

CITY OF ELLSWORTH CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MINUTES

DATE: Monday, March 16, 2026

TIME: 6:00 PM

LOCATION: Ellsworth City Hall Council Chambers

1. Call to Order Chair Patrick Lyons called the regular monthly meeting of the Ellsworth City Council to order at 6:00 PM. – Councilor N. Smith attended virtually, and Councilor Shea was late.

2. Pledge of Allegiance The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.

3. Rules of Order The Chair noted that the Council abides by Robert's Rules of Order for the progression of the meeting.

4. Adoption of the Ellsworth City Council minutes The minutes from the February 17, 2026, Regular Meeting were presented for adoption.

- **Motion:** To approve the February 17, 2026, meeting minutes.
- **Moved by:** Councilor White; **Seconded by:** Councilor M. Smith
- **Result:** Passed 6-0 (Unanimous).

5. Presentation of Awards The Council presented certificates of achievement to the following:

- **EHS Cheerleading Team:** For being Big East, PVC, Northern Maine, and four-time State Champions.
- **Matt Mattson:** Voted Big East Boys Co-Coach of the Year (absent).
- **Jovin Pesek:** For reaching 100 wins in Wrestling.
- **Caitlin Jenkins:** For setting new school records in Long Jump and 55-meter Hurdles.
- **Boris Felix:** For being Class B State Runner-Up in the High Jump.

6. City Manager's Report: City Manager Charlie Pearce reported on several items, including a missed public hearing for an infrastructure grant for affordable housing on Beals Avenue, which will be addressed at a special meeting on March 26. He highlighted community volunteerism, upcoming events like the Card Brook clean-up, and the history of the Downeast Scenic Railroad. He also noted significant city growth, with 50 single-family housing permits issued in 2025 and \$700 million in new valuation over the last five years.

7. Committee Reports

- **Arbor Commission:** Councilor White reported on an invasive species forum and announced an Arbor Day event for April 22.
- **Historic Preservation Commission:** Councilor Martineau reported an upcoming meeting on March 25 and progress on mapping local historic properties.

- **Appointments:**

- **Austin Schuver (Arbor Commission):** Term expiring 6/30/2026.
 - **Motion:** To approve the appointment.
 - **Moved by:** Councilor White; **Seconded by:** Councilor Martineau
 - **Result:** Passed (Unanimous).
- **William Fogle (Historic Preservation):** Change from alternate to regular member, term expiring 6/30/2027.
 - **Motion:** To approve the appointment.
 - **Moved by:** Councilor Martineau; **Seconded by:** Councilor White
 - **Result:** Passed (Unanimous).
- **Sarah Bowden (Housing Authority):** Board of Commissioners, term expiring 1/2029.
 - **Motion:** To approve the appointment.
 - **Moved by:** Councilor White; **Seconded by:** Councilor M. Smith.
 - **Result:** Passed (Unanimous).

8. Citizen's Comments: Citizens commented on various topics, including the city budget, nonprofit funding, homelessness concerns near the library, and reports from the Chamber of Commerce and Heart of Ellsworth.

9. Councilor Comments: Councilor O'Halloran expressed disappointment regarding what he perceived as a trend of "squelching" the public's right to speak and requested more flexibility in the process.

10. Consent Agenda: Council Order #032600: The Council considered the reservation of the City's right to harvest alewives. Parks & Recreation and Facilities Director Roddy Erhlenbach explained that the city leases these rights to a harvester, with 50% of the proceeds (approx.. \$40,000 annually) going to the Harbor Fund.

- **Motion:** To authorize the City Manager to notify the Commissioner of the Maine Department of Marine Resources of the City's intent to harvest alewives.
- **Moved by:** Councilor M. Smith; **Seconded by:** Councilor O'Halloran.
- **Result:** Passed (Unanimous).

11. Public Hearing and action on renewal for licenses: A public hearing was held for multiple business and lodging licenses. Significant discussion occurred regarding the Sanctuary Inn, with neighbors citing issues such as police calls and hygiene, while residents and the owner testified to the facility's role in rehabilitation and its compliance with fire and safety codes.

- **Motion (as amended):** To approve all license renewals except the Sanctuary Inn.
- **Moved by:** Councilor Lyons; **Seconded by:** Councilor Martineau.
- **Result:** Passed 6-1 (O'Halloran abstained).

- **Motion:** To approve the license renewal for Sanctuary Inn Investors LLC.
- **Moved by:** Councilor Lyons; **Seconded by:** Councilor Martineau.
- **Result:** Passed 5-1-1 (Shea opposed; O'Halloran abstained).

12. Council Order #032601: Central Corridor Omnibus Municipal TIF District: Economic Development Director Twila Fisher and Consultant Reagan LaRochelle presented the creation of a new TIF district encompassing 32 properties along High Street and Downeast Highway.

