

Palmer Town Council

Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2018

Call to Order

The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, October 15, 2018 was called to order at 6:30PM by Town Council President Barbara Barry. Councilors Lorinda Baker, Mary Salzmann, Karl Williams, Michelle Sikes and Robert Lavoie were present. Matthew Lemieux was absent Also present was Town Manager, Charles Blanchard, and Executive Assistant, Nicole Parker.

Meeting minutes

August 13, 2018

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

Matt Lane, SMOC

Matt Lane of SMOC was present to provide an update on 2032 Main Street. He stated that bids went out a few weeks ago, and a contractor will be selected shortly and some exterior work should be done at that time. He stated that in January and February interior work will be done. B.Barry inquired as to whether there was any interest in the commercial space. Mr. Lane said there has not been any solicitation as of yet but they are very open regarding the type of business, such as a coffee shop or art space. B.Barry also asked about the extension that was requested on the grant. Mr.Lane said they requested a two to three month extension. He believes there will be work starting at the end of October or early November. B.Barry asked Mr. Lane to come back in February for another update and to schedule a tour with the Council. C.Blanchard asked if the conceptual design had changed at all. Mr. Lane said that they modified the design slightly and he would send the updated plans over to him.

Public Hearing: 6:35PM Second Reading/Public Hearing: Ordinance 2019-04

Deletion of Medical Marijuana Article XXIV Medical Marijuana Facilities and Operations from Chapter 171; Zoning Ordinance. B.Barry opened the public hearing at 6:37. There was no one from the public to speak. B.Barry closed the public hearing at 6:39PM. The vote will be taken at the November meeting.

Paul Wizniewski, Community Branding

C.Blanchard provided the modified cast iron train for the Council. The concern was that it was too heavy or possibly dangerous as it could fall on passersby. B.Barry distributed a branding

article that discusses how to brand a community. She believed a committee should be formed and it should be properly done. L.Baker agreed and thinks a formal plan is necessary. R.Lavoie also wants to see a more comprehensive plan. M.Sikes thought the Chamber of Commerce should be involved. The committee will be formed in November.

Legion Field Bleacher Update

C.Blanchard provided the cost estimate he's provided before that are still relevant. If there is any interest moving forward his recommendation would be to purchase new aluminum bleachers. The Council will discuss at the next meeting.

Town Manager Goals Update

C.Blanchard distributed his updated goals. He reviewed them with the Council (copy attached)

New Business

Troy Brin, Veteran's Agent was present to request the Town designate a Veteran parking spot designated at Town Hall.

Motion was made to adopt the provisions of Massachusetts General Law, Part I, Title VII, Chapter 40, Section 22 ¾. by L.Baker. Seconded by R.Lavoie. Motion passed (6:0)

T.Brin also asked the Council if they would be willing to adopt the Veteran Identification Card Program. The Veteran Identification Card program has been designed to encourage veterans to shop locally, support local businesses and the local economy, as well as to conduct outreach to local veterans to further understand their needs for programs and services. This is a collaboration between the Towns of Palmer, Ludlow, and Wilbraham Veteran Services Departments, with many Western Massachusetts cities and Towns seeking to follow suit.

Motion was made to adopt the Veteran Identification Card by L. Baker. Seconded by R. Lavoie. Motion passed (6:0)

Arbor Day Proclamation

Jeff Stanhope, Conservation Commission Assistant, was present to explain the Tree City USA to promote and adopt a tree planting day and the importance of trees. This proclamation is required to then get an official Tree City USA designation.

Motion was made to sign Arbor Day Proclamation by L. Baker. Seconded by K.Williams. Motion passed (6:0)

Motion was made to support Palmer becoming Tree City USA by R. Lavoie. Seconded by L.Baker (6:0)

Breckenridge St Solar PILOT Agreement

Motion was made to authorize B. Barry to sign agreement by R. Lavoie. Seconded by K. Williams. Motion passed (6:0)

Election warrant

Motion was made to sign election warrant by R. Lavoie. Seconded by K. Williams. Motion passed (6:0)

Town Manager Report

C. Blanchard reviewed his report (below) with the Council.

October 11, 2018

To: Palmer Town Council

From: Charlie Blanchard

Re: Town Manager's Report – October 15, 2018

1. I am pleased to announce that Sue Coache has earned the designation as a Certified Massachusetts Municipal Clerk and will receive her commemorative pin and plaque at the Massachusetts Town Clerks' Association Winter Conference in February. Only 125 of the Commonwealth's 301 town clerks hold this designation.

The CMMC designation is achieved by attending MTCA-sponsored educational courses and passing a two hundred and fifty questions aptitude test measuring the municipal clerk's knowledge of Massachusetts General Laws in categories such as elections and election procedures, vital records, campaign and political finance, Chapter 40 (planning), Chapter 41 (zoning), ethics and public records.

