

Palmer Town Council

Town Council Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 27, 2014

1. Roll Call

The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Tuesday, May 27, 2014 was called to order at 6:30 pm. Present were Town Manager Charles Blanchard, Phil Hebert, Jason Polonsky, Barbara Barry, Matt Lovell, Donald Blais, Mary Salzmann and Andrew Golas recording minutes. Paul Burns was not present for roll call but joined the meeting at 6:45 pm.

2. Consent of the Agenda Order

Motion to accept the agenda as submitted by J. Polonsky, seconded by M. Lovell. Motion passed 6-0.

3. Meeting Minutes

None

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

None

5. FY15 Budget

1. Palmer Public Schools

School Superintendent Tom Charko and School Finance Director Brad Brothers addressed the Council regarding the proposed FY15 School Budget. B. Brothers stated that the school committee had proposed a \$15,536,361 budget including the addition of 3 high school teachers and 1 elementary school teacher. B. Brothers outlined the proposed increases and decreases in the proposed school budget. He stated that the district had been hit hard by out of district tuition costs. The proposed budget included a school to career advisor, technical engineering teacher and a reading intervention specialist. J. Polonsky asked what percentage of the school was college bound. Palmer High School Principal Mary Lou Callahan stated that the college bound percentage could be as high as 96%, although that number had not been confirmed.

M. Salzmann asked how many grants were lost over the past year by the school. B. Brothers stated that the grants were not lost, but significantly reduced. He estimated that grant funding had reduced by 15%.

P. Burns joined the meeting at 6:45pm

T. Charko stated that the school committee will need to decide if they want to proceed with the new PARCC exam or stay with the MCAS exam. He stated that the schools would need to look for grants to purchase computers to support the PARCC testing. P. Burns asked if the schools should be looking at purchasing tablets. T. Charko stated that

it is currently difficult to manage the PARCC exam on a tablet but the need for technology will need to be addressed down the road. C. Blanchard asked if Race to the Top grant money is shown in the list of funding sources. B. Brothers stated that it is not included.

B. Barry asked what the current number is currently being presented in the FY15 Town Budget for the schools. C. Blanchard stated that the proposed FY15 budget for the schools is \$15.1 Million. B. Brothers stated that the \$436,000 difference would need to be made up through position cuts. B. Barry stated that there is a need for new books at the school and would like to see funding allocated from FY14 to purchase new books and bring the school closer to the current FY14 minimum Net School Spending number. She stated that after reviewing the current insurance costs, she believed that \$142,000 would be remaining in the Group Health Insurance at the end of the year which could be allotted to the school.

Motion to transfer \$142,000 from Group Health Insurance to the Palmer Public School Budget in FY14 by B. Barry, seconded by P. Hebert.

P. Burns stated that he would like to review the matter before proceeding with a vote. M. Lovell asked if transferring the money in FY14 would affect the FY15 Budget proposal at all. C. Blanchard stated that it would not change the recommended budget for FY15.

Motion to table the transfer \$142,000 from Group Health Insurance to the Palmer Public School Budget in FY14 by B. Barry, seconded by P. Burns. Motion passed 7-0.

Motion to transfer \$158,000 from free cash to the Palmer Public School budget by B. Barry, seconded by P. Burns.

D. Blais asked if the funding will go toward text books. B. Barry stated that despite the fact that the Town Council cannot dictate how funds are spent by the schools, she would hope that the funding is used to purchase books.

Motion passed 7-0.

C. Blanchard questioned how there could be a guaranteed surplus of at least \$142,000 in Group Health insurance.

6. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by P. Burns, seconded by B. Barry. Motion passed 7-0 at 7:20 pm.

Minutes submitted by: Andrew M. Golas