

Town Council Meeting
June 9, 2022

The June 9, 2022 Town Council Meeting was called to order by Denise L. DiFranco, Council President, in Foster, RI at 7:00 p.m.

The following members were present:
Denise L. DiFranco, President
Heidi Rogers, Vice President
Chris Stone
David Paolino
Cheryl Hawes

Also present:
Kelli Russ, Finance Director
Julia Chretien, Solicitor
Chief David Breit

- I.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- II.

ANNOUNCEMENTS /
PUBLIC COMMENT

Denise L. DiFranco asked for a moment of silence for Janet White. She said that Ed Robinson has a lovely tribute for her on Facebook / Foster Gazette. She did a lot for Preservation and other things within the town. Also for those of you who might not have heard, Susan Dillon’s mother-in-law, Mike Dillon’s mother passed away.

Ron Cervasio, Old Plainfield Pike, discussed a stone dust coating that was on his car from roadwork that was done incorrectly. Three of his cars were affected. He wanted his car detailed by professionals, and he will be sending the attorney a bill.

Pam Fontaine, Danielson Pike, requested putting monthly reports online. She also said there were a lot of branches on Rt. 6 and suggested the town contact DOT.

Lynne Rider, Burgess Road, discussed an article in the Observer about the town having problems with beavers and how they were contemplating getting trappers. She suggested they talk to Dennis Therrien who has experience with beaver fencing.
- III.

CONSENT AGENDA

Warrants-Approval of General Warrant #20
\$63,956.25

Chris Stone moved, Heidi Rogers seconded, to accept the Consent Agenda as presented.
Discussion: None
Motion passed 5 - 0.
Heidi Rogers, aye; Chris Stone, aye; David Paolino, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Denise L. DiFranco, aye.

1.

Swearing in of patrolman Jaisen Cole
moved to this position

Denise L. DiFranco requested a motion to move Item 1 under new business to this position.

Heidi Rogers moved, David Paolino seconded, item one under New Business, the swearing in of Patrolman Jaisen Cole to this point in the agenda.

Discussion:
Motion passed 5 - 0.
Heidi Rogers, aye; Chris Stone, aye; David Paolino, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Denise L. DiFranco, aye.

Chief Breit introduced Jaisen Cole, the newest graduate of the municipal police academy who brings the total number of officers up to eight. Chief Breit swore him in.
- IV.

OLD BUSINESS

1.

EMS: Budget and Operations

Denise L. DiFranco said they had some discussion on this on Saturday. We said that we would continue it to today. Kelli Russ said she could not finalize the budget without more information. She does not have details from their general ledger for this year to see where they are spending their money. Julia Chretien said it was requested to go out today. Ms. Russ said that as far as Workers’ Comp she did speak with them yesterday. They said we would not get a Workers Comp policy; we would extend our IOD, which we have for the police. If we were to hire non-EMT personnel, they would be covered by Workers Comp. We would have to look into a separate pension system. We

would have to advertise for the per diem spots and she said she needs guidance on the rates.

Denise L. DiFranco said to come up for a list for the 16th. David Paolino asked if there is a need to prioritize the list. Ms. Russ said having people work is the top priority. Heidi Rogers said she had looked into that further and spoke to Tom from OR Ambulance but she did not have numbers yet. She asked him for 24-hour coverage for a Cardiac and 24 hour Basic, and she sent messages to three others.

Cheryl Hawes said she thought that the next meeting is the 16th, but that they should meet before then. Heidi Rogers asked if they should advertise for per diem. Kelli Russ said that if their intention is to move forward, then yes, they should advertise, come up with a rate and start filling these positions. David Paolino asked if there is an out if something miraculously happens. Kelli said the out is that you haven't actually hired them.

Cheryl Hawes said she thought Gordy [Brayton] might have something to say about it. Mr. Brayton said he spoke with other volunteer chiefs and arranged to have a meeting with the EMA director. He said trying to do this by July 1st is very risky; we don't know the status of the vehicles, we don't have any help. There are a few at Station 1 that would like to work with Station 4 to resolve this. Maybe if we just pay rescue month by month, and buy a few months and have a panel come up with some ideas. Heidi Rogers asked what the monthly cost would be. They asked for \$167,000 to get them through. We have limited funds. If we throw this money at the Ambulance Corps and everybody is banking on the Fire District passing in November, and when it doesn't pass in November, we have zero money. Mr. Brayton said there are places to cut money in the Ambulance Corps, we had that discussion today. Everything is in place already. Chris Stone said there is a deadline; we didn't set it. Heidi Rogers said they don't have the money. Mr. Brayton said you still have to pay people. Denise L. DiFranco asked Julia Chretien—they have a lawyer—is it something we can vote on? Ms. Chretien said they could.

Cheryl Hawes asked how they are paying for an attorney if they don't have the money?