- **Motion:** To approve the creation of the Central Corridor Omnibus Municipal TIF District and a TIF Committee.
 - **Moved by:** Councilor Martineau; **Seconded by:** Councilor White.
 - **Result:** Passed 6-1 (O'Halloran opposed).
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- **Motion:** To authorize submission of the application to the DECD.
 - **Moved by:** Councilor White **Seconded by:** Councilor M. Smith.
 - **Result:** Passed 6-1 (O'Halloran opposed).

13. Council Order #032602: City of Ellsworth Downtown Development Plan: The Council reviewed an updated development plan required for the Downtown TIF application, incorporating previous studies and performance metrics.

- **Motion:** To approve the 2026 City of Ellsworth Downtown Development Plan.
- **Moved by:** Councilor White; **Seconded by:** Councilor Martineau.
- **Result:** Passed 5-2 (O'Halloran and Shea opposed).

14. Council Order #032603: Downtown Corridor Omnibus Municipal TIF District: The proposal for a TIF district encompassing 300 properties in the urban core was presented to shelter tax revenue for infrastructure.

- **Motion:** To approve the creation of the Downtown Corridor Omnibus Municipal TIF District.
 - **Moved by:** Councilor White; **Seconded by:** Councilor Martineau.
 - **Result:** Passed 6-1 (O'Halloran opposed).
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- **Motion:** To authorize submission of the application to the DECD.
 - **Moved by:** Councilor M. Smith; **Seconded by:** Councilor White.
 - **Result:** Passed 6-1 (O'Halloran opposed).

15. Council Order #032604: Amendments to Personnel Ordinance (Chapter 34): Discussion focused on allowing limited overtime for exempt police administrators during staffing shortages. Councilors expressed concerns regarding the precedent and requested more time for review.

- **Motion:** To table the item for a future workshop/meeting.
- **Moved by:** Councilor Shea; **Seconded by:** Councilor N. Smith.

- **Result:** Passed (Unanimous).

16. Council Order #032605: Criminal Forfeiture Funds: The Police Chief requested to accept \$566 in drug forfeiture funds following a 2024 adjudication.

- **Motion:** To approve the request to accept the funds.
- **Moved by:** Councilor Martineau; **Seconded by:** Councilor O'Halloran.
- **Result:** Passed (Unanimous).

17. Council Order #032606: Remote Participation Policy Amendments: The Council considered clarifying that the remote participation policy explicitly includes subcommittees to allow meetings to proceed during inclement weather.

- **Motion:** To approve the amended remote participation policy.
- **Moved by:** Councilor White; **Seconded by:** Councilor M. Smith.
- **Result:** Passed (Unanimous).

18. Council Order #032607: Knowlton Park Playground Phase 1: Staff recommended delaying the \$80,000 "Phase 1" installation due to current budget constraints, suggesting instead a letter of intent to work with the vendor (GameTime) for a 2027 replacement. Council raised concerns about the legal implications of a "letter of intent".

- **Motion:** To table the item.
- **Moved by:** Councilor Shea. **Seconded by:** Councilor White.
- **Result:** Passed 6-1 (P Lyons opposed).

19. Council Order #032608: Discussion on New Procurement Policy: The City Manager discussed a proposed modernization of the procurement policy to utilize digital systems and establish clearer thresholds and procedures. No action was taken.

20. Council Order #032609: Track and Soccer Field Replacement: The Council considered awarding a contract for the replacement of the high school track, which has been unusable for years.

- **Motion:** To authorize the City Manager and School Superintendent to enter a contract with Rekortan for \$749,565.
- **Moved by:** Councilor Shea; **Seconded by:** Councilor Martineau.
- **Result:** Passed 5-2 (O'Halloran and Shea opposed).

21. Council Order #032610: Bus/City Vehicle Storage and Staff Facilities: Discussion focused on a potential lease in Hancock to house the bus fleet and water department, as current leases are expiring. The public and several councilors expressed strong preference for building a local facility on city-owned land rather than leasing out of town. No public action was taken but executive session to discuss negotiations was moved.

- **Motion:** To enter executive session.
- **Moved by:** Councilor Martineau; **Seconded by:** Councilor Shea.
- **Result:** Passed 6-1 (O'Halloran opposed).

22. Executive Session: The Council moved to enter executive session to discuss personnel matters.

- **Motion:** To table executive session.
- **Moved by:** Councilor O'Halloran; **Seconded by:** Councilor Shea.
- **Result:** Passed (Unanimous).

23. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned following the executive session.

- **Motion:** Adjourn.
- **Moved by:** Councilor O'Halloran; **Seconded by:** Councilor Shea.
- **Result:** Passed (Unanimous).