

COUNCIL MEETING

JANUARY 24, 2023

{The meeting was held in a hybrid model – in person and via Zoom}

Called to order by Mayor Casavant at: 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call: William Emhiser, Scott Whiting, Martin Grohman, Doris Ortiz, Liam LaFountain and Marc Lessard were present. Bobby Mills joined the meeting at 6:15pm. Norman Belanger was excused.

The Council and all that were present recited the Pledge of Allegiance

Point of Order:

Motion made by Councilor Emhiser, seconded by Councilor Whiting to take an agenda item out of order to move the appointment of Julian Schlaver to the beginning of the meeting

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Passes

Julian Schlaver was sworn in as Councilor for Ward 5 by the City Clerk

Presentation: Mayor's Affordable Housing Task Force Report

Councilor Doris Ortiz and Councilor Martin Grohman presented the report. Jim Bennett, City Manager also said a few things during the report. A copy of the report can be found on the City's website.

Presentation: CIP Presentation

City Manager Jim Bennett presented Part 1 of the Capital Improvement Plan for FY24, referencing a PowerPoint presented to the Council, which can be found on the City's website.

Public Addressing the Council: Two people from the public addressed the Council

Consideration of Minutes: **January 10, 2023**

Motion by Councilor Mills, seconded by Councilor Lessard to accept the minutes as printed.

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Passes

Orders of the Day:

2023.5) Parking Issues on Acorn Street

Motion made by Councilor Whiting to direct the City Manager to post a fire lane on Acorn Street, seconded by Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Passes

2023.6) Public Works Auction Items

2023.6 **IN BOARD OF CITY COUNCIL...JANUARY 24TH, 2023**

BE IT ORDERED, that the City Manager or his designee authorized the public works department to sell surplus items as sealed bid.

Funding for this project will be as follows:

- None

Motion made by Councilor Emhiser, seconded by Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Passes

2023.7) Alfred Street Improvement Project

2023.7 IN BOARD OF CITY COUNCIL...JANUARY 24TH, 2023

BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Biddeford does herewith endorse the PACTS Complex Project titled “Alfred Street Improvement Project” as described in the accompanying memo. The goal of this project is to enhance the safety, walkability and livability of Alfred Street in the downtown area of the City from Main Street to Washington Street.

Motion made by Councilor Whiting, seconded by Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Passes

Appointment:

Julian Schlaver was appointed and sworn in as City Councilor for Ward 5 at the beginning of the meeting.

IN BOARD OF CITY COUNCIL...JANUARY 24, 2023

ORDERED, that I, Alan M. Casavant, Mayor of the City of Biddeford, do hereby appoint:

**Alison Tobey
Ward 5**

to the *Historical Preservation Committee*

Motion made by Councilor Grohman, seconded by Councilor Lessard to confirm the appointment.

Vote: Unanimous.

Appointment Confirmed

IN BOARD OF CITY COUNCIL...JANUARY 24, 2023

ORDERED, that I, Alan M. Casavant, Mayor of the City of Biddeford, do hereby appoint:

**Rick Laverriere
Ward 6**

to the *Chair of the Airport Commission*

Motion made by Councilor Grohman, seconded by Councilor Lessard to confirm the appointment.

Vote: Unanimous.

Appointment Confirmed

Public Addressing: There were no comments from the public

City Manager report:

Jim Bennett City Manager addresses his lack of professionalism regarding his appearance. His house like many others is without power.

Other Business:

Councilor Lessard recognized all of the staff working through the aftermath of Covid. He also wanted to recognize Public Works and their hard work during the past couple storm and the storm coming tomorrow night which is going to switch over to rain and make a real mess. He wants to thank all the folks working for the City.

Councilor Grohman recognized Public Works and all their hard work plowing throughout the night. The Councilor mentions WinterFest and one of the primary planners and supporters Reverend Justin Sweeney from New Life Church and how at the last meeting he was asked to pray for snow but now he is being asked to stop praying for snow.

Councilor Whiting says how much he is looking forward to WinterFest and the sled run. He hopes everyone will join him while he does a few runs. He says if you don't want to participate you can always just come to watch him wipe out. On a more serious note he reports that with the storms this past weekend he has received a lot of constituent complaints regarding parking bans and towing policies. One particular constituent of his pointed out that there are a lot of new residents in Biddeford who may be experiencing their first winter here and so they may not know what a parking ban is. If they see it snowing outside they may not think to check the City's website to see if there is a parking ban in effect. He says this is especially true for the immigrant and refugee community who might not have stable internet access and also they might not have enough of a grasp of English to understand what a parking ban is asking them to do. Because of this Councilor Whiting would be in favor of seeing the City's office of communications working on a campaign to maybe re-educate the public on what our winter parking policies are regarding parking bans, ticketing, towing and also the 48-hour rule. He says he's talked to constituents that have lived here for several years and have never heard of the 48-hour rule. He thinks at the very least explaining what the 48-hour rule is all about and possible revisiting that rule for future discussion.

