

MINUTES
FREEPORT TOWN COUNCIL MEETING #24-22
TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 30 MAIN STREET, FREEPORT
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2022
5:30 PM Executive Session
(Regular Council Meeting to start at 6 pm.)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chair Piltch called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

ITEM # 220-22 To consider action relative to an Executive Session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. § 405(6)(E) pertaining to a legal matter.

MOTION: That the Town Council enter Executive Session. (Piltch & Daniele)

VOTE: (5-Ayes)(0-Nays)(2-Absent Lawrence & Fournier)

MOTION: That the Town Council exit Executive Session. (Egan & Piltch)

VOTE: (5-Ayes)(0-Nays)(2-Absent Lawrence & Fournier)

(15 minutes)

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FROM: Peter E. Joseph, Town Manager

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

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FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS: Pledge of Allegiance

SECOND ORDER OF BUSINESS: To waive the reading of the minutes of Meeting #23-22 held on December 6, 2022 and to accept the minutes as printed.

MOVED AND SECONDED: To waive the reading of the minutes of Meeting # 22-22 held on December 6, 2022 and to accept the minutes as written. **VOTE:** (Daniele & Egan)(5-Ayes)(0-Nays)(2-Absent Lawrence & Fournier)

THIRD ORDER OF BUSINESS: Announcements (15 minutes)

- **2023 Dog Licenses are available.** All dog licenses expire December 31st of each year. Dogs six months and older are required to be licensed by law. You may register at the Freeport Town Hall or online at: www.doglicensing.com. Please bring proof of the rabies vaccination and spay/neutering. *Please be aware that you must renew your dog license no later than January 31st of each year, or a late fee of \$25.00 per dog will be charged.*
- **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 are available at the Town Office and on the Town's website at www.freeportmaine.com. Deadline for nominations is January 5, 2023. The Special Projects Committee makes reviews the nominations and makes the recommendation to the Council.
- Public Works would like to give a reminder to keep turnarounds clear so the plow trucks can turn their vehicles safely. Also, please keep the sidewalk clear of vehicles and trash cans.

FOURTH ORDER OF BUSINESS: Information Exchange (15 minutes)

Councilor Bradley: In regard to the Downtown Vision, the Transportation Group asked the Council for approval to put an extended cart on the town insurance policy and motor vehicle registration. Since then, ADA considerations have come up that are being taken seriously. It will delay any movement on that till we find a solution.

The Sewer Committee has met with FEDC and there are positive conversations going back and forth. In a short time, they have gotten focused on things like what does the District need, how could the town help and should they help and what are other towns doing that ought to help you decide if we want to do this.

Councilor Egan: (liaison to Meetinghouse Arts): Meetinghouse Arts will be before the Council on January 17, 2023 to give an update. They just went through a strategic planning process. They have broad ambitions for 2023 and beyond and would like to catch us up to date since we are a trusted partner.

There was a bump in the road getting the Housing Task Force off the ground. One of the proposed members declined due to the potential perception of conflict. They are working on another prospect and hope to convene in early January. The proposed structure of the committee is a 12-month ad hoc committee. There is an outline that has been used by other municipalities that are also forming housing committees, that he will offer in terms of organizing topics and suggested focus areas one of which is getting input from residents.

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Chair Piltch: The Police Advisory Committee got a tour of the Police Station and the facilities. They will be forwarding a memo to the Council on their findings. We should see that before budget season.

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

Mr. Joseph thanked the Public Works Dept. for taking part in the Sparkle Parade. Kelly and Tammy worked to decorate the newest plow truck and entered it in the parade.

Fire Department did a presentation of their newest life saving devices that were purchased with donations made to Fire Rescue each year. We have three of these units now. Over the past few weeks they have had a string of three cardiac events, including bringing two codes back to life. Chief Conley spoke in detail about the events where the Rescue responded with life saving procedures. The device they have with them tonight was placed in service last Friday. The three pieces were purchased for \$60,000. It is a significant live saving device. He will demonstrate how quickly it can be set up to use on a cardiac arrest patient. This frees up crew from manually doing the compressions and becoming expended with the quality of compressions lowering as the rescue personnel tire out. This machine will run continuous. It makes it safer for the crew to transport while still maintaining CPR on the patient. It is potential life saving for both the patient and crew. He went on to detail another successful save of a cardiac event. He named the crews responsible for the great saves. During training on the device, they received another call at which they had another cardiac event where CPR was necessary and had a successful outcome. They have also been able to purchase a video laryngoscope if they need to put an ET scope in which was also purchased with generous resident donations. The CPR devices are about \$20,000 each. Each battery pack runs for 45 minutes and each device has 2 battery packs. They also can power with electricity. Once the device is on the patient, it remains in place in case there is another cardiac event in route to the hospital. He followed up with a quick video and demonstration of the device. Chief Conley also spoke about the precare that we are able to provide to patients before arriving at the ER. This device cannot be used on young children, the very weak or elderly and people who may exceed 350 lbs.

