with additional functions. If it's not extending beyond this year it is something the Manager can execute. We do this experiment and then decide if we want to lease it which would involve more money in the spring to use for the summer season.

Councilor Egan: At the intersection of Flying Point Rd and Pleasant Hill Rd is a yield sign instead of a stop sign which creates problems for bicyclists. After receiving citizen complaints, he brought this to the council to send to Complete Streets. He is following up with the Manager to make sure that we push this to the top so we have some focus on that. A stop sign would be a dramatic improvement on that intersection.

Councilor Egan was also contacted by a resident who tragically lost her son, Matthew McMillan in a motorcycle accident going over Exit 20 several years ago. Melody Seymour, the mother, has asked the council if they would support the idea of her petitioning to the State DOT to have a memorial name put on the bridge in her son's name. Senator Daughtry is supporting that at the State. DOT has advised that getting a letter of support from the town is the first piece to come forward. He is looking for Council support for this effort. It was an fatal accident involving him striking a boat trailer with his motorcycle as it was turning. There was no objection to a letter of support.

Chair Piltch: It is time to do Committee Assignments. If any Councilor would like to change and try something new, let him know in the next week or so. We can address this by the end of the year.

We are recognizing the significant achievement of one of Freeport's youth tonight. State Representative Melanie Sachs and Coach Jason Oullette presented Eli Spaulding with a Legislative Sentiment that was read aloud to the audience. The Coach outlined his incredible golf accomplishments including winning the Class B State and New England Championships this year. He was named All Conference and won the Chevie Award for the second year in a row. He is also a supportive teammate.

FIFTH ORDER OF BUSINESS: Town Manager's Report (15 minutes)

COUNCIL MEETING #21-22
NOVEMBER 29, 2022

There are two days left to sign up for the Property Tax Stabilization Program. Freeport has received 567 applications. 560 have been approved with 4 needing more documentation. Three were denied for not meeting the baseline qualifications. 284 million in valuation has qualified into that pool which is .3 billion out of 2.1 billion dollars of property evaluation in Freeport. That's 15% of all properties in town. 3.6 million dollars in taxes has been stabilized out of roughly 30 plus million. Representative Sachs was one of the first one to express concerns at the State level about the total cost of this Program and whether it's sustainable. That's going to be a tough number for Freeport which makes up just a few percentage points of the total statewide (less than 2% percentage of the total aggregate statewide valuation). Multiply that times 75 and that's the total. Any increase to that 3 million dollars in taxes supposedly now is going to be made up by the State. He and Rep. Sachs have concerns about that amount ever being appropriated in future years to cover that shortfall. It will be fine for this year and next, but we should be aware there could be a reduction in the State reimbursement in future years. The statute is silent as to what would happen if the State is unable to fully reimburse the municipalities. The amount in question will continue to increase as valuations increase of the years.

Councilor Bradley: if properties were to go to their actual market value as assessed and that was done all at once it would catch a lot of people off guard that haven't put aside the income to pay for that tax increase for the period of time that the state tax was stabilized.

This was not a bill that was vetted well. Representative Sachs explained that this bill will be looked at to correct issues in this legislative session. Improvements have been already made in the Homestead Exemption and will be slowly ratcheted to 100% reimbursement to municipalities overtime. Councilor Fournier wants to ensure that we start looking at this so we don't get blindsided.

