

**Palmer Town Council
Meeting Minutes
February 16, 2016**

1 **1. Roll Call**

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3 The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Tuesday, February 16, 2016 was called to order at 6:30 pm
4 By Town Council President Barbara Barry. Present were Town Manager Charles Blanchard,
5 Councilors Robert Lavoie, Barbara Barry, Lorinda Baker, Mary Salzmann, Philip Hebert, Karl
6 Williams and Donald Blais.

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8 **2. Visitors Comments - None**

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10 **3. Meeting Minutes**

11 January 11, 2016 – The Minutes of January 11, 2016 were tabled to the next Town Council
12 Meeting

13 **4. Old Business**

14
15 **a. Vote – Park Street Zone Change – Parcels west of East Palmer Park Drive**

16 Ordinance 2016-03, a proposal to change the zoning of nine contiguous parcels west of
17 East Palmer Park Drive on Park Street from General Business to Highway Business was
18 read by R. Lavoie.

19 *Motion to approve Ordinance 2016-03 was made by M. Salzmann, seconded by R.*
20 *Lavoie. Motion passed 7-0.*

21 **b. 1st Reading - Adoption of MGL Chapter 58 §8C**

22 An update on the changes to the proposed ordinance was provided by C. Blanchard. He
23 stated that there was clarification as to what would make a property non-compliant
24 with the ordinance as well as clarification to the language regarding penalties added to
25 the ordinance. M. Salzmann asked why others in the state have not accepted this
26 section of law. C. Blanchard stated that they could not find a reason why no other town
27 has utilized it, but believes that its implementation would be a positive tool for the
28 Town.

29 B. Barry stated that the Second Reading and Public Hearing for the proposed ordinance
30 would be March 14, 2016 at 6:35pm

31 **c. Catherine Ratte - PVPC**

32 Catherine Ratte of the PVPC addressed the Town Council regarding the Mass in Motion
33 program. She gave an overview of the achievements of the committee for the first year
34 and goals for its second year. Some of the new initiatives in 2016 will include a Healthy

1 Dining Week and a Healthy Corner Store Assessments. She also provided proposals that
2 the committee will consider as goals in year two.

3 **5. New Business**

4
5 **a. Senator Anne Gobi & Representative Todd Smola**

6 Senator Anne Gobi and Representative Todd Smola Addressed the Town Council
7 regarding issues ongoing at the state level. Sen. Gobi provided a breakdown of the
8 House 2 FY17 Budget summary. She stated that the House Ways and Means committee
9 has begun hearings on the Governor's proposed FY17 Budget. She stated a majority of
10 9C cuts filed in the FY16 budget involved fuel expense savings. Sen. Gobi stated that a
11 majority of the Governor's proposed budget is level funded. The largest debate has
12 been over Charter School funding. Sen. Gobi stated that she anticipates that a net
13 metering cap bill will be passed soon. Rep. Smola stated that recent state budgets have
14 trended higher than income and have taken from the rainy day fund to supplement.
15 Continuing to do so will impact the state's bond rating. Rep. Smola stated that the
16 House Budget will be looking to place money into the State's stabilization account. Rep.
17 Smola stated that the proposed state budget includes significant increase in DCF funding
18 and decreases in the Early Retirement Incentive Program. Unrestricted General
19 Government Aid and Chapter 70 have each increased in the proposed budget, although
20 the Chapter 70 increases are just above level funding. Rep. Smola addressed the
21 unfunded pension liability on the state level and how the Ways and Means Committee
22 will address it.

23 B. Barry asked about the Municipal Modernization bill filed by the Governor and how it
24 is progressing through the legislature. Sen. Gobi stated that there will be hearing on
25 individual bills which the overall bill was broken into. The bill had been grouped and
26 categorized into separate pieces of legislation to be considered by the House and
27 Senate. The legislature will be looking for compromise within the bill. B. Barry stated
28 that she would like to see the proposed bill passed because many issues within it are
29 common sense pieces of legislation. Sen. Gobi anticipates that parts of the bill may be
30 attached to the budget process. T. Smola outlined the State budget process to the
31 council.

32 B. Barry asked about SPED sending tuition costs and how the legislature is addressing it.
33 Sen. Gobi stated that she anticipates a bump from the Senate's proposed budget to
34 address SPED costs. Rep. Smola stated that Chapter 70 formula needs to be addressed
35 in the near future. M. Salzmann stated that 504 spending and special education should
36 be broken out in the Chapter 70 formula.

