

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

1   **1. Call to Order**

2       The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, March 13, 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       None

9   **3. Meeting Minutes**

10       **a) February 13, 2017**

11               *Motion to approve the minutes of February 13, 2017 as amended by L. Baker, seconded*  
12               *by M. Lemieux. Motion passed 5-0-2 with M. Salzmann and P. Hebert abstaining.*

13   **4. Old Business**

14       **a) Continuing Discussion - Town Council Community Meeting**

15               Anne Miller of 60 Buckland Street addressed the Town Council to ask if the Town  
16               Council discussed the possibility of performing a downtown rail planning study at their  
17               previous meeting. She stated that the town should be ready if Federal funding becomes  
18               available to establish a commuter rail stop in Palmer.

19               The Town Council scheduled a meeting on April 3, 2017 at 6:30 to continue discussion  
20               on items brought up during the community forum.

21       **b) Any Other Old Business**

22               M. Salzmann asked how much early voting cost the town. C. Blanchard stated that he  
23               would investigate the cost impact of early voting and report to the Town Council.

24               M. Salzmann asked that there be a note placed on the Town website indicating that the  
25               Town Hall is open until 7:30pm on Tuesday when the offices are closed on Monday due  
26               to a holiday.

27   **5. New Business**

28       **a) Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Proclamation**

29               The Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Proclamation was read by R. Lavoie. B. Barry  
30               presented the proclamation to William Byrnes and Veterans Agent Troy Brin.

31       **b) Tim Culverhouse – Lifesmarts Program**

32               Tim Culverhouse, coordinator of the PHS Lifesmarts Program provided an outline of the  
33               objectives of the Lifesmarts program. He noted that the PHS program won the

1 Massachusetts Lifesmarts Championship and have qualified for National Championship  
2 in Pittsburgh. He stated that there are significantly fewer Lifesmarts programs in schools  
3 around the state and the program is not funded by the school. T. Culverhouse asked if  
4 the Town Council would provide any financial assistance for the program. Their goal is to  
5 raise \$5,200 for the program to attend the National Championship.

6 B. Barry stated that she did not feel the Council would be able to provide funding from  
7 the town funds. L. Baker asked if the program had started a "Go-Fund-Me" account to  
8 raise money. T. Culverhouse stated that the school advised against a Go-Fund-Me page.  
9 He stated that the program is looking to schedule a fundraiser soon. T. Culverhouse  
10 stated that donations should be addressed to PHS with Lifesmarts in the memo. L. Baker  
11 stated that she would assist in their fundraising efforts by leveraging contacts from the  
12 300th Anniversary Committee. T. Culverhouse stated that they have raised \$435 over  
13 the two weeks since they began their fundraising efforts.

14 B. Barry stated that she would make a personal contribution and encouraged other  
15 councilors to do the same. M. Salzmann stated that she would make a personal  
16 donation to the program, but would like to make a significant contribution from  
17 municipal funds. P. Hebert asked if the reason that six of the Lifesmarts members  
18 couldn't attend the National Championship was due to funding. T. Culverhouse stated  
19 that due to funding restrictions, only the five students on the State Championship Team  
20 would be able to attend the National Championship.

21 *P. Hebert made a motion to appropriate \$2,600 from Free Cash to support the Lifesmarts*  
22 *Program, seconded by M. Salzmann.* R. Lavoie stated he would be more inclined to fund  
23 \$1,000 toward their fundraising efforts rather than half of the total cost. P. Hebert  
24 stated that he would like to keep the proposal at \$2,600. B. Barry noted that providing  
25 funding to the Lifesmarts program would open the door to other groups requesting  
26 funding from the Town Council for fundraising efforts. *Motion failed 2-5 with M.*  
27 *Salzmann and P. Hebert in favor.*

28 **c) Domestic Violence Task Force - Tammy Koske DVTF Coordinator**

29 Tammy Koske, Domestic Violence Task Force Coordinator, addressed the Town Council.  
30 She gave an overview of the DVTF program. She stated that Domestic Violence  
31 programs are important to the community. The goal of the program is to target people  
32 involved in domestic violence relationships and get them out of those relationships as  
33 well as teach children about healthy relationships. She stated that there would be a  
34 fundraiser for the Domestic Violence program at the Steaming Tender on May 4<sup>th</sup>. She  
35 also stated that there is a 5k fundraiser scheduled at Palmer Motorsports Park on April  
36 8th. Currently, the program is looking for funding for housing and transportation for  
37 battered women. B. Barry suggested reach out to the Town Manager. T. Koske stated  
38 that she is looking to have a reception at library for the Take Back the Night program.