We did have an airboat stakeholder meeting today and there is some decent progress going on there. They will continue to meet over the winter. DMR and the Commissioners office are leading that effort. The discussion centers around early morning hours as where the majority of complaints in Freeport and a few areas are being generated. The majority are concerning the Harraseeket River area. There are 60+ air boats registered around the state and Freeport has 4-5 of these. There are 30 in Brunswick. The focus is early morning hours and that seems what they're willing to tackle which wouldn't solve all the problems but would address resident concerns. DMR also is willing to propose administrative rulemaking and/or possibly legislation although they don't know what that would look like. There is a conversation that hasn't been resolved as to whether rulemaking would be location specific to areas of high complaints such as the Harraseeket River, Freeport, Casco Bay or whether it would be Statewide limit of hours or decibel levels or a specific time. The good news is that the staff is willing to propose some rules, even though they will not be popular with some residents and harvesters. That will probably happen in the spring. Residents, harvesters and Municipal reps from each town are represented on the 9 member board representing Freeport, Brunswick and Harpswell. The noise is a real issue especially in the morning hours. DMR is trying to not impact commercial harvesters negatively and also not having people woken up at 4 am.

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

Andy Spaulding: Has volunteered for the Active Living Committee and stays involved with Complete Streets through the group Connect Freeport. When the Active Living Task Force created the Active Living Plan, one of the major recommendations was to hire an Active Living Coordinator which has not shown practical since 2014/15. He wanted to encourage the councilors to consider a role for a staff person who may assist with items such as funding opportunities. We explore grant fundings and items such as easements for expansion. This would free up overtaxed staff and there would be an integration

COUNCIL MEETING #21-22
NOVEMBER 29, 2022

value also between complementary boards and committees (Complete Streets, Downtown Task Force, Connect Freeport, etc). One issue is knowing what other boards and committees are doing. He is encouraging we look at funding through the Concord Gully Brook TIF. This would need to be explored to see if allowable.

Complete Streets and MDOT met and discussed a Safe Routes to School. Maine DOT was favorable to the potential of using the highway corridor as a potential multi use path connection from Mallet Drive to Elm Street. Residents on Oak St. and Guptil do not like the idea of a path on their streets. He discussed grant opportunities that have not been applied for due to the bandwidth of the task. There is a long term need for an additional staff to assist. If there are grants available, it would be wise to hire outside staff to assist us with these tasks as opposed to utilizing current staff. We did discuss this during the budget process. Some of the grants were not appropriate for the time frame.

Mr. Spaulding explained the Grant Process Committee which has been collectively looking at grants and deciding whether to pursue. The Biden Harris Infrastructure bill has a provision that it has to go toward a community that has been socially disadvantaged and we probably wouldn't receive it. Identifying the grants is one thing but having the bandwidth to apply for them is another. We are probably not going to hire a grant coordinator, but if we need to contract for assistance we could probably find the funding for that. Many grants require matching funds, a decision made by the Council.

Could we have a line item for a contracted employer for grant writing during the budget season. Don't we have a contingency line to use for current opportunities available.

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

ITEM # 203-22 To consider action relative to adopting the November 29, 2022 Consent Agenda.

BE IT ORDERED: That the November 29, 2022 Consent Agenda be adopted.
VOTE: (Fournier & Lawrence)(6-Ayes)(0-Nay)(1- Excused-Pillsbury)

(Council Chair Piltch) (5 minutes)

ITEM # 204-22 To consider action relative to setting a Public Hearing for December 6, 2022 to discuss a Special Amusement Permit for the following:

Councilor Bradley questioned whether the special amusement activity was indoors or outdoors as it was slightly unclear on the application. The Town Clerk clarified that it appeared they mistakenly checked the yes box indicating outdoor activity. Activities related to the permit would be located on the private second floor space.

1. Mast Landing Brewing Co.

BE IT ORDERED: That a Public Hearing be set for December 6, 2022 at the Town Council meeting that starts at 6 pm in Town Council Chambers, 30 Main Street to discuss a Special Amusement Permit. **VOTE:** (Lawrence & Daniele)(6-Ayes)(0-Nay)(1-Excused-Pillsbury)

COUNCIL MEETING #21-22
NOVEMBER 29, 2022

(Town Clerk, Christine Wolfe)(5 minutes)

ITEM # 205-22 To consider action relative to a setting a Public Hearing for December 6, 2022 to discuss a supplemental appropriation to the FY23 Budget in the amount of \$20,000 for the procurement of police cruisers.