37 P. Hebert asked how many more years before MassHealth takes over the entire state
38 budget. Sen. Gobi stated that the legislature is currently looking at cost containment
39 methods. She stated that healthcare costs will always be higher in Massachusetts due to
40 the availability of care and limited regulations on costs. Rep. Smola addressed the
41 changes in healthcare availability which have changed longevity of individuals which in
42 turn, has driven up costs.

1 D. Blais stated that he feels a 1.7% increase in Chapter 70 is not an adequate proposal.
2 He also stated that he would like to see more in Chapter 90 come toward the western
3 side of the state. Sen. Gobi stated the Governor is looking to release two-million dollars
4 in the form of a Chapter 90 bond. D. Blais asked about the Casino slots revenue from
5 Plainville and asked if its use could be reassessed. Sen. Gobi stated that those funds
6 have been committed as part of the expanded gaming legislation. Rep. Smola stated
7 that casino projections are very far under what the projections were when the casino
8 was sited. Both Sen. Gobi and Rep. Smola addressed recreational marijuana as a
9 prospective issue that the state could deal with in the near future.

10 Rep. Smola addressed the opioid crisis and how the issue has blown up in the
11 Commonwealth. Sen. Gobi stated that over-prescription has become a problem leading
12 to the opioid crisis. Discussion continued on pending legislation to address opioid
13 addiction. L. Baker asked how much additional funding will be committed to rehab
14 centers under the state's budget and stated that she would like to see additional
15 resources committed to treatment.

16 B. Barry requested that Sen. Gobi and Rep. Smola assist with facilitating a meeting with
17 MassDOT regarding bridges. She also asked for assistance with the Massachusetts
18 Library Board of Commissioners to readjust the municipal contribution formula. B. Barry
19 forwarded concerns over the availability of personal information available in the street
20 listing.

21 **b. Request for Special Legislation to MassDOT for Land Donation**

22 Conservation Agent Angela Panaccione and Conservation Commissioner Sarah Brodeur
23 addressed the town council regarding a request for special legislation that MassDOT
24 donate a specific parcel, Assessor's Map 14, Lot 13, to the Town of Palmer for
25 Conservation purposes. A. Panaccione stated that requesting Special Legislation is the
26 fastest way to help push forward the land donation. C. Blanchard stated the wording of
27 the Special Legislation had been reviewed by the Senate attorney and the town
28 attorney.

29 *Motion to request special legislation that MassDOT donate Assessor's Map 14, Lot 13 to*
30 *the Town of Palmer for Conservation purposes by P. Hebert, seconded by D. Blais.*
31 *Motion passed 7-0.*

32 **c. Approval of TIF Agreement with Michael's Party Rentals**

33 Economic Development Director and Planner Linda Leduc addressed council regarding a
34 proposed Tax Incentive Financing Agreement (TIF) for Michael's Party Rentals at 1221
35 South Main Street. Michael Linton of Michaels Party Rentals also addressed the council.
36 L. Leduc gave an overview of the local EDC program and process the committee took to
37 review the proposal. The local EDC committee had voted 5-0 to adopt the proposed
38 agreement. The Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC) will consider the TIF
39 for approval on March 2nd and local approval needs to be in place before consideration.
40 M. Linton stated his company rents equipment for special events and they are looking to

1 expand business and hire locally. The TIF would be a ten-year financing agreement and
2 final approval would come from the EACC. B. Barry noted that exemptions only apply to
3 improvements made to the building which impact property tax.

4 *Motion to approve the ten-year Tax Incentive Financing Agreement for Michael's Party*
5 *Rentals by R. Lavoie, second by M. Salzmann. Motion passed 7-0.*

6 Recess taken at 8:07 pm

7 Reconvene 8:17 pm

8 **d. 1st Reading – 1524 Park Street Zone Change**

9 B. Barry noted that the Planning Board voted 3-0-1 against the request to change the
10 zoning of 1524 Park Street from Rural Residential to Highway Business in order to
11 maintain esthetic quality of area and provide a buffer from highway business uses to the
12 existing residential use. The zone change of 1524 Park Street was read by R. Lavoie.

13 B. Barry stated that the second reading and public hearing would be held March 14,
14 2016 at 6:40pm

15 **e. Vote – Presidential Primary Warrant**

16 *Motion to sign the Presidential Primary warrant as presented by P. Hebert, seconded by*
17 *D. Blais. Motion passed 7-0.*

18 **f. Vote – Adoption of Revised Dog Officer Fees**

19 Revised Dog Officer fees were presented to the Town Council by C. Blanchard which
20 were recommended by the Animal Control Officer and Town Clerk.