2. Lucas McDiarmid has expressed interest in serving on the Conservation Commission and has attended a recent Commission meeting. His letter of interest and resume is attached. Please confirm my appointment of Mr. McDiarmid to the Conservation Commission for a term ending in 2021.
3. Sandra Noonan has asked to be appointed to the Cultural Council and I think she would be an excellent addition to this board. Please confirm my appointment of Sandra Noonan to the Cultural Council for a term ending in 2021.
4. The Legion Field Options Cost Summary is in your packet. Sarah Szczebak will need to know if you would like a grant request for the wheelchair lift to the press box included in this year's CDBG grant request no later than December 15th.

Motion was made to confirm C. Blanchard's appointment of Lucas McDiarmid to the Conservation Commission by L.Baker. Seconded by K.Williams. Motion passed (6:0)

Motion was made to confirm C. Blanchard's appointment of Sandra Noonan to the Cultural Council made by R.Lavoie. Seconded by K.Williams. Motion passed (6:0)

Adjournment 7:45PM

Motion was made to adjourn at 7:45PM by R.Lavoie. Seconded by K.Williams. Motion passed (6:0)

Town Manager 's Adopted Goals for 2018 status

Town Manager will include the previous month's Staff Meeting minutes in the packet for each regular Town Council meeting. This report should include any significant happenings for the department in the previous month. This was done as of April 10, 2018.

Town Manager will implement a town website and Facebook page survey to gauge the satisfaction level residents have with Comcast prior to contract renewal negotiations. This has been done and the survey results were presented to the Town Council and to Comcast.

Confer with town attorney to investigate other potential options for a cable company provider. This was done – we have a non-exclusive contract with Comcast that would not prevent another carrier to come into Palmer if they so desired. I reached out to Charter Communications but they did not show any interest.

Prepare a complete list of streets and/or homes where Comcast does not provide service. There are currently 4,282 subscribers in Palmer and 29 homes have been identified as not being able to receive service under the density requirements of our agreement. This means that more than 99% of the Town has cable access. (Coverage to these 29 homes is available but would cost the homeowner from \$1,100 to \$6,000 to connect.)

Town Manager will facilitate a meeting with all Fire/Water District officers (or Prudential Committees of) to discuss the previous study that was done and determine if the environment today is better to discuss consolidation to a single District. I am reviewing the previous studies and reports on this topic and the legal steps that would have taken to combine the existing four districts into a single district. I am putting together an invitation to the Chairs of the Prudential Committees to meet during the week of September 17th to have a discussion on the interest and the feasibility of pursuing this.

Town Manager will research and price any costs related to implementing electronic billing as an opt-in election. The Tax Collector has learned that the taxpayer would have to sign up for a Unibank account in order to view their tax bill and make payment. The Town would be charged \$.25 per paperless bill. The City of Northampton signed up for this feature this year, so Carolyn had been waiting to see how it works for them before pursuing this further. She also requested information from other Collectors at the UMASS training in August and has not received much feedback yet.

Town Manager will research the date of the last State bridge inspection report and; if the mandated timeframe for re-inspection has passed, inquire with Mass DOT as to when our bridges will be inspected. This was completed and all bridges are current with their required State inspections. We have provided all information requested by the State to go out to bid on the Main Street Three Rivers Bridge.

Town Manager will continue the resident Municipal Government Academy to be held every other year (2019 would be the next), and work with the school Superintendents (Palmer and Pathfinder districts) to discuss a suitable variation for students.

Town Manager will facilitate the creation of a WELCOME section for new residents and businesses with a section for basic information that would be helpful to someone new to Palmer. This was added to the Town website on June 27, 2018.

Town Manager will work with the Chief of Police and look into holding a Citizens Police Academy. This has been discussed with Chief Janulewicz and planning is in process.

Town Manager will review the fee structure of all Departments and make recommendations for changes to the current structure if warranted and remove any overlapping fees. This will be done in the fall.

Town Manager will submit "Punch up list" and final cost of Town Hall renovations to Town Council by June's meeting. This was completed as of April 10, 2018.

Town Manager will Implement 3 ways to improve service to residents (i.e. outside payment lockbox). The outside payment collection box will be ordered this month.

Town Manager will invite PRA (Palmer Redevelopment Authority), Palmer Rotary, Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce and Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce to meetings with Planning/Economic Development, Community Development so that all departments/organizations are working together for a better Palmer. There should be regular (quarterly or semi-annually) meetings with all of these group to share ideas and cross-promote.

Carryover Goals from 2017

- Town Manager will work with the Financial Team to ensure that year end closing and reconciliations are done in a timely manner and that the Balance Sheet and Schedule A are submitted by DOR deadlines. Although these submittals have been much timelier in recent years, a complete overhaul of the Town's chart of accounts will vastly improve the Town (and School Department's) ability to provide this financial information to the state. Preparing an FY2020 annual budget using a new chart of accounts for implementation on July 1, 2019 will take considerable effort and very likely cause delays in FY18 and FY19 reporting due to the additional demands imposed on the accounting staff. FY20 reporting should achieve the long term desired results we are all looking for and at the same time set the stage for further efficiencies (i.e. addition of the Munis purchasing module).