

**Palmer Town Council
Meeting Minutes
February 13, 2017**

1. Call to Order

The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, February 13, 2017 was called to order at 6:30 pm by Town Council President Barbara Barry. Present were Town Manager Charles Blanchard, Councilors Robert Lavoie, Lorinda Baker, Barbara Barry, and Matthew Lemieux. Absent were Councilors Mary Salzmann and Philip Hebert. Councilor Karl Williams was not present at the call to order but arrived at 6:32 pm.

2. Visitors Comments

B. Barry acknowledged the Boy Scout troop present at the meeting to earn their citizenship badge.

3. Meeting Minutes

a) September 6, 2016

Motion to accept the minutes of September 6, 2016 as submitted by L. Baker, seconded by M. Lemieux. Motion passed 4-0.

b) September 12, 2016

Motion to accept the minutes of September 12, 2016 as amended by L. Baker, seconded by M. Lemieux. Motion passed 4-0.

c) October 11, 2016

Motion to accept the minutes of October 11, 2016 as submitted by M. Lemieux, seconded by L. Baker. Motion passed 5-0.

d) November 7, 2016

Motion to accept the minutes of November 7, 2016 as submitted by M. Lemieux, seconded by L. Baker. Motion passed 5-0.

e) December 5, 2016

Motion to accept the minutes of December 5, 2016 as submitted by R. Lavoie, seconded by M. Lemieux. Motion passed 5-0.

f) January 9, 2017

Motion to accept the minutes of January 9, 2017 as submitted by R. Lavoie, seconded by L. Baker. Motion passed 5-0.

g) February 6, 2017

Motion to accept the minutes of February 6, 2017 as submitted by L. Baker, seconded by M. Lemieux. Motion passed 5-0.

1 **4. Old Business**

2 **a) Discussion - Thin Blue Line Proposal**

3 B. Barry stated that MassDOT had expressed concerns regarding the proposal to paint a
4 blue line between the double solid yellow lines in front of the Town Hall and Police
5 Station. R. Lavoie stated that although MassDOT may not recommend painting the line,
6 they do not have jurisdiction over the markings on local roads. He stated that the impact
7 would be minimal and would be great gesture to show support for the local police. R.
8 Lavoie stated that the blue line adds the benefit of notifying people where the Police
9 Department is located. He suggested having the line painted for law enforcement week
10 in May.

11 *Motion to paint a blue line between the solid yellow lines in the road abutting the Town*
12 *Hall and Police Station by R. Lavoie, seconded by K. Williams.* B. Barry stated that she
13 would not vote to support painting the blue line because she is concerned that it does
14 not recognize all those that serve in the field of public safety and felt there were other
15 ways to show support towards our police officers. Her vote of opposition to the painting
16 of the blue line in no way represented her respect for the members of the police
17 department.

18 *Motion to paint the blue line passed 4-1 with B. Barry against.*

19 **b) Vote - Town Manager Bonus**

20 Discussion and Vote on the Town Manager Bonus was tabled to the March 13, 2017
21 Meeting, since all councilors were not in attendance.

22 **c) Any Other Old Business**

23 None

24 **5. New Business**

25 **a) Vote - Free Cash Appropriations**

26
27 **i. \$150,000 for Old Mill Pond carpet replacement**

28 B. Barry stated that she would like to table the discussion on Free Cash appropriations
29 related to the school until representatives from the school administration could be
30 present to address their requests. C. Blanchard stated that the request for \$150,000
31 from Free Cash is for the second phase of the OMP Carpet Replacement project which
32 had already been supported by the Town Council.