We budgeted two cruisers at \$30,000 and \$15,000 for equipment and change over. When the bids came back the cruisers were \$46,000 each. That was a uniform response from every dealership. We got a result from Casco Bay Ford and Augusta Ford came back at a few hundred dollars more. The second issue was getting the cars. We were originally going to buy one and pray we could find a second one in time for next years budget. In order to purchase the second that has become available we need the extra \$20,000 because that would be the cost over what we budgeted. If we wait till the next budget season the price will be higher. To get on an order list right now is about 12 months. An additional cruiser became available from someone else's order. Councilor Egan stated we are at a disadvantage by buying one or two cruisers only and we should partner with neighboring towns for a fleet purchase price. There is a shortage of available cars. We are at the mercy of vehicle vendors.

There used to be a State bid package that would give municipalities a choice of dealers under that group vehicle bid. The Manager stated he hasn't seen that in years. He will reach out to GPCOG about why we haven't seen that in collective bidding. Even if we did that there isn't the inventory. It's a seller's market.

We had a detailed Capital Budget which looked at fleet replacement. Every time we bump that we get out of sync and will pay 4 or 5 years down the road. We are out of sync on Rescue vehicles and we are going to see a huge cost increase on that. We have not adjusted purchasing to fall in line where we have a comfortable level on that. This is an example of where we change something and it has a huge impact. We will get by but in 12 months from now when we are running a vehicle with 110,000 miles on it instead of 80,000 we start seeing breakdowns and reduced efficiency. We have a replacement schedule that includes little to no down time on cruisers. The longer we go we lose efficiency.

The request is for an additional \$20,000 but the vehicle looks like it's only \$11,000-\$12,000 more. There is wiggle room in the changeover line that we would have been able to absorb a few thousand dollars but not \$10,000. Should we say an amount slightly more because we can put the money back. Any monies not expended go back to the Police equipment reserve fund eventually. Should we increase this up to \$24,000? The manager would be fine with that. If it's to small amount he won't be back for more money. The Police Advisory Committee sent out a survey and the top two or three themes from the majority of them were that the cars are unreliable, old, breaking down, or we don't have the number of cars we need per shift.

BE IT ORDERED: That a Public Hearing be set for December 6, 2022 at the Town Council meeting that starts at 6 pm in Town Council Chambers, 30 Main Street to discuss a supplemental appropriation, pursuant to section 6.08 (A) of the Freeport Town Charter in the amount of \$20,000 for the capital purchase of police cruisers. **VOTE:** (Daniele & Lawrence)(6-Ayes)(0-Nay)(1- Excused-Pillsbury)

(Police Chief, Nathaniel Goodman)(10 minutes)

COUNCIL MEETING #21-22
NOVEMBER 29, 2022

ITEM # 206-22 To consider action relative to a bid award for a new Recycling Center Tractor.

This is replacing an 18 year old skid steer tractor that is at the Recycling Center. One of the reasons we wanted to go with a tractor is because they want to do their own mowing. That will save \$3,000/yr and will bring it in house.

We budgeted this amount in our last fiscal year and this is just the execution of that authority with a savings of just over \$1,000. They didn't like the bids from their first request, so they sent out a second bid. This money has already been appropriated. The engines horsepower went from a 32 horsepower to a 52. The bobcat was not a tractor but was a utility vehicle. We wanted a self-contained broom so as you sweep it goes into a bucket. John Deere and Bobcat couldn't do that. His solicitation list was helpful.

BE IT ORDERED: That a bid award go to Wallingford Equipment of Auburn Maine for a new Recycling Center Tractor with attachments in the amount of \$68,900.00.
VOTE: (Bradley & Lawrence)(6-Ayes)(0-Nay)(1- Excused-Pillsbury)

(Public Works Superintendent, Earl Gibson)(10 minutes)

Note: \$70,000.00 was included in the FY22-23 Recycling Center Budget for the purchase of a new tractor with attachments. The total bid price with trade-in included is \$68,900.00. This will be a saving of \$1,100.00.

