

# ***Palmer Town Council***

## ***Town Council Meeting Minutes***

Monday, April 14, 2014

### **1. Roll Call**

The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, April 14, 2014 was called to order at 6:30 pm. Present were Town Manager Charles Blanchard, Phil Hebert, Barbara Barry, Jason Polonsky, Matt Lovell, Donald Blais, Paul Burns, Mary Salzmann and Andrew Golas recording minutes.

### **2. Consent of the Agenda Order**

Motion to accept the agenda as submitted by P. Burns, seconded by J. Polonsky. Motion passed 7-0.

### **3. Meeting Minutes**

None

### **4. Visitors Comments (for items not on the agenda)**

None

### **5. New Business:**

#### **1. Yellow House – Bonnie Rathbone**

Bonnie Rathbone and Lisa Remillard of the Yellow House addressed the council regarding their proposal to commission a mural for the Town of Palmer. B. Rathbone stated that the Yellow House would like to raise funding to commission muralist Rochelle Shicoff to aid the town in developing a town oriented mural. She presented a resume for Ms. Shicoff and proposal to develop a mural in a place yet to be determined. B. Rathbone stated that the cost to commission the large mural on Adam's market in Monson was \$3,500, however, a smaller mural would not cost as much. The anticipated start time of the mural could be spring of 2015. M. Salzmann proposed applying for a cultural grant to fund the project. B. Rathbone stated that it would be possible to apply for a cultural grant; if so, applications would be due in October. She also stated that the physical painting of the mural would be done by local townspeople and art students. P. Hebert asked what action The Yellow House was looking to receive from the Council. B. Rathbone stated that they were looking for support from the Council to move forward with the project.

J. Polonsky asked about coordinating a revitalization effort at the Depot Village Park on Walnut Street. B. Rathbone stated that she would like to pursue cleaning the park and the possibility of using it for concerts. Recreation Director Jim Ostrout stated that he has begun coordinating a cleanup effort with the Parks Department and town residents. J. Polonsky stated that he would like to see other community development projects follow this effort. B. Barry stated that she would like the mural project to be a lead up event to the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration in 2016. The Council expressed unanimous support for moving the project forward.

## 2. **Debt Exclusion for Old Mill Pond School Floor**

C. Blanchard explained that one potential impact of the Net School Spending deficit is that there would be no borrowing capacity left in the budget to fund the replacement of the carpet at Old Mill Pond School. The OMP Building Committee is reviewing the options on the materials to specify the flooring replacement, but the current budget estimate ranges between \$1.5 and \$2.1 Million depending on the material chosen. He recommended placing a question on the June 10<sup>th</sup> election to exclude the debt service for this project from the limits of Proposition 2 ½. C. Blanchard explained that the MSBA will meet on June 4<sup>th</sup> to determine if the project will be awarded a reimbursement grant. The OMP School Floor Building Committee will also need to determine which flooring option they would like to move forward with. C. Blanchard also stated that due to the presence of water in the slab, moisture mitigation will be required as part of the project. He is unsure as to whether the final material could be determined prior to the June 10<sup>th</sup> town election. J. Polonsky asked if he could provide an estimated cost per homeowner for the override. C. Blanchard stated that it could be calculated and presented. B. Barry asked if it was the consensus of the Council to hold off on the construction of the project until next summer break. C. Blanchard confirmed that the consensus was to wait until 2015 to begin the project. B. Barry stated that she is concerned that an override may not pass if a firm price has not been committed prior to the election. P. Hebert asked what the town's option would be if the override did fail. C. Blanchard stated that due to the tight bonding limit, the project could not go forward. P. Burns stated that he would be concerned of the cost to hold a special election if the council decided to wait on the debt exclusion vote.

Motion to place the debt exclusion for the Old Mill Pond School Floor replacement of the June 10<sup>th</sup> Town Election ballot by J. Polonsky, seconded by P. Burns. Motion passed 7-0.

## 3. **Bottle Bill Discussion**

Town resident Alexander LaMarche addressed the council to express his support for the proposed bottle deposit bill. He asked that the Town Council vote to support the bottle bill in an effort to reduce litter. Discussion was held on the current status of the bill in the legislature. P. Burns stated that he is in support of the bill. Motion to formally endorse the bottle bill by P. Burns, seconded by M. Lovell. Motion Passed 7-0. P. Burns commended A. LaMarche for bringing this proposal to the Town Council to generate their support.

