

**Palmer Town Council
Meeting Minutes
June 19, 2017**

1 **1. Call to Order**

2 The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, June 19, 2017 was called to order at 6:30 pm by
3 Town Council President Barbara Barry. Present were Town Manager Charles Blanchard,
4 Councilors Lorinda Baker, Barbara Barry, Mary Salzmann, Philip Hebert, Karl Williams and
5 Matthew Lemieux. Absent was Councilor Robert Lavoie

6
7 **2. Visitors Comments**

8 Robert Haveles of Palmer Events Planning addressed the Town Council. He stated that Celebrate
9 Palmer will not happen this year. He thanked those who have helped put it together over the
10 years. He stated that the reason for not holding the event this year was because there was not
11 enough volunteers to coordinate the event. He stated that they need people from the
12 community to help organize the event. He stated that they are arranging for a concert the night
13 Celebrate Palmer was supposed to be held.

14
15 M. Lemieux asked if Palmer Events Planning coordinates Palmer Pickup Day. R. Haveles said
16 Mike Switlowski and Joe Nompleggi have taken reigns of the Pickup Palmer Day event.
17 Discussion continued on town-wide volunteer programs.
18

19 **3. Meeting Minutes**

20 **a) April 11, 2017**

21 *Motion to approve the minutes of April 11, 2017 as submitted by P. Hebert, seconded by*
22 *L. Baker. Motion passed 6-0.*

23 **b) May 8, 2017**

24 *Motion to approve the minutes of May 8, 2017 as submitted by L. Baker, seconded by P.*
25 *Hebert. Motion passed 6-0.*

26 **4. Old Business**

27 **a) 1st Reading - False Alarm Ordinance**

28 B. Barry gave an overview of the proposed False Alarm Ordinance. She stated that the
29 Second Reading and Public Hearing would be held at the July meeting.
30

31 **b) 6:40 PM - Public Hearing - Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Large Scale Ground**
32 **Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations**

33 The Public Hearing on the Zoning Ordinance Amendment for Large Scale Ground
34 Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations was opened at 6:43 PM

35
36 No public comment.

37
38 The Public Hearing was closed at 6:44 PM

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2 **c) 2nd Reading Public Hearing - Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Large Scale Ground**
3 **Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations**

4
5 B. Barry gave an overview of the Zoning Ordinance Amendment.

6 **d) 6:45 PM - FY18 Budget Hearing**

7
8 The Public Hearing on the FY18 Budget opened at 6:56 PM

9 Donald Plouff stated that he is concerned that there is not a line item for water at the
10 Endleson Playground. B. Barry explained that there is a \$5,000 line item in the budget.
11 She also addressed the hours of operation. She stated the Council has not taken any
12 vote to limit the spray park hours, but is looking for methods to limit the water usage to
13 reduce the amount of water used the previous year.

14 The Public Hearing was closed at 7:00 pm.

15 **e) FY18 Budget Discussion**

16
17 C. Blanchard gave an overview of the changes proposed in the budget from the previous
18 meeting. He noted the reduction in election line items, a reduction in OPEB, an increase
19 of \$20,000 in park maintenance to fund field improvements, and an increase in funding
20 for stormwater. C. Blanchard stated that the Conservation office could be used to
21 coordinate the requirements of the MS4 permit through the increased stormwater
22 funding. C. Blanchard also noted that the position of Executive Assistant is in flux in
23 Town Managers office. He stated that the current Executive Assistant will be leaving at
24 the beginning of the fiscal year.

25 B. Barry asked what the increase in stormwater funding would cover. C. Blanchard noted
26 that the funding would cover staffing costs to track the requirements of the MS4 permit.

27 B. Barry asked about the 25 hour per week line item for a clerical position. C. Blanchard
28 stated that if the town received an applicant with similar education and experience as
29 the outgoing Executive Assistant, he would push for changing the position to Assistant
30 Town Manager.

31 M. Lemieux asked where money could be spent if it was not appropriated in the
32 Assistant Town Manager's salary budget. C. Blanchard noted that the need for the
33 administrative position was presented in the budget request. B. Barry stated there
34 needs to be additional conversations on the proposed staffing of the Town Manager's
35 Office and proposed funding for park improvements. Discussion continued on the
36 proposed plan for improvements to Laviolette Field and Burleigh Park.

37 B. Barry stated that the town technically has until the tax rate is set to pass a budget and
38 suggested postponing the decision on some items until after July 1st. P. Hebert
39 continued the discussion on the proposed Assistant Town Manager position. B. Barry
40 stated that some of the duties of the office will need to fall back on the Town Manager

1 rather than hiring additional staffing to account for the gap left by the outgoing
2 Executive Assistant. P. Hebert stated that there should be a vote as to whether or not to
3 move forward with the change in the position. Discussion continued on the need for the
4 Assistant Town Manager position. M. Salzmann stated that building a budget around a
5 person is not the way to build a budget.

6 P. Hebert stated that he would create the Assistant Town Manager position for a person
7 from town to grow into the Town Manager role. P. Hebert stated that he would support
8 the creation of the Assistant Town Manager position. C. Blanchard asked if the council
9 would support the addition of administrative support.