ITEM # 207-22 To consider action relative to a Sewer Funding Task Force.

Councilor Bradley: requesting action to create a committee to deal with potential collaboration between the town and the Sewer District with respect to funding improvements to the plant and associated items which include force mains and disinfection processes at the plant that are not included in the current proposal for improvements to the plant. The idea is that we would form a committee of people who have interest in the sewer district to determine if there is a way in which the town could or should support the Sewer District in funding its services to clean the sewer because of the general benefits it provides. We got involved with this over connection fees being charged by the Sewer District for modifications to buildings in the downtown which affected the Revisioning. Since then the issue has expanded to include a greater inquiry into the whole nature of the sewer district and it's relationship to the town, funding its projects and governance of the sewer district in participation by the town. The Sewer District manager has been transparent and helpful. He's open to talking about the range of issues. They had an initial meeting with people who have set this up for the consideration of the committee he's asking the council to form. This committee will be for 6 months and advisory to the Council and will present alternatives that the council might find reasonable and will provide information that will help the Council make decisions about whether to help fund and under what conditions. The people identified: Councilor Bradley and Fournier, the Town Manager and Town Planner, Lee Arris and Sally Leland from the district, resident Rod Regier, Dan Bacon and Brett Richardson from FEDC and consultant Brent Bridges. Two people we would like to ask to also join, Mark Winter and Clint Goodenow.

FEDC supports this request. The only thing not in the motion we should add or understand is when we are talking about funding we are not just talking about money. We are talking about the conditions and terms under which funding might be offered as a collaborative effort. The committee would not ignore

COUNCIL MEETING #21-22
NOVEMBER 29, 2022

that a financial contribution might involve more participation with the district. Right now they are pretty much stand alone and if you put in town money that may not continue to be true. He expects to be back in part of the revision process in time for the budget process.

Councilor Egan: the engineer cautioned that most Federal grant sources available to the district would reduce the grant that Rural Development is considering. That is true. That's why we may want to consider going after sources of funding ourselves. We may have areas we could get funding for that were not in the purview of the rural development, it would not reduce it. If we simply give the district money it would reduce the amount of grant available from the federal government.

Think about the Sewer District as more than a place you clean up dirty water, it's a service to the entire community including the quality of the harbor, recreational uses, the clambers, all the water issues along the shore and the boating industry in the town. They are all related to the district. We were cautioned to not go willy nilly producing funds that are within the purview of a grant that rural development is considering because if you do you may find they reduce the amount of the grant that they give. It's a 17.5 million dollar grant they are pursuing. They are not sure how much will be grant and how much will be loan.

Councilor Egan: Wondered if the contract that the Sewer District has is for engineering services or for capital planning and grant writing. It is a little of both. They are dragging them in on a lot of different meetings so it's hourly at this time.

Councilor Daniele asked about opening this group up to the general public. Every person was picked for their sense of experience and interest in the Sewer District. These would be open meetings if the committee is established by governance. Sally Leland is a tax payer representative and on the Sewer District. Councilor Fournier supports this committee.

Chair Piltch: to confirm, the committee is going to explore all possible funding including Town funding but we're not binding the town to commit to funding, just what that funding looks like. They will present alternatives that make sense to the committee. Brett Richardson has already cautioned between tying a particular funding mechanism to a particular TIF. TIF will definitely be a topic that will return.

Councilor Bradley wanted to know if anyone had any concerns. It's a positive offer on this committee to do the work of the council in the Revisioning process and the work of the town. Councilor spoke in favor of the committee. Councilor Fournier is finding refreshing the honest dialogue that is being had. We may not adopt everything that comes out of it, but this is progress.