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

Robert Stevens: Mason Morfit and himself sent a letter to the Council describing how they think the ARPA allocation money could be used to help people in town who need help with heating and other purposes and also to help electrify Freeport. As he has gotten older he realizes we are in trouble with the climate. He believes the Council understands that too and is committed to try to help Freeport do what it can do locally. That's why 700-800 residents have suggested two ways to do that. One is to move ahead of the State regarding adoption of the Stretch Building Code and the second is to use the unallocated ARPA funds. If we want to be a leader, we need to move these things along. Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funds will be coming along too. Adoption of the Stretch Code this year will help us try to stay ahead of the State. Don't send it to another committee to study more. We need action and he wonders if they are going to get it?

Chair Piltch: They don't have a date when they will take action. The spirit of the Council is to move the needle to try to lead on this issue. On the Stretch Codes, we have taken action on those and have a committee going and some discussion as to what the impact is. There are questions about whether we want to apply the Stretch Codes to everyone or just some of the buildings in town. There are nuances that we are looking into. There are a lot of people looking into requests of the ARPA funds.

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Councilor Bradley: This town has a million things in the frying pan with a small number of people making the decisions. Things that are critical get lumped in with everything else and there's no process for determining that something deserves a priority. He is up here like everyone else looking for ARPA funds for his pet project, but he would give it all up to give climate it's due, so we could set an example and actually do something as opposed to think and plan about it. It's not the silver bullet that solves it all but it shows the residents that we think it matters most and it shows by example that they can get things done in the climate. He hopes we do the Stretch Code. Let's give some money to the climate. FCS and the Sewer Dept will also be asking for money but those things are in a line of issues that we're addressing to help the town generically. This is existential and he hopes we can do something and don't lose our chance to make a difference.

Councilor Pillsbury: He thought we decided to do a pilot program. One of the concerns he has is the sustainability of the program. Councilor Daniele had mentioned a loan program for folks that wouldn't have the upfront money to invest in heat pumps. The other issue is how are we going to run a program. Starting with some seed money and doing a pilot will demonstrate to us how we best run that, i.e. how would we coordinate with Efficiency Maine or whatever group we coordinate with. We want to leverage our money in the line of Efficiency Maine or other grants and then our money is last because there is a finite pool of it. He doesn't have a clear idea of how we're running that program, so he'd rather start with seed money. He thought that was the sentiment they had discussed.

The remaining ARPA funds are currently \$427,600. They had originally asked for \$150,000 to start the program. They have now suggested that the council put \$75,000 as a meaningful amount. Mr. Stevens has spoke with the Manager about the ability of staff to handle this and he thinks the way the program will be run will not create a burden on the staff. There are volunteers that would be happy to contribute time also.

MOTION: To appropriate \$75,000 for seed money to start the program going with the help and support of the Town Manager and staff and start learning the lessons to make this a sustainable program in the future. (Bradley & Egan)

Councilor Daniele: Would prefer to not go so fast and at the next meeting we discuss under Other Business a bigger picture of what the town wants to do with the ARPA money with the intent of putting things in a bucket and start making a decision about how much we choose to spend on this program then go forward and make that motion then. This is a worthy thing but what are those other buckets that may need funds. ARPA requests will come in over time. We have already made ARPA allocations including the funds given to FCS and the contingent money. Councilor Bradley can't think of anything more important than the climate as an important project.

Councilor Pillsbury: We had talked about using some funds for Freeport Housing Trust (FHT) to do these projects in their building to potentially lower rents. He would like to see that as part of the proposal. He sees the value in doing this as we already have a partnership with FHT. It's a value to the community and speaks to a wider group of people than those that might use the pilot program for a set amount of funding. He would be in support of something that had a distribution there as well. If we are willing to give \$75,000, where do we draw that line.