Councilor Mills says that he appreciates Councilor Whiting bringing these concerns up. Councilor Mills has also received quite a few emails regarding the snow parking ban. Councilor Mills says working for FedEx he believes that the policies we have here are more lenient than some of the other communities that are on the coast. With that being said, he does agree that a better communication process needs to be done. He also received an email from a constituent about being towed out of Clifford Park before the snow ban time was up and they incurred quite a bit of money in towing fees.

Councilor LaFountain starts by congratulating Danielle Emerson from Biddeford High School Volleyball for being named the Gatorade Player of the Year from Maine. Secondly, he reports to the Council that he has reviewed the Fire Department's Annual Report, where they had almost

5700 total incidents this year, almost 16 per day, or 1 every 93 minutes. He says that he went to the Fire Department a couple months ago and he was there for less than hour and there were 3 calls in that time. He goes on to say that they are dealing with a variety of different types of calls such as fire suppression, medical emergencies, hospital transports and mutual aid. He thanks the Fire Department for their ability to keep our community safe and healthy and their tireless work and the impact on the community.

Jim Bennett City Manager responds to the parking situation by saying that the City went through a really intensive effort to communicate differently with people about the parking because we had inconsistent parking messages. He says that it is very common in every community he's worked with and all the communities around the communities he's worked with that the first big storm we have, you get a lot of complaints because people just aren't ready. His understanding regarding the incident at Clifford Park is that the storm had not stopped but the parking ban had stopped and people have to be out of the free lots so that they can be cleaned as well to make them available. His understanding of the situation is and he does reiterate that he will double check on this, but his understanding is that because it was still snowing that the owner of the vehicle thought that they didn't have to move their vehicle. He says to the Council that he will double check on these concerns and report back to them. He tells the Council that he will make a note regarding the 48-hour rule and make sure that they have a conversation regarding that to figure out if this is something that will have to be brought to the Council to take a look at. Jim wanted the Council to know that City staff did make attempts to make it better in comparison to first storms in the past.

Councilor Mills makes a suggestion that the City uses the same notification system that the school system uses to notify parents and students during snow storms. Jim Bennett does not believe that would be the most effective way to notify everyone in the City.

Jim Bennett City Manager reminds the public that if you are parking your car on a piece of land that you do not own then you need to take it upon yourself to find out what the rules are when it snows.

Councilor Lessard suggests handing out a piece of paper that talks about snow bans to everyone that comes into City Hall to register their vehicle.

Council President Addressing the Council:

Council President Norman Belanger was not present at the meeting

Mayor Addressing the Council:

Mayor Casavant reflects on the days that there was no parking on public streets all winter long and of course there were complaints about that so the City of Biddeford went to the system that all other major cities use. Mayor Casavant goes on to say that when there is a major storm it's on the news. He feels that if a paper regarding parking bans was handed out to people that most people won't read it and it will be thrown out because every available avenue whether it be radio, signage, the message is everywhere. He agrees that though there can be better clarity, it's important to note that good government is a two-way street. Government can illicit the information but people have to notice it as well. If people not taking in the information, then there are consequences and people get upset understandably. There is a responsibility about being a good active citizen and that's to know what's going on. Mayor Casavant talks more about WinterFest and some of the highlights of the festival. There is going to be plenty of snow, there is going to be a huge raffle where they will be raffling over 40 bicycles for free. There are

going to be multiple gifts including two \$500.00 gift cards to Hannaford, some small gift cards as well. Plenty of free food will be served. He says the idea is to bring community together so he encourages everyone to stop by. You can be like Councilor Whiting and go sledding, there are going to be lots of fun things to do. The Mayor goes on to say that he thinks the idea of festivals no matter what festival it may be, it's that next level of community where you get people together laughing and talking with each other because that is ultimately what builds community is building relationships and getting people to converse and that doesn't happen in the polarized Facebook, social media world we live in. He hopes everyone stops by, it starts Friday, February 3rd with adult sledding and there will be a Joey Boucher concert. All day Saturday is the family event with a comedy show at night. Public skating if there is good ice at the Westbrook Skating Rink all day Sunday.

Motion made by Councilor Grohman to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Lessard

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Passes

Time: 8:12pm

Mayor Casavant allowed one person from the public address the Council

Motion made by Councilor Grohman to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Whiting

Vote: Unanimous

Motion Passes

Time: 8:17pm