

Palmer Town Council

Meeting Minutes

June 29th, 2023

Call to Order:

The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, June 28th, 2023, was called to order at 6:37 pm by Town Council President Barbara Barry. Councilors Jessica Sizer, Robert Lavoie, Mark Caci, Philip Hebert, and Karl Williams were present. Councilor Matthew Lemieux participated remotely. Also present were Town Manager Ryan McNutt and Executive Assistant Marlene Ottomaniello.

Visitor Comments

Steve Kosmider- Would like a status update on Church St. Bridge progress as well as Converse Middle School.

Town Manager Ryan McNutt gives updates- Church St. Bridge currently in the process of demolition. Working on request for proposals for Converse Middle school, one being a fitness center, another for housing.

Town Council – Has had numerous discussions over the potential uses for Converse school. No determination has been made as the Council is seeking and reviewing costs related to repairs for re-use and the current cost of maintaining the building.

Sara Menard- King Street, Palmer MA. Asked on the status of the feasibility study for a railroad stop in Palmer.

Town Council – The Governor’s proposed budget did include 4 million for a stop in Palmer, that portion of the budget did not pass. The council will be seeking new information from MASSDOT.

No Old Business

New Business

President Barbara Barry opens the FY 2024 Municipal Budget Public Hearing at 6:59pm.

Public Hearing Comments

Erica Nadeau -Palmer resident and member of the School Committee. Questions about where additional money is being allocated, and if a larger portion could be put towards the school. States that the FY23 Budget for the schools only covered contractual salary increases, reviewed the FY24 budget and it only covers salary increases- both years had nothing to assist with non-salary related increases. PTA negotiations with the Teachers Association occurred not knowing what the final budget numbers were, would like to have known sooner. The current budget is challenging, now looking at cutting 6 positions. Recommends having a representative from the school committee allowed at budget meetings. ESSER Funds are diminishing, used for student and teacher social/emotional needs. Questions the large increase for the Police Department, possibly state mandated training or if it was for other costs. The School Department represents a majority of the town’s municipal employees and is receiving one of the smallest percentage increases.

Discussion: Police Department increase was related to mandatory training to maintain their certifications. During Budget Subcommittee meetings questions were brought to the school regarding the use of funds, specifically that one-time funds were not being used towards positions that would be an obligation moving forward. Responses from the school were lacking due to transitions occurring at the school. The Subcommittee asked for a detailed budget and only received high level numbers. The 6 positions being cut are due to budget expenses that are tied to enrollment. School provided the School Committee with a detailed budget to go over costs, seems like the same information is not being clearly communicated to everyone. Moving forward there will be better communication established between the School and Budget Subcommittee.

Motion to close the FY 2024 Municipal Budget Public Hearing at 7:32pm by P. Hebert 2nd by J. Sizer vote: 7-0-0

Resolution NO.: 2023-32

Purpose: To see if the Town Council will vote to establish a new stabilization fund under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 5B to be effective on July 1, 2023. The purpose of the fund is to provide funds for maintenance of Duke Track.

Motion: Moved that the Town of Palmer create Duke Track Stabilization Fund under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 5B to be effective on July 1, 2023. The purpose of the fund is to provide funds for maintenance of Duke Track.

Motion by R. Lavoie, 2nd by J. Sizer Vote: 7-0-0

Resolution NO.: 2023-35

Purpose: FY 2024 Revolving Fund Spending Limits

Motion: To authorize annual spending limits for the Town’s Revolving Funds in FY 2024.

<u>Revolving Fund</u>	<u>Account No.</u>	<u>FY 2024 Spending Limit</u>
Electrical Inspections	2702451	\$120,000
EV Charging Station	2701231	\$10,000
Gas Inspections	2702421	\$30,000
Legion Field	24650738	\$5,000
Plumbing Inspections	2702431	\$30,000
Recreation Fund	24630548	\$10,000
Sealer of Weights & Measures	2702441	\$15,000
Senior Center	24541008	\$30,000

Discussion: Why Legion Field has a revolving fund as opposed to other fields. Legion Field takes in money for its use to pay for the costs of lights and employees.

Motion by R. Lavoie, 2nd by P. Hebert Vote: 5-2-0

Resolution NO.: 2023-30

Purpose: To approve a transfer of \$88,175 from Free Cash to Revaluation Expenses Special Revenue Fund to provide for costs associated with revaluation/reassessment of real estate property in the Town of Palmer.

Motion: To transfer \$88,175 from Free Cash (01-35900) to Revaluation Expenses account.

Discussion: Past expenses for the revaluation were previously funded as part of the operating budget. The sub-committee reviewed and in order to create consistency in the budget thought to move the money that would close out in FY23 from Free Cash to Special Revenue to give access to funds to be used properly. An outside consultant is hired to complete the revaluations of real estate every 5 years and interim assessments every year.