Councilor Egan: FCAN has approached FHT and has gotten a positive reception and commitment that if they can take advantage of the Electrify everything effort and match it with other rebates, they will use it to reduce rents. It is unclear how many units or households might actually benefit, therefore, how much of the initial allocation might go to that population of landlord units at FHT. They have already had that conversation.

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Mr. Stevens spoke to the concept of a community solar project at the capped landfill site. FHT is interested in participating in something like that. The board has authorized a sum of money because they feel like they need another 160 kilowatts of electricity. So FCAN is working with FHT.

Chair Piltch: loves the spirit this is coming from. There is a lot of money coming out of the Inflation Reduction Act. They are still writing the rules but a lot of it is directed at that kind of help. He would like to get more information about that before we start depleting our ARPA funds. If we are starting a seed program, we can probably do with less than \$75,000 just to get it off the ground and see how much interest there is. He's hesitant to start the precedent that who gets here first can get ARPA funds. We initially set one third for FCS/social services, one third for downtown and a third for infrastructure. Now there's a fourth category that because the proposal is finessed and here first we are ready to spend the money on that before seeing what's in these other buckets which might take a few months to do. We should consider what might come out of that. He's hesitant to do something without announcing it without allowing the public to come in with support or otherwise.

Councilor Daniele: He is leaning the same way as the chair and notes we also have two councilors missing tonight and shouldn't move without their input. He spoke with FSAB about the \$40,000 they had for the Sustainability position and they are still going through the process of discussing where else that money may be used. He thinks having a discussion about ARPA funds at the next meeting would be productive.

Councilor Bradley: This is the downtown. Electrification and climate is part of the goal of the downtown revision plan. You can start with the \$75,000 and give them the assurance that they can set up the program. If we find as we went away and did other work for other sources, we might find other fundings and we could save the ARPA funds. He would like to see us do something. We can put this on the agenda for January 3rd. The Manager will work with Mr. Stevens before the next meeting. Councilor Bradley withdrew his early motion.

Councilor Pillsbury: Suggests that we come back with a number that FHT might be able to use. The reason that is important is that it's guaranteed affordable housing in perpetuity essentially, whereas someone that's a private resident gets the grant and if they sell their property, and someone buys that property that doesn't have the income restrictions they get the benefit. The heart of this is two things, one to get a more sustainable heating source for the environment but also to support lower income folks with their heating bills. He would like to see a piece of that that is concrete. They are working to nail that down with the Housing Trust.

Susan Nourse: She wanted to recognize the Police and Fire Rescue Departments for their good work throughout the year and this time of year the sacrifices of time away from family and friends taking care of Freeport. She is a plan person and spoke on her views on recent plans. She sees that the Town Council has embraced the recent development of Freeport's Downtown Vision Plan, a plan to revitalize the downtown area. Some ideas have been experimented with this past summer. She is waving the caution flag to making too many changes to existing guidelines that protect the quaint historic look of Freeport. Our New England Village center would lose its distinct character, one that residents and visitors enjoy if the permitting process for development are streamlined and changes made to such things as density, building height and architectural standards. Several of the projects identified in the plan conflict with the visual effect desired for Freeport's Historic District of town such as the Main Street redesign and placement of multi-family housing. Please use the Vision Plan as a guide and not a rule.

