

**Palmer Town Council  
Meeting Minutes  
November 18, 2019**

**I Call to Order**

The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, November 18, 2019 was called to order at 6:30PM by Town Council President Barbara Barry. Councilors Lorinda Baker, Jessica Sizer, Karl Williams, Matthew Lemieux and Robert Lavoie were present. Michelle Sikes was absent. Also present was Town Manager, Ryan McNutt and Executive Assistant, Nicole Parker.

**II Public Hearing**

**6:35PM Second Reading/Public Hearing;**

R.Lavoie read the public hearing notice

The purpose and intent of this Ordinance is to eliminate nuisances affecting buildings and real property in the Town. Nuisances, such as dilapidated buildings, buildings or real estate covered with graffiti, buildings open to the weather or vagrants, real estate with overgrowth of vegetation, debris, trash, and stagnant pools of water, and vacant or abandoned buildings, cause and contribute to blight within neighborhoods and commercial areas of the Town and may adversely affect the property values for adjacent and surrounding property.

Joyce Lynch and Bill Spinkle of 22 Diane Street stated that they would like to see this ordinance enforced on a historically, habitual problem property on their street. R.McNutt stated that he will look into it and that this Ordinance has a “Review Board” that consists of almost every department, and their concerns will be researched.

With no one else wishing to be heard on the Ordinance, the Public Hearing was closed at 6:52PM.

The vote will follow at the December meeting.

**6:53PM Public Hearing; Tax Classification**

R,Leroux read the public hearing notice

Robert Leroux, Principal Assessor, and Mike , Assessor presented the proposal for FY2021 tax assessments through a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed the process of adopting the rates.

The purpose of this hearing is for the Town Council to receive information from the Board of Assessors in order to decide on a factor to establish the allocation of the tax levy. The Board of Assessor’s recommended a single tax rate, and no open space Discount, no Residential Exemption, and no Small Commercial Exemption.

With no one else wishing to be heard on the proposed rates, the Public Hearing was closed at 7:12PM.

Motion was made to vote YES on a single tax rate by L.Baker. Seconded by R.Lavoie. Motion passed (6:0)

Motion was made to vote NO on an Open Space Discount by M.Lemieux. Seconded by L.Baker. Motion passed (6:0)

37 Motion was made to vote NO on a Residential Exemption by M.Lemieux. Seconded by L.Baker. Motion  
38 passed (6:0)

39 Motion was made to vote NO on Small Commercial Exemption by L.Baker. Seconded b y R. Lavoie.  
40 Motion passed (6:0)

41 **III Old Business**

42 **Minutes**

43 September 9, 2019

44 Motion was made to approve by L.Baker. Seconded by K.Williams. Motion passed (6:0)

45 October 24, 2019

46 Motion was made to approve by K.Williams. Seconded by L.Baker. Motion passed (6:0)

47 November 4, 2019

48 Motion was made to approve by L.Baker. Seconded by J.Sizer. Motion passed (6:0)

49 **IV New Business**

50 Appointment; Historical Commission

51 R.McNutt recommended approval of appointment to Michael Bechard for a three year appointment to the  
52 Historical Commission.

53 Motion was made t approve appointment by L.Baker. Seconded by R.Lavoie. Motion passed (6:0)

54 Resolution 2020-05 - To transfer funds from the Town's Stabilization Trust Fund

55 To approve the transfer of \$94,000.00 from the Town's Stabilization Fund (Account # 8395000-59700) to  
56 a Special Revenue Account for the purpose of engaging Tighe and Bond to create and submit design  
57 development plans for the Palmer High School track, synthetic fields, bleachers, lighting, a drainage  
58 report, a geotechnical report, and an opinion of probable cost

59 Motion was made to approve Resolution 2020-05 by M.Lemieux. Seconded by L.Baker. Motion passed  
60 (6:0)

61 Town Manager Report- November, 2019 (attached)

62

63 **V Adjournment**

64 Motion was made to adjourn at 7:30PM by M.Lemieux. Seconded by L.Baker. Motion passed (6:0)

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66



# Town of Palmer

4417 Main Street, Palmer, MA 01069 – 413-283-2603

**Ryan McNutt**  
**Town Manager**

November 14th, 2019

To: Palmer Town Council  
From: Ryan McNutt

Re: Town Manager's Report – November 18, 2019

November the Administration continues to advance through projects and initiatives as well as continue the Town finances for year-end close-out and certification of free cash.

