

Palmer Town Council

Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 9, 2015

1. Roll Call

The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, March 9, 2015 was called to order at 6:30 pm. Present were Town Manager Charles Blanchard, Councilors Robert Lavoie, Barbara Barry, Jason Polonsky, Mary Salzmann and Donald Blais. Matthew Lovell and Philip Hebert were absent.

2. Visitors Comments

None

3. Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2015 – *Motion to approve the minutes of February 17, 2015 as amended by J. Polonsky, seconded by M. Salzmann. Motion passed 5-0*

4. Old Business

a. FY16 Budget Discussion

C. Blanchard stated that the budget he had presented represented level funding from state local aid. He explained that there was not much of a change in the House 1 budget presented by Governor Baker from his estimated local aid funding. C. Blanchard stated that Chapter 70 only increased by \$30,000 in the governor's House 1 budget. C. Blanchard presented neighboring community Chapter 70 distributions in comparison to the Palmer proposal. He also explained that the unrestricted general aid adds about \$60,000 more than the proposed FY16 budget.

C. Blanchard stated that regional school transportation was part of the governor's supplemental budget cuts which could affect the Pathfinder allocation. C. Blanchard listed the Town Council's FY16 Budget priorities as presented at the March 20th meeting and outlined how they had been addressed in the proposed budget. He stated that School Department budget as presented supports the School administration's proposed budget to the School Committee.

C. Blanchard also explained that they will be moving forward with the PVPC Pavement Management plan as part of the chapter 90 road improvement plan. He also presented the FY16 wage summary at a 2% increase over FY15. B. Barry asked how many hours were proposed for the new clerical position in the building department. C. Blanchard stated that the budget was based on 25 hours per week. He explained that the budget included Building clerical support and 2 additional DPW Staff as the only staffing increases. B. Barry that detail included in previous budgets be included as part of the FY16 budget.

J. Polonsky asked how funds from the solar lease would be allocated. C. Blanchard stated that we should wait until the project is completed and the town knows when the lease payments would be made before it is included as a revenue source. B. Barry asked when the additional backup information would be available. C. Blanchard explained that information would be

available next week. B. Barry stated that she would begin developing a schedule for the budget discussions.

b. Town Manager Review

B. Barry gave an overview of the Town Manager's Performance Review. She stated that the Town Manager was evaluated in the categories of Finance, Personnel, Leadership, Staff Development, Public Relations, Employee Relations, Policy Execution, Interaction with Town Council, Intergovernmental Relations, Effectiveness and Goal Attainment. C. Blanchard stated he appreciated the recognition of the positive review. He stated that he will address any issues that he has with the review to councilors directly. J. Polonsky stated the review process is in need of overhaul and hopes to finalize the new review tool before the next review.

B. Barry stated the Town Manager Goals subcommittee will need to meet to set new goals for 2016. B. Barry stated that J. Polonsky should be sent recommendations from each councilor for 2016 goals. She stated that a discussion on the Town Manager's Bonus would be held at the next meeting.

5. New Business

a. 1st Reading – False Alarm Ordinance

Overview of ordinance given by D. Blais. R. Lavoie stated that in discussions with the Chief of Police, he felt the ordinance was needed to address some frequent offenders. J. Polonsky asked if the wording addressing the number of times the officers had to respond to a false alarm was conflicting. He also stated the previous committee had considered excluding single family homes. He also asked why buildings owned by the town are not excluded by the ordinance.

B. Barry stated that she believes three warnings were too many to be given prior to enforcement. She also stated that she felt the rate structure was rather high. B. Barry asked if the ordinance should require those with alarm systems to register with the police department. She also asked if the violation of the ordinance should be handled as a criminal or civil penalty. C. Blanchard stated that the intent of the ordinance is to encourage the home or business owner to address issues they have with their alarm systems directly.

J. Polonsky stated that he is not sure if false alarms are currently recorded by the police department. J. Polonsky noted that there is a currently a \$25 fine per day for un-shoveled sidewalks and penalties for the false alarm ordinance should be comparable to those fines. C. Blanchard asked if a breakdown was provided by the police department on property use for each false alarm.