Councilor Egan is concerned about the 74-76% of the people who are not served by the District voicing a voice about their tax dollars going to a government entity of which they get no benefit. He agrees that the Sewer District provides benefits besides somebody's pipe connection, but he's not sure there would be widespread consensus on that point. We should be well aware that any recommendation that comes forward for Town budget to support a particular project or any ongoing support for the Sewer District will be quite a discussion.

The Town Manager spoke about how the proposed board will contain a balanced and varied group of opinions.

COUNCIL MEETING #21-22
NOVEMBER 29, 2022

BE IT ORDERED: That a Sewer Funding Task Force be established, to exist for a period of six months, for the purposes of exploration of all possible funding sources for the Sewer District, including external sources, potential Town funding sources, federal funding and any other sources of funding, with a goal of bringing recommendations on the above-mentioned subject to the Town Council before its completion.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED: That the following individuals be appointed to the Sewer Funding Task Force: Peter Joseph, Town Manager; Ed Bradley and Darryl Fournier, Town Councilman; Lee Arris, Manager of the Sewer District; Sally Leland, member of Sewer District and resident of District 3; Rod Regier, former Town Councilor; Dan Bacon, Representative of FEDC; Brent Richardson, Executive Director FEDC; Brent Bridges; Woodward and Curran consultant to the Sewer District. Also add 2 more names Mark Winters and Clint Goodenow if they agree. **VOTE:** (Bradley & Fournier)(6-Ayes)(0-Nay)(1- Excused-Pillsbury)

(Councilor Bradley)(45 minutes)

ITEM # 208-22 To consider action relative to establishing a Housing Task Force.

Councilor Egan: This is the formal action to follow up on the discussion we've had for the past several months culminating in the presentation from the Social and Racial Equity Committee in October of a report which we all received copies of regarding current housing status and glaring needs in the community and some demographic and census information to illustrate how certain segments of our real estate market are completely unaffordable to many residents in our community. The final recommendation of that report which was presented was to create a housing committee. We had conversation around whether it would be a formal committee or a task force with a shelf life. He is presenting a recommendation for a 12 month task force to focus on housing issues. We have the benefit of having a very successful non-profit in our community called Freeport Housing Trust which owns and operates successfully 170 units they have in the community. They work with a wide array of folks and through that housing they have done some ownership as well. They are trying to serve a broad slice of the community, not just low income. They have agreed to participate in this task force. They bring a lot of data and information and knowledge of the community. He has confirmation of a list of people who have agreed to serve. The particulars of what the committee might focus on are derived from the issues that each of them bring to that discussion. As a starter set he is suggesting a couple of things we can put forward that would be some particular active steps that the Council might take to spark a development project. We have two that have come forward recently and there is an opportunity to see if we could get a few more to create more housing stock in our community. We've had a lot of feedback about our Zoning Ordinance and our permitting process and encourage this group to focus on recommending three or more top zoning ordinance barriers that projects might be facing in terms of permitting. We have a state law in place now that allows for development of accessory dwelling units. Our Zoning already allows this so we don't have to focus on an authorization there, but he thinks we should be promoting it. He's not suggesting putting dollars out there to encourage it as other communities have done.

He does have a starter list of names and would be open to the public involvement:
Matt Peters, Freeport Housing Trust
Mitch Rouda, Planning Board
Brett Richardson, FEDC

COUNCIL MEETING #21-22
NOVEMBER 29, 2022

Vanessa Far, Participated with Principle Group, Professional Planner
Marty Mia, SREC member and was instrumental in the Report mentioned above
Someone from the Construction industry (He recommends Drew Wing from Zachau Construction)
John Egan, Council Liaison

Councilor Bradley: A lot of this relates to the Downtown Revisioning but it doesn't specifically identify how this effort would merge with the Downtown Revision if at all. He wants to know Councilor Egan's thoughts on that.

