

1 **Palmer Town Council**

2 **Town Council Meeting Minutes**

3 Monday, March 10, 2014

4
5 **1. Roll Call**

6
7 The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, March 10, 2014 was called to order at 6:30 pm.
8 Present were Town Manager Charles Blanchard, Phil Hebert, Barbara Barry, Jason Polonsky,
9 Matt Lovell, Donald Blais, Mary Salzmann and Andrew Golas recording minutes. Paul Burns
10 was not present for roll call but arrived at 6:36 PM

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

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14 Motion to accept the agenda as amended by M. Salzmann, seconded by J. Polonsky. Motion
15 passed 6-0.

16
17 **3. Meeting Minutes**

18
19 November 18, 2014 – Motion to approve minutes as amended by M. Salzmann, seconded by J.
20 Polonsky. Motion passed 6-0.

21
22 February 10, 2014 – Motion to approve minutes as amended by M. Salzmann, seconded by D.
23 Blais. Motion passed 6-0.

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

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27 None

28
29 **5. Old Business:**

30 **1. Playground Committee**

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32 Better Parks for Palmer committee member Donna Collette and Community
33 Development Director Alice Davey addressed the council regarding the status of the
34 Endleson Park rehabilitation project and other potential park improvement opportunities.
35 D. Collette stated that the committee had raised an additional \$7,500 since the approval
36 of funds from the Town council; most made in memory of Brian Donovan. These
37 donations have reduced the funding required by the Town Council. D. Collette stated that
38 The Better Parks for Palmer committee has requested that the surplus funds be allocated
39 to other parks in town. A. Davey stated that the FY14 Community Development Block
40 Grant application was submitted to the state on February 14th and the town should know
41 the status of the grant by July or August. She recommended that the Town Council
42 Funding should remain in place until the grant is awarded. A. Davey stated that the
43 Community Development office has applied for a \$200,000 Common Backyards grant in
44 which Eager Playground was the first choice to receive renovation. As part of the
45 renovation, A. Davey suggested expanding the memorial program used to raise money
46 for Endleson park. She asked if the council would support the reallocation of funds
47 committed to Endleson Park to the rehabilitation of Eager Playground if the Better Parks
48 for Palmer committee is successful in raising the remaining difference. J. Polonsky asked
49 when the earliest time was that the money could be moved from the Endleson Playground
50 account. A. Davey stated that it would potentially be early April. P. Burns requested that

51 the Thorndike Park be looked as a priority for rehabilitation. A. Davey stated that the
52 Thorndike playground did not qualify for the common backyards grant because it is not
53 within an environmental justice area. She also stated that the DPW would be providing
54 in-kind work to offset some of the project costs at Eager playground.
55

56 Motion to support the plan as outlined by Community Development Director Alice
57 Davey and to support the plan to move funds to support the project as necessary by B.
58 Barry, seconded by M. Lovell. Motion passed 7-0.
59

60 **2. Domestic Violence Task Force**

61
62 Holly Batise of the Domestic Violence Task Force outlined the mission of the White
63 Ribbon Campaign. She stated that the mission of the campaign was to end domestic
64 violence against women. The town council and all in attendance took the pledge against
65 domestic violence against women.
66

67 **3. Welcome Home Veterans Day Proclamation**

68
69 J. Polonsky acknowledged William Byrnes who was in attendance and had served in the
70 Vietnam War. J. Polonsky read the proclamation for Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans
71 Day. P. Burns recognized the service by veterans during the Vietnam War.
72

73 **4. Town Manager Goals**

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75 The Town Manager Goals were presented to the Council by C. Blanchard. The council
76 agreed to vote on the goals during the next Town Council Meeting.
77

78 **5. Town Manager Contract**

79
80 Motion to extend the Town Manager's contract by one year beginning July 1, 2015 at a
81 two percent salary increase and also to increase the possible bonus to \$6,000.00 by J.
82 Polonsky, seconded by P. Burns. Motion passed 7-0.
83

