

Palmer Town Council

Meeting Minutes

July 10th, 2023

Call to Order:

The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, July 10th, 2023, was called to order at 6:31 pm by Town Council President Barbara Barry. Councilors Jessica Sizer, Robert Lavoie, Matthew Lemieux, Mark Caci and Karl Williams were present. Also present were Town Manager Ryan McNutt and Executive Assistant Marlene Ottomaniello.

No Visitors Comments

Tim Cienciwa – Mater Plan Implementation Committee

T. Cienciwa gives hand out to TC & TM and reviews. Resigned his position as Chairman in June. Would like to update the Town Council before relocating. The committee started with 7 members, currently down to 4. The committee is looking to have a Town Council member join to have an acting liaison to help with input from Council. The committee's working goal is to meet with town agencies to ensure master plan actions are received, being worked on, and if these agencies are facing any challenges. The committee has met with the Historical Commission to have items stored in boxes to be displayed at the Palmer Public Library. Discussion with Palmer Recreation about the parks throughout town as well as the Parks and Rec website. The committee met with water departments to discuss failing infrastructure, water rates and staffing issues. Three Rivers Water dept. received a portion of a grant for a tank restoration project. Some discussion on combining all 4 water districts, what the benefits would be and would like specific terms to be set by the Town Council. The committee's next focus will be on Rail Stop support for the town.

Minutes

May 8th, 2023. - Motion by M. Lemieux, 2nd by K. Williams Vote: 5-0-1

June 12th, 2023, as amended - Motion by M. Lemieux, 2nd by K. Williams Vote: 5-0-1

No Old Business

New Business

Leslie Duthie, President Opacum Land trust – seeking amendment for Conservation Restriction which was passed by The Town Council in December 2021. Amendment would comply with newly implemented IRS regulations.

Motion by R. Lavoie, 2nd by M. Lemieux: 6-0-0

Appointment – Nicholas Zeo, to Conservation Commission term to 2026

Motion by J. Sizer, 2nd by M. Lemieux Vote: 6-0-0

Appointment – Brenda Binczewski, Board of Assessors term to 2026

Motion by M. Lemieux, 2nd by K. Williams Vote: 6-0-0

Wendy Gendron, ARC LLC – Approval of Forest Lake Watershed base plan

Reviews a power point presentation of Forest Lake Watershed Based Plan. The intent of this plan is to ensure the body of water maintains its fishing, swimming, and support of aquatic habitat. This plan was part of a 604b state grant to collect information from both the watershed and lake to assess the existing conditions. Part of the assessment looked at physical, biological, and chemical factors withing the lake and watershed. The information collected is used to evaluate and develop nutrient loading estimates. Forest Lake's main concerns are elevated levels of phosphorus and invasive aquatic plants. Excess phosphorus encourages algae and rooted plant growth which poses health risks to humans, pets,

and wildlife: increased bacteria, harmful algae blooms. The lake plan provides recommendations to establish load reductions to bring the lake into compliance with outlined thresholds. Watershed management opportunities could be structural the DPW could provide along with homeowner-led efforts. The lake may reach a point that will be difficult to recover from; proactive & restorative actions are essential. This plan is considered a living document; should be updated as new information is acquired. Funding opportunities exist such as state grants, land grants and septic assistance.

Department Head Reports

Building Inspector- Bonita Weeks, Monthly Report for June, and N.I.C.E Committee actions

B. Weeks hands out a spread sheet and reviews the number of permit applications for demolition, building, electrical, gas and plumbing; \$953,413.27 in estimated costs provided from applicants. Monthly fees taken in were \$12,301.43. \$500 in waved fees for 3 permits the town obtained. There are ongoing jobs at the industrial park and downtown Palmer. Five houses currently in N.I.C.E., three unsafe structures looking into being removed.

Discussion- Updates on Baystate Hospital. A portion of the second-floor addition is now a cardio unit and has received its occupancy permit. A portion of the old emergency area is being turned into Radiology, almost complete. Another of old emergency room they just applied for complements Radiology. They have completed work in the basement in the adjacent building. They are possibly looking to expand further into the second floor but are still undecided. Review of solar projects and other properties such as “The Pink House”, Tenczar’s and the Mill on Church St.

(at 7:56pm Phil Hebert joins meeting, still needs to be sworn in by clerk)

Citizen Zoning Petition Request for Amendment to Zoning – Additional Cannabis Retail -*refer to Planning Board*

Motion to refer this the Planning Board by M. Lemieux, 2nd by K. Williams vote: 6-0-0

Motion to petition the General Court for a special act for (1) on premise and (2) off premise alcohol licenses.

Discussion- Locations are site specific to prevent having any just on hold in case someone needed them. Palmer Plaza has no specific business that was presented. Amend wording to remove (1) off premise license located at 1043 Thorndike St. in the Palmer Plaza, keep (1) on premise for Tables at the Farm and (1) off premise for Luke’s Beer and Wine.

Motion to approve as amended by K. Williams, 2nd by Mark Caci 6-0-0

Motion to approve the proposed 2% COLA increase for retirees in the Hampden County Retirement Board system, as a one-time retroactive payment for FY23.

Discussion- Hampden County Regional Retirement Board voted to offer. Two thirds of communities have already approved. Deadline to vote was June 23, 2023, 2% increase already approved. The Town Council’s vote should go on the record for any retirees.

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

Town Council Rules – Town Council members to review and make recommendations for updates, tabled until the next meeting.

No Subcommittee Reports

Town Managers Report

R. McNutt reads report to the Town Council

Topics- Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce Food Truck and Artisan Market is on Friday July 14th, 3pm-8pm along with the ribbon cutting for the new playground at Hryniewicz Park. The gazebo has been refurbished with new railings, power washed and painted to remove graffiti. Filming of the movie Barons Cove has ended. Complete Streets projects at the intersections of Converse & Walnut, Central & Park, and Walnut & Pleasant. Projects include ADA compliant ramps at

each corner, pavement markings and signage. Duke Track irrigation system is in poor condition, a decision needs to be made on how to proceed.

Discussion- Review of Duke Track needed repairs to irrigation system and drainage systems. Should be done correctly now, review cost to fix verses full replacement of irrigation system. Thorndike Mill owner's requests for information regarding the bridge project- issues related to using their parking lots for staging equipment are being addressed to allow the project to continue.

Misc. Correspondence & Councilor's Roundtable

Complaints of vehicles running the stop sign at intersection of Walnut & Central, asking for flashing stop sign. Complete streets includes this intersection with a new stop sign. Complaints about the Palmer Water Department's discolored water. Water Districts are separate from Town, Council should pressure to improve failing infrastructure. All 4 water districts operate differently, set up meetings with them to understand the situation better. The Town Council would like updates on the cost for demolition, rehab, or an RFP for Converse Middle School. Considerations involving Converse to include are the use of legion field, the buildings historical value and town monuments located at the site.

Roll Call Vote to enter Executive Session at 8:47pm

Close public session, roll call vote to convene executive session for the purposes of M.G.L. c. 30A, § 21 # 3. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation (THE UNITED PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES UNION (UPSEU), LOCAL 424M (DPW/ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT) (Contract 2022 – 2025) if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares.

Motion by M. Lemieux, 2nd by K. Williams to Close Executive Session and return to open session at 9:58pm

Motion to adjourn meeting at 9:59 pm by K. Williams, seconded by M. Lemieux Vote 6-0-0.