Councilor Egan: Any of the projects that are identified in the Downtown Plan are only going to get better if we have residents living in the downtown. If you talk to any planner, the number one economic development action a community can take is increase 24 hour residency of people living in downtown. That creates consumer demand. Councilor Bradley sees it does reference housing projects specifically in the downtown.

The Downtown Plan talked about residents that live within a radius of downtown so the project itself might not be downtown but for instance the new development on Desert Road contributes to the number of people who live, shop and work and could easily bike or walk downtown even though the project itself doesn't reside in that little square box we drew around downtown. The breweries have recognized the affinity locations of the south end of our Main Street and that could be other industries that serve population that are more proximal for bike rides and pedestrian access. The definition of downtown will evolve a little bit over time.

Councilor Lawrence: It shouldn't be limited to downtown, it should be the whole town. We don't have starter homes or the next level homes. We have very low income housing and high income housing and it doesn't bode well.

BE IT ORDERED: That a Housing Task Force be established, to exist for a period of twelve months, to study the problem of housing affordability in Freeport and to make recommendations to the Town Council for actions the town could take and policies the town could establish to encourage the development of affordable housing.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED: That the following individuals be appointed to the Housing Task Force: Matt Peters, Mari Mia, Brett Richardson, Mitch Rouda, Vanessa Far, a representative of the construction industry, and John Egan

VOTE: (Egan & Daniele)(6-Ayes)(0-Nay)(1- Excused-Pillsbury)

(Vice Chair Egan)(30 minutes)

OTHER BUSINESS:

COUNCIL MEETING #21-22
NOVEMBER 29, 2022

1. Continuing discussion regarding concerns surrounding General Assistance and potential homelessness resulting from the anticipated elimination of the emergency rental assistance program (ERA Program) at the State level.

Town Manager: We held a meeting with the Manager, Councilors Egan and Bradley, a local affordable housing developer, a local hotel owner, Sarah Lundin and Mike Tausek of FCS, Greg Payne from the Governor's Office (housing expert) and Representative Sachs. They discussed some of the developments the State is going to extend the ERA program with additional money that has been recovered that was lost from the treasury transfer process essentially until the end of December. There is a proposal likely brought to the Legislature in the next 1-2 weeks to provide emergency housing funding continuing through the winter. That is not a done deal, but will likely have a lot of debate. There has been some funding identified as available but it's going to depend on a lot of other people. There's broad support in this part of the State, but the question is wider parts of the State where this isn't an issue. Will there be support to raise and appropriate State funds to take care of this issue. The proposal isn't formal, but there is movement on the immediate need. It doesn't address the long-term homelessness insecurity and housing shortage. It's not the same but it's tied closely to the housing affordability problem.

The Manager drafted a letter to be used for PR if it's the correct time to provide input. He was also asked for additional stats and has provided that in a memo to the Council. He summarized:

Best Western: 30 households – housing cost \$110/night=\$99,000/mos or \$1.2 million/yr
That's the portion covered by ERA right now. That is the amount of State money going to the hotels right now.

Food/non food/prescription: 30 households = \$25,000/mos= \$300,000/yr. That is a GA figure. That is a 70/30 split with the State picking up 70% of that.

Total cost for that facility: \$124,000/mos = \$1.5 million/yr.

Casco: no detail: not receiving ERA. Receiving funding from Portland General Assistance Office. Portland is honoring their commitment to continue to fund families that were placed there in the spring. He mentioned this because Portland is under no legal obligation to continue to honor it and he wants to put a place holder here that this could drop on us.

Other Freeport Hotels (mainly Econo Lodge and 44 Hotel North): Approximately 20 households.
Housing Costs=\$140/night = \$1 million/yr. This is State ERA money that is going to those households.
Potential food/non food prescription: \$200,000/yr. We are not seeing that because few of those families have qualified under General Assistance. We could be responsible for 30% of \$200,000/yr.