39

40

1           **d) Thorndike Playground Discussion and Possible Funding**

2           Alice Davey, Community Development Director, addressed the Town Council. She stated  
3           that she has been in discussion with residents regarding reconstruction of the Thorndike  
4           Playground. She stated that existing program funds were used for the design of a new  
5           playground. She is applying for \$300,000 in CDBG funding to construct a new Thorndike  
6           Playground. A. Davey stated that they currently have a shortfall of \$22,000 in their  
7           anticipated project budget.

8           B. Barry stated that the Community Development office is looking for a commitment of  
9           funding for the \$22,000 shortfall to assist the grant application. She stated that funding  
10          for the project would be contingent on the project bid coming within their budget and  
11          the CDBG grant being awarded.

12          *Motion to commit \$22,000 from available funds for construction of the Thorndike*  
13          *Playground project by M. Lemieux, seconded by L. Baker.* C. Blanchard noted that the  
14          funds for the project would not be needed until next spring at the earliest. B. Barry  
15          stated that the CDBG funds being used to build the park target low income areas and  
16          must be used for specific purposes related to housing and community development.  
17          *Motion passed 7-0.*

18           **e) Free Cash Appropriations**

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

20          School Business Manager Aaron Osborne addressed the Town Council regarding the  
21          proposed Free Cash appropriation for the replacement of the carpets at Old Mill Pond.  
22          B. Barry asked if the objective of the school is to complete entire carpet replacement  
23          project this summer. A. Osborne stated that the goal is to complete all 45 classrooms  
24          this summer. He stated that he is confident they will be able to get the project done  
25          because most of the school activities during the summer will be focused on Converse in  
26          preparation of the move to the high school. The total cost of the project is anticipated to  
27          be \$300,000; \$150,000 of which was appropriated from FY16 Free Cash.

28          *Motion to appropriate \$150,000 from Free Cash for the Old Mill Pond Carpet*  
29          *Replacement Project by P. Hebert, seconded by L. Baker. Motion passed 7-0.*

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

32          A. Osborne stated that the E-Rate program offered by the utilities would match funds  
33          for the installation of Wi-Fi at PHS and OMP. He stated that the E-Rate program could  
34          pay up to 80% of the funds needed. He will know the full cost of the project within three  
35          weeks of the project walkthrough. B. Barry stated she would like to wait to appropriate  
36          funding until they knew how much would be needed.

37          Barry asked if the school would be upgrading their current data network to fiber A.  
38          Osborne stated that the school would need to upgrade the fiber network to the high  
39          school due to unfunded mandates for online testing requirements. He stated that the

1 planned network upgrade should last 7-10 years with some wiring replacement  
2 incorporated into the project.

3 B. Barry asked if the schools had considered asking Pathfinder to perform the wiring  
4 work. A. Osborne stated that if they found a large wiring issue, they would engage  
5 Pathfinder, but not for the small wiring replacement called for in the project. He stated  
6 that the school is currently considering Pathfinder to coordinate the buildout of the new  
7 administration offices at PHS. B. Barry noted that the Town Council would vote on the  
8 funding of the Wi-Fi upgrades after bid results were received.

9 **f) Discussion – Converse Middle School Building**

10 B. Barry stated she received a great deal of feedback from residents after closure of CMS  
11 was announced. She stated that the only information she has received from the School  
12 Department was that they will continue to heat the building. B. Barry stated that she  
13 would like to be sure that basketball and football still have access to the building for use  
14 of the gymnasium and locker room facilities. She would like to know what the School  
15 Department will still be responsible for once the school closes. A. Osborne stated the  
16 goal of the School Department is to work with town to identify the best use of the  
17 school building and not close it. M. Lemieux asked if the school would be used as  
18 storage for extra school materials. A. Osborne stated that he would look at auctioning  
19 off desks and extra supplies. C. Blanchard stated that the school's presentation showed  
20 that maintaining the facilities would be in the schools budget for FY18.