10 L. Baker stated that any additional administrative support should not be appropriated
11 for more than 10 hours per week. B. Barry noted that the current salary of the Executive
12 Assistant is over the 75th percentile of the grade so a new Executive Assistant could be
13 brought in at a lower salary.

14 *Motion to create the Assistant Town Manager position by P. Hebert. No second to the*
15 *motion. Consensus of the Town Council was to strike the proposed Administrative*
16 *Assistant position. B. Barry suggested reducing the Executive Assistant budget to*
17 *\$48,450.*

18 G. Skowronek addressed the Town Council regarding the proposed improvements to the
19 parks. He stated that the DPW would need to work with the soccer program to move
20 the large field in Laviolette. He stated that the DPW needs more cooperation and
21 coordination from the sports leagues to understand what their needs are. The goal of
22 the improvements would be to start with Laviolette Field by moving instructional soccer
23 to Chase Field. This would require moving the large field to the location of the smaller
24 fields. M. Lemieux asked why they are not starting with Chase Field. G. Skowronek
25 noted that there are challenges other than the conditions of the field which limit the use
26 of Chase Field. He proposed using water cannons on Laviolette Field to improve the
27 condition of the grass. G. Skowronek stated that they would need to pay for water
28 usage at Laviolette Field and Burleigh Park. Discussion continued on the use of Chase
29 Field. B. Barry stated that there needs to be a meeting with the sports leagues to discuss
30 their schedules and to coordinate the closing and repair of the fields.

31 The Town Council discussed the operation of the Endleson Playground splash park. G.
32 Skowronek stated the incorrect information provided to the paper was his
33 responsibility. He noted that the system is totally automated and his department has a
34 better grasp on how to operate the system this year. G. Skowronek stated that there
35 were some glitches which needed to be corrected last year. M. Lemieux stated that
36 there should be a temperature control so the splash pad does not operate on cold days
37 and a cooling off period between cycles. G. Skowronek stated that a delay in cycles is
38 already built in. K. Williams asked about the possibility of using water from the river on
39 the splash pad. G. Skowronek stated that water needed to be chlorinated to be used in
40 the splash park. Discussion continued on the use of the splash park.

1 M. Lemieux proposed operating the Endleson Park splash park from 10:00 am to 8:00
2 pm daily. B. Barry asked if there was adequate training for use of the splash park
3 controls. G. Skowronek said there was adequate training but the system needs to be
4 tuned properly. Donald Plouff stated he would like to see the park operated from noon
5 to 8:00 pm and advocated for a 10 minute cool down every 30 minutes.

6 *Motion to operate the Endleson Park splash park from noon to 8:00 pm daily by B. Barry,*
7 *seconded by M. Lemieux. Motion passed 6-0.*

8 **f) FY18 Capital Improvement Plan Discussion**
9

10 M. Salzmann asked when the carpet project at Old Mill Pond will be moving forward. B.
11 Barry stated that the project will be starting at the beginning of summer vacation.

12 John Kuzmiski discussed the Capital Planning process. He gave a summary of the
13 proposed Capital Improvement Plan. The FY18 Capital Improvement Plan included
14 \$106,100 worth of Capital Improvement Funds. The recommended projects in the
15 Capital Improvement Plan included the purchase of a zero turn mower for the Parks
16 Department, computer software for the Cemetery Department, pointing of the exterior
17 brick at Memorial Hall, a new Ford F150 with plow for the DPW and a walk-in cooler for
18 the School Department. J. Kuzmiski noted other projects which were recommended by
19 the Capital Improvement Planning Committee. He stated that the School Department
20 received an 80% reimbursement grant from E-rate for districtwide Wi-Fi improvements,
21 but would require a town contribution of \$48,000 for the project from free cash.

22 B. Barry stated that the council would vote on the CIP at the next meeting.

23 **g) Laviolette Field Bathrooms**
24

25 G. Skowronek stated that he received two quotes for the renovation of the Laviolette
26 Field restrooms. The two quotes came in at \$22,732 and \$56,000. B. Barry stated that
27 she would like to see the detail of the quotes before moving forward with appropriating
28 money for the renovations.

29 **h) Athletic Field Report**
30

31 Topic discussed during the FY18 Budget Discussion.
32

33 **i) Community Forum Discussion**
34

35 None
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37 **j) Converse Middle School Discussion**
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39 C. Blanchard stated that the school is planning to maintain the scheduling of the use of
40 Converse Middle School according to Business Manager Aaron Osborne. M. Lemieux
41 asked if it would be the school would retain liability of the building until it is taken over
by town. C. Blanchard said that they would.

1 **k) Any Other Old Business**

2
3 None
4

5 **5. New Business**

6 **a) Matthew Lane – SMOC Housing – Neighborworks Grant for Main St. Three Rivers**
7 **Update**

8
9 Matthew Lane of SMOC Housing and Community Development Director Alice Davey
10 addressed the Town Council. M. Lane stated that they were awarded a Neighborworks
11 grant for \$500,000 for which would be used primarily for the restoration of the 2032
12 Main Street building. M. Lane also stated that the grant will pay for a new roof on the
13 Palmer Historical and Cultural Center building, fund renovations to Laviolette Field. The
14 renovations of 2032 Main Street will include a café on the first floor with housing on the
15 second floor.

