

Palmer Town Council

Meeting Minutes

November 13, 2023

Call to Order:

The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, November 13, 2023, was called to order at 6:33 pm by Town Council Vice President Jessica Sizer. Councilors Robert Lavoie, Philip Hebert, Matthew Lemieux, Mark Caci, and Karl Williams were present. Also present was Executive Assistant Marlene Ottomaniello.

Visitor Comments –

Mike Minney, French Drive- Would like DPW to address road conditions on French Dr., Faragon Ave., and James St. to ensure emergency access.

Steve Kosmider, Thorndike – Would like updates on the Church St Bridge and High School Track. Has concerns about the conditions of the Wastewater Treatment Plant and rising costs of sewer bills.

Patricia Conti, Faragon Ave. – Would like help addressing the storm water runoff coming from Flynt St. There was previous discussion about a possible catch basin to help mitigate the sand and salt being deposited onto the boat ramp. Town Council will have the DPW Director look into the situation and possible solutions.

Chris Smith – Would like to know the total cost of work to be done at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and why the loan is for two million dollars. Town Council will explain further in the discussion before the vote.

New Business

Board of Assessors – FY24 Tax Classification Hearing

Rachael Carney, Principal Assessor reviews PowerPoint presentation covering three Tax Policy options for consideration and vote -Single or Split Tax Rate, Residential Exemption, and Small Commercial Exemption. Rachael reviews projected financial summaries, notes that some numbers are rounded and not final. There is also a brief overview of the assessment process and the recommendations from the Board of Assessors. The Board of Assessors does not recommend a split tax rate. A Single Tax rate would keep Palmer competitive for new business as well as maintaining Commercial, Industrial and Personal Property values and stability for existing businesses. The projected tax rate is 17.15 per \$1000 Assessed value subject to DLS approval. The Board of Assessors also does not recommend adopting the Small Commercial Exemption or the Residential Exemption. Residents are encouraged to visit the Assessors office with any questions.

Motion to accept the Single Tax Rate for Town of Palmer by R. Lavoie 2nd by K. Williams *vote: 6-0-0 passed.*

Motion to not adopt the Small Commercial Exemption by M. Lemieux, 2nd by K. Williams *vote: 6-0-0 passed.*

Motion to not adopt the Residential Exemption by M. Lemieux, 2nd by K. Williams *vote: 6-0-0 passed.*

Old Business

Stormwater Management Ordinance - Public Hearing and 2nd Reading

Chapter 145 Stormwater Management- Purpose and authority. The purpose of this article is to better manage land development in order to protect, maintain, and enhance the public health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens of Palmer by establishing minimum requirements and procedures to control the adverse impacts associated with construction site stormwater runoff and post-construction runoff.

Public Hearing opened at 7:23 pm

Discussion- Mandates are being passed down from the State to meet MS4 requirements, soon to be MS5. These controls and guidelines are to help the town mitigate concerns going forward.

Public Hearing closed at 7:25 pm

Stormwater Management Enterprise Ordinance – Public Hearing and 2nd Reading.

The stormwater management program is a federal mandate designed to promote the health and safety of the public, to protect property from flooding, and the damage caused by stormwater runoff, and to protect and manage water quality by controlling the level of pollutants in stormwater runoff and the flow of water as conveyed by manmade and by natural stormwater management systems and facilities.

Public Hearing opened at 7:26 pm

Discussion- This would establish an Enterprise Fund where there would be an additional fee for stormwater management. The storm water fee shall only be used for the direct and indirect costs of the Storm Water Division to provide storm water management services. Clarification that this would be a fee and not a tax. Residential would be a possible annual flat fee of \$15. Commercial and Industrial would be based on square footage of the building, parking lots and other impermeable surfaces. The costs to meet MS4 permit requirements are projected to double. This fee would offset the rising costs of the town's stormwater management.

Public Hearing closed at 7:41 pm

Citizen Zoning Petition for Amendment to Zoning – Additional Cannabis Retail – *Vote by Council*

Ordinance 2023-2 Z- Amendment to the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Palmer, Be it enacted by the Palmer Town Council

That the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Palmer, Chapter 171 Zoning, Article XXIV — Section 171-124 — Marijuana Establishments and Registered Marijuana Dispensaries be amended to change the language of subsection E. "Limitation on Number of Marijuana Establishments and subsection G.(l)(b) "Special Permit Application Requirements."

Motion to accept Ordinance 2023-2 Z by P. Hebert 2nd, by K. Williams *vote: 6-0-0 passed.*

Wastewater Loan Authorization \$2,000,000 – *Vote by Council*

Discussion- Monson and Belchertown have appropriated the required funds for their portion of this project. This vote is to authorize a loan for the borrowing of up to 2 million dollars which would allow the project to proceed and meet the contract deadline. Once things are finalized, we will then have full information on the total cost of the project.

Motion to accept the Wastewater Loan Authorization for \$2,000,000 by M. Caci, 2nd by M. Lemieux *vote: 6-0-0 passed.*

New Business

Review/ Discussion of candidates for Interim Town Manager

Discussion- About 15 candidates applied, would like to narrow it down to 3 or 4 for interviews. Each councilor reviews their choices and collectively the Town Council select Charles Blanchard, Robert Reed, Richard White and Michael Szlozek.

Schedule interviews for Interim Town Manager-Town Council sets the date for Thursday November 16, 2024.

Misc. Correspondence & Councilor's Roundtable

Councilor Rob Lavoie -Would like to thank those who helped make the Veterans Day Parade a success. This is a great tradition and show of community support for our Veterans.

Chris Smith - Light up Palmer is from 3-6pm on November 25. The group now has full non-profit status registered as Palmer Business Partnership and can reach out for grant money for future projects.

Other Holiday events coming up are Christmas on the Common at Hryniewicz Park, Palmer High Craft Fair and the PHCC Festival of Trees.

Motion to adjourn meeting at 8:32 pm by P. Hebert, 2nd by K. Williams *Vote 6-0-0*