

*Palmer Town Council
Meeting Minutes
Monday, May 18, 2015*

1 **1. Roll Call**

2 The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, May 18, 2015 was called to order at 6:00 PM.
3 Present were Town Manager Charles Blanchard, Councilors Barbara Barry, Jason Polonsky, Mary
4 Salzmann, Philip Hebert, Robert Lavoie and Donald Blais. Absent was Councilor Matthew Lovell.

5
6 **2. Executive Session**

7 *Motion to enter Executive Session as per Chapter 39, Section 23B (3) Contract Negotiations by J.*
8 *Polonsky, seconded by D. Blais. Motion passed 6-0 by roll call vote at 6:01pm. D. Blais - Yes, R.*
9 *Lavoie - Yes, P. Hebert - Yes, M. Salzmann - Yes, J. Polonsky - Yes, B. Barry - Yes*

10
11 *Motion to reconvene in open session by P. Hebert, seconded by D. Blais. Motion passed 6-0 by*
12 *roll call vote at 7:30 pm. D. Blais - Yes, R. Lavoie - Yes, P. Hebert - Yes, M. Salzmann - Yes, J.*
13 *Polonsky - Yes, B. Barry - Yes*

14
15 **3. Visitors Comments**

16 None

17
18 **4. Meeting Minutes**

19
20 December 8, 2014 - *Motion to approve the minutes of December 8, 2014 as submitted by M.*
21 *Salzmann, seconded by D. Blais. Motion passed 6-0.*

22
23 January 20, 2015 - *Motion to approve the minutes of January 20, 2015 as amended by J.*
24 *Polonsky, seconded by R. Lavoie. Motion passed 6-0.*

25
26 March 9, 2015 - *Motion to approve the minutes of March 9, 2015 as amended by P. Hebert,*
27 *seconded by R. Lavoie. Motion passed 6-0.*

28
29 April 13, 2015 - *Motion to approve the minutes of April 13, 2015 as amended by D. Blais,*
30 *seconded by R. Lavoie. Motion passed 6-0*

31
32 **5. Old Business**

33 **a. Recreation Building Update**

34
35 C. Blanchard stated that due to a lack of information to present to the Town Council regarding
36 the proposal, Jim Ostrout requested to postpone the discussion to the June Town Council
37 meeting.

1 **b. Second Reading - Adoption of Chapter 138, Section 33B**

2
3 Chapter 138, Section 33B of the Mass General Laws, authorizing licensees under section twelve
4 to sell alcoholic beverages between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon on Sundays, the last
5 Monday in May and on Christmas day or on the day following when said day occurs on Sunday
6 was read by M. Salzmann

7
8 **c. Public Hearing - Adoption of Chapter 138, Section 33B**

9
10 The notice of public hearing on the adoption of Chapter 138, Section 33B was read by M.
11 Salzmann. The public hearing was opened at 7:38 pm by B. Barry. J. Polonsky spoke on behalf of
12 the Local Licensing Authority and stated that the Town Council should this section of law
13 because it would allow for more Sunday events to occur in town at local businesses. He stated
14 that the Town’s business are currently losing out on revenue because the town has not taken
15 advantage of the opportunity. The public hearing was closed at 7:39 pm.

16
17 **d. FY 16 Budget Hearing**

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19 The notice of public hearing on the FY16 Budget was read by M. Salzmann. The public hearing
20 was opened at 7:40 pm by B. Barry. No public comment was offered. The public hearing was
21 closed at 7:41 pm.

22
23 **e. Town Manager Goals**

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25 B. Barry stated there was no comment on the Town Manager Goals as presented at the April 13,
26 2015 meeting. *Motion to approve the Town Manager Goals as presented by D. Blais, seconded*
27 *by P. Hebert.* J. Polonsky thanked councilors who supported goals which were presented and
28 thanked C. Blanchard for his work in presenting his proposed goals. He stated that he hopes
29 more councilors will engage in the goal setting process in the future. *Motion passed 6-0.*

30
31 **6. New Business**

32 **a. Conservation Restriction - Summer St Thorndike**

33
34 C. Blanchard stated that the proposed conservation restriction on the property owned by the
35 Donaldson family was part of proposal to mitigate a historic superfund site. He stated that this
36 restriction had been accepted by Conservation Commission. Counsel to the Donaldson family,
37 Bob Levite, stated that the process of enacting the conservation restriction took 11 years.

38 B. Levite outline the process taken to enact the conservation restriction on the property. He
39 stated that the conservation restriction on the property would be held by the New England
40 Forestry Foundation. Whitney Beils, Director of Land Protection for the New England Forestry
41 Foundation, outlined some of the restrictions which would be part of the conservation
42 restriction.

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B. Barry stated that the property would not become town owned land if the Conservation Restriction was accepted by the town. B. Levite stated that the property is owned by the Donaldson Family and can be sold, but the conservation restriction will stay with the property. He explained that the town must approve the conservation restriction because under Massachusetts General Law, the local town government must affirm the restriction would be beneficial for the town. C. Blanchard stated that passive recreation would be allowed on property. J. Polonsky asked if a gate could be installed at the entrance of the property to limit ATV use. B. Levite stated that constructing a gate to the property would be allowed.

