

**Palmer Town Council  
Meeting Minutes  
November 19, 2018**

1        **Call to Order**

2            The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, November 19, 2018 was called to order  
3            at 6:30 pm by Town Council President Barbara Barry. Councilors Lorinda Baker, Mary  
4            Salzmann, Karl Williams, Matthew Lemieux, and Michelle Sikes and Robert Lavoie  
5            were present. Also present was Town Manager, Charles Blanchard and Executive  
6            Assistant, Nicole Parker.

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10       **Meeting Minutes**

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12       June 23, 2018- Community Meeting

13       Motion was made to approve minutes by M.Salzmann. Seconded by M.Lemieux. Motion passed  
14       (7:0)

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16       October 24, 2018 Community Meeting

17       Motion was made to approve minutes by M.Lemieux. Seconded by K.Williams. Motion passed  
18       (7:0)

19  
20       October 10, 2018

21       Motion was made to approve minutes by R.Lavoie. Seconded by K.Williams. Motion passed  
22       (7:0)

23  
24       October 17, 2018

25       Motion was made to approve minutes by K.Williams. Seconded by M.Lemieux. Motion passed  
26       (7:0)

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28       **Old Business**

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30       Vote: Deletion of Medical Marijuana Ordinance 171.123, and as an allowable use per 171.66 B  
31       (2) (a) and (b) Urban Renewal Industrial District and 171.67 C. (4) and (5)- industrial A & B

32  
33       Motion was made to approve the deletion by L.Baker. Seconded by M.Lemieux. Motion passed  
34       (7:0)

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36       **Comcast Agreement**

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38       C. Blanchard stated that he had a meeting with Eileen Leahy from Comcast. He stated that  
39       Comcast has agreed to extend cable coverage to the Old Warren / Boston Road area and to  
40       Woodlands Heights in the renewal contract. They have also agreed to increase the M-Pact PEG

41 Access/facilities funding from the \$100,000 that was in the current contract to \$150,000 in the  
42 renewal contract, and maintain the 5% annual payment on Gross Annual Revenues to M-Pact for  
43 PEG Access purposes. Comcast will agree to complete the buildout of the cable to Old Warren /  
44 Boston Road and Woodland Heights within three years of the signing of the contract renewal,  
45 but Eileen stated that it is their intention to complete this as soon as possible – most likely within  
46 two years. (The only caveat on this is that the extension to Old Warren / Boston Road requires at  
47 least two easements from private parties, and the agreement to run this cable is contingent on  
48 Comcast being able to obtain these easements.) C.Blanchard stated that if the Town Council will  
49 support this agreement they could hold the required public hearing on this proposal at the  
50 December 10<sup>th</sup> Town Council meeting, and the renewal could be signed in January. This would  
51 start the clock running on the time for the cable extensions to be completed. C.Blanchard also  
52 stated that Comcast is not willing to extend the cable from where it ends on Mt. Dumplin Road  
53 to 1808 North Main Street since the cost of this extension is approximately \$22,000 and there are  
54 only two homes in addition to 1808 North Main Street that might be served. They would,  
55 however, contribute \$1400 per home for this extension, so if the Town Council feels it would be  
56 beneficial to have the cable in this area, he gave the option of taking \$17,800 from our franchise  
57 fee account for this. There is approximately \$30,000 currently in that account. M. Lemieux’s  
58 thoughts were that to make sure everyone that does not have cable should. L. Baker agreed, and  
59 felt that they shouldn’t wait ten more years for the next contract renewal. B.Barry recognized  
60 that not all of the requests were met, such as mileage coverage for new development. The  
61 Council requested to see the proposed contract for the December meeting. C.Blanchard stated  
62 that he would get them one before the next meeting.

63 7:56PM Public Hearing; Tax Classification Hearing

64 Barbara Barry read the public hearing notice.

65

66 Present were the Board of Assessor’s, with Principal Assesor Rob Leroux giving the presentation  
67 on the tax classification process.

68 Motion was made to vote for a single tax rate by L. Baker. Seconded by M.Lemieux. Motion  
69 passed (7:0)

70 Motion was made to vote NO on a residential discount by M.Lemieux. Seconded by R. Lavoie.  
71 Motion passed (7:0)

72 Motion was made to vote NO on small commercial exemption by L.Baker. Seconded by  
73 R.Lavoie. Motion passed (7:0)

74 Motion was made to vote NO on open space exemption by M.Salzman. Seconded by L.Baker.  
75 Motion passed (7:0)

76 Public Hearing was closed at 7:09PM

77

78

79 East West Rail discussion

80 Present representing Citizen's for a Palmer Rail Stop were Ben Hood and Anne Miller. They  
81 distributed a document called "Palmer Station Steering Committee & Transit Oriented  
82 Deveopment Plan" to the Council.

83 B. Hood also put the document on the television screen for several members of the public that  
84 were present to see. He spoke about the East West Rail Plan and Palmer being brought up to the  
85 tier two plan, and how important establishing a Palmer Station Steering Committee charged with  
86 developing an action plan to make the case for a Palmer passenger rail stop. He also was rallying  
87 for funds to hire a consultant to develop a Tranist Oriented Development (TOD) Plan. The  
88 Palmer Redevelopment Authority hired a consultant to draft a TOD and believes it needs to be  
89 expanded and incorporated into a full plan. The Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop were looking for  
90 a committment from the Council of approximawely \$100,000.00.

91 B..Barry asked Town Planner Linda Leduc if there were any means available currently from  
92 Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) . L.Leduc stated that she spoke to some land use  
93 staff at PVPC and they told her there are Direct Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) grants  
94 available to study existing data and initiatives, such as traffic patterns, tourism data, and even  
95 regional information that could bolster the fact that Palmer is the ideal location for the stop,  
96 which could be complied into a reportable format. She stated that the Rail Advisory Committee  
97 also has some great information and graphics that could be incorporated without spending very  
98 much money. She believes putting a full plan in place is too preliminary. L.Leduc stated that  
99 once the state completes their East West Study in approximately eighteen months, there are other  
100 sources of funding that cn be applied for. L.Leduc also stated that Tim Brennan, PVPC  
101 Executive Director recommended requesting a spot on the state study committee.

102 C.Blanchard also asked Community Developent Director, Sarah Szczebak about becoming a  
103 mini entitlement community. S.Szczebak stated that Palmer will be in a less competitive  
104 category over the next three years and has the potential to be awarded \$125,000.00 extra than in  
105 previous years, which could possibly help fund some of the project in the future.

106 M.Lemieux reiterated the need for a Palmer rail steering committee to keep the propulsion of the  
107 work going forward. He stated with L.Leduc, S.Szczebak, and so many resident volunteers it's  
108 more important than ever to have the local committee.

109 B.Hood said he feared that if a full TOD isn't done Palmer may not be considered serious  
110 enough a contender to be guaranteed for the stop.

111 B.Barry didn't feel that spending up to \$100,000.00 at the present time for a full TOD is  
112 necessary or wise, and felt that doing the work locally and through our own resources is what the  
113 Town should focus on. She also felt that either requesting a letter of support from nearby towns  
114 or asking them to be on the steering committee may be helpful.

115 Motion was made to send a letter to Senator Gobi and Representative Smola to encourage the  
116 state sudy committee to allow a Palmer representative on the study committee by B.Barry.  
117 Seconded by M.Salzmann. Motion passed (7:0)

118 Motion was made to appoint Linda Leduc as Palmer representative on the state study committee  
119 by L.Baker. Seconded by M.Lemieux. Motion passed (7:0)

120 B.Barry read the recommendations for members of the steering committee to be appointed in  
121 December. They would be as follows:

- 122 • 2 representatives of Town Council
- 123 • Representative of Planning Board
- 124 • Town planner/Economic Development Director Linda Leduc
- 125 • Representative of Palmer Redevelopment Authority (PRA)
- 126 • PRA Rail Advisory Board
- 127 • 2 representatives of Depot Village businesses, including a representative of the historic  
128 station
- 129 • Representatives of Three Rivers and Quaboag Valley Chambers of Commerce
- 130 • Representatives of Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop
- 131 • Resident(s) who commute from Springfield or Boston
- 132 • Regional Representative
- 133 • Community Development Director, Sarah Szczebak

134 Motion was made to approve list and to be formally appointed at the December meeting by  
135 L.Baker. Seconded by K. Williams. Motion passed (7:0)

#### 136 Community Branding

137 B.Barry stated that a committee should be created and open to the public. There are many  
138 components to branding a community. Town staff should also be involved. The Council felt that  
139 there should be 7 members on the committee. C.Blanchard stated that creating a mission  
140 statement should be formed to find out what the goals really are of the committee.

#### 141 Legion Field Bleachers

142 B.Barry stated that she has heard complaints about boards being put on boards and the safety of  
143 the bleachers. She stated it is important to take the winter months to formulate a plan. By Spring,  
144 when the weather breaks, there needs to be decisions made.

145 M.Sikes inquired about how the feasibility study was going for Converse and whether the fields  
146 will be part of it. B.Barry stated there is a meeting on December 3, 2018. C.Blanchard stated that  
147 the architectural study is complete as is the market study. Today the Housing Partners report was  
148 received and will be discussed at the December meeting with Housing Partners. The  
149 understanding is that a portion of the building will be maintained as will the fields for  
150 community use.

151 There was also discussion about HANDICAP access to the field itself and the possibility of  
152 building a ramp from the parking area TO THE BLEACHERS.

153

154

155 Scum Concentrator

156 C.Blanchard distributed a copy of BALANCES IN Sewer Surplus budget. He is requesting  
157 \$600,000.00 for a replacement. There was discussion of raising sewer rates incrementally, so not  
158 to have such a big increase at once and to allow for large capital replacements.

159 Motion was made to authorize the transfer of \$600,000.00 from the Sewer Surplus Fund for a  
160 new Scum Concentrator by M.Lemieux. Seconded by L.Baker. Motion passed (7:0)

161 Town Council Rules

162 Motion was made to approve rules as amended by L.Baker. Seconded by R.Lavoie. Motion  
163 passed (7:0)

164 Host Community Agreement

165 A negotiated agreement was presented to the Council. C. Blanchard stated that the agreement  
166 was the maximum allowed under the legislation. He stated that if Altitude Organics decides to  
167 sell Adult Use marijuana the Town can receive an extra 3% of the gross sales of the marijuana  
168 enterprise. He also said if the Council adopts MGL C 64N the Town can also elect to get a 3%  
169 local option excise tax. B.Barry asked about the optional 3% local tax to be on the December  
170 agenda.

171 Motion was made to authorize C. Blanchard to sign the agreement by L.Baker. Seconded by  
172 M.Lemieux. Motion passed (7:0)

173

174 Letter from Local Licensing Authority (LLA) for Special Legislation; Russ Baker- 1701 Park  
175 Street

176 The license that was at the above location was transferred when the restaurant closed and there  
177 are no more all alcohol licenses available. B.Barry stated that since there are none available the  
178 Town should request 3 extra licenses for economic development.

179 Motion was made to request three additional special legislation licenses; one for Russ Baker;  
180 1701 Park Street, and two more for future development by M.Lemieux. Seconded by L.Baker.  
181 Motion passed (7:0)

182 B.Barry brought up the fact that she has been receiving complaints regarding dead trees, and that  
183 the gypsy moth infestation either killed trees or they had dead limbs. She said she was familiar  
184 with a Town that was able to bring in a strike team at no cost to identify the trees that should be  
185 removed or trimmed. with the Tree Warden who then reached out to a tree company to address  
186 it. She said she is aware of programs that Palmer should take advantage of.

187 Sub-Committee Report

188 CMS reuse meeting will be held December 3, 2018.

189 Town Manager Report

190 Councilo'lo'r roundtabkle

191 L.Baker inquired as to who coordinated the Summer Concert series. C.Blanchard stated that it  
192 was the Recreaion Director. B.Barry asked if we've hired another Director since Jim Skowronek  
193 reigned on October 1. C.Blanchard said there has not, but will get the job posting out on the  
194 website and advertised this week.

195 M.Salzmann brought up the fact that C70 formula is broken and needs to be fixed. She suggested  
196 writing a letter to the state explaining the concerns of the community so they are aware of the  
197 value and how the formulas are skewed for communities such as Palmer tht does not have  
198 adequate public transportation. B.Barry recommended contact School Committee to write a joint  
199 letter. She asked C. Blanchard to write the letter and they will discuss it at the next meeting.

200

201

202

203 Re: Town Manager's Report – November 19, 2018

204

205 1. Attached is a memo from Town Planner/Economic Development Director Linda Leduc  
206 with her ideas on how we can work with the consultants hired by the State for the East –  
207 West Rail Study to ensure that the Palmer passenger station remains part of the plan.

208

209 In addition, Sarah Szczebak has submitted a CDBG grant application this week that would get up  
210 to \$16,000 to support a preliminary study for the economic development of Depot Village.

211

212 I fully support the efforts of the Citizens for a Palmer Rail Stop, but I do not feel that the  
213 development of a detailed Transit Oriented Development Plan is warranted at this stage in the  
214 East–West Rail Study.

215

216 2. As I reported previously, the Architectural Feasibility Study by Abacus Architects &  
217 Planners and the Appraisal and Market Analysis by Kirk & Co. for the conversion of the  
218 Converse Middle School into Senior Housing and a Community Center have been  
219 completed. These studies have shown that the project is very feasible and our consultant  
220 Housing Partners Inc. will have their draft report ready for our subcommittee to review  
221 the week of December 5<sup>th</sup>.

222

223 3. A consultant has been selected to conduct our Architectural Access Plan which is funded  
224 through the community compact. Unfortunately the plan cannot be completed in time for  
225 DHCD approval this year, so a grant for handicap access to the Legion Field bleachers  
226 cannot be submitted until the FY20 grant period.

227

228 4. I have forwarded information on a proposal from Northern Construction to enter into a  
229 Development Agreement with the Town fir a zone change that would allow the  
230 expansion of this business in Palmer while creating additional playing fields for the town.  
231 I will have more information for a discussion on this at tonight's meeting

232

233 John Rahkonen, owner of Northern Construction, offered to allow the Town to use one of his  
234 parcels for recreation for 25 years.. He would also donate \$5,000.00 toward maintainence  
235 annually. J.Rahkonen would like to change the zone of 1701 Park Street to an overlay district to  
236 use for his construction yard.

237 R.Lavoie was in favor of the proposal. He stated that with the last proposal J.Rahkonen did not  
238 show a real benefit to the Town, and now there is.

239 L.Baker stated that she didn't fully recognize the benefit for the community.

240 M.Lemieux stated he would like to see plans for what Mr. Rahkonen is proposing for 1701 Park  
241 Street use.

242 The Council felt that was in agreement that if J.Rahkonen wants to go forward with the proposal  
243 he should suibmit the appropriate paperwqork.

244

#### 245 **Adjournment**

246

247 Motion was made to adjourn at 10:08PM by R.Lavoie. Seconded by M.Lemieux. Motion passed  
248 (7:0)