21 *Motion to approve the Dog Officer fees as presented by M. Salzmann, seconded by P.*
22 *Hebert. Motion passed 7-0.*

23 **g. Town Hall Renovation Presentation – Architectural Insights**

24 Bob Haveles of Architectural Insights addressed the council regarding proposed changes
25 that he has made to the Town Hall Renovation project. His proposal is to expand the
26 meeting room and move the Accountant and Veterans Agent offices. The meeting room
27 would be a full renovation. B. Haveles stated the increase in expansion would be
28 approximately \$65,500. C. Blanchard stated that he feels this change would be worth
29 the estimated escalation in cost. The revised cost of the renovation would be \$712,350.
30 B. Barry feels that this would be worth the investment as well.

31 **h. PVTA Advisory Board - Paul Burns**

32 P. Burns stated that ridership of the PVTA in the community has fallen below the
33 standard for the regional route. The PVTA is working to improve ridership. There is a
34 proposal to significantly cut the dial-a-ride program which is utilized by many seniors for
35 doctor's visits. Currently, the senior center van service through the Council on Aging
36 cannot keep up with demand and dial a ride service takes up the additional ridership. P.

1 Burns noted that the state budget proposes an expansion in transportation services. He
2 is looking for a letter from council stating that they do not support a reduction in dial-a-
3 ride van services.

4 P. Hebert asked whether or not the town could support another fulltime van driver to
5 supplement van services. The Town Council would support a letter stating that they do
6 not agree with the proposals and reduction in standards to 90% on time service.
7 Discussion continued on how the proposed changes would affect seniors. B. Barry stated
8 that she feels there is no marketing for the transportation services in the community. B.
9 Barry asked that free ridership be offered to school kids. The next advisory meeting for
10 the PVTA paratransit committee would be February 24th.

11 **6. Subcommittee Reports**

12 - Ordinance Subcommittee – D. Blais stated that the Ordinance Subcommittee voted to leave
13 the current snow removal ordinance the way it is. C. Blanchard stated that the town could adopt
14 different standards for different zoning areas but changing the regulation would not be
15 beneficial for the town as a whole. L. Baker stated that they reviewed a false alarm ordinance
16 and are still reviewing possible proposals.

17 - 300th Anniversary Committee – L. Baker stated that the Valentine’s Day Social at Amvets was a
18 sell-out. Food donations were made by the Steaming Tender, Chmura’s and Pathfinder. All
19 proceeds from the event will go towards the 300th Anniversary Parade. Also, raffle donations
20 were made by Big Y, Pinocchio’s, Burgundy Brook, Chris Miarecki’s Tax Prep Service and
21 Ramadon’s Package Store. Currently they are working on history lectures for March.

22 - Goals Subcommittee - B. Barry stated that the Goals Subcommittee will meet next week.
23 Suggestions for Town Manager goals should be submitted by the end of this week.

24 **7. Town Manager’s Report**

25 C. Blanchard met with Business West to discuss Economic Development in town. He gave an
26 overview of Economic Development over the last year. B. Barry asked for a report when new
27 businesses open in town. C. Blanchard stated that the first negotiation sessions with the labor
28 unions are set to begin on Friday. He also gave information on false alarms and will contact
29 businesses that are repeat offenders. Discussion continued on how the town will proceed with
30 addressing false alarms.

31 **8. Misc. Correspondence**

32 B. Barry stated that the Pathfinder Budget presentation will be March 16th at 7pm. She also
33 acknowledged correspondence from the Massachusetts Library Board of Commissioners
34 regarding the municipal contribution calculation. B. Barry acknowledged receipt of the Draft
35 FY17 Budget from the School Department and stated that Superintendent Patricia Gardner will
36 meet with the Town Council at the next meeting.

1 **9. Councilor’s Roundtable**

2 D. Blais stated that he attended the MMA conference in Boston. He attended workshops
3 addressing economic development, technology and the opioid crisis.

4 R. Lavoie encouraged residents to vote in the presidential primary

5 B. Barry stated that on February 22nd the Town Council will hold an untelevised working session
6 to discuss goals of council over next year. She also noted that the Boy Scouts will be holding a
7 crossing-over ceremony on March 6th.

8 **10. Executive Session as per Chapter 39, Sec. 23B (3) Contract Negotiations**

9 *Motion to enter Executive Session and adjourn from there by D. Blais, seconded by L. Baker.*

10 *Motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote at 9:35 pm. D. Blais – Yes, K. Williams – Yes, L. Baker – Yes, P.*
11 *Hebert – Yes, R. Lavoie – Yes, M. Salzmann – Yes, B. Barry – Yes.*