Motion by R. Lavoie, 2nd by J. Sizer Vote: 7-0-0

Resolution NO.: 2023-36

Purpose: To approve a transfer of \$500,000 from Free Cash to the Stabilization Fund for future applications.

Motion: To transfer \$500,000 from Free Cash (01-35900) to the Stabilization Fund (839500).

Discussion: Information provided to budget sub-committee, not discussed. Transfer of Free Cash to Stabilization Fund has occurred in years past. Clarification that this is not for Capital Improvements, it is for General Stabilization. Should have Financial Policies in place that has percentages to maintain the Operating Budget, need to have future discussions. Free Cash unavailable after June 30, 2023, needs to be recertified.

Motion by K. Williams, 2nd by P. Hebert Vote: 3-4-0

Resolution NO.: 2023-33

Purpose: To adopt FY 2024 Budget

Town Council Meeting Date: June 29th, 2023

WHEREAS the Town Council conducted a Public Hearing on the FY 2024 budget on June 29, 2023, after due notice was given.

WHEREAS, the Town Council considered the FY 2024 Budget on an organizational basis, and by vote so determined the size of appropriations for each department on June 29, 2023, as listed and outlined in the Palmer Final Budget Document, a copy of which is attached and will remain a part of this budget resolution as follows:

Department of Public Service	\$2,183,594
Department of Municipal Finance	\$501,756
Department of Public Safety	\$3,108,102
Department of Public Works	\$1,914,168
Palmer Public Schools	\$17,612,183
Pathfinder	\$2,043,892
Palmer Public Library	\$917,058
Unclassified	\$10,508,964
<u>Wastewater Treatment Plant</u>	<u>\$3,491,805</u>
	\$42,281,522

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT MOVED AND VOTED to raise and appropriate the sum of \$42,281,522 to pay the Town charges for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, and to raise through the collection of sewer fees the amount of \$3,491,805,000 for the Wastewater Treatment Plan Budget. \$122,017 while raised in the General Fund is funded through sewer fees.

Also, to raise and appropriate:

\$10,000 to the OPEB Trust Fund

\$134,004 to the Capital Stabilization Fund

\$110,000 to Duke Track Stabilization

\$50,000 to Tree Removal/Trimming Capital Projects Fund

\$30,000 to Revaluation Special Revenue Fund

\$3,000 to Tax Title Special Revenue Fund

Discussion: Items from Sub-Committee meetings; \$10,000 to the OPEB Trust Fund every year, Duke Track Stabilization Fund newly voted item, Tree Removal/Trimming expended to get an annual plan to address trees that need to be taken

care of and the Tax Title Revenue Fund allows funds to be carried forward from year to year to build up a balance and adjust. Unclassified is a section of the general ledger that has various items that don't fit in any one single department such as health insurance, retirement, workers comp and general liability.

Motion by R. Lavoie, 2nd by J. Sizer Vote: 6-1-0

Resolution NO.: 2023-31

Purpose: To approve a transfer of \$100,000 from Free Cash to Tax Title Expenses Special Revenue Fund to provide for costs associated with the process of tax taking.

Motion: To transfer \$100,000 from Free Cash (01-35900) to Tax Title Expenses account.

Motion by R. Lavoie, 2nd by J. Sizer Vote: 6-1-0

Resolution NO.: 2023-34

Purpose: To approve Town Manager's recommended FY 2024 Capital Plan as detailed below.

Motion: To adopt FY 2024 Capital Plan in the amount of \$858,349 as follows:

Department	Project Description	Est. Cost	Source of Funding
DPW	Backhoe	\$177,522	Free Cash
DPW	Wood/Tree Chipper	\$84,765	Free Cash
DPW	Tandem Roller	\$25,507	Free Cash
DPW	Trailer for Tandem Roller	\$5,794	Free Cash
DPW	Field Conditioner	\$45,966	Free Cash
DPW	Baseball/Softball Turface Material	\$9,168	Free Cash
DPW	Slop Mower	\$117,627	Free Cash
Police	Police Cruisers	\$135,000	Free Cash
Police	Dispatcher's Consoles	\$170,000	Free Cash
Police	Mobiles and Portables	\$57,000	Free Cash
Town Manager/Police	Computer Replacement (20)	\$30,000	Free Cash
		\$858,349	

Discussion: Police Cruisers not in the regular budget, previously was. The Sub-Committee would like to see it put back as it is an annual expense. First time Baseball/Softball Turface Material is part of DPW, should be an annual item.

Missing/removed items such as fencing and school parking lot to be discussed at future meetings.

Motion by R. Lavoie, 2nd by B. Barry Vote: 6-1-0

Misc. Correspondence

Town Council received correspondence on Lake Thompson, council has no role on the abatement period or influence over State Law. Would like to clarify that the process is outside of their control.

Motion to adjourn meeting at 8:15pm by P. Hebert, seconded by R. Lavoie Vote 7-0-0.