33 **ii. \$48,000 in matching funds for new Wi-Fi at Palmer High School and Old Mill Pond**
34 **School**

35 C. Blanchard stated that the school indicated Wi-Fi upgrades are a need because of
36 future online testing requirements. He noted that the School needs a commitment of
37 funds to qualify for an E-Rate grant which would match funds for the project. R. Lavoie
38 asked if the upgrade of the Wi-Fi was essential despite closure of Converse Middle

1 School. C. Blanchard stated that the school had proposed upgrades to the CMS Wi-Fi
2 system, but withdrew the request when the plan to close the school was presented. B.
3 Barry asked if the school will be connecting to the internet via fiber rather than cable.
4 She stated that she wants to be sure the Town is buying the correct equipment for
5 future needs of the school.

6 **b) Discussion and Consideration of Funding for Pedestrian Crossing Signs**

7 B. Barry presented information regarding pedestrian signs that light up and are powered
8 by solar. She stated that the signs could be activated by pedestrians waiting to cross. B.
9 Barry proposed purchasing a set of pedestrian signs to pilot test in the Main Street
10 Bondsville area. She stated that poles would need to be purchased to mount the signs
11 to. B. Barry noted that the cost is roughly \$4,000 per unit.

12 *Motion to appropriate \$4,110.00 from the Town Council Discretionary Fund for the*
13 *purchase of two pedestrian crossing signs with solar powered flashing lights by B. Barry,*
14 *seconded by M. Lemieux. Motion passed 5-0.*

15 **c) Discussion – Purple Heart Recipients**

16 B. Barry stated that she had approached Veteran’s Agent Troy Brin about identifying
17 Purple Heart recipients in town. She indicated that there was not a list available of
18 Purple Heart recipients. B. Barry asked that Palmer residents who have received a
19 Purple Heart provide a copy of their DD2-14 to the Veteran’s Agent in order show proof
20 of their Purple Heart designation. She asked that the local newspapers run articles
21 requesting members of the community to come forward if they have received a Purple
22 Heart.

23 **d) Discussion – Town Council Community Meeting**

24 B. Barry stated that she would like to schedule another Community meeting before the
25 end of May and another in September. She stated that she was pleased with comments
26 presented at the meeting and proposed holding three community forums per year. The
27 Town Council reviewed the minutes of the meeting and reviewed each issue presented.

28 B. Barry stated the issue regarding a reduction in Veteran’s Benefits was addressed
29 adequately at the meeting. She noted that the Veteran’s Benefits budget was not cut,
30 but funded to the expected level of service. C. Blanchard noted that there will be
31 increases proposed in next Fiscal Year, but was funded in FY17 to the level requested by
32 the Veteran’s Agent. Discussion continued on the funding of the Chapter 115 benefits.

33 B. Barry asked if French Drive is a private road. C. Blanchard stated that it is and does
34 not meet the town standards to be an accepted town road. B. Barry asked DPW Director
35 Gerry Skowronek if pot holes and the missing street signs could be addressed. G.
36 Skowronek stated that he would address signage and pot hole issues on the road. B.
37 Barry stated that at some point the town needs to step in to notify residents that live on
38 privately owned roads that it is their responsibility to maintain the right of way. C.
39 Blanchard noted that every owner on the street must sign an agreement that they will

1 not hold the town liable if the Town Council adopted the section of law to allow the
2 Town to do work on private roads. B. Barry stated that betterments could be assessed if
3 the Town had to perform work on private roads. G. Skowronek noted that the Town has
4 filled pot holes and plowed private ways but have not used Chapter 90 funds to do long
5 term repairs.

6 B. Barry acknowledged the complaint that the Town Council received on 21 Diane Street
7 regarding junk and debris. Board of Health Agent Josh Mathieu updated the Town
8 Council that a 30 day notice to clean of the property had been issued and is set to expire
9 soon. B. Barry noted the concern regarding a chicken coop attached to house. C.
10 Blanchard noted that the police have been enforcing blighted properties which has been
11 a reoccurring issue. B. Barry asked if an ordinance was needed to assist the Board of
12 Health in doing their job. She stated that she is looking for input from department
13 managers to see how the Town can address blighted and abandoned properties. C.
14 Blanchard noted that there are other properties which are in much worse condition
15 than the property on Diane Street which the town is addressing. An update on the
16 Martowski property on High Street was provided by J. Mathieu. He noted the issues
17 which have prevented the cleanup of that property. J. Mathieu noted that strengthening
18 the definition of junk would allow the Board of Health to enforce many of the blighted
19 properties. M. Lemieux asked at what point enforcement of junk on properties can
20 occur without infringing on property owner's rights. B. Barry stated that the town
21 should use other communities' ordinances which have been vetted through legal
22 counsel to establish a blighted property ordinance.

