

**Palmer Town Council**

**Meeting Minutes**

**November 10, 2014**

**1. Roll Call**

The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, November 10, 2014 was called to order at 6:30 pm. Present were Town Manager Charles Blanchard, Councilors Robert Lavoie, Barbara Barry, Mary Salzmann, Donald Blais, Philip Hebert, Jason Polonsky and Executive Assistant Andrew Golas. Absent was Councilor Matt Lovell

**2. Consent of the Agenda Order**

Motion to approve the agenda as submitted by P. Hebert, seconded by D. Blais. Motion passed 6-0.

**3. Visitors Comments**

Mike Magiera of 4 Bowden Street addressed the council concerning new signs which were posted by Baystate Hospital at the intersection of Lawrence St. and Thorndike Street. His concern is that the location of the sign is obstructing the view of traffic down Thorndike Street as you pull out from Lawrence Street. C. Blanchard stated that he would refer the concern to the Traffic Safety Committee for a recommendation on the matter.

**4. Meeting Minutes**

None

**5. New Business**

**a. Pilot Agreement with Syncarpha Solar**

C. Blanchard gave a summary of proposed pilot agreement with Syncarpha Solar, LLC. Brian Kopperl of Renewable Energy Massachusetts represented the applicant of this project. He stated that the proposed PILOT agreement would be \$12,000 per MW A/C which is consistent with the other projects being constructed in town. He also stated that an escalator of 1.5% per year was also attached to the PILOT agreement. The pilot would apply to personal property only and would include a one-time \$10,000 processing fee. B. Kopperl stated that he felt the proposed solar field would be a positive reuse of the airport property. He stated that Syncarpha Solar hopes to break ground on the project by the beginning of the new-year and would be operational by July 4<sup>th</sup>. The proposed PILOT agreement would be a 20 year agreement. The site plan for the project was approved by Planning Board at their November 3, 2014 meeting.

P. Hebert asked if the standard practice was to upgrade the equipment on site after 20 years. B. Kopperl stated that the contractor could upgrade the equipment at that point but would it would be more likely that the assessors would re-value the existing equipment on site after the PILOT has expired. He stated that the power inverters are the only

equipment scheduled to be replaced which would be after 15 years. B. Kopperl stated that a decommissioning agreement at end of the project is in effect with the Planning Board.

J. Polonsky asked if there were any site plans available for the Council to inspect and if there were any comments from the neighbors of the project. B. Kopperl stated that a landscape plan is a condition of site plan which was approved by the Planning Board.

J. Polonsky asked if a portion of the PILOTs for solar developments could be earmarked for parks and recreational use. C. Blanchard explained that the PILOT would be in lieu of personal property taxes that might be subject to appeal every year, but would go into the general fund for the annual operational budget. He stated that he was not aware of a mechanism that allows a particular property tax payment to be earmarked for an individual use each year, but would investigate this further. B. Kopperl stated that the proposed project location was abandoned property and the assessed PILOT value would bring additional revenue to the Town.

B. Barry clarified that the discussion was on the acceptance of the PILOT on the taxes not approval of the project moving forward. The advantage to the developer seeking a PILOT agreement is to leverage financing from potential investors by finalizing all costs up front.

J. Polonsky asked if PILOT was not approved by the Council, would taxes would still be assessed to the project. C. Blanchard stated that taxes would still be assessed but would be reassessed each year based on the personal property value.

*Motion to accept the agreement with Syncarpha Solar for a 20 year PILOT agreement at \$12,000 per Megawatt AC plus a 1.5% escalator by J. Polonsky, seconded by M. Salzman. Motion passed 6-0.*

C. Blanchard stated that Syncarpha has shown interest in leasing the adjoining landfill property for solar but would require new RFP to be advertised. At that time, the Council would have an opportunity to accept a lease for solar energy production.

## **b. Council Rules**

The proposed Town Council rule amendments were presented by B. Barry.

P. Hebert questioned if working sessions should be televised. B. Barry explained that the revised rule would make the televising of working sessions a council decision.

P. Hebert asked why the revised rules proposed to remove the acceptance of the agenda order. B. Barry explained that it seemed to be unnecessary exercise of the Council. She explained that the changes made were based on flow of a typical meeting. B. Barry explained the changes to the order of business. She explained that a provision was added to allow the council to react to issues within their own approved ordinances in less than 2 years which is prohibited under the current rules.

P. Hebert asked how the councilors be able to add agenda items. B. Barry stated that any item that a councilor would like to discuss could be discussed during old business. B. Barry also stated that councilor roundtable would be reformed to allow for councilors to voluntarily provide comment each meeting rather than be placed on the spot.

D. Blais stated that he would like change to change the conference schedule to allow more councilors to attend the MMA conference each year. B. Barry stated that the discussion of more councilors attending conferences should be brought up during budget discussions to appropriate more funds to the conferences and trainings line item.

