

**Palmer Town Council
Meeting Minutes
April 10, 2017**

1 **1. Call to Order**

2 The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, April 10, 2017 was called to order at 6:30 pm by
3 Town Council President Barbara Barry. Present were Town Manager Charles Blanchard,
4 Councilors Robert Lavoie, Lorinda Baker, Barbara Barry, Mary Salzmann, Philip Hebert, Karl
5 Williams and Matthew Lemieux.
6

7 **2. Visitors Comments**

8 Melissa Fales of the Quabog Valley Community Development Corporation addressed the Town
9 Council to highlight the TRACK Artisan Fair on Saturday, May 6th in downtown Three Rivers. She
10 stated that over 50 Artisans are scheduled to be part of the fair. M. Fales also explained that
11 there would be a number of art galleries at the Interactive School House. There will be free
12 parking and admission for the event. She stated that the event is being sponsored by the Valley
13 Advocate along with a number of other local businesses.
14

15 **3. Meeting Minutes**

16 **a) March 13, 2017**

17
18 *Motion to approve the minutes of March 13, 2017 as submitted by L. Baker, seconded by P.*
19 *Hebert¹. Motion passed 7-0.*
20

21 **5. Old Business**

22 **a) Approval of Special Legislation Language for Full Off-Premises Liquor License – Junction**
23 **Variety**

24
25 B. Barry stated that the resolution to petition for a Special Legislation License at the Junction
26 Variety was submitted to Senator Anne Gobi's office. She stated that a new resolution must be
27 passed as with the approved language from Senate Counsel.
28

29 The resolution to petition the legislature for an additional off-premises license at the Junction
30 Variety was read by R. Lavoie.
31

32 *Motion to approve the petition for a special legislation off-premises full liquor license was made*
33 *by P. Hebert, seconded by M. Lemieux. Motion passed 7-0.²*
34

35 **b) False Alarm Ordinance Discussion**

36
37 The Town Council began discussion on the proposed False Alarm Ordinance from the Ordinance
38 Subcommittee³. Police Chief John Janulewicz stated that there should be wording in the

¹ Minutes of March 13, 2017

² Resolution 2017-26

³ Proposed False Alarm Ordinance

1 ordinance which would require the property owner or key holder to be notified of the alarm and
2 there should be a 10 to 15 minute response from the key holder.

3
4 J. Janulewicz asked that additional language be provided to define what constitutes a false alarm
5 dispatch. He stated that some alarms are canceled with the Police Department in route but
6 should still be considered a false alarm dispatch in their call log. B. Barry stated that language
7 should be added which states the property owner is responsible for keeping their contact
8 information up to date. M. Lemieux stated that there shouldn't be a fee for administrative
9 changes to alarm systems since the town would want to encourage people to keep their
10 information current. Discussion continued on the proposed False Alarm Ordinance fees.

11
12 M. Salzmann asked why the municipality is exempt from the False Alarm Ordinance. R. Lavoie
13 stated that it is common practice not to fine municipalities since they would only be fining
14 themselves.

15
16 B. Barry suggested making the alarm schedule based on calendar year instead of fiscal year. She
17 also stated that the Police Chief's concerns should be incorporated into the ordinance. C.
18 Blanchard stated that the town cannot set fees for the fire departments since they are separate
19 entities. The wording addressing fire alarms should be replaced with the term public safety. It
20 was also explained that all existing alarms must apply for a permit under the new ordinance.
21 Discussion continued on what would constitute a false alarm with a non-monitored alarm
22 system. C. Blanchard stated that most false alarms are from commercial properties. The
23 discussion on the False Alarm Ordinance was continued to the May Town Council Meeting. L.
24 Baker suggested waiving the registration fee to encourage residential and commercial
25 properties to register their systems.

26 27 **c) Recreational Marijuana Discussion**

28
29 B. Barry stated that the Planning Board will bring forward a moratorium on the sale of
30 recreation marijuana at the May Town Council Meeting. She stated that the state regulations on
31 recreational marijuana sales are scheduled to be released prior to July 1, 2017. C. Blanchard
32 stated that the Attorney General has stated that they would accept up to an 18 month
33 moratorium to allow the community to draft local regulations. B. Barry stated that if the Town
34 Council is interested in proposing a ban on recreational sales as was done in the Town of
35 Westboro, the proposal would need to be brought forward prior to the April Town Council
36 meeting to be placed on the June Town Election ballot. An ordinance banning the sale of
37 recreational marijuana would need to be passed by the Town Council then placed on a ballot to
38 be passed at a local election.