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Thirdly, she spoke at McDonald's at the corner of Main and Mallet Drive. We are fortunate to have a fast food restaurant that has design features that compliment adjacent historic buildings. Forty years ago the town required McDonald's to modify its typical box appearance to fit with the existing character of the buildings on Main Street. The approval process came with much angst. As you walk on Main Street there are many examples of how town leaders have maintained the architectural character of Freeport as the small village it is. At the southern gateway at Main and West Street, there is an opportunity to shape that entrance for the town. Currently, there is a proposal before the Design Review Board for two multi-story apartment buildings on that lot. She wrote before about the visual affront those buildings would have to anyone traveling north over the train overpass. The proposed buildings are square and modern. There is nothing about them that fit within the neighborhood scale, height, proportion, rhythm or roof shape. It is not the town's responsibility to fulfill the developers wish to have certain profitability. It is our responsibility to have this building conform to the aesthetics established on Main Street. She thanked the council and manager for their service. The people of Freeport count on them to make decisions in large town changing decisions. The use of the property at West and Main has emerged as a town changing decision. She has been told that the use of that land at 22 Main Street is not up for consideration by the council. It is not something that has come before them for review. The council has had much influence about this plot of land in meetings with board and committee meetings or at social gatherings. She is asking that their influence be directed toward a use for this property that is compatible with the character of Freeport's downtown in scale and visual effect. Create a warm and welcoming gateway into Freeport, not a harsh unattractive box blocking this building. There seems to be a rush to get multifamily buildings approved in the downtown district. She agrees that the infrastructure supports that type of housing but does not agree that the proposed housing needs to be situated on Main Street or that it fits any of the required design components that form our downtown village. We will look to the town council for whatever change happens at 22 Main Street. People do pay attention when things impact them in a big visual way and this group of proposed buildings is a big visual atrocity. As a governing board, slow down and consider the long-term impact of any significant changes to the permitting process as it applies to the development in our village. Are we using the vision plan as a guide to maintain the desired historic visual effect? Let's make sure the southern gateway is pleasing to the eye for residents and visitors.

Councilor Bradley: There are things to be said that are real and concrete and are commitments and efforts that have been made that he thinks have to be merged with Ms. Nourse's thoughts if we are going to come to a decision that is correct for the town. It's got to be done quickly and it can't be done at the council level. McDonald's didn't happen at the council, it happened in the community as an outcry about something that was important to them. There are a lot of people concerned about the issues she raised but they are not putting forward a concrete set of concerns and objections or political effort that he thinks needs to be done before the kinds of things she's talking about can have an impact on the 2-3 years of planning that has gone into the downtown which these projects she's talking about are part of. He has talked to people with views on both sides and they raise concerns and go away. He doubts they have found a way to see their values realized by those on the council who are trying to do the right thing.

This housing project proposals are before the Project Review Board and will be there a number of times. They have some approvals but still have more that they need. The applicant will be before that board and that is a good meeting for the public to attend. You may also forward feedback to the Town Planner or council chair.

Michael Marcolla: Previously sent a letter to the council in regard to the short-term rental ordinance which he supports. He does not support the 16-guest limit which puts an unfair burden on some of the homeowners. He is one. He is a year-round resident of Freeport spending 44 weeks in their home and then do grandchildren care for 8 weeks in the summer and rent their residence. Their home has a private driveway on 3.4 acres with adjacent space for parking. Summer rentals starting in 2017 were mostly

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large family reunions (over 16 guests). Since 2021, with the 16-guest cap, they have had to decline various family reunions leaving some weeks unfilled. This has a negative financial impact and sends the message that large family reunions are not welcomed in Freeport. This cap was a reasonable starting backstop, but excessive noise and congestion can be caused by smaller or larger groups. Have there been complaints on noise or parking? Would there be a high negative impact on amending the 16-guest cap. Our message is we are a 16 cap town and if you need bigger, go elsewhere. For the large homeowner, your rental options are limited. He hopes we remove the cap or set procedures by which owners can apply for an adjustment.

Councilor Daniele: asked about the number of bedrooms at his home/rental. Mr. Marcolla's year-round septic is zoned for 20 people. He pointed out that if he is zoned for year-round septic for 20, what would be the impact over a shorter period of time. You need to have technical people look into that.

Councilor Bradley clarified that what is being asked is an exception that an owner could apply for and qualify their property with Codes or someone to say there is enough rooms to take care of it and you can up the number to 20 for example. This is reasonable to refer to the Ordinance Committee. When this ordinance was adopted there was the thought that we would get experience with it and see how it worked out. Councilor Bradley will bring Mr. Marcolla's letter to the Ordinance Committee and will let him know when that meeting is so he can attend. By the ordinance, you cannot have more than 16 rental guests for dinner. An owner could however host the party privately as long as it's not a rental. We need to look at owner on premises as part of the ordinance considerations.

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

ITEM # 221-22 To consider action relative to adopting the December 20, 2022 Consent Agenda.

Chair Piltch reviewed the items on the Consent Agenda.