We are conducting interviews for the payroll and benefits specialist and we have amended the job scope to include more cross-training in the Accountant's office. This should help reduce backlogs and create the efficiencies for more timely year-end closeouts. The Finance Director is currently working on Combined Balance Sheet. General Ledger for FY 2019 is closed.

The tax rate classification hearing is the same night as our Town Council meeting. The Assessor has given me the number for FY20's New Growth which is \$185,000. We received our report from the Moody's credit rating agency and the Town's A1 rating is stable. I have included the Moody's Key Indicators exhibit with this report.

Major projects such as the bleachers at Legion Field and geotechnical conditions assessments of the playing fields, track, and complex at the Palmer High School are moving forward. Included for the meeting agenda on the 18<sup>th</sup> is a resolution to withdraw \$93,900 from Stabilization for the Tighe & Bond geotechnical conditions assessments of the playing fields, track, and complex at the Palmer High School. This initial planning work is required and will better inform the Town about what needs to happen at PHS to restore the running track and playing fields as well as mitigate the conditions that caused the impacts.

## **Community Development**

The ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan has been completed. It is 5,600 pages. The Community Development Office submitted a grant application to the state for partial funding for the new bleachers at Legion Field. We hope to hear in December if we received funding.

The Community Development and Economic Development/Planning Offices continue to be involved with the following projects:

- Master plan
- Converse Middle School reuse

- Thorndike School reuse
- 2032 Main Street, Three Rivers “SMOC” Building, This \$700,000+ complete gut rehabilitation of a former two-family building into a mixed-used commercial space and market rate apartment on the second floor.

DHCD held a public meeting for comments on the proposed changes for the FY 20 application. The Community Development Department attended and commented in favor of several new proposed initiatives. The primary purpose of attending was to voice opposition to the proposed changes that would limit how many activities applicants would be able to apply for. The final changes should be released in early November. The FY 20 CDBG applications are due March 6, 2020.

### **Department of Public Works**

Working with Chris Smith to get the electrical straighten out for the Christmas decorations in Depot Village. We will continue to work with the DPW to get all the areas ready for holiday lighting in the downtown.

Continuing to receive calls from residents regarding trees believed to be hazardous. Tree work throughout town continues. As of today we have less than \$10,000 remaining of the \$40k budgeted!

The Palmer Youth Baseball Organization and the town paid to install sprinklers at Burleigh Park for the 2 renovated fields. The electricity needs to run to the new pole to power the sprinklers. Palmer baseball has a electrician to complete the work once National Grid installs the new power line.

### **Three Rivers Bridge Update**

After the bridge was blasted and primed CME, the design engineers of record, inspected the existing bridge steel. Based on the finding of the inspection and computations, CME engineered a steel design change. MassDOT had to review the inspection report and approve the design change. New steel shop drawings had to be drafted and approved, steel had to be ordered and steel had to be fabricate to comply with the design change. The steel is currently being fabricated and NEI will install the steel as soon as possible. Bridge design and approval is a lengthy process and I apologize for any inconvenience. Keith Miles Project Manager New England Infrastructure, Inc.

**Church Street and Main Street Bridges** – The Town of Palmer was not awarded the 2019 US BUILD grant. Only one project applicant from Massachusetts won an award: Conley Terminal Container Storage and Freight Corridor Massachusetts \$20,000,000.

**MS4 Storm water requirements** Storm water expenses are becoming higher then what we have budgeted. GIS mapping and tracking the condition for each manhole, catch basin, stream, culvert in the MS4 area of Palmer which is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the town, inspecting outfalls along with sampling and testing the storm water outfalls will require new employees that concentrate only on storm water. Our existing manpower barely keeps up with the street sweeping and catch basin cleaning required in the new MS4 permit which now requires the town to dispose of the material from catch basins and street sweeping to a landfill. There are communities that have created their own storm water agency that requires a fee to be paid for by all residents, and businesses. We will need to take a serious look at funding by either the annual budget or creating a storm water utility to pay for everything the EPA & MADEP is requiring in Palmer’s storm water permit. The Asset

management Grant that we applied for will cover some of this work. Approximately (20) communities in MA have created storm water enterprise funds with a residential/commercial fee structure.

## **Health**

The board is moving forward with a public hearing for Abandoned, Foreclosed and Foreclosing Properties regulations. The public hearing is scheduled for November 18, 2019 at the Police Station. Once adopted these regulations would also go into effect January 1, 2020.

Vinny's Pizza: The site survey is being completed the week of November 11, 2019 by Sherman & Frydryk. We have started seeking bids for the demolition of the building. More information will be forth coming.

The grant funded dumpster from RETRAC was ordered and will be delivered in 4 weeks to DPW for the resident recycling program. This Town supported single stream resident recycling program, part of the Western Mass regional Material Recycling Facility, will increase in costs starting with a new contract in January 2020. The Town of Palmer had approximately 4,255 residents participate in 2019. The costs for recycling will increase by about \$6.44 per capita for Palmer to continue to participate. Approximately, \$27,389 in new fees for the program.

## **Town Clerk's Office**

### **In October the Clerk's office processed:**

- 19 Death Records
- 11 Burial Permits
- 3 Marriage Intentions
- 10 Birth Records
- 6 Business Certificates
- 21 Dog Licenses
- 1 Raffle Permits
- 3 Marriage Certificates
- 1 Planning Board Decision
- 1 Statement of Discontinuance

### **We also had:**

- 124 Voter Acknowledgement Notices sent out
- 27 Voters Deleted
- 3 Voter Pre-Registrants

### **We also sold:**

- 6 Business Certificates
- 1 Raffle Permit
- 9 Burial Permits
- 3 Marriage Intentions
- 3 Street Lists
- 25 Marriage Certificates

- 85 Death Certificates
- 69 Birth Certificates
- 21 Dog Licenses
- 1 Planning Board Decision
- 2 Tag Sale Permits

Respectfully,

Ryan McNutt  
Town Manager

## EXHIBIT 1

## Key Indicators of Palmer

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	US Median	Credit Trend
<b>Economy / Tax Base</b>							
Total Full Value	\$987M	\$896M	\$896M	\$921M	\$921M	\$1,904M	Weakened
Full Value Per Capita	\$81,251	\$73,517	\$74,021	\$75,319	\$74,879	\$94,106	Weakened
Median Family Income (% of US Median)	94%	94%	94%	103%	103%	111%	Improved
<b>Finances</b>							
Available Fund Balance as % of Operating Revenues	11.7%	13.1%	13.1%	15.5%	17.0%	34.6%	Improved
Net Cash Balance as % of Operating Revenues	19.4%	20.3%	19.4%	19.9%	22.3%	39.6%	Stable
<b>Debt / Pensions</b>							
Net Direct Debt / Full Value	2.0%	2.6%	2.5%	2.3%	2.1%	1.1%	Stable
Net Direct Debt / Operating Revenues	0.57x	0.68x	0.63x	0.58x	0.51x	0.84x	Stable
Moody's-adjusted Net Pension Liability (3-yr average) to Full Value	4.0%	4.4%	4.2%	4.0%	4.3%	1.9%	Stable
Moody's-adjusted Net Pension Liability (3-yr average) to Operating Revenues	1.14x	1.16x	1.07x	0.99x	1.04x	1.56x	Stable
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	US Median	
<b>Debt and Financial Data</b>							
Population	12,155	12,191	12,108	12,237	12,309	N/A	
Available Fund Balance (\$000s)	\$4,048	\$4,403	\$4,629	\$5,779	\$6,549	\$8,028	
Net Cash Balance (\$000s)	\$6,707	\$6,833	\$6,840	\$7,425	\$8,587	\$9,530	
Operating Revenues (\$000s)	\$34,529	\$33,679	\$35,318	\$37,316	\$38,451	\$23,172	
Net Direct Debt (\$000s)	\$19,633	\$22,868	\$22,230	\$21,459	\$19,627	\$19,139	
Moody's Adjusted Net Pension Liability (3-yr average) (\$000s)	\$39,305	\$39,108	\$37,806	\$36,922	\$39,957	\$35,448	

Source: Moody's Investors Service