*Motion to accept the proposed Council Rules as amended by D. Blais, seconded by J. Polonsky. Motion passed 6-0.*

**c. Preliminary Budget Discussion**

B. Barry stated that a joint meeting between the Town Council and School Committee prior to the development of the budget is required under the Town Charter. C. Blanchard stated that he usually meets with the Business Manager and Superintendent to discuss the financial position of the town. The School Committee and Town Council have made attempts to meet in the past but many have been unsuccessful. C. Blanchard explained that the annual budget that is presented and discussed in March is not a final number from the state and normally, revenues and expenses are still being fine tuned into June.

B. Barry stated that the Town Council should meet with School Committee at next the next Town Council meeting in December. C. Blanchard stated that the Governor's budget proposal will not be presented until late January so any budget presented beforehand is only an estimation. The only numbers which he will be able to present at that time will be new growth and the 2 ½ percent increase. B. Barry stated that she would reach out to the chairmen of the School Committee and try to schedule meeting for December. J. Polonsky asked that a year to date budget projection be presented to the Town Council. B. Barry asked that all budget numbers be brought up to date prior to being presented to the Town Council.

C. Blanchard stated that there will not be enough information to develop budget this early. He stated that the council should be bringing general priorities forward at this point to take into consideration during the budget development process. B. Barry stated that the Council should try to comply with way charter is written. M. Salzman stated that she knows that the budget will change but will like an early starting point. P. Hebert stated that it is too early to propose budget for the next fiscal year.

**d. Veterans Day Proclamation**

*Motion to approve and sign the Veteran's Day Proclamation for 2014 by D. Blais, seconded by M. Salzman. Motion approved 6-0*

**6. Old Business**

**a. Town Manager Evaluation Form Discussion**

The proposed Town Manager Evaluation forms were presented to council. J. Polonsky asked that the numbering system for the performance J. Polonsky stated that he would like the ability for the Town Manager to provide feedback and for councilors to add their own comments in each category.

Motion to table the discussion on the Town Manager Evaluation Forms until the December 8<sup>th</sup> meeting by M. Salzman, seconded by P. Hebert. Motion passed 6-0.

## **7. Subcommittee Report**

Ordinance Committee – D. Blais stated that the Ordinance Committee has discussed a potential false alarm ordinance with Chief Frydryk. He stated that he hopes to have a draft ordinance to present at December or January meeting.

## **8. Town Manager Report**

C. Blanchard stated that a proposal had been presented by the Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce to demolish the former Tenczar's property taken by the Town by tax title and replacing it with a parking lot. By C. Blanchard asked if there was any interest by the Council to pursue this proposal. He stated that the proposal would be benefit to existing businesses which are in need of parking. C. Blanchard stated that the Town's responsibility would be to construct parking lot and maintain the property. He also stated that as part of the agreement, the Town may wish to have wording so the town would not be required to keep the use as a parking lot in perpetuity. D. Blais stated his support of proposal. M. Salzman asked how large the parking lot would be. C. Blanchard stated he was unaware of the total square footage. J. Polonsky asked if a cost estimate was available on the total scope of work. C. Blanchard stated that a cost estimate was not available at this time. B. Barry stated that the Town Council would need to vote to retain to property for municipal use because it was taken by Tax Title. R. Lavoie voiced support for project. Motion to direct the Town Manager to move ahead with proposal by B. Barry, seconded by D. Blais. Motion passed 6-0.

C. Blanchard stated that the dump truck body replacements which were funded through the Capital Improvements Plan would not be moving forward after a review of the current DPW needs. He stated that he intended on reallocating the funds to go toward a new pickup truck with plow. He stated that the existing trucks were too corroded to support the dump bodies which had been budgeted. B. Barry stated that any change of use to Capital Improvement Plan funds would need vote of council. B. Barry stated that she would like to review of need for new truck. Discussion continued on need for new truck for the DPW.

*Motion to move forward with the purchase of a new pickup truck with plow by reallocating funds designated for purchasing new dump bodies under the FY15 Capital Improvements Plan by P. Hebert, Seconded by M. Salzman. Motion passed 5-1 with R. Lavoie against.*

C. Blanchard stated that the Bid date for bar rack replacement at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and generator replacement at Pump Station #3 will be due November 19<sup>th</sup>

C. Blanchard also distributed an update on his progress on the Town Manager Goals

## **9. Misc. Correspondence**

B. Barry acknowledged receipt of the letter for waiver on library funding, an email regarding the process of rezoning property. She also stated that the Veteran's Day Parade would be at 10:40 am Tuesday from the Thorndike Post Office to the Junction Memorial Park

## **10. Councilor Roundtable**

D. Blais thanked the Palmer Schools for holding a Veteran's Day remembrance ceremony.

P. Hebert stated that he would like the pro-expanded bottle bill signs picked up from next to the Mass Pike entrance. He also congratulated Anne Gobi on being elected to the State Senate. He

also stated his displeasure that Monson Schools have prohibited Pathfinder from recruiting students from their High School. P. Hebert also stated that he would like the DARE program extended to High School students

J. Polonsky thanked the town for the positive turnout at the state election. He also wished everyone a happy Veterans Day.

#### **11. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by D. Blais, seconded by P. Hebert. Motion passed 6-0 at 8:15 PM

Minutes submitted by Andrew M. Golas