Heidi Rogers said the Ambulance Corps refused to sit and meet with them and that we've asked multiple times to work this out.

David Paolino asked if Gordon was going to spearhead this; we need assurance of who is going to handle the management. If the town taxpayers are going to foot hundreds of thousands of dollars in bills, there has to be some kind of assurance that it's not going to fall apart in September. Mr. Brayton said he thinks he can negotiate. Ms. Rogers said that by the time they get to the 16th, they have two weeks; she doesn't want to keep kicking the can. She said it's poor management, so how much money are you looking for?

Denise L. DiFranco said so let me get this straight: you want to meet with four people, go over and come back to the council. Will you come back on the 16th? Mr. Brayton said, no we have a lot of work to do. Ms. DiFranco said she is concerned because what are we going to do on June 30th? Mr. Petrarca asked for \$167,000 for a quarter. Kelli Russ said we couldn't afford that for a year, she doesn't know why he thinks we could afford it for three months.

Catherine Bey, South Killingly Road, said that if you are going to do this month-to-month, you have to take over the third party billing immediately. That way at least you have an idea of what you are working with and how much

you can go with that if necessary. It's been going on for a while, and now there's another committee of four people who are known to no one, and they're going to come up with a miraculous plan. Okay, I hope so, as a taxpayer. Anna Rao asked about the calculations. Ms. Russ explained her reasoning.

Lynne Rider said that the two sides trying to work together—it's never going to happen. There's too much, you really do need four people who are out of the fight, and just let them do their thing. There could be a solution when cooler heads are doing the discussing. Because there are two rescues, what is the town planning? One rescue? Heidi Rogers said she would love to go to the police records and see how many times a second rescue have ever gotten out. Whenever there's a rescue call, if another call comes it, it's immediate to call for mutual aid. The second rescue never goes out; we don't have the personnel. Ms. Rider said that could change. One rescue for the entire town doesn't seem right. Ms. Russ said we are never going to have the manning for two. You need four people on staff for that. Ms. Rider said so the town is planning one rescue. David Paolino said there are two things that come up, we're looking historically where one rescue is rolling. The second thing is—we'll probably go to two—the dilemma now is what do we do in the meantime? Do we just stop the plan, put the money forward, and hope it will be resolved?

Further discussion on funding ideas were discussed.

Denise L. DiFranco read a letter from Susan Joyce (see Exhibit A).

Further discussion on possible solutions. Lynne Rider, Ginny Colwell, Kelli Russ, Denise L. DiFranco, Cheryl Hawes.

Heidi Rogers moved, Chris Stone seconded, to advertise for positions for and admin, full-time, and per diem positions.

Discussion: Jonathan Barrette

Motion passed 5 - 0.

Heidi Rogers, aye; Chris Stone, aye; David Paolino, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Denise L. DiFranco, aye.

2. Police Station Building
Committee update

Denise L. DiFranco said they met on Monday and there has been no process in the House of Representatives. They are still working on it for the 1.3 million from the ARPA funds. Changes have been sent to the architect. They are waiting for a signature from her. She tried to send it electronically, but they never received it. Heidi Rogers asked what the status with the land was. Gordy Brayton said we don't know how much to transfer. Ms. Rogers said so we have no idea when this is going to break ground. Denise L. DiFranco said they are working on it.

V. NEW BUSINESS

2. Bid award for Financial
Auditing Services

Kelly Russ said the form she needs to complete for the Auditor General is in their packet. If they approve, that form will go tomorrow morning. We would be using the company who had the lessor score.

Heidi Rogers moved, Cheryl Hawes seconded, to approve Bacon & Company for our audit of 2022-2024 in the amount of \$107,550.00.

Motion passed 5 - 0.

Heidi Rogers, aye; Chris Stone, aye; David Paolino, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Denise L. DiFranco, aye.

3. Bid award for Financial
Advisory Services

Kelli Russ said we have an attorney who sent the two companies who do this type of work of financial advising on Bond issues. We sent that out and two responded, and she recommended PFM was the cheaper. This is the bond issue for the police station. They would help us go out for

RFPs for all the banking and private industries. She will do all the legal work if we go to publicly traded bonds. PFM helped Ms. Russ go out to bid.
Heidi Rogers moved, David Paolino seconded, to award the bid for financial advisor for the bond issue/other to PFM Financial Advisors as presented in their proposal. Motion passed 5 - 0.
Heidi Rogers, aye; Chris Stone, aye; David Paolino, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Denise L. DiFranco, aye.

4. Bid award for Town House Improvements

Denise L. DiFranco said she received an email today from Mike Antonellis suggesting that the council postpone voting on the bid until Preservation has their input to preferred bidder. Item was tabled.

5. EMS restructuring meeting on June 16th

Cheryl Hawes moved, Heidi Rogers seconded, to hold a meeting on June 16th to discuss the EMS restructuring with their attorney Mr. Petrarca.
Discussion: None
Motion passed 5 - 0.
Heidi Rogers, aye; Chris Stone, aye; David Paolino, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Denise L. DiFranco, aye.