31 Other Households with ERA ending: we do not have specifics on this. The CAP agencies are not giving out that information. FCS estimated the rough allowance for GA would be about \$2,000/mos, we can only assume that this would be similar to what the ERA costs might be for rent.
Estimated Costs for 30 Households: \$750,000/yr (potential ERA costs)

Councilor Egan: The Federal Emergency Rental Assistance was announced to be ending at the end of November. His understanding is that through some negotiations, this may be extended through December. The Federal passed assistance for this is over December 31st. There is going to be a discussion quickly for legislation at the State legislature to come up with some solution. That is not a guarantee. The context of looking at these numbers there is the possibility the Town of Freeport will have to figure out what to do with these families, many of which are unable to work because of immigration status. The immigration issue is a whole different sector that needs to be tackled but in the meantime we need to get a handle on what this looks like if 20-50 families with no place to live and no income. There

COUNCIL MEETING #21-22
NOVEMBER 29, 2022

are hopeful signs about emergency extension from the State. There are at least 6 of these households with an expectant baby coming, just imagine that for a moment. There are a lot of people, advocates and organizations trying to solve the problem. There are social service agencies around Portland that are communicating with FCS which is doing an amazing job. The top priority that what is best for those households is at the top of the list in terms of decisions and impacts.

Councilor Bradley: There are two base problems, one is the new Mainers and those are the people at the Best Western and the Casco Bay Inn essentially. The rest are traditional people in poverty or in distress. They all have been getting ERA money and will be effected. The new Mainers though don't have the ability to earn money or take care of themselves because of immigration restrictions. The older Mainers do have that possibility but may be restricted by virtue of conditions that they experience personally. If this great plan doesn't occur, Preble Street offered to provide a social service assistant to help older Mainers who may have access to a whole range of social services that they don't access because of their personal problems and will work with them on a case by case basis.

Councilor Bradley inquired that when you get to the last two categories, it seems to be double counting. He understands that the 30 Best Western households may be relocated to Portland or South Portland. The Casco Bay Inn ones are ones that Portland's taking care of for now and the old Mainers which he understands roughly 20 families are filtered throughout our community. There are 81 households that are not Portland's responsibility that are on ERA in Freeport right now. The Town Manager explained the breakdown of the families and their eligibilities for assistance. It gets difficult because GA has been the bridge funding mechanism. There are longer term programs for support for people such as SSDI for people who cannot work. GA is not supposed to support somebody for years, just the months they need help getting into those programs. Councilor Bradley left these meetings understanding that there was a full court press to solve this problem through spring and through that time other solutions would be discussed. Recognizing that might not work, there was some question about what steps the town should be taking about if it doesn't. This is a daunting amount of money.

In years past we have helped maybe 10 households per month. Examples of ways we have helped people were given by the Town Manager. These were to fill in the gaps in funding. The real big difference now is the hotels being emptied during the covid pandemic, a large group of people becoming homeless, the shelters in Portland closing and people who would have received those services being moved out to another location including Freeport. That 51 number would have been 5 if it was the traditional Freeport GA case load.

Of the 28 new Mainer families at the Casco Bay Inn, they're not under this ERA deadline, but are there other looming deadlines for them or any reasons why the city of Portland might not have access to the funds they're using to pay for these folks today? The Town Manager is not aware of any drop off for that group. The plan for those families is a draw down, as those families are placed in long term housing or achieve work authorization, as they move out they are not being back filled by Portland. The Casco Bay Inn is not putting people from those other categories into those rooms. That's a private business decision.

The Best Western owner's reason for moving those people to South Portland is that it is better for them. They are closer to services, closer to transportation and all the things they can use. The issue is the kids who are in school. There was some discussion of providing transportation for these kids so they can stay in school

Councilor Fournier: Have we reached out to Catholic Charities or other organizations that may not be the traditional people who help but have had an influence on bringing people to our area?

COUNCIL MEETING #21-22
NOVEMBER 29, 2022

Sara Lundin: We are at the table with many of these groups being mentioned. Catholic Charities has been focused on refugees who settle in the area versus asylum seekers which there is a very big difference. FCS has been working with the Immigrants Rights Coalition who helped place the families here and working collaboratively towards a solution.

Some folks receiving ERA have gone from hotel to hotel so there's no agency placing them there. The ERA program was portable to allow folks to go where there would be more resources or jobs. There was discussion about the agencies making placements.

Representative Sachs:

She attends the Housing Caucus each week which is a group of legislators that tried to pass laws last year to put a small dent in the housing crisis. One of the pieces was significant in that you can now use TIF funds for Supportive Services. Should you choose to do things such as Part-time housing navigator, you can use TIF funds to do so. She thinks it would be permissible to revise the TIF as permissible and eligible expense. She spoke about how local realtors are working to help make housing placements and the help that new Mainers need.

Legislation: Greg Payne has been a long time person advocating within the affordable housing coalition as well as now being Governor Mills Housing expert. He came to Freeport and he's excited about the work we are doing collaboratively. She welcomes a letter from the Town Council and she's committed to doing everything she can within the Legislature to pass a package at least get us through the end of April. One of her focuses is pushing GA reimbursement up to 90%. This is a Statewide problem.

Councilor Daniele: Inquired about if we do not have funding after December, whether we have contacted the schools about the potential of using them as temporary emergency shelters? It's a phone call and he would like to have preliminary conversations. We haven't investigated yet, but may need to.

Let's see what happens with the State's emergency legislation as plan A (four-month reprieve). Don't waste your time on things you may never have to do in this time frame.

A potential Plan B (financial): While ERA may be ending there may be other hotel or hospitality facilities and/or private units in the community, if they were paid, may put up some of the families. One concern is that many of the hotels would like to shut down. Some hotels aren't going to take the referrals. It could be smaller apartments or churches. It would have to be coordinated and discussed. It's not as simple as a phone call to the RSU. To start develop a Plan B, is another major undertaking for a town like ours. Let's give Plan A a shot. Councilor Lawrence is skeptical of waiting on the State to do it. We have a meeting with the RSU and we will have them put it on their radar.

Councilor Fournier: After having run an emergency shelter in the past, we don't want to discuss this because we do not have the infrastructure to support this.

Sarah Lundin: There are a couple of agencies that did place people at the Best Western. There has been support for food but there's not been any on-site case management or support. FCS has been able to secure a full-time one-year position through Good Shepherd from a grant. She doesn't fault the agencies that were trying to house the hundreds of homeless being refused services after May 5th. It's unfortunate that there wasn't someone onsite everyday as she had hoped.

COUNCIL MEETING #21-22
NOVEMBER 29, 2022

General Assistance is not just the responsibility of where the person is from, its where they live or move to or claim general assistance. If you move into a hotel, you are a Freeport resident. He explained the breakdown in the State General Assistance program in this regard and the problem with non-support surrounding towns. Only 40-50 municipalities are picking up the problem.

(Chair Piltch)(60 minutes)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

ITEM # 209-22 To consider action relative to an Executive Session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. § 405(6)(A) pertaining to an employment matter.

MOTION: That the Town Council enter Executive Session amending to include pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. § 405(6)(C) a Real Estate or Personal Property matter. **VOTE:** (Daniele & Lawrence)(6-Ayes)(0-Nay)(1- Excused-Pillsbury)

Matthew Pillsbury entered the Executive Session at 9:20 p.m. via phone as a non-voting participant. Mr. Joseph left the meeting at 9:20 p.m. **VOTE:** (Daniele & Egan)(6-Ayes)(0-Nay)(1- Present, non-voting - Pillsbury)

MOTION: That the Town Council exit Executive Session.

(15 minutes)

END OF AGENDA (Estimated time of adjournment 10:15 PM)