39
40 M. Salzmann asked if a moratorium can be in place only until regulations have been passed,
41 rather than the full 18 months of the moratorium. C. Blanchard explained that the town would
42 need enough time to draft and pass regulations which react to the laws which are still under
43 consideration by the legislature. P. Hebert asked why a moratorium was necessary when the
44 regulations from the state haven't been passed. Discussion continued on the need to draft
45 regulations in response to pending state regulations. M. Salzmann asked why the town needs 18
46 months to draft local legislation. C. Blanchard stated that according to the Attorney General, the
47 town cannot pass a moratorium with an unlimited amount of time, the amount of time needs to
48 be set in the moratorium at passage.

1
2 B. Barry stated that municipalities are encouraged to pass moratoriums to allow them to create
3 local regulation in response to the state laws.
4

5 A discussion on the moratorium will continue at the May Town Council meeting. P. Hebert
6 stated that he does not agree that the town should outright ban the sale of recreational
7 marijuana. M. Lemieux stated that he would not vote to ban the sale of recreational marijuana
8 and would like to see the increase in local revenue. L. Baker stated that she would not vote to
9 ban recreational marijuana but agrees that there should be regulations on the location of retail
10 facilities.
11

12 **d) Any Other Old Business**
13

14 M. Salzmann asked if there is access to water at Chase Field. C. Blanchard stated that all
15 underground utilities were removed when the camp was demolished and the field was created.
16 A fire hydrant is located in close proximity to the field.
17

18 The Town Council recessed at 7:42 pm
19

20 The Town Council reconvened at 7:47 pm
21

22 **6. New Business**

23 **a) Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Large Scale Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic**
24 **Installations**
25

26 The letter from the Planning Board requesting consideration of proposed Zoning Ordinance
27 Amendments for Large Scale Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations was
28 acknowledged by B. Barry.⁴
29

30 *Motion to refer the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment for Large Scale Ground Mounted*
31 *Solar Photovoltaic Installations to the Planning Board for public hearing and recommendation by*
32 *P. Hebert, seconded by K. Williams. Motion passed 7-0.*
33

34 **b) Minimum Wage Discussion – Councilor Barry**
35

36 B. Barry stated that there are three employees in the Council on Aging that are not being paid
37 the state minimum wage. She also explained that Election Workers are not being paid the state
38 minimum wage. B. Barry noted that the van drivers that are paid under Massachusetts
39 Minimum Wage are under the administrative collective bargaining agreement. B. Barry stated
40 that the town is only obligated to pay the federal minimum wage. She stated that she felt that
41 all town employees should be paid at the state minimum wage which is currently \$11 per hour.
42

43 *Motion to honor the Massachusetts state Minimum Wage by M. Salzmann, seconded by K.*
44 *Williams.*
45

⁴ Letter to Town Council from Planning Board regarding changes to the Large Scale Ground Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Ordinance dated March 29, 2017

1 B. Barry stated that the van drivers should be reimbursed retroactively to January 1, 2017. C.
2 Blanchard stated that that the legislature has discussed raising the state minimum wage to \$15
3 or \$16 per hour so they will need to take that into consideration when passing a blanket
4 resolution to increase wage rates. B. Barry also indicated that some election workers were not
5 paid minimum wage. C. Blanchard recommended keeping differential between the different
6 election worker rates. B. Barry recommended amending the motion on the floor to retroactively
7 reimburse the van drivers to January 1, 2017 and increase their wage to \$11 per hour.

8
9 *The motion on the floor was withdrawn by M. Salzmann.*

10
11 *Motion to increase the wages of the Council on Aging Van Drivers to the state minimum wage*
12 *retroactively to January 1, 2017 by M. Salzmann, seconded by K. Williams. Motion passed 6-1*
13 *with P. Hebert opposed.⁵*

14
15 *Motion to increase the wages for election workers to minimum wage and adjust all other*
16 *election workers equivalently effective for the June 2017 town elections by B. Barry, seconded by*
17 *M. Lemieux. Motion passed 7-0.⁶*

18
19 **c) Free Cash Appropriations**

20
21 **i. Town Hall Roof Replacement**

22
23 C. Blanchard noted that problems with the roof were revealed during the demolition phase of
24 the Town Hall Renovation Project. He stated that costs to replace the roof have been received
25 by the contractor and the town is awaiting the final price. C. Blanchard gave an overview of the
26 scope of work for the roof replacement. He stated that he is asking for \$150,000 for roof
27 replacement which would include contingency.