BE IT ORDERED: That the December 20, 2022 Consent Agenda be adopted.
(Pillsbury & Daniele) **VOTE:** (5-Ayes)(0-Nays)(2-Absent Lawrence & Fournier)

(Council Chair Piltch) (5 minutes)

ITEM # 222-22 To consider action relative to setting a Public Hearing for January 17, 2023 at the Town Council meeting starting at 6 pm for review and comment on Hedgehog Mountain Management Plan update as recommended by the Conservation Commission.

The Conservation Commission has been working to develop a new management plan which they're required to do by ordinance. It's a little overdue. The ordinance states they must pass by a 2/3 vote, which they did. Now it's required to come to the council for adoption after public hearing. He expects a lot of discussion at the hearing. There are details of the plan that people are going to want to dig into including whether we can have mountain bike trails and where can they go.

Tom Ross: Murch Road resident. Not happy with town dissemination of information. He came down to say that the conservation commission has done a fantastic job on the management plan. This town spent a lot of money on the fantastic downtown vision plan. This town has a chance to think

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about a hundred years ahead on the gateway here to the western part of town. There is an opportunity for a master plan. He agrees that there should be snowmobiling, mountain biking and a paved path that folks could ride bikes on at Hedgehog Mt. He calls it the West Freeport Outdoor Recreation Area because there's about 6 properties of land. There is Pownal Rd Fields, the town landfill, Hunter Rd Fields, the Keith property, Hedgehog property and they all have different management plans. He has all of them. He remembers when it passed by 3 votes to buy the Keith property and then they came up with the management plan. He doesn't get on the conservation commission because they come and go. He's a long time resident and knows the property like the back of his hand. He asked the prior town planner to anoint him steward of the West Freeport Outdoor Recreation Area. He knows all the ordinance of the different properties so we can get a master plan out there. Years ago, he had to bribe the town and bring in high school students and offer to build the senior project trail for free with money from his pocket. It was an act of God, but they allowed it. He now sees that the town and NEMBA want to build long wanted trails out there and it doesn't pass the sniff test. He's been the steward out there for a long time and rides his mountain bike on the trails he should there. We need to make this 100-year vision (holding the management plan) when we're all gone. Let's think about what we can create out there as a master plan rather than the toy of the day which right now is NEMBA coming and saying they'll build mountain bike trails. We need to understand the hiking trails. This area is the Central Park of Freeport. He thinks it needs a vision, what we can think about that property when we are all gone.

The council may vote on this January 17th or if there are unanswered questions they may need to postpone. We've had significant conversations with NEMBA about building mountain bike trails on Hedgehog Mt. including the summit and the management plan specifically says the summit is ecologically too delicate for mountain bike trails. That's likely to be an issue on the 17th. The Hedgehog Mt. property and other recreational areas are shown on the map included with the management plan.

BE IT ORDERED: That a Public Hearing be set for January 17, 2023 at the Town Council meeting starting at 6 pm in Town Council Chambers, 30 Main Street, Freeport for review and comment on Hedgehog Mountain Management Plan update as recommended by the Conservation Commission. **VOTE:** (Daniele & Egan)(5-Ayes)(0-Nays)(2-Absent Lawrence & Fournier)

ITEM # 223-22 To consider action relative to the renewal of the Bow Street Park Usage Agreement with the Hilton Garden Inn.

The town has an agreement with the Hilton Garden Inn. They hold events there and pay us to rent the park when they hold events, but this is the formal agreement that gives them the right to schedule and reserve the park. They pay for it (\$200/use) The public could do this as well if they come and get the park usage agreement and get the council to approve it, you can take precedence as well.

Councilor Egan did outline an incident last summer where a music group had reserved the park and the Hilton also had a wedding that day. The hotel didn't reserve the park or indicate that they needed to use the park. The Town Clerk clarified that the calendars are now cross checked so that doesn't occur.

There is a band stand for Memorial Park envisioned as part of the Downtown Revisioning Plan. People in the community or the group investing in that may be affected by a use agreement for the hotel. As we go through thinking about investments in that, we ought to think about ways to protect that against occasional use by others. The farmer's market may be looking for a new space and we may want to leave Friday mornings open right now.