6. Old Plainfield Pike - No through trucking of 60,000 lbs. or more (collaboration with Scituate)

Denise L. DiFranco said they have a request from Gordon Rogers for no through trucking of 60,000 lbs. or over on Old Plainfield Pike. This is a request from the Scituate DPW Director who reached out to Gordon. There is concerned about wear and tear.
Chris Stone moved, David Paolino seconded, to collaborate with Scituate.
Discussion: David Paolino said he spoke to the DPW Director in Scituate.
Motion passed 5 - 0.
Heidi Rogers, aye; Chris Stone, aye; David Paolino, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Denise L. DiFranco, aye.

7. Purchase/funding of used rescue vehicle

Heidi Rogers said she spoke to people in Moosup Valley about this and in the event that on June 30th we do not have any rescues in their possession, and we need to provide emergency services, we need to have a vehicle. She has looked at a few and reviewed them for the council.
David Paolino moved, Cheryl Hawes seconded, to empower Heidi and Chris to investigate and negotiate the purchase of a rescue not to exceed \$55,000.
Discussion: Lynne Rider, Anna Rao.
Motion passed 5 - 0.
Heidi Rogers, aye; Chris Stone, aye; David Paolino, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Denise L. DiFranco, aye.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Trash and Recycling
Town House Repairs
June 23rd Meeting

**VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION
PURSUANT TO RIGL 42-46-5a (2) Litigation**
Opioid litigation update
PURSUANT TO RIGL 42-46-5a (2) Collective Bargaining
Local 3422, International Assn. of Firefighters

Heidi Rogers moved, Chris Stone seconded, to go into Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5 for a work session regarding Collective Bargaining / Negotiations or Litigation according to RIGL 42-46-5-a (2) and to reconvene into open session and to further keep the minutes of said meeting closed and the minutes of all executive sessions held previous to this meeting remain closed in accordance with provisions in RIGL 42-46-4 & 5.
No discussion.
Motion passed 5-0.
Heidi Rogers, aye; Chris Stone, aye; David Paolino, aye; Cheryl Hawes, aye; Denise L. DiFranco, aye.

**RETURN TO OPEN
SESSION**

The council reconvened in to Open Session at 9:03 p.m.
Denise L. DiFranco announced that no votes were taken
in Executive Session.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Submitted by,

Susan M. Dillon, Town Clerk

June 9, 2022

To: The Foster Town Council and the Foster Ambulance Corps (FAC)

From: Susan Joyce, 90A Winsor Road, Foster

I cannot attend tonight's Town Council meeting, and I see further discussion on EMS restructuring is on the agenda. I would like to offer some observations that might help move us forward.

It seems that everyone agrees the town of Foster needs an ambulance service. We have been served for decades by trained volunteers running a non-profit organization. They provide an extraordinary service to the town, and I am grateful to all of them.

I appreciate that the Council must investigate options, and it is helpful to see what outside companies charge so we understand the true cost/value of the service FAC provides. However, I don't see how hiring a for-profit company to replace FAC can possibly be less expensive. A for-profit business operates to make money. And while an outside service presumably has qualified staff, it can't take the place of the people who have so selflessly given their time to help save the lives of their neighbors.

From what I've heard, it doesn't sound like a financial shortfall has been a chronic problem for the FAC. The only concrete point that I've heard raised is the purchase of a new ambulance, which I assume the FAC needed to continue to save lives. Rather, this shortfall is the result of a confluence of events, exacerbated by a global pandemic. Surely the FAC, first responders who continued to serve this community through the pandemic, should be given extra support and consideration.

We need an ambulance service, and it is unlikely we would get comparable service for less than what it will cost to operate the primarily volunteer-run FAC. Plus, these are our neighbors who are still willing to help the town in this way. So, how can we help? In my experience, people tend to be very literal. They might hear "the FAC doesn't have enough volunteers to keep going" but they don't make the leap that *they* could volunteer. And there seem to be several areas where people could help, not just trained EMTs: a dedicated fundraising and financial planning team, grant writing, coordinating other volunteers, communication outreach (website, social media, email). All of this work shouldn't fall to the people trained to save lives. There are people in town with many of these other skills who might not want to serve as an EMT but who would be happy to help in other ways.

Asking for volunteers needs to be specific and widely broadcast through every possible channel—every person in this town needs to be asked if they can step up in any of the ways needed. And they need to know why it matters to them.

While this isn't an instantaneous solution, the taxpayer dollars we voted on at the Town Financial meeting will buy a few months to start to increase the volunteer base. Some of those people might eventually eliminate or reduce the need for paid EMTs, and others will find new ways to raise money.

Thank you all for your service to this town.

Susan Joyce