

Town Council Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 13, 2015

1. Roll Call

The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, March 9, 2015 was called to order at 6:30 pm. Present were Town Manager Charles Blanchard, Councilors Robert Lavoie, Matthew Lovell, Philip Hebert, Barbara Barry, Jason Polonsky, Mary Salzmann and Donald Blais.

2. Visitors Comments

Library Director Ben Hood introduced himself to the Town Council. He stated that the Library has recently added 2 new staff to their department. He stated that he would like to take library into the community and reach out to the individual villages.

3. Meeting Minutes – Review of the Meeting Minutes were moved to the next meeting by B. Barry.

- December 8, 2014
- January 20, 2015
- March 9, 2015

4. Old Business

a. Recreation Update

Recreation Director Jim Ostrout addressed the Town Council regarding ongoing programs that the department has been working on. J. Ostrout stated that on June 6, 2015, the Recreation Department will facilitate a family tennis tournament in connection with the Connecticut Open. The tournament will be open to families throughout the region. The winner of tournament will have the opportunity to participate in the Connecticut Open. The Recreation Department may generate proceeds from the event.

J. Ostrout stated that the Recreation Department will be offering a tennis camp in summer with the assistance of the High School Tennis Coach. J. Polonsky asked that signage be placed to address skateboarders on the tennis courts. C. Blanchard stated signs will be placed to prohibit skateboarders from using the tennis courts by the DPW.

J. Ostrout stated that the Summer Youth Program will be held from July 6th to Aug 7th. