

**Palmer Town Council
Town Council Minutes
Monday, November 9, 2015**

1 **1. Roll Call**

2
3 The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, November 9, 2015 was called to order at 6:30 pm.
4 Present were Town Manager Charles Blanchard, Councilors Robert Lavoie, Philip Hebert,
5 Barbara Barry, Lorinda Baker, Mary Salzman and Donald Blais. Absent was Councilor Karl
6 Williams

7
8 **2. Visitor's Comments**

9
10 None

11
12 **3. Meeting Minutes**

13
14 September 14, 2015 - *Motion to accept the minutes of September 14, 2015 as amended by D.*
15 *Blais, seconded by L. Baker. Motion passed 6-0.*

16
17 September 14, 2015 Executive Session - *Motion to accept the minutes of September 14, 2015*
18 *Executive Session as amended by D. Blais, seconded by L. Baker. Motion passed 6-0.*

19
20 October 13, 2015 - The minutes of October 13, 2015 will be considered at the next Town Council
21 meeting.

22
23 **4. Old Business**

24
25 **a. Adoption of Chapter 148, Section 26H - Lodging/Boarding House Sprinkler**
26 **Ordinance**

27
28 *Motion to accept Chapter 148, Section 26H, which would require the installation of*
29 *sprinkler systems in all lodging and boarding houses within five years of adoption, made*
30 *by M. Salzman, seconded by D. Blais. Motion passed 6-0.*

31
32 **b. Adoption of Chapter 148, Section 26I -New Dwelling 4+ Unit Sprinkler Ordinance**

33
34 *Motion to accept Chapter 148, Section 26H, which would require the installation of a*
35 *sprinkler system in all new and substantially renovated dwellings with four units or more,*
36 *made by D. Blais, seconded by P. Hebert. Motion passed 6-0.*

37
38 **c. Discussion on the Adoption of MGL Chapter 58, Section 8C**

39
40 C. Blanchard stated that the DOR has confirmed that if the Town Council were to adopt
41 the provisions of Chapter 58, Section 8C, the Town could restrict the use of the Statute to
42 court appointed receivers under the Attorney General's abandoned housing initiative. C.
43 Blanchard distributed a spreadsheet showing the Attorney General's Abandoned Housing
44 Initiative and court appointed receivership process. P. Hebert stated that he felt tax
45 forgiveness should only be used for affordable housing by court appointed receivers. C.

1 Blanchard stated that the town would need to set the ordinance which gives the
2 guidelines of the receivership process under Chapter 58, Section 8C.

3
4 C. Blanchard explained that the purpose of adopting this section of law would be to bring
5 houses that do not meet health and safety regulations back into compliance. B. Barry
6 stated she is not sure if the town should go forward accepting any section of law that
7 would result in the town forfeiting owed taxes. C. Blanchard explained that if a property
8 has been abandoned long enough to fall into such a bad condition that a court appointed
9 receiver is made, the homeowner has refused to pay the taxes anyway and eventually,
10 the town would end up taking the property through tax title. Discussion continued on if the
11 Town Council would want to go forward with the adoption of Chapter 58 Section 8C. L.
12 Baker stated that she would support the proposal if it would mean bringing abandoned
13 properties back on the tax rolls. C. Blanchard stated that he would be looking for motion
14 from the Council to go forward with drafting an ordinance to be adopted by the Town
15 Council under Chapter 58, Section 8C.

16
17 *Motion to direct the Town Manager to move forward with drafting an ordinance under*
18 *Chapter 58, Section 8C by M. Salzmann, seconded by D. Blais. Motion passed 6-0.*

19
20 **d. FY16 Budget Amendment**

21
22 *Motion to amend 2015-30 FY16 Budget summary to reflect the correct total to raise and*
23 *appropriate in the FY16 budget to 31,791,298 by M. Salzmann, seconded by D. Blais.*
24 *Motion passed 6-0.*

25
26 **5. New Business**

27
28 **a. Tax Classification Hearing**

29
30 The Tax Classification Hearing was opened at 7:01 PM by B. Barry. The Public Hearing
31 Notice for the Tax Classification Hearing was read by B. Barry.

32
33 The Board of Assessors Members Larry Jasak and Mike Burns along with, Robert Leroux
34 Principal Assessor, addressed the Council for the presentation of FY16 Tax Classification
35 Hearing.

36
37 R. Leroux stated that the municipal tax rate for FY16 would be \$19.97 per thousand
38 valuation.

39
40 R. Leroux stated that the Board of Assessors recommended maintaining a single rate,
41 not adopting the open space discount, not adopt the residential exemption and not adopt
42 the small commercial exemption.

43
44 P. Hebert asked why the FY16 tax rate had gone up from the FY15 tax rate. R. Leroux
45 stated that the increase was based on the accepted FY16 budget because of the Council
46 approved a 3.4% budget increase. M. Salzmann asked how many properties would
47 qualify under the small business exception. R. Leroux stated about 150 properties would
48 qualify for the small business exemption. B. Barry asked what the FY15 debt exclusion
49 amount for the Police Station was. R. Leroux stated that the FY15 debt exclusion on the

1 Police Station was 64 cents per thousand. M. Salzmann asked what kind of communities
2 accept a split tax rate. M. Burns stated only cities and towns with a high commercial and
3 industrial base accept a split tax rate. R. Leroux gave a breakdown of each property
4 classification.

5
6 *Motion to adopt a single tax rate by D. Blais, seconded by M. Salzmann. Motion passed*
7 *6-0.*

8
9 *Motion to not adopt the open space discount by M. Salzmann, seconded by D. Blais.*
10 *Motion passed 6-0.*

11
12 *Motion not to adopt the residential exemption by P. Hebert, seconded by M. Salzmann.*
13 *Motion passed 6-0.*

14
15 *Motion not to adopt the small commercial exception by P. Hebert, Seconded by D. Blais.*
16 *Motion passed 6-0.*

17
18 **b. Conservation Land Donation**

19
20 Conservation Agent Angela Panaccione, Conservation Commissioners Sarah Brodeur,
21 Theryn Nein-Large and Don Duffy addressed the Town Council. A. Panaccione stated
22 the Conservation Commission is requesting the Town Council accept a donation of
23 property to add to the Midura Conservation Area from Darlene Bergeron-Burns. A.
24 Panaccione provided a map of properties as part of the plan to expand the Midura
25 Conservation Area. A. Panaccione gave history of the town's efforts to try and adopt the
26 Bergeron-Burns property and importance of taking the parcel in relation to the expansion
27 of the Midura Conservation Area.

28
29 P. Hebert asked how the property would be connected to the Midura Conservation land.
30 A. Panaccione stated that she is actively working to acquire properties on the Open
31 Space and Conservation Plan to connect the Bergeron property to Midura Conservation
32 Area. She also explained that the Conservation Commission is adopting a forest
33 management policy. B. Barry asked why the deed for the land transfer was not executed
34 in 2002 when the proposal was first made. A. Panaccione stated that she is not sure why
35 it wasn't executed at that time. She stated that no title search on the property had been
36 done at this time. C. Blanchard noted that a new title search should be done before the
37 Town Council can accept the land donation. Discussion continued on need to do title
38 search prior to taking the Bergeron property. C. Blanchard stated that the title search will
39 be done before moving forward with the land donation.

40
41 A. Panaccione stated that she would like to ask the Town Council to petition the
42 legislature for special legislation to convey property owned by MassDOT which is
43 connected to the Midura Conservation Area to the town. She stated that the Conservation
44 Commission has been in discussions with Senator Gobi's office to seek special
45 legislation to convey the property to the town. She stated that a formal request will come
46 at later meeting.

47
48 **c. Petition for Zone Change - 1524 Park Street**
49

1 *Motion to refer the petition for zone change at 1524 Park Street from Rural Residential to*
2 *Highway Business to the Planning Board by D. Blais, seconded by M. Salzmann. Motion*
3 *passed 6-0.*

4
5 **6. Subcommittee Reports**

6
7 None

8
9 **7. Town Manager Report**

10
11 C. Blanchard stated that Sean O'Donnell, who was appointed to the Conservation Commission
12 last year, has not attended a meeting since December 16, 2014. He stated that A. Panaccione
13 has tried to reach him several times without success. C. Blanchard stated that the notification of
14 his intention to remove Mr. O'Donnell from the Conservation Commission came back as
15 undeliverable. C. Blanchard requested that the Town Council confirm the removal of Sean
16 O'Donnell from the Conservation Commission.

17
18 *Motion to remove Sean O'Donnell from the Conservation Commission by D. Blais, seconded by*
19 *L. Baker. Motion passed 6-0.*

20
21 C. Blanchard stated that he has received a letter of resignation from Dan Slowick from the Palmer
22 Redevelopment Authority. *Motion to accept the resignation of Dan Slowick from the PRA by P.*
23 *Hebert, seconded by L. Baker. Motion passed 6-0.*

24
25 C. Blanchard stated that two bids were received for the Gymnasium floor replacement at Old Mill
26 Pond School. Pavilion Floors of Woburn, MA was awarded the contract at the bid price of
27 \$139,775. The work will be done over the Christmas vacation period.

28
29 C. Blanchard stated that the Division of Local Services has approved the Town of Palmer's
30 Community Compact application and the Lt Governor will be in Palmer on Tuesday, December 1st
31 at 9:00 am for the signing.

32
33 C. Blanchard stated that the Sergeants' Assessment Center was conducted on Saturday,
34 November 7th with nine officers participating. The results should be submitted to the Town
35 Manager and the Human Resources Division of Civil Service.

36
37 **8. Monthly Report from DPW**

38
39 The Town Council acknowledged receipt of the monthly DPW Report. M. Salzmann asked how
40 many large plows the DPW has. DPW Director Gerry Skowronek stated that the DPW has 11
41 plows. Mary Salzmann asked how many drivers the DPW has with Commercial Driver's Licenses.
42 G. Skowronek stated that they currently have 11 drivers with CDLs. Discussion continued on the
43 methods of pretreatment the DPW would be using during the winter season.

44
45 **9. Misc. Correspondence**

46
47 B. Barry read a letter from Representative Todd Smola regarding the support of restoring
48 passenger rail service to the Town of Palmer.

49

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14

10. Council Roundtable

D. Blais thanked the Library for hosting the forum on the restoration of rail service. He also thanked all those that came out to the Veteran’s Day Parade.

M. Salzmann stated that on Veterans Day, there is a green light program for individuals to recognize veterans.

R. Lavoie stated that residents should support our veterans on Veterans Day.

11. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by D. Blais, seconded by L. Baker. Motion passed 6-0 at 8:08 pm.