16 A. Davey stated that over 70 individuals have attended Revive Three Rivers meetings
17 which contributed to the award of the grant. M. Lane stated there is not a set date to
18 begin the renovation project, but they are looking to begin at the end of summer. He
19 stated that the grant stipulates the funds need to be spent by the end of the calendar
20 year. L. Baker asked if there would be one or two units of housing at the site. M. Lane
21 stated that they anticipate only one housing unit will be on the second floor. C.
22 Blanchard noted that they need to address the ownership issue between the Town and
23 SMOC before they can proceed.

24 Sheila Cutty of the Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation and Bob
25 Haveles of the PHCC stated that they will be having another artisan fair in Three Rivers
26 next year. Their goal is to continue pushing for the establishment of the arts programs.
27 B. Haveles thanked SMOC and QVCDC for their support for funding a new roof on the
28 PHCC. S. Cutty stated that only 55 Neighborworks Grants were awarded nationwide.

29 **b) Laviolette Field Walking Trail – Program Introduction**

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31 Alyssa Chapin of the Revive Three Rivers Committee addressed the Town Council. She
32 stated that the goal of the program was to raise \$14,000 for the Three Rivers Walking
33 Trail. Matthew Holbrook of Fire Service Group addressed the Town Council. He stated
34 that FSG will be donating \$4,900 towards the completion of the trail and is challenging
35 the rest of community to match the funding. A. Chapin gave an overview of the walking
36 trail proposed around Laviolette Field.

37 **c) Transfer from Sewer Surplus - \$50,000 for Sludge Removal**

38
39 G. Skowronek stated that the company which previously held their sludge hauling
40 contract did not submit a bid to renew and needed to go with a different company. The
41 new sludge hauler contract increased the sludge rate from \$83.05 to \$140. G.
42 Skowronek stated that there was an additional increase in FY18 based on the Consumer
43 Price Index. He also stated that a trial program to reduce sludge costs was not

1 successful. C. Blanchard provided information showing the annual increases to the
2 sewer surplus fund. He also noted that there will be an appropriation request for
3 engineering costs to replace the scum concentrator and will be looking at the sewer
4 surplus to fund that project. M. Lemieux stated that the town should be looking at
5 increasing the sewer rate to keep up with capital expenses. G. Skowronek noted that
6 there will be rate increases coming down the road to go towards capital expenses, but a
7 plan needs to be put in place before enacting rate increases. B. Barry stated that she
8 would like to see incremental increases in the sewer rate so that sewer users are not hit
9 with a large increase in one year.

10 *Motion to transfer \$50,000 from the Sewer Surplus Account to the Sludge Removal*
11 *Account by B. Barry, seconded by M. Salzmann. Motion passed 6-0.*

12 **d) Any Other New Business**

13 M. Salzmann asked Library Director Ben Hood how the rally for rail went. B. Hood
14 thanked all on the members of the council that attended the event. He encouraged
15 residents to push for rail funding with the legislature. B. Hood noted that it has been a
16 regional effort pushing for rail.

17 *Motion to authorize the Town Manager to draft a letter of support for an East-West*
18 *passenger rail study by L. Baker, seconded by M. Lemieux. Motion passed 7-0.*

19 **6. Subcommittee Reports**

20
21 None

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23 **7. Town Manager's Report**

24 C. Blanchard requested a one year appointment of Sean O'Donnell to the Palmer
25 Redevelopment Authority. Sean O'Donnell said he is motivated to give back to town.

26 *Motion to appoint Sean O'Donnell to the Palmer Redevelopment Authority by P. Hebert,*
27 *seconded by L. Baker. Motion passed 6-0.*

28 C. Blanchard requested a letter of support for the ACES Energy Storage Grant that Thorndike
29 Energy is pursuing.

30 *Motion to send a letter of support for the ACES Energy Storage Grant that Thorndike Energy M.*
31 *Lemieux, seconded by L. Baker. Motion passed 6-0.*

32 **8. Misc. Correspondence**

33 None

34 **9. Councilor's Roundtable**

35 L. Baker stated that Slices of Three Rivers has opened and is doing very well.

36 M. Salzmann stated that there was a great turnout for the Memorial Day parade despite the
37 anticipated rain. She also noted the opening of Personal Touch Home Healthcare.

38 K. Williams thanked the Lamothe family for their coordination of the Rally for Rail.

1 B. Barry acknowledged a lack of knowledge of the local election in the community. She stated
2 that she would like to invest in sign boards to place in strategic locations around town to notify
3 residents of events. She also asked about the status of the crossing light purchased for
4 Bondsville. C. Blanchard stated that they are ready to go up and the DPW needs to schedule
5 time to do it.

6 C. Blanchard stated that the town received a Green Communities grant for the purchase of two
7 electric vehicles.

8 **10. Adjournment of Formal Session**

9

10 *Motion to adjourn from formal session by M. Lemieux, seconded by L. Baker. Motion passed 6-0*
11 *at 9:37pm.*