84 **6. Voting Location**

85
86 B. Barry stated that the school committee had asked what progress the town had made on
87 looking into changing the voting location for Precincts 2 and 3 from Converse Middle
88 School. C. Blanchard stated that the Town Clerk and State Elections Board are in the
89 process of looking for an alternative location; however, it is not likely that a new voting
90 location will be established before the 2015 School Calendar is set. He stated that the
91 Schools should anticipate elections to be held at Converse Middle School next year.
92

93 **6. New Business**

94
95 **1. Refinancing of Outstanding Bonds – 1st Reading Loan Authorization 2014-02**

96
97 C. Blanchard stated that the bids for the Sewer Replacement Project had come in lower
98 than anticipated, however, after further review; the refinancing of the debt will not cover
99 100 percent of the incurred debt from the SRF project. C. Blanchard stated that
100 continuing with the refinancing of debt makes sense whether or not the sewer project
101 moves forward. He also explained that the benefits of the project still outweigh the costs
102 of the project. Finance Director John Kuzmiski presented the potential impacts on the
103 sewer budget over the next two fiscal years. He also highlighted which accounts were to

104 be paid off through the loan authorization. J. Kuzmiski recommended the town opt to
105 finance the SRF project through a 20 year bond, which would save one million dollars
106 over the life of the loan in interest as compared to a 30 year bond. C. Blanchard stated
107 that by the time sewer fees are increased to account for the SRF project, the current rate
108 would have been held for four years. He also stated that Palmer is on the low end of
109 sewer rates in the area. WWTP Superintendent Gerry Skowronek highlighted the benefits
110 of the SRF project if the council decided to move forward with it. He stated that because
111 the Town of Palmer is an Environmental Justice community, a portion of the unallocated
112 funds from the SRF program will be issued in the form of debt forgiveness. J. Polonsky
113 asked what the approximate timeline of the project will be. Antonio de Cruz of Tighe and
114 Bond stated that all sewer work would be completed by November and final paving
115 would be done in 2015. In this timeline, high traveled areas would be completed first.
116

117 B. Barry asked if the motion to refinance would just extend the current debt or pay it off
118 completely. J. Kuzmiski stated that the Town would be calling the debt and paying off
119 the current loans. B. Barry asked to confirm the wording of the Loan Authorization with
120 the fiscal advisor. J. Kuzmiski confirmed that the Town's Fiscal Advisor, Maureen
121 Pacella would be attending the next Town Council Meeting on March 24th.
122

123 Loan Authorization 2014-02 was read by J. Polonsky.
124

125 2. **FY15 Budget**

126 P. Hebert acknowledged the Council's receipt of the FY15 Budget proposal. C.
127 Blanchard outlined some of the challenges in developing the FY15 budget including the
128 questionable status of the Net School Spending penalties on the town. He recommended
129 setting dates for department managers to meet with the council to discuss their budgets
130 beginning next meeting. J. Polonsky asked if there was any timeline on the state
131 legislature's bill to remove the Net School Spending Penalties. D. Blais stated that there
132 was no timeline yet.
133
134

135 3. **Town Hall Hours**

136 C. Blanchard stated that he has put a proposal together which would extend Town Hall
137 operation hours earlier in the week but close Town Hall on Fridays. He presented his
138 proposal to the Council. J. Polonsky stated that he felt the proposed hours would be
139 confusing to residents. P. Burns stated that the decision to manipulate Town Hall hours is
140 a management decision which should be left to the discretion of the Town Manager. D.
141 Blais stated that he would be reluctant to change the Town Hall hours. B. Barry stated
142 that she felt that all employee hours should be consistent with each other. J. Polonsky
143 stated that he would not be in support of changing the current Town Hall time schedule.
144
145