21 B. Barry stated there needs to be a conversation between the Town and School on who  
22 will be responsible for the maintenance costs of CMS once it is closed. B. Barry  
23 addressed the comment from the School Committee that the town has not funded the  
24 capital needs of the schools. She stated that that comments regarding the Town  
25 Council's lack of funding for the school's capital needs was inaccurate and needs to stop.  
26 A. Osborne noted that stagnant Chapter 70 has been absorbed by the town to ensure  
27 adequate funding each year.

28 B. Barry asked if the town had received a request from Senator Gobi for budget requests  
29 for FY18. B Barry stated that the low Chapter 70 funding and mandated testing  
30 requirements should be brought forward to Senator Gobi and Representative Smola.

31 C. Blanchard stated that communication has improved between the town and schools  
32 and the two are on same page as far as the FY18 budget is concerned. A. Osborne noted  
33 the impact of charter schools on the school budget.

34 B. Barry asked if the Council should meet with the School Committee to discuss a short  
35 term plan for the building. C. Blanchard recommended that he sit down with the  
36 superintendent and business manager to discuss a short term strategy. Prior to the May  
37 Town Council meeting, there will be meeting between the Town Manager and  
38 Superintendent's Office to discuss the future of the CMS building.

39 Richard Opper of 31 Smith Street addressed the Town Council to convey his idea for the  
40 reuse of the CMS building. He stated that the town should maintain ownership of the

1 land but sell the building and charge for rental of the property. He does not think the  
2 town should repurpose the building for municipal use.

3 A community forum was set for April 11, 2017 at 6:30 pm in the PHS Auditorium to  
4 receive ideas from community members regarding the reuse of the CMS building. C.  
5 Blanchard asked if survey should be placed on website to gather ideas from residents  
6 prior to the meeting. B. Barry stated that she would prefer to wait until after the  
7 community forum to place any community survey on the website.

8 **g) Request for Special Legislation Full Off-Premises Liquor License – Junction Variety**

9 B. Barry acknowledged the letter from the License Commission supporting a petition to  
10 the legislature for a Special Legislation All-Alcohol Off-Premises Liquor License at the  
11 Junction Variety Store.

12 *Motion to petition the legislature for Special Legislation All-Alcohol Off-Premises Liquor*  
13 *License at the Junction Variety Store by P. Hebert, seconded by M. Lemieux. Motion*  
14 *passed 7-0.*

15 **h) Presentation of FY18 Budget**

16 C. Blanchard gave an overview of the proposed FY18 budget. He stated that the 2.5%  
17 revenue projection was provided as part of packet. He noted that there was a large hit  
18 in pension costs which is being reviewed. He noted that the overall budget represents  
19 an increase of 2.4% from FY17. C. Blanchard stated that an area of concern is the status  
20 of the snow and ice deficit because it continues to grow over the projected amount in  
21 the budget.

22 B. Barry asked if any of the issues from the community meeting had been addressed in  
23 the proposed budget. C. Blanchard stated that the issues brought up during the meeting  
24 were not directly addressed, however, additional funds were provided for field  
25 maintenance which was addressed as a concern during the meeting. He stated that  
26 there are no capital items proposed from the community meeting addressed in the  
27 budget.

28 C. Blanchard stated that during the Council’s individual review of the budget, any  
29 questions should be given to him as they arise. A budget review meeting is scheduled  
30 for April 19<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm. Questions on the budget should be submitted by March 31<sup>st</sup> to  
31 the Town Manager to provide adequate time to provide answers to the Council  
32 members.

33 **i) Recreational Marijuana Discussion**

34 B. Barry stated that many communities are adopting moratoriums on recreational  
35 marijuana to allow enough time to react to pending legislative changes to the  
36 recreational marijuana law. She noted that some communities are considering banning  
37 the sale of recreational marijuana through local referendum. In order to do so, the Town  
38 Council would need to vote to ban the sale of recreational marijuana and place the  
39 question on the town election warrant. C. Blanchard noted that a moratorium has been

1 drafted by the Planning Board, however revised regulations have not been passed by  
2 legislature, so a moratorium would be premature at this time.