Motion to approve the conservation restriction on the Donaldson property located at 8 Church Street, Thorndike and a portion of 209 Summer Street, Thorndike by J. Polonsky, seconded by D. Blais. Motion passed 6-0.

B. Levite stated that the conservation restriction document will be filed at Registry of Deeds

b. Approval of Annual Town Election Warrant

Motion to waive reading of the warrant by J. Polonsky, seconded by M. Salzman. Motion passed 6-0.

Motion to sign the Town Election Warrant and authorize the Town Clerk to post the warrant by P. Hebert, seconded by J. Polonsky. Motion passed 6-0.

C. Blanchard provided an update on how information on Old Mill Pond Rug Replacement ballot question is being disseminated.

7. Old Business

a. Budget Discussion

M. Salzman asked for a breakdown of the Mohegan Sun Gift Account, Baptist Hill Road plowing costs and the cost of snow removal on the Main Streets. C. Blanchard stated \$70,000 had been expended from Mohegan Sun Gift Account. He stated that the full costs of snow removal and plowing have not been totaled. J. Polonsky asked if there was breakdown on evening snow removal versus daytime snow removal costs. C. Blanchard stated that he will provide more information for the June meeting to discuss snow and ice deficit.

J. Polonsky asked why there was an increase to the Town Council Expense line item. C. Blanchard stated that it was increased to allow Town Council members to attend more meetings and trainings.

1 B. Barry proposed moving \$800 from the Town Council Stipend to the Town Manager Hourly
2 expense for the Town Manager's office and add the responsibility of Town Council Minutes to
3 Executive Assistant's job description. She stated that this would change the Executive Assistant
4 position to a salaried position and would bring the annual salary to \$46,564 in FY16.
5

6 B. Barry asked if \$25,000 would still be used for merit increases. C. Blanchard explained that the
7 merit increases are distributed based on goal attainment. He stated that the merit increases are
8 about 1% of each department head's salary.
9

10 B. Barry asked about the increase to the Recreation Department's \$2,000 increase in the salary
11 line item. C. Blanchard stated that the increase was proposed to provide additional hours for the
12 Recreation Director. C. Blanchard stated that the only increase in pay for the Recreation Director
13 would be a 2% cost of living adjustment consistent with other employees. B. Barry requested a
14 breakdown of the Recreation Director's current hours and a justification for \$2,000 increase in
15 expenses.
16

17 J. Polonsky asked why there was a large increase to the Town Clerk full time salary line item. C.
18 Blanchard explained that the difference was due to adding the proposed administrative career
19 plan into the budget.
20

21 B. Barry asked why there was an increase to the computer site maintenance costs. Executive
22 Assistant Andrew Golas stated that the increase was to fund improvements to the GIS software.
23

24 R. Lavoie asked why there was a proposed increase in Public Health Expenses line item. C.
25 Blanchard explained that the funding was originally proposed to fund a public health nurse.
26 Although the proposed program was not moving forward, the additional funding would go to
27 support other programs the Board of Health conducts. C. Blanchard stated that funding for a
28 needle exchange kiosk was also included in their budget proposal.
29

30 B. Barry asked that a computer replacement program be presented to the council
31

32 J. Polonsky, asked why \$5,000 had been allocated to Munis training. C. Blanchard stated that
33 because a \$7,000 actuarial study was not needed in FY16, a portion of the funding was
34 reallocated to provide training on the Munis system. B. Barry asked that cost estimate on Munis
35 training and what type of training would be provided be given to the Council.
36

37 J. Polonsky asked for a year to date expense report on the election workers salary and for
38 justification for the increase of \$600 to the line item.
39

40 B. Barry asked why no dues or travel and training expense was budgeted into Treasurer or
41 Collector budgets. She also asked for an explanation of the Folder Maintenance Contract line
42 item. These would be addressed at the next meeting.

1
2 B. Barry asked what the Palmer Town Building Capital Project funds are used for. C. Blanchard
3 explained that \$10,000 was expended to fund extraordinary maintenance items in Town Hall. He
4 requested that the Council continue to level fund this line item.
5

6 C. Blanchard provided a report from Alan Roy describing the duties of the forest warden. This
7 report was reviewed by the Town Council. J. Polonsky asked for information on the duties of the
8 Emergency Manager. C. Blanchard explained that he devotes 10-15 hours per week to his
9 position. He will provide a full report of the duties of the Emergency Manager.
10

11 B. Barry asked about the Dog Officer Capital Outlay line item. C, Blanchard explained that the
12 funds were to be used for new laptop for the dog officer. B. Barry stated that she believes the
13 computer purchase should be moved to computer expense. M. Salzmann asked about increase
14 in Dog Officer salary. C. Blanchard explained that the salary increase is from the regional MOU
15 with the Town of Monson for Dog Office services. Discussion continued on the increase in the
16 Dog Officer's budget.
17

