

**Palmer Town Council
Meeting Minutes
May 30, 2017**

1 **1. Call to Order**

2 The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, May 30, 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.

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7 **2. Visitors Comments**

8 None

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10 **3. Mass Clean Energy at Thorndike Mills**

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12 C. Blanchard explained the plans for Mass Clean Energy at Thorndike Mills to establish an energy
13 storage facility and solar energy project. B. Barry asked if the site would be requesting solar
14 development. C. Blanchard noted that there would need to be a site plan review by Planning Board.
15 M. Salzmann and P. Hebert noted their support for the grant and reuse of the building. K. Williams
16 asked if there would be other opportunities for the town to take advantage of the energy
17 generation facility. C. Blanchard noted the potential of development of a microgrid to support
18 municipal buildings. L. Baker asked about the status of the site cleanup. C. Blanchard stated that the
19 primary cleanup that would need to be done would be in the parking lot area.

20
21 Joe Turek of the Palmer Redevelopment Authority stated that the PRA met with many government
22 agencies to push for reuse of Thorndike Mills for energy production. They will be sending letter of
23 support for the grant as well.

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25 *Motion to send a letter of support for the grant for Mass Clean Energy at Thorndike Mills by L. Baker,*
26 *seconded by K. Williams. Motion passed 7-0.*

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28 **4. Budget Discussion**

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30 Elections – B. Barry noted that the budget line item for Elections should be adjusted since there is
31 only one election next fiscal year. The line item should be adjusted to show Election Workers at
32 \$10,000 and Election Supplies as \$11,000 per the Town Clerk.

33
34 Police Station – M. Salzmann asked why the line item for Police Station maintenance stayed level
35 funded. A. Golas noted that the service is under state contract. B. Barry asked if all the punch list
36 items had been addressed. C. Blanchard stated that all of the punch list items had been addressed
37 to his knowledge.

38
39 Animal Control – C. Blanchard noted that they are waiting to see if Warren and Ware will be joining
40 the regional Animal Control Agreement. C. Blanchard noted that the proposed budget amount
41 shows 100% of the cost, with the town being reimbursed by the other communities.

42

1 DPW – B. Barry asked about the water usage at Endleson playground and what the town will do to
2 control costs this year. C. Blanchard noted that the DPW is adjusting the system to limit the amount
3 of water used for its operation and they are working with Bondsville Water District to read the
4 meter weekly. C. Blanchard stated that they are looking to reduce the water usage by half.
5 Discussion continued on use of the spray park. B. Barry asked if a water ban would affect the use of
6 the park. C. Blanchard stated that despite the drought conditions, there was not a water ban issued
7 last year. He stated the town would do all they could to limit water use.

8
9 B. Barry questioned whether the tree maintenance budget is sufficient. C. Blanchard stated that the
10 budget increase of \$5,000 from FY17 would allow the Town to cut down three additional trees
11 down. L. Baker asked who would be responsible for replacing the trees slated for removal in
12 downtown Three Rivers. M. Lemieux noted that the Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce would be
13 replacing the trees. L. Baker asked if they would be replaced with a specific tree. C. Blanchard stated
14 that the options for replacement would need to be reviewed. B. Barry asked who determines if a
15 tree needs to be removed. C. Blanchard noted that the DPW Operations Director reviews trees to
16 see if the tree in question is the town's responsibility, then contracts with a private tree removal
17 firm to remove the tree if necessary. B. Barry noted that trees over the roadway could be potential
18 hazards.

19
20 M. Salzmann asked if the position which filled the DPW Operations Director would be backfilled. C.
21 Blanchard stated that the position would be filled and paid at the union rate.

22
23 WWTP - M. Lemieux asked about the increase in stormwater costs. C. Blanchard stated that \$16,000
24 would be needed to meet the requirements of the MS4 permit. B. Barry asked why there were no
25 capital projects budgeted in WWTP Budget. She noted that that there is a need to replace the scum
26 concentrator and is afraid that the town is not replenishing the fund balance at an adequate rate. B.
27 Barry stated that she would like to see a slow increase in the sewer rate to fund anticipated capital
28 projects instead of a drastic increase all in one year. C. Blanchard stated that he would provide an
29 update on the revenue in the sewer surplus account. J. Kuzmiski noted that the sewer surplus is
30 close to \$2 Million. Discussion continued on the impact of capital projects on the sewer surplus
31 fund.

32
33 B. Barry stated that the salaries for the gas, electrical and plumbing inspectors should be shown in
34 the general fund and not remain in the revolving fund. C. Blanchard stated that the dramatic change
35 in inspection amounts could hit the budget with a deficit. Discussion continued on how inspectors
36 are paid. B. Barry requested a report on how much each inspector was paid last fiscal year.

37
38 Debt Service – B. Barry asked if the Town is paying the \$25,000 for the Town Hall Renovation Project
39 in FY18. J. Kuzmiski noted that the Town would pay \$25,000 toward principal payment when the
40 bond matures.

41
42 Unclassified – B. Barry questioned the amount appropriated for unemployment costs. C. Blanchard
43 noted the low amount in the previous fiscal year was abnormal and FY17 is trending towards the
44 \$40,000 appropriated.

45
46 B. Barry asked if cemetery summer help will be paid from the perpetual care fund. C. Blanchard
47 noted that the cemetery summer help is paid from the operating budget. C. Blanchard stated that
48 the use of perpetual care funds are not used for workers.

1
2 B. Barry questioned the way the town uses the revenue from large scale solar projects in the budget.
3 C. Blanchard noted that the solar revenue is part of new growth. B. Barry asked if potential projects
4 have been estimated in new growth. B. Barry stated that she would like to see the revenue from the
5 large scale solar projects earmarked for capital improvements. Discussion continued on how solar
6 funds are built into the budget and how the budget should be built around new revenue sources. B.
7 Barry stated that she is frustrated that council's priorities were not built into the proposed budget.

8
9 B. Barry asked that the budget be amended to provide for procurement classes for the Executive
10 Assistant by adding \$1,400 into the Town Manager Expenses.

11 B. Barry requested a recess at 8:35 pm.

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13 The Town Council reconvened at 8:40 pm.

14
15 The Town Council had a discussion regarding the proposed change in the Executive Assistant
16 position to Assistant Town Manager and the addition of a part time clerical assistant.

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19 **5. Adjournment of Formal Session**

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21 *Motion to adjourn from formal session by P. Hebert, seconded by K. Williams. Motion passed 7-0 at*
22 *9:00pm.*