3 A discussion on prohibiting the sale of recreational marijuana will continue at the April  
4 10<sup>th</sup> Town Council meeting.

5 **j) Town Manager Goals**

6 The proposed 2017 Town Manager Goals were presented to the Town Council by the  
7 Town Manager Goals Committee.

8 *Motion to adopt the proposed 2017 Town Manager Goals by M. Lemieux, seconded by L.*  
9 *Baker. Motion passed 7-0.*

10 **k) Town Manager Bonus**

11 L. Baker asked what the Town Manager's overall rating was. C. Blanchard noted that his  
12 rating was 4.21 out of 5 but also stated that that the contract states his bonus is to be  
13 based on overall performance.

14 *Motion to award C. Blanchard a bonus of \$5,000 by B. Barry, seconded by M. Salzman.*

15 B. Barry stated that it is important to give input to the Town Manager so he can perform  
16 his job at the highest level possible. She noted that keeping lines of communication  
17 between the Town Council and Town Manager is important. She acknowledged that  
18 there was a large range in performance scores and feels that \$5,000 is a fair bonus to  
19 award. L. Baker stated that she also feels that \$5,000 is fair. K. Williams stated that that  
20 he agrees the Town Manager is doing a great job and noted that, although some  
21 residents that he spoke to did not agree that the council should award bonuses to the  
22 Town Manager, awarding a bonus annually is part of contract of the Town Manager's  
23 contract. P. Hebert stated that he would support awarding a \$6,000 bonus.

24 *Motion passed 7-0 to award a \$5,000 bonus to the Town Manager.*

25 **l) Any Other New Business**

26 None

27 **6. Subcommittee Reports**

28 R. Lavoie stated that a False Alarm Ordinance will be presented at next meeting by the Ordinance  
29 Review Committee.

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

31 C. Blanchard stated that GTI's proposal to establish a commercial marijuana growing operation in  
32 Maple Tree Industrial Park will not be moving forward.

33 C. Blanchard stated that the wellness Leadership Team is pursuing the use of Chase Field as a  
34 community garden site. B. Barry stated that she would like to ensure that the field could still be used  
35 for sports. She would like additional information regarding this proposal.

1 C. Blanchard stated that the Town Hall Renovation Project is still on track, but slightly delayed due to  
2 some unforeseen occurrences. He stated that replacement of the roof will need to be part of project  
3 and hopes to keep the added project scope within budget.

4 **8. Misc. Correspondence**

5 Correspondence included an Invitation to a Crossover Ceremony for Cub Scout Pack 164, a proposal  
6 for the use of Converse Middle School Building from Richard Opper and a proposal for the use of  
7 Converse Middle School Building from Michael and Alison Swiatlowski.

8  
9 **9. Councilor's Roundtable**

10 M. Salzmänn acknowledged the three local high school basketball players who reached the 1,000  
11 point milestone and wished the Palmer High School Boys Basketball team good luck in the state  
12 championship game.

13 P. Hebert encouraged residents take safety precautions during the impending snowstorm. He noted  
14 that nomination papers are now available for the annual town election and acknowledged that he  
15 would not be running for reelection in the upcoming election.

16 **10. Executive Session as per Chapter 30A, Sec. 21(3) Impact Bargaining for New England Police**  
17 **Benevolent Association Local #071**

18 *Motion to enter into Executive Session as per Chapter 30A, Sec. 21(3) Impact Bargaining for New*  
19 *England Police Benevolent Association Local #071 and adjourn therefrom by M. Salzmänn, seconded*  
20 *by R. Lavoie. Motion passed 7-0 by roll call vote.*

21 *M. Lemieux – Yes, K. Williams – Yes, L. Baker – Yes, P. Hebert – Yes, R. Lavoie – Yes, M. Salzmänn –*  
22 *Yes and B. Barry – Yes at 9:20 pm*