## 6. **Old Business**

### 1. **FY15 Budget**

J. Polonsky requested that a schedule of departments be presented each budget meeting to the Council to facilitate discussion. C. Blanchard stated that the intent of the Council was not to address any departments at this meeting, but to schedule them for the upcoming meeting. B. Barry asked for an overview of the town's standing with Net School Spending. C. Blanchard stated that he has been in negotiations with Brad Brothers and DESE Commissioner Chester regarding the elimination of the net school spending penalty. He stated that if a resolution is not reached, a 20 percent budget reduction in each department could be implemented. He is still awaiting a response from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. M. Salzmann stated that she felt that the town needs to petition the state for additional Chapter 70 funds. C. Blanchard stated that according to the DESE, the Town of Palmer already receives more Chapter 70 money than the current formula indicates it should. Discussion continued on the standing of the Net School Spending issue. B. Barry stated that the town should pay the amount to

the schools to bring the town within five percent of Net School Spending in FY14 in an effort to avoid any further penalty. Discussion continued on the status of the school department budget. P. Burns stated that he would like to see a line item FY15 budget produced from the school department. The next budget meeting will be April 28<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM.

## **7. Subcommittee Report**

D. Blais reported that the new Police station was 97% complete and that an open house has been scheduled for Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00 am

B. Barry stated that the Town Manager Goals Committee is currently rewriting the Town Manager Goals evaluation tool. The committee is meeting next week to continue discussions on the revised evaluation tool.

## **8. Town Manager's Report**

C. Blanchard stated that because the town switched from the HCOG spot rate to the National default rate, the town realized a savings of \$22,373.57 in the month of January alone. He also stated that the SRF project held its kick-off meeting on April 9<sup>th</sup>. He requested that the Town Council formally appoint the Director of Municipal Finance as an alternative to sign documents over the duration of the project.

Motion to appoint Director of Municipal Finance John Kuzmiski as the alternate signatory for the SRF project by J. Polonsky, seconded by P. Burns. Motion passed 7-0.

C. Blanchard stated that a summary of Chapter 90 road projects had been provided by Craig Dolan. J. Polonsky asked that a street sweeping schedule be provided to residents through the town website. M. Salzmann stated that due to the terrible condition of the Church Street Bridge, a load limit should be enforced and a letter should be sent to companies in the industrial park to deter trucks from using Church Street. B. Barry requested a Chapter 90 road replacement schedule with an estimated cost of repairs. C. Blanchard stated that the costs to fully repair the Church Street Bridge would be much higher than just repairing the roads. C. Blanchard reported that he had attended the CT-MA Rail Initiative Meeting in Norwich which included an update on the Central Corridor Study and East-West Inland Study. He and Chief Frydryk also attended an Active Shooter and Violence Intruder emergencies in Schools seminar. Finally, C. Blanchard reported that the polling location for Districts 2 and 3 would be moving from Converse Middle School to the St. Thomas Parish Center. P. Hebert raised a concern about needles being found in the local parks. P. Burns asked if there was a better way the town could make sharps containers available to the public.

## **9. Misc. Correspondence**

None

## **10. Councilor Roundtable**

1. D. Blais thanked Chief Frydryk for the tour of the new Police Station of April 7<sup>th</sup>.
2. P. Burns wished everyone a happy Easter.
3. J. Polonsky stated that the Easter Bunny would be making appearances around town over the next week at various locations. He also stated that the Leaf Pit would be open to

Town residents beginning April 25<sup>th</sup>. Finally, he thanked Doug Farmer for posting an editorial on getting more involved in the community in the Palmer Journal Register.

4. P. Hebert stated that he would like to see the Council give Noah Lis a proclamation for his appearance on the TV show The Voice. P. Hebert read a letter from Mohegan Sun concerning the potential for development at the site owned by Northeast Realty off of the Turnpike Entrance. He also addressed the letter written to Mohegan Sun which was signed by D. Blais, M. Salzmann and P. Burns concerning Mohegan Sun's commitment to developing in Palmer. He stated that he did not appreciate a letter being sent regarding this issue from other members of the council without consent from the council as a whole.

## **11. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by P. Hebert, seconded by D. Blais. Motion passed 7-0 at 8:17 PM

Minutes submitted by: Andrew M. Golas