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The Hilton sends an email to the Clerk and it's added to the calendar and Building and Grounds is notified of the reservation. Events are booked on a first come/first serve basis. Could the Hilton reserve the park for Saturdays, the whole summer, just to reserve them? They would pay the \$200 fee and they have never done this. If an event is free and open to the public there has not been a fee assessed to other groups that reserved the park. If someone however gates off the park for a private event, the council may look at that differently. Most weddings are booked for Saturday afternoons for a 4 hour window. Councilor Egan wondered if we should have a cap on the number of events we allow the Hilton to reserve the park for. The average number of reserved events preCovid was 7-8 per summer and since Covid it has only been 1 or 2 per summer so we probably don't need a cap now. We'll keep an eye to next year.

BE IT ORDERED: That the 2023 Bow Street Park Usage Agreement for with the Hilton Garden Inn be approved. **VOTE:** (Egan & Daniele)(4-Ayes)(1-Nays Bradley)(2-Absent Lawrence & Fournier)

(Town Manager, Peter Joseph)(5 minutes)

ITEM # 224-22 To consider action relative to Town Council Committee Assignments to Ordinance Review, Municipal Facilities and Special Projects.

BE IT ORDERED: That the Committee Assignments as listed below be approved. **VOTE:** (Bradley & Daniele)(5-Ayes)(0-Nays)(2-Absent Lawrence & Fournier)

MUNICIPAL FACILITIES: Councilors Fournier, Egan and Pillsbury

APPOINTMENTS: Councilors Egan, Bradley and Lawrence

SPECIAL PROJECTS: Councilors Bradley, Lawrence and Daniele

ORDINANCE: Councilors Piltch, Bradley and Pillsbury

(Council Chair Piltch)(5 minutes)

OTHER BUSINESS:

1. Discussion of participation in project HOME with Freeport Community Services and Quality Housing Coalition (Town Manager, Peter Joseph)(30 minutes)

On Zoom: Victoria Morales, executive director of Quality Housing Coalition (QHC) and they do Project Home which is what we're discussing here. The QHC had submitted a grant application to Cumberland County under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. They had invited Freeport and Westbrook to participate due to some of the rehousing and settlement issues that we're going through. Project Home is a project where their organization works directly with landlords to prequalify/identify housing areas (apartments and landlords) for people who generally fall into the category of people who are in our general assistance program including new Mainers and people coming off the ERA program that don't have housing. They work with landlords ahead of time to identify families and they're able to place them. They do the housing navigation and the housing coordination feature. That is one of the things that FCS doesn't have the capacity to do. This is one of the missing links in what we do for GA, what we do

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for housing and the landlord general market and how we make those connections. They negotiate the landlord needs and put people in those places. The council was previously provided with a memo detailing Project Home.

Victoria Morales: She talked about the member make up of QHC. In 2018, during the housing shortage crisis, these for profit and non-profit landlords came together to say what are we going to do to open up housing units, recognizing they have many barriers to getting into housing. That's how the project began. They started out with 20 units in just the Portland area and now they have 200 units they are overseeing, with 32 landlords in 5 counties. They work to bring landlords on board, to remove some of their barriers to apply for housing, to support them with financial guarantees and payments of damages if necessary if they agree to work with people with subsidies. They work with every subsidy here in Maine including Section 8. They provide to every tenant housing navigation and housing stabilization throughout the entire tenancy. Through this 99% of tenants are successful because they are there to navigate the system they are working in and make sure there is a strong tenant / landlord relationship.

Part of this conversation started with discussion of the grant preapplication that we did that goes along with the actual application that happens in January. We said yes to Westbrook that we want to glom onto your work so we can participate in that. We started having conversations about our immediate housing needs. We know there are families, whether that's 10 or 80, that are going to be homeless not by choice, possibly evicted from the emergency rental places where they're staying which is mostly hotels. There are also a few apartments and house rentals that also face the risk of eviction as the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) winds down. We discussed the timing between if this grant application is successful and we're able to establish these services semi permanently including Freeport, that would be great but we have an immediate need. People started talking about the short term and pitched an idea to the Manager and Sarah Lundin suggesting this is a group that could help us in the immediate short term. We have Amy Cartmell on the phone and Representative Sachs who have helped put them all together and recognizing that there is a group that could serve that intermediate need in Freeport. This is all great but there is a funding component attached to this. The Manager is fairly confident that \$20,000 for the housing navigator position that Victoria put forward which would be a roughly 20 hour per week for 6 months. That's the number put forward to us to have someone working directly on Freeport finding housing for that interim period until 6 months or if the grant application is successful which would be funding for one year. The other half is the kind of funding they use for gap funding including first and last month rent, security deposits. Some of it is gap but not all of it is gap funding. The difference between subsidy programs and the landlord incentives, whatever it would take to get somebody to agree to have that family stay there permanently. Also to address concerns that the landlords might not take a rental tenant in because they don't have the means to pay all kinds of costs. That amount they estimate is \$2,000-\$4,000 per family. He suggested \$20,000. It would be 5-10 families at \$2,000. You can do the math to double that. We probably have 10-40 families depending on how this shakes out that Victoria's organization could be helpful with. If the council wishes to participate, that is what you're looking at. There is really not a right number for the second half. What he and Sarah have suggested is to move forward with this with an immediate amount in a smaller amount to start the program. They feel like they could start finding housing for people quickly, like this or next week. Understanding that the number may increase if they're successful and committing to if there is a long-term success we may consider more long term funding.

