

## Palmer Town Council

### Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 17, 2015

#### 1. Roll Call

The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Tuesday, February 17, 2015 was called to order at 6:30 pm. Present were Town Manager Charles Blanchard, Councilors Philip Hebert, Matt Lovell, Barbara Barry, Jason Polonsky, Mary Salzmann, Donald Blais and Executive Assistant Andrew Golas Recording Minutes. Absent was Councilor Robert Lavoie

#### 2. Visitors Comments

Scott Ebbeling of 40 Burlingame Road addressed the Council. His concern was that the Schools and Bus Company had decided not to allow school buses up Burlingame Road and have asked children to walk to end of Baptist Hill Road to be picked up by the bus. He did not feel this was a safe option for his daughter. B. Barry stated that this has been an unusually bad winter and the school and bus company coordinate the decision on how to service each area of town. C. Blanchard stated the town is doing all it can do to stay on top of the clearing of the snow given the multiple storms and lack of melting. P. Hebert stated that the bus servicing Baptist Hill Road should not try to climb the hill.

#### 3. Meeting Minutes

- a. Executive Session October 14, 2014 – Motion to approve the minutes of the October 14, 2014 executive session as submitted by J. Polonsky, seconded by M. Lovell. Motion passed 6-0
- b. January 12, 2015 – Motion to approve the minutes of January 12, 2015 as amended by J. Polonsky, seconded by P. Hebert. Motion passed 6-0

#### 4. Old Business

- a. Mass in Motion Grant – Wellness Leadership Team - Catherine Ratte of PVPC

Catherine Ratte of Pioneer Valley Planning Commission addressed the council regarding the ongoing activities of the Municipal Wellness Leadership Team. She outlined the goals of the health assessment that will be coordinated by the Wellness Leadership Team. She also stated that a focus group will be conducted at the Council on Aging to try to assess the direction the Wellness Leadership Team should be headed. C. Ratte stated that a \$40,000 grant split between Palmer and West Springfield was obtained to support this effort. That grant will be used to develop a work plan for the town.

- b. Award of Emery Street Landfill Solar Lease

C. Blanchard outlined the proposed Lease Agreement and PILOT agreement with Renewable Energy Massachusetts (REM) and Syncarpha Solar. Cliff Chapmen and Bob Knowles of REM Solar represented the company. C. Blanchard distributed the proposed timeline of the project to the council. P. Hebert asked if there was an annual escalator to the lease agreement. C. Blanchard confirmed that. J. Polonsky asked when the land was zoned properly for the project. A. Golas explained that the property had been

designated as General Business since the adoption of zoning due to its previous use as a landfill. J. Polonsky also expressed concern regarding the abutters. B. Knowles acknowledged that all abutters concerns will be addressed prior to construction.

Motion to authorize the Town Manager to sign the lease agreement with REM to construct a solar development on the former Emery Street Landfill by D. Blais, seconded by M. Lovell. Motion passed 6-0

Motion to accept the PILOT agreement with REM for the Emery Street Landfill solar project pending approval of the Board of Assessors by M. Lovell, seconded by P. Hebert. Motion passed 6-0.

c. Status of Town-Wide Trash Collection

C. Blanchard explained that pursuing a 2 ½ override proposal would not be prudent at this time given the council's decision to place the Debt Exclusion for the OMP School Floor Replacement on the local election. C. Blanchard stated that he would like to move forward with updating the current trash collection regulations. Arlene Miller of MassDEP stated that this will give the town the opportunity to better educate residents on the issue before going to an override vote. She stated that many towns are currently going through this process. M. Salzmänn asked if people tend to opt out of fee based programs in other towns. A. Miller stated that when people are given the opportunity to opt out, private haulers tend to undercut rates to encourage residents to stay with their current hauler.

d. Free Cash Transfers

i. 189 State Street Well

C. Blanchard explained that he certified that the free cash amount is \$1.8 Million. He stated that this issue was discovered by the DEP during their annual testing of the wells around the landfill. The recommendation from DEP was replacement of the current shallow well with a bedrock well as well as additional testing of that well. \$45,000 would be needed to provide the new bedrock well and additional testing of the landfill.

Motion to appropriate \$45,000 from Free Cash toward the design and construction of a new well by P. Hebert, seconded by J. Polonsky. Motion passed 6-0.

ii. Police DPW Radio Upgrade Funding

C. Blanchard provided additional information to the council showing where the increased costs are in the radio system proposal. J. Polonsky asked if it would be worth a second opinion on the design of the project. C. Blanchard noted that it would not be beneficial to seek a second opinion because the unknowns which were addressed in the updated price proposal were very costly upgrades to the project cost. M. Salzmänn asked if we are back charging Palmer Water District

for use of the site. C. Blanchard explained that the site is owned by Palmer Water District and they provide in-kind work at the site.

Motion to appropriate \$275,000 from Free Cash toward the Police and DPW Radio Upgrade Project by M. Lovell, seconded by D. Blais. P. Hebert stated that he was disappointed that a number of issues were not addressed prior to the initial appropriation. J. Polonsky stated that he was frustrated that the budget was so far off from the original estimate. The council discussed their frustration with the increased project costs. C. Blanchard stated that he did not recommend hiring a second consultant to review the system design. Discussion continued on whether to review design with new consultant. B. Barry asked if the town should go off state bid list for lower cost. C. Blanchard explained that Mark Cady's proposal took into account that the town would achieve cost savings by bidding individual aspects of the project and pulling others directly from the state bid list. Motion passed 6-0.

e. Three Rivers Parking

J. Polonsky asked for a status on the Three Rivers Parking Lot. C. Blanchard stated that he is waiting for a response from Attorney Ksieniewicz.

**5. New Business**

P. Hebert brought up concern with requiring residents to clean sidewalks. A. Golas stated that shoveling sidewalks is a fundamental responsibility of homeowners and as an ordinance, is enforced by the Palmer Police Department.

M. Salzmann stated that when the council deliberates the use of free cash, the council is deliberating use of reserve funds which should not be expended on operational costs but should be retained as rainy day funding.

**6. Subcommittee Reports**

D. Blais stated the Ordinance Committee is still working on an alarm ordinance to bring forward to the council.

**7. Town Manager's Report**

C. Blanchard stated that he met with the Quaboag Hills Economic Development Committee to discuss ongoing efforts of the PRA and Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce to begin business incubator programs in town. He also stated that concerns regarding bridge repairs were brought forward during the Central Massachusetts Senators' listening tour. C. Blanchard provided the School Funding History spreadsheet to the Council. B. Barry asked for the total amount of School Choice Receiving Tuition the schools will be receiving.

**8. Misc. Correspondence**

B. Barry acknowledged a letter from Insurance Advisory Committee accepting the town's proposal to change copays from \$10 to \$20 for doctor visits and from \$50 to \$100 for ER visits.

**9. Councilor's Round Table**

M. Salzmann recognized firefighter Bevan Forbes for his actions during the Pleasant St. Fire

J. Polonsky recognized the services of all firefighters in town

D. Blais thanked the town's Firefighters for their service and the DPW for their work during the winter. He also stated he petitioned the legislature during their listening tour for infrastructure improvements. He also asked for schedule on addressing the FY16 budget.

**10. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by J. Polonsky, seconded by M. Lovell. Motion passed 6-0 at 8:55 PM.