146 7. **Subcommittee Report**

147 M. Salzmann stated that the Energy Committee had met with Jim Barry of the Department of
148 Energy Resources. She stated that the DOER had indicated the town would not be eligible for a
149 Green Community grant application during this application session since we currently have a
150 Green Community grant funded project ongoing. She also stated that all town building are
151 scheduled to receive an energy audit. M. Salzmann stated that according to the DOER, LED light
152 upgrades for all town owned street lights would be far too costly to be worth the investment at the
153 current time.
154
155

156 D. Blais reported that the new Police station was 97% complete and that an open house has been
157 scheduled for Saturday, May 3rd at 10:00 am
158

159
160 **8. Town Manager's Report**
161

162 C. Blanchard requested the appointment of the following individuals to the Open Space and
163 Recreation Committee: Angela Panaccione, Linda Leduc, Michael Marciniac, Alice Davey, Dave
164 Cotter, Bonnie Weeks, and Jim Ostrout. He also stated that the commission would like the
165 Council to appoint one of their own members to sit on the committee as well.
166

167 Motion to appoint D. Blais to the Open Space and Recreation Committee by M. Salzmann,
168 seconded by P. Hebert. Motion passed 7-0.
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170 Motion to appoint all members recommended by the Town Manager to the Open Space and
171 Recreation Committee by J. Polonsky, seconded by B. Barry. Motion passed 7-0.
172

173 C. Blanchard presented newly appointed Recreation Director Jim Ostrout to the Town Council.
174 He stated that the Manager and Recreation Director would establish a set of goals for the
175 Recreation Direction Director to accomplish.
176

177 C. Blanchard presented a proposal from Marois Construction to replace the East and West doors
178 and frames on the Town Hall. He recommended that the Council vote to transfer \$70,000 from
179 the Mohegan Sun Unrestricted Gift Account to a Town Hall Door Replacement Account. J.
180 Polonsky asked if there was available funding in the Capital Improvement Account. He also
181 stated that he would like to see the unrestricted funding given to the town by Mohegan Sun to go
182 toward Park Improvements. C. Blanchard stated that the proposed Capital Improvement Program
183 has declared a use for the majority of funds in the Capital Improvement Account.
184

185 Motion to transfer \$70,000 from the Mohegan Sun Unrestricted Gift Account to the Town Hall
186 Door Replacement Account by D. Blais, seconded by M. Lovell. M. Salzmann asked if the
187 funding could be taken from free cash. C. Blanchard advised against taking from free cash due to
188 the projections on the tightness of the FY15 budget. Motion Passed 7-0.
189

190 C. Blanchard asked that J. Polonsky be appointed as the newest member of the Licensing
191 Commission. Motion to appoint J. Polonsky to the position of Licensing Commission Member by
192 B. Barry, seconded by M. Lovell. Motion passed 6-0-1 with Mr. Polonsky abstaining.
193

194 **9. Misc. Correspondence**
195

196 P. Hebert acknowledged receipt of the letter from Mr. Plassman regarding the Race Track on
197 Whisky Hill.
198

199 **10. Councilor Roundtable**
200

- 201 1. B. Barry asked that Northeast Realty be formally invited to the next regular Town
202 Council Meeting on April 14th. P. Hebert stated that he had previously attempted to reach
203 out to Northeast Realty with no success.
- 204 2. M. Salzmann expressed her sympathy toward the Donovan and Perry Families for their
205 losses. She also requested that the town form a Founder's Day committee in anticipation
206 of the 2016 Founders Day.

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3. P. Burns commended the efforts of the Playground Committee in securing the necessary funding for the Endleson Park to move forward and to petition for additional funding to rehabilitate Eager Park.
 4. J. Polonsky acknowledged the accomplishment of Noah Lis passing auditions on the show The Voice.
 5. P. Hebert stated that he had met with the new owners of Nick's Sports Shop on Park Street. He also thanked Senator Steven Brewer for his service to the Town and State over the years

216 **11. Adjournment**

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218 Motion to adjourn by P. Burns, seconded by M. Lovell. Motion passed 7-0 at 8:35 PM

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221 Minutes submitted by: Andrew M. Golas