D. Blais requested that the list of issues raised be forwarded to his attention. The ordinance will be referred back to the committee for revision.

b. Blue Wave Solar PILOT Agreement

Overview of the Blue Wave Solar PILOT agreement was given by C. Blanchard. He stated that the developer is currently waiting for the interconnection agreement with National Grid to put the project online. He noted that the correct version of the PILOT agreement should state that the PILOT agreements shall be paid in quarterly payments to the Town. C. Blanchard stated that he

is looking for the Council to approve the agreement subject to approval from the Board of Assessors.

Motion to accept the PILOT agreement with Blue Wave Solar and authorize the Council President to sign the agreement subject to approval from the Board of Assessors by J. Polonsky, seconded by M. Salzman. Motion passed 5-0.

c. Town Charter Review

B. Barry stated that as per charter requirements, all ordinances approved by the Council must be reviewed and recoded every five years. She stated that a nine member board must be appointed to review the ordinances. B. Barry stated that the review must be filed by May 1, 2016. She requested that advertisement be run to solicit voters to serve on the committee. C. Blanchard asked for clarification on need for review since substantive change cannot be made through this process. B. Barry asked that clarification be provided by from Town Counsel on purpose of this charter requirement.

d. Proclamation for Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day

The proclamation for Welcome Home Veterans Day 2015 was read by M. Salzman.

6. Subcommittee Reports

Goals Subcommittee – J. Polonsky stated that he would like recommendations from councilors and from C. Blanchard for the 2015 Town Manager Goals by March 21st.

7. Town Manager Report

C. Blanchard stated that a meeting was held with members of the Police, Fire and DPW to discuss mitigation efforts relative to the potential for spring flooding and impacts it may have to the DPW location on Bridge Street.

B. Barry asked if impacts to the town from the harsh winter qualify for FEMA reimbursements. C. Blanchard stated that the town has not been asked to provide that information to the state. J. Polonsky stated that he is concerned with the road condition of Church Street Bridge. He asked that signage be places before the bridge to warn drivers of the condition.

C. Blanchard stated that the architect for the Old Mill Pond Floor Replacement Project updated the cost of the flooring replacement based on the latest projected schedule.

C. Blanchard reported that the Police Station Building Committee will have their final meeting on March 16th. He also provided the updated FY15 Snow and Ice account deficit.

C. Blanchard stated that he met with Architectural Insights to discuss the renovation plan for Town Hall. He stated that the cost would be significantly higher than anticipated. He stated that Architectural Insights is preparing a full cost estimate to make building serviceable for next 20 years. Based on the projected scope of the project, they would need to go through a request for design services. J. Polonsky proposed holding a Volunteer day at Town Hall to help boost the esthetics of the building.

The proposed regulations on horse keeping from the Board of Health were presented to the Town Council.

C. Blanchard stated that a mosquito control district is being considered for several Western Massachusetts communities. He stated that they are evaluating whether or not their proposal will be feasible for the FY16 budget. R. Lavoie asked how the financial assessment was established. C. Blanchard stated that the assessment is based on mosquito risk areas. Discussion continued on what the program would offer. B. Barry stated that this proposal would be a low priority based on budget needs.

8. Misc. Correspondence

The council acknowledged letter from Chestnut Farms thanking the Palmer Board of Health office for their help assisting a resident.

C. Blanchard also presented preliminary information on trying to determine the interest in a proposed Community Garden at Chase Field

9. Councilor Roundtable

R. Lavoie thanked the Palmer High School Band for offering a program on music therapy. He stated that the program is currently looking for donations.

J. Polonsky stated that Palmer Soccer will host a Bunny Run on March 28th. He also stated that Palmer Little League will be asking for volunteers to help clean and prepare fields at Burleigh Park.

D. Blais congratulated the students of Palmer High for being featured on News 40. He also stated that he is giving a presentation on the assassination of Abraham Lincoln on April 15th at the PHCC.

10. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by J. Polonsky, seconded by D. Blais. Motion passed 5-0 at 8:11 PM