



**WESTBROOK CITY COUNCIL
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY JULY 6, 2020
WESTBROOK PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**



CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 6:00pm by Finance Committee Chair Victor Chau.

City Councilors Present: Claude Rwaganje (At-Large); David C. Morse (Ward 1); Victor Chau (Ward 2); Anna A. Turcotte (Ward 3, Vice President); Gary Rairdon (Ward 4, President); Elliot Storey (Ward 5)

City Councilors Absent: Michael Shaughnessy (At-Large)

Other City Officials Present: Jerre Bryant (City Administrator); Natalie Burns (City Solicitor); Melanie Fernald (Assistant Clerk); Stephen Fields (Assistant City Administrator/Director of Human Resources); Michael T. Foley (Mayor); Angela Holmes (City Clerk); Suzanne Knight (Finance Director); Dena Lebeda (Tax Collector)

PROPERTY TAX POLICIES – OVERVIEW

Committee Chair Chau gave the floor to Mayor Foley, who introduced two proposed property tax policies. Mayor Foley noted that one policy addresses how to handle municipal liens going forward, and the other establishes an interest amnesty period to resolve some of the outstanding balances.

Committee Chair Chau indicated that each policy would be considered separately during the Committee meeting.

TAX ACQUIRED PROPERTY POLICY

Mayor Foley gave the floor to Mr. Bryant, who noted that the City does not currently have a set policy or procedure concerning tax liens. While the City has a sound tax collection history, it has never addressed tax liens. Mr. Bryant noted that Council has recently seen that there are some cases of significant accumulation of tax debt for property owners in Westbrook. Mr. Bryant provided an overview of the proposed Tax Acquired Property Policy. Committee Chair Chau gave the floor to Ms. Knight, who clarified that the lien process is a State-mandated process. This policy addresses how the City handles the disposition of the property afterwards.

Committee Chair Chau opened the floor for comments on the Tax Acquired Property Policy. The following individuals spoke: Vice President Turcotte, Councilor Morse, Mayor Foley, Ms. Burns, Councilor Rwaganje, Councilor Storey, Committee Chair Chau, Mr. Bryant

Motion to amend the proposed Tax Acquired Property Policy in part to state, “Any net surplus proceeds of the sale will be designated to the Capital Reserve Fund or distributed as the City Council sees fit.”

Moved by Councilor Morse, seconded by Councilor Storey.

Committee Chair Chau opened the floor for comments on the motion. The following individuals spoke: Ms. Burns, Mr. Bryant, Councilor Morse

On the recommendation of Ms. Burns and Mr. Bryant, Councilors Morse and Storey agreed to amend the motion to limit the amendment to Tax-Acquired Single-Family Residential Property and to rely upon the City Solicitor to draft the specific language for the amendment.

Committee Chair Chau opened the floor for additional comments on the motion to amend the Tax Acquired Property Policy. The following individuals spoke: President Rairdon, Ms. Holmes

Amendment approved. Motion carried by a show of hands. (Vote 5-1-1)

Ayes: Morse, Rairdon, Turcotte, Storey, Rwaganje

Nays: Chau

Absent: Shaughnessy

Committee Chair Chau returned to receiving comments on the Tax Acquired Property Policy, now as amended. The following individuals spoke: Committee Chair Chau, Knight, Bryant, Rwaganje

All present agreed to a friendly amendment to the Tax Acquired Property Policy in part to state as follows: "A Committee will be established to review all tax-acquired property annually no sooner than 60 days after automatic foreclosure and to make a recommendation to the City Council."

Motion to refer the Tax Acquired Property Policy to Council for consideration, as amended.

Moved by President Rairdon, seconded by Vice President Turcotte.

Motion carried by a show of hands. None opposed.

ONE-TIME INTEREST AMNESTY OFFER

Committee Chair Chau gave the floor to Mr. Bryant again, who provided an overview of the proposed One-Time Interest Amnesty Offer. This offer would provide a 90-day period during which the interest on past due real estate taxes would be forgiven.

Committee Chair Chau opened the floor for comments on the One-Time Interest Amnesty Offer. The following individuals spoke: President Rairdon, Councilor Storey, Councilor Morse, Mr. Bryant, Mayor Foley, Ms. Knight, Councilor Rwaganje, Vice President Turcotte, Committee Chair Chau

Mayor Foley noted that the effective date of the policy would be dependent upon the date the policy is adopted by City Council, and if referred to City Council, the amended date would be included in the proposal.

Motion to refer the One-Time Interest Amnesty Offer to Council for consideration.

Moved by President Rairdon, seconded by Vice President Turcotte.

Committee Chair Chau opened the floor for comments on the motion. No one spoke.

Motion carried. (Vote 4-2-1)

Ayes: Morse, Rairdon, Turcotte, Rwaganje

Nays: Chau, Storey

Absent: Shaughnessy

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 7:03pm.

Moved by Councilor Rwaganje, seconded by Vice President Turcotte.

Motion carried by a show of hands. None opposed.