28
29 *Motion to transfer \$150,000 from free cash for roof replacement by M. Lemieux, seconded by R.*
30 *Lavoie.*

31
32 M. Salzmann asked why the roof issues weren't addressed earlier in the project and if there is
33 anything that could get pulled from the project to account for the increase in project scope. C.
34 Blanchard explained that the leak in the roof was originally identified as an issue with a roof
35 drain which had been addressed, although further investigation showed that the leak was
36 caused by deterioration of the roof itself. M. Salzmann asked if there are any grants available to
37 cover the cost of the roof replacement. C. Blanchard stated that grants to replace the roof on
38 Town Hall are not available. B. Barry asked the age of the entire roof and if we were sure if the
39 entire roof needed to be replaced or if some sections were newer than others. M. Lemieux
40 stated that it would be a shame invest in the renovation of the Town Hall and not fully replace
41 the roof. R. Lavoie stated that the whole roof should be done, rather than repairing the roof in
42 sections. P. Hebert agreed that the full roof should be replaced. A. Golas noted that the
43 antennas affixed to the roof will be removed.

44

⁵ Resolution 2017-27

⁶ Resolution 2017-28

1 *Motion to transfer \$150,000 from free cash passed 6-0-1 with M. Salzmann abstaining.*⁷
2

3 **d) Any Other New Business**
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5 B. Barry - Citizen Leadership Academy – B. Barry stated that she would like to start a program to
6 engage residents in local government with the goal of improving interest in becoming elected or
7 appointed officials. She noted that the town of Westboro and Natick currently have a similar
8 program. She is looking to see if there is interest in starting this program in Palmer. L. Baker
9 stated she supported it and would like to see the program expanded to the schools. B. Barry
10 stated that she would like to look at holding the program in September. R. Lavoie stated that in
11 his experience, residents seem to be interested in learning more about local government.
12 Discussion would continue at the May Town Council Meeting.
13

14 **7. Subcommittee Reports**

15 None
16

17 **8. Town Manager's Report**
18

19 C. Blanchard stated that Public Safety Consultants has been retained to conduct an assessment
20 center for the position of Lieutenant for the Police Department.
21

22 C. Blanchard stated that DPW Operations Director, Rudy Pisarczyk will be retiring in May. He
23 stated that an RFP for the carpet replacement at Old Mill Pond is now available and is due on
24 April 27th.
25

26 C. Blanchard stated that BSC Group has been selected as the engineer to perform the
27 prioritization plan for the complete streets program. C. Blanchard stated that the PRA is looking
28 at an urban renewal plan which would incorporate passenger rail aspect into future
29 development strategy. Currently, the PRA is working with Southbridge to develop an urban
30 renewal plan. B. Barry requested that C. Blanchard reach out to Anne Miller to explain the
31 current status of the urban renewal plan.
32

33 **9. Misc. Correspondence**
34

35 Miscellaneous correspondence to the Town Council included:

- 36 - A memo from the School Business Manager updating the Town Council on the Districtwide
- 37 Wifi Proposal.
- 38 - Notice of an Eagle Scout Court of Honor for Timothy Canning.
- 39 - Notice of a clean and lien order for 238 Old Warren Road.
- 40 - A Letter from National Consumer League congratulating Palmer on the success of the
- 41 Lifesmarts Program.
- 42 - Notice from Pathfinder regarding their FY18 Assessment.
- 43 - A copy of the Conservation Agent's Job Description as provided by the Conservation
- 44 Commission.
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46 **10. Councilor's Roundtable**

⁷ Resolution 2017-29

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B. Barry stated that there would be a meeting on Tuesday, April 11th at Palmer High School regarding the future of the Converse Middle School Building. Currently, there is a Budget Meeting scheduled for April 19th. C. Blanchard will meet with the school department prior to the May meeting to report on the future of the CMS Building.

M. Lemieux stated that there is a Spring Fling on April 22nd hosted by the Three Rivers Fire Department Woman’s Auxiliary. The event will be from 7-11 pm at Amvets.

M. Salzmann thanked the Highway Department for their efforts during the last major snowstorm.

R. Lavoie stated that he would be attending the Eagle Scout Court of Honor for Timothy Canning

L. Baker stated that there is a Tommy Cash Concert to benefit the Palmer High School Band in purchasing new uniforms.

11. Adjournment of Formal Session

Motion to adjourn from formal session by P. Hebert, seconded by M. Lemieux. Motion passed 7-0 at 8:41pm.