

Town of Brunswick, Maine

**Finance Committee Meeting
Thursday June 15, 2023 at 6:30 PM
85 Union Street – Council Chambers
and by electronic devices**

Meeting Minutes (approved 7/20/23)

Committee Members: Councilor Sande Updegraph
 Councilor Nathaniel Shed

Staff: Finance Director Julia Henze
 Fire Chief Ken Brilliant
 Town Manager John Eldridge (remote)

1. Acknowledgement that meeting was properly noticed
2. Adjustments to agenda / Public comment
None

3. Submission of meeting minutes from 3/24/23

Councilor Shed moved to approve, Councilor Updegraph seconded. Approved unanimously.

4. Fire Department Fees

J.Henze introduced Article III, Section 9 of the Muncipal Code of Ordinance related to Emergency Medical Services, and the associated section of the Master Schedule of Revenues, Charges, Fees and Fines for the committee's review and consideration to forward a proposal to the Town Council.

K.Brillant outlined the recent survey that was done by the Windham fire chief, pointing out that Brunswick's ambulance fees are lower than the average. Medicare has undertaken a review of the current Medicare rates, and may consider changing the allowed rates. Staff recommends increasing certain of Brunswick's fees to be more in line with surrounding communities, and be well positioned if Medicare rates are increased.

Committee asked questions and discussed how ambulance billing is done, including the Medicare rates and other insurance rules. K.Brillant explained the categories of care and how non-transport fees are charged, stressing that staff is not proposing an increase to the non-transport fee. J.Henze described the in-house ambulance billing collection procedures, explaining that every situation is different, with various services and insurance policies.

Councilor Updegraph moved that the recommendation to increase ambulance fees be forwarded to the Town Council for consideration. Councilor Shed seconded. Approved unanimously.

5. Tax-Acquired Properties

J.Henze presented the Town's current Tax-Acquired Real Estate Policy, explained the current State law, and the impact of a recent Supreme Court decision on the disposition of sale proceeds. Currently, the State and Town's policy does not require that any surplus sale proceeds be returned to the original owner. Tyler vs. Hennepin County would change that. J.Henze reported that the Town Attorney recommended amending the Town's policy, and in the meantime proceeding with the Town's usual process, and send the original owner a check after the property is sold.

Councilor Shed pointed out the need to follow clear guidelines, and asked about recouping staff costs so as not to lose money. J.Eldridge pointed out that there are limitations on how to quantify staff costs, and the Town could be discouraged from expending much effort if the Town can't benefit from surplus proceeds. More clarity is needed from the State. Councilor Updegraph asked about timing, and if the Town can wait until the State issues guidance. J.Eldridge said that for these particular properties, the Town could move ahead, and they are all relatively small pieces of land, only one of which may be buildable. Stated that there are no time constraints on these properties, and it would not make much difference to wait to see what the State does.

Committee discussed the options, and decided to make no recommendation to the Town Council.

6. Long-term Financial Planning

J.Henze presented the Excel spreadsheet used to model projected financials, and explained that this was prompted by the rating agencies asking about long-term financial planning. Reviewed how the spreadsheet works, and how the expenditure and revenue assumptions can be changed, affecting the bottom line. The exercise is to see how to balance the budget with various trends and assumptions. The model does not include valuation changes, and Councilor Shed asked that this be incorporated, as it is an important element.

J.Henze was not able to make the Excel spreadsheet work in real time, but the committee discussed the model, with the goal to understand the various elements and how they interact. The spreadsheet will be sent to the members of the committee to 'play with'.

7. Adjourn

Councilor Updegraph adjourned meeting.