Councilor Egan: Clarified that it was \$80,000 that was held back for FCS for future funding. He would be inclined to consider more giving how critical and acutely sharp the issue is. We are not taking a lot of risk because QHC has a proven track record for how successful this program is. It's a wheel that's already turning. The network they have built with landlords is a critical piece to this because that builds trust and confidence with those landlords talking to each other about the successes. We don't have enough money to buy that, it's already happening. We have an opportunity to amplify the request. If the request is \$20,000

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he is in favor of that for the staffing request. The remainder would be some chunk of money that would be earmarked by the town for people that QHC finds for housing, \$20,000 to \$40,000 to \$60,000. Councilor Egan wants to make sure we provide the program with a ramp to success.

Councilor Bradley: His understanding is that FCS has not identified anything for the \$80,000 that was set aside from ARPA money that we would revisit if they identified a need. Here's the need, let's do it with that number and we use our judgements about the gap. It would be \$20,000 for this then some other amount from the rest of the money to do the gap funding. The landlords are not just in Freeport. We have people who are in the hotels that want to maintain their connection with Freeport, some with kids in school. Is there any effort to place them in units in Freeport? Yes, they hope to be able to find Freeport landlords that want to work with the program. They are in 5 counties and they use their extensive network. They will be looking for Freeport people to meet the needs of Freeport renters.

Councilor Daniele: Can we fund the housing navigator for 3 months instead of 6 to see how it's going. He assumes the amounts we need will be greater in the beginning and then it'll trail off as people get placed. Councilor Pillsbury also inquired as to how many families the coordinator would be realistically able to set up with housing. What is your success rate? When would this coordinator be ready to go, two or three weeks?

Victoria Morales: They will be devoting probably four team members to this and have a plan to come to Freeport Friday if all works out in order to work fast. The funding for hotels will continue until the end of January. This gives the team who is working hard to house folks in these situations a little more time. The Legislature is taking up a bill tomorrow. They house between 3 and 8 households per month. Their team is multi lingual. The good news is that the folks at the hotel are also very connected to their partners at Hope Acts because they are all seeking their work permits. She works closely with Hope Acts on those initiatives because being able to work and have sustainable housing creates housing stability. We know the timing is tricky.

Representative Sachs: She highly recommends funding the navigator for six months. This is not only a short-term solution it is also potentially long term. We know this housing crisis is not going to be 6 months long. She hopes the council funds this positions so that if the CDBG application comes through, the funding won't be available until July, even if it's approved in March. So hopefully this position will go from January to July and then start July 1 and continue. That navigator position can help continue to build the network of landlords which so many community members are working on right now. You asked for short term solutions and long-term stabilization. This is what you asked for and you asked for a housing navigator. This is the missing link you asked for. She talked about ways to participate in the public hearings tomorrow around the original package that has small changes. Within that there is substantial housing relief money (22 million dollars) along with lots of heating assistance. The ERA money has been extended through January. There's no amount of money that will fix this problem, but let's put it to its best and most targeted use.

Amy Cartmell: Agrees that a six-month term for the housing navigator is essential. There is such an extreme shortage of rental housing right now, it will take that long or longer to find housing for as many folks as possible. All 183 housing units that Freeport Housing Trust has are full.