23 B. Barry acknowledged the claim that there are dangerous cracks on sidewalks in the
24 Brown Street area. G. Skowronek stated he would to look into the condition of the
25 sidewalk. B. Barry noted that the faded and illegal crosswalks around town are being
26 phased out. B. Barry requested that the town look into different textures to apply to
27 crosswalks to make them more visible.

28 B. Barry acknowledged the poor condition of the Laviolette field bathrooms. M. Lemieux
29 stated that he spoke with a gentlemen that wanted to replace the existing bathroom. G.
30 Skowronek noted that they cannot guarantee the security of the building which has led
31 to its current condition of disrepair. B. Barry stated that she sees the building as a
32 liability and if it couldn't be secured it should be taken down. L. Baker and M. Lemieux
33 agreed that leveling the building would be best option.

34 B. Barry asked about the use of Legion Field by outside groups. She suggested that the
35 coaches of youth sports be given field maintenance forms which are required by the
36 school athletic programs. G. Skowronek stated that the lack of water has been an issue
37 which has deteriorated the condition of the other athletic fields. He stated that he
38 would like to have conversation on a plan for renovation of the town's athletic fields
39 including the installation of irrigation systems. B. Barry discussed holding a meeting to
40 discuss the fields and developing a plan to upgrade the various fields which would need
41 to include fields not being available for play while being repaired.

1 B. Barry stated that all illegal signs on telephone poles should be removed. She would
2 like to know whose responsibility it is to remove illegal signs. G. Skowronek stated that
3 the DPW has removed illegal signs along with the police and zoning enforcement.

4 B. Barry asked who was responsible for piled material on Breckenridge Street. G.
5 Skowronek stated that the contractor for the Thorndike Water Interconnection Project
6 had used the property as a staging area for the project. He would follow up with them
7 to remove the material.

8 B. Barry asked about the material piled near K-Mart. G. Skowronek stated that he will
9 look into.

10 C. Blanchard noted that a list properties in blighted status have been provided to the
11 Town Council and would be available on the Town Website.

12 Discussion on the condition of the athletic fields will continue at the March 13th
13 Meeting.

14 **e) Any Other New Business**

15 None

16 **6. Subcommittee Reports**

17 a) Ordinance Committee – R. Lavoie stated the Ordinance Committee is scheduled to meet
18 prior to the next Town Council Meeting.

19
20 b) Town Manager Goals Committee – L. Baker stated that the Town Manager Goals
21 Committee is scheduled to meet February 14th.

22
23 **7. Town Manager’s Report**

24 C. Blanchard provided information to the Town Council on the enforcement of the Sidewalk
25 Clearing Ordinance. He noted that all citations that have been written so far this year have been
26 warnings.

27 **8. Misc. Correspondence**

28 L. Baker acknowledged the Tommy Cash Concert Fundraiser for PHS band uniforms.

29 B. Barry thanked all those that reached out to her after the Community Meeting with their
30 comments and concerns. She stated that the next meeting would be held at the Library as there
31 is more seating available.

32 **9. Councilor’s Roundtable**

33 L. Baker thanked the DPW for their snow removal efforts after the last storm. G. Skowronek
34 outlined the town’s snow removal method.

35

36

1 **10. Adjournment of Formal Session**

2 *Motion to adjourn from formal session by M. Lemieux, seconded by L. Baker. Motion passed 5-0*
3 *at 8:37pm*