

MEETING MINUTES OF THE
PALMER CITIZEN CASINO IMPACT STUDY COMMITTEE
GENERAL GROUP MEETING 28
PALMER TOWN BUILDING, MEETING ROOM I
MARCH 25, 2009 – 6:30 PM

Meeting opened at 6:40 pm by Gerald Chudy, Chair.

ATTENDANCE

PRESENT Rocqueline Blazejowski, Charlotte Burns, Gerald Chudy, Anthony Dimitropolis, CathyAnn Gehlhausen, Mickey Ghosh, Joseph Mastalerz, George Roy, Stephen Sears, Carol Sugrue, Michael Swiatlowski, Paul Wisnewski

OTHERS PRESENT Ken Somerville

MINUTES APPROVAL

Minutes for Meeting 24

S. Sears would like the notes for Meeting 23 amended to state that the Pathfinder request does not have to do with space limitations at the school.

M. Swiatlowski will correct the typos (Brody, assessor).

A motion was made by R. Blazejowski to accept the minutes with corrections.

A. Dimitropolis seconded. The vote passed.

Minutes for Meeting 25

M. Swiatlowski will correct the typos (assessor, “the” to “to”)

S. Sears questions who owns the land being proposed for a casino site and asks if the tax status has been confirmed? M. Swiatlowski answers that Northeast Realty owns the land and Mohegan Sun has a 99-year lease to the site. The accuracy of this statement is question and the tax status is still unknown. S. Sears has volunteered to look into this matter.

A motion was made by A. Dimitropolis to accept the minutes with corrections.

R. Blazejowski seconded. The vote passed.

Minutes for Meeting 26

A. Dimitropolis asks that it be noted that there were only six committee members in attendance for this meeting and our quorum set forth at our first meeting in Dec of 2007 was seven members. It is discussed that our quorum of seven was set when the committee had 18 members and now our committee is 12 members. M. Swiatlowski states that the committee did hold this meeting with six members and asks if there are any concerns about this, we should bring them up now or acknowledge that this is an accepted meeting. No concerns are raised and the six-person quorum will be noted in the minutes for meeting 26.

S. Sears asks if anyone did get in contact with Chief O’Connor regarding the confusion over his statements in the Infrastructure Report? J. Mastalerz confirms that the statement was incorrect and that Chief O’Connor’s statement was rewritten to note that if the Town Hall was to relocate, he would propose that the current TR fire station move to the 4 corners location. This would provide a better location to support the PFD.

A motion was made by R. Blazejowski to accept the minutes with notation.
A. Dimitropolis seconded. The vote passed.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

P. Wisnewski joins the committee and has a comment on the status of the 91-acre Sherman Property. He states that the land is currently in Chapter 61. It is believed that the town would be given the first option to buy the land should it be developed into a commercial operation and if it was developed, the owner would need to pay the back taxes at a full commercial rate for the 5 previous years. It is questioned why the town would not buy the land to hold a very valuable piece of property?

J. Mastalerz has spoken on the phone with Jim St. Amand (Northeast Realty). He states that the taxes on the proposed casino site are up to date and they are paid for at a commercial property rate.

REVIEW OF COVER LETTER

S. Sears begins by stating that all across the country, we have read stories of communities that wish they should have done a better job preparing for a casino. We have the opportunity here to not make the same mistakes. The discussion continues that a professional negotiator should be hired by the Town of Palmer with the town's best interests in mind. Suggestions for the qualifications of the negotiator range from a person that has experience in casino development to a trial lawyer. It is agreed by all that whomever the person is, he or she should maximize the benefits for Palmer.

A lengthy discussion takes place regarding the structure of the letter and the recommendation of a Negotiating Committee to the Town Council. It is decided that our committee will make the recommendation that the Council form the committee that will be lead by a professional negotiator, but not list the other members of this committee. It is also discussed that the estimate for the cost of the new town employees, a number which does not include the cost of school employees, will not be noted in the cover letter.

A motion is made by A. Dimitropolis to not include a specific dollar estimate in the cover letter. J. Mastalerz seconded. The vote passed (12-0).

It is discussed that the letter will be based on M. Swiatlowski amendment to J. Mastalerz's original letter. The introduction and ending of P. Wisnewski's letter will be incorporated. M. Swiatlowski reads through the sections and will fine tune the letter for a final review at our next meeting.

The topic of an itemized list of costs to the town as a result of a casino is raised again. S. Sears states that this list should be included directly after our cover letter in the report and that it would be inexcusable for our committee to not provide these figures. M. Swiatlowski states that it would be very difficult for our committee to agree on what a list of estimated costs would look like. J. Mastalerz states that there are figures already included in our report, but a list calls for too much scrutiny on the details of these costs. He cites that we do not have the information about the specifics of those costs – items such as bullet proof vests and ammo are given as examples for the cost of a police budget. S. Sears states that we should list the department's overall operational costs. C. Burns volunteers to create the list from the report.

A motion is made by P. Wisnewski to have C. Burns create an itemized list of estimated costs. C. Burns seconded. The vote fails (5-7).

K. Somerville adds that in one of our earlier committee meetings, Town Manager Richard Fitzgerald said that our committee was not to be concerned with dollars. S. Sears questions why we would not include the numbers if we have them?

REVIEW OF PROBLEM GAMBLING AMENDMENT

Regarding the Social and Cultural Impacts, C. Burns would like to add to the Problem Gambling section an estimate of \$200,000 a year to treat problem gambling here in Palmer should a casino be built. This estimate comes from the Dr. Lori Rugle, the Director of Problem Gambling for the state of Connecticut. G. Chudy asks that Charlotte type up the paragraph to be submitted.

A motion is made by G. Chudy that C. Burns type up a paragraph to be added to page 9 of the Social and Cultural Impact Report. A. Dimitropolis seconded. The vote passes (12-0).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

G. Chudy will provide the Town Council with the hard copies of our reports. M. Swiatowski will provide the town with electronic copies. He requests that each sub-committee provide a disc of their report for the next meeting.

UPCOMING MEETING SCHEDULE

April 8

- Review remaining Minutes
- Review revised cover letter
- Collect electronic copies of sub-committee reports
- Discuss any open topics before submitting report

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by A. Dimitropolis to adjourn meeting at 8:30 pm.

R. Blazejowski seconded. The vote passed (12:0).

MINUTES SUBMITTED BY MICHAEL SWIATLOWSKI.

APPROVED – DRAFT