18 B. Barry asked what additional work would be accomplished by the DPW if the two proposed
19 workers were added to the DPW Full Time Salary. A. Golas explained that the additional
20 employees would help the department catch up with current workload of the department. J.
21 Polonsky stated that according to reports from his coworker's, the length of the grass and
22 condition of the field at Laviolette field was an embarrassment. B. Barry stated that she felt
23 more needs to be done to maintain the town's parks. She stated that a proposal should be
24 brought forward to bring all of the parks up to an acceptable standard.
25

26 B. Barry questioned what the Railroad Crossing expense was used toward, noting the actual
27 expended amount in FY13 and FY14 was \$0. Additional information would be provided on this
28 expense.
29

30 J. Polonsky questioned why the Hampden County Retirement Assessment was reduced from
31 FY15. C. Blanchard explained that the assessment was set by the Hampden County Retirement
32 Board and transposed into the FY16 Budget.
33

34 B. Barry asked for a current balance on the October Snowstorm debt. Additional information
35 would be provided. B. Barry questioned the debt service proposed for the town hall
36 renovations. M. Salzmann stated that she would like to see additional principal payments to pay
37 off the October Snowstorm debt payment. J. Polonsky questioned if the town would be able to
38 afford jump in principal payments to \$88,000 for the Town Hall Renovation debt service
39 proposal.
40

41 P. Hebert left the meeting at 9:30 pm
42

1 J. Polonsky asked if there is any way to fund the full Library circulation proposal. C. Blanchard
2 explained that the library is well funded and there is no justification to provide additional
3 funding to the library to go above the mid-level circulation. He explained that the Library's
4 waiver program was set up to keep towns from cutting library budgets disproportionately with
5 other departments, which is not the case in Palmer.

6
7 B. Barry stated that she was disappointed that no additional service increases were being
8 proposed despite the projected new revenues from solar fields

9
10 B. Barry asked if the Capital Improvement Program could be taken up for discussion in July. C.
11 Blanchard explained that the funds to replenish the CIP program were in the FY16 budget. B.
12 Barry asked for how much money the town has in liabilities for Tax Title Attorney fees.

13
14 Discussion continued on the need to allocate more funding to maintain the town's parks.

15
16 **8. Subcommittee Reports**

17
18 Ordinance Committee - D. Blais stated that he hopes a revised version of the False Alarm
19 Ordinance would be prepared for the June meeting.

20
21 **9. Town Managers Report**

22
23 C. Blanchard stated that the contract for the Memorial Hall Roof Replacement had been
24 awarded to Aboveboard Contracting for \$18,600.

25
26 C. Blanchard stated that he met with inspectors from the Army Corps of Engineers at the site of
27 the Three Rivers Flood Damage Reduction project on April 30th to review the maintenance issues
28 there and to get a better understanding of what needs to be done to bring the facility into a
29 compliant condition. He stated that he is hopeful that the town will be able to develop a
30 maintenance plan over a timeframe that will be affordable.

31
32 C. Blanchard stated that the well at 189 State Street had been installed and the testing required
33 by the DEP was proceeding with good results so.

34
35 C. Blanchard reported that the Town received an extra dividend of \$16,127.00 on the MIIA
36 Property and Casualty and Workers Comp policies.

37
38 C. Blanchard explained that proposals from the vendors for the Sergeants' Assessment Center
39 were due on May 14th and interviews would be held the following week to select a firm to do
40 the assessments if it continues to appear to be beneficial to the selection process.

41

1 C. Blanchard stated that he has looked into various configurations for a parking lot on the Main
2 Street Three Rivers building the Town owns, and due to the small size of the lot, only 6 or 7
3 spaces can be put in – provided the abutter allows the town an easement across his property so
4 a one-way aisle can be established. He stated that it would be very difficult to provide any
5 landscaping due to space limitations.
6

7 C. Blanchard stated that because of the interest in redeveloping the Three River downtown area,
8 and the application for the Adams Arts Program, Alice Davey has suggested the town consider
9 turning the building over to the PRA. He explained the plan would be for the PRA to try to secure
10 grants and funding to rehabilitate the building and then lease or sell it on favorable terms to a
11 business that could become an anchor for the Arts-centered redevelopment.
12

13 **10. Misc. Correspondence**

14 None
15

16 **11. Councilor Roundtable**

17 D. Blais thanked Alice Davey for her efforts on the Adams Art Project. He also stated that he is
18 petitioning the legislature to repair Red Bridge prior to 2020. D. Blais thanked the Palmer
19 Historical and Cultural Center for allowing him to present his presentation on the assassination
20 of Abraham Lincoln.
21

22 R. Lavoie stated that the Lions Club would be holding a Pancake Breakfast on Memorial Day at
23 Converse Middle School prior to the Memorial Day Parade.
24

25 M. Salzmann stated that she would like a report from the subcommittee assigned to reviewing
26 the local government Essay Contest.
27

28 **12. Adjournment**

29 *Motion to adjourn by J. Polonsky, seconded by R. Lavoie. Motion passed 6-0 at 10:10 pm*
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