We were previously told that there are 80 families in temporary shelters of some sort in Freeport. How many of those families have been rehoused and how many will be affected by the end of the ERA in January? FCS has been able to house a few families at the Best Western. They were looking at about 80 families that were affected by the ERA ending, not all of them are in hotels. There are some in apartments.

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A few of the families have been housed. There are about 25 at Best Western and about the same looking at the other hotels combined in the community. She wanted to touch on this resource as well for the families at the Casco Bay Inn. Although we think of them as safe because they are receiving general assistance from the city of Portland, they worry when the rug will be pulled out from underneath us also. Portland has exceed any State regulations as to how long they need to support these families. These efforts can be directed towards that. Beyond the hotels and urgent need now, this is going to be a long-term incredible resource for the community.

Chair Piltch: He supports this but also has a concern that if Freeport and a few surrounding towns do this, will it create a magnet effect. Might people come to Freeport to solve housing issues because we have ponied up and had these programs in place? It would be better to have a regional approach to a regional problem.

Representative Sachs: These 80 families are here now that need assistance. It's a very specific, we are not building an emergency shelter here in Freeport. It can't happen. We are working with the Housing Committee you set up to think about long term because long term what will help is more housing. Thoughtfully have that develop and plan full in a way that you'd like is fantastic. This is a specific program for an interim. There is specialty housing for lots of different folks. This is one solution that we can hopefully do.

Victoria Morales: We do need more regional coordination. It shouldn't be on every town to figure out housing insecurity and homelessness out. Their first attempt to be more regional was to go after that multi-community CDBG opportunity. She names other communities and organizations that fund housing navigators.

Manager Joseph: Should we earmark some of this funding that we may set aside for people who are here right now that are ERA and facing homelessness because of the end of ERA. At the same time, what if all those families are housed and we've got money and a housing navigator left over, we would hate to turn someone away that was homeless for another reason. He thinks we either set a condition that the money we're talking about now is targeted and focused on the immediate crises (i.e. the families that will be homeless at the end of January). At the same time do you want to make that formal to the extent that it would exclude other people. This is money well spent. There are enough families in town that have a need currently. He doesn't want to be the only town trying to solve this program.

If ERA or some substitute happens and is extended for 6 months or a year, will there be a push to bring in more people to house over the winter. FCS has that concern. They don't want to be doing wave number 2 or 3. Shelter by hotel is the emergency option. We don't want it to become the defacto answer to homelessness. It's great to keep people from freezing over the winter but it's not the answer to homelessness. Will this put a dent in the public safety issue that we have with the population of some of the folks in hotels on Route One that have seen an increase in public safety services. The Manager thinks a lot of the issues we are having are caused by long term population that Victoria's group may not be able to find housing for. Their group focuses on all types of people. This isn't a refugee asylum seeker targeted program. The homeless by choice population, people with long term mental health problems or problems of the sort, aren't people who are able to get into a stable housing program. That's why they're in a shelter to begin with. This is not generally a group you can set up with long term success even in Victoria's organization.

Chair Piltch recapped that the ask is for \$20,000 for Quality Housing and then another \$20,000 - \$60,000 for FCS to fulfill the Gap funding at FCS's discretion working with QHC. We think \$20,000 is the immediate need but the long-term need will be more than that. We shouldn't think it will be just \$20,000. We need to see some results in what the individual cost per family unit are before we know what the long-

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term need is. If it's held by the town you can act quickly to change that as long as there's recognition by the council. Sarah Lundin would not object to this money coming out of the pot that of \$80,000 that was set aside for FCS.

MOTION: that we approve \$20,000 for the program as defined by Quality Housing Coalition and that we release half of the \$80,000 that we had held back for future needs at FCS (\$20,000 for QHC and \$40,000 for the Gap needs)VOTE: (Egan & Bradley)(5-Ayes)(2-Absent- Lawrence & Fournier)

EXECUTIVE SESSIONS

ITEM # 225-22 To consider action relative to an Executive Session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. § 405(6)(C) pertaining to a Real Estate matter and 1 M.R.S.A. § 405(6)(D) pertaining to discussion of labor contracts between the Town of Freeport and the Freeport Police Benevolent Association.

MOTION: That the Town Council enter Executive Session.

MOTION: That the Town Council exit Executive Session.

(60 minutes)

END OF AGENDA (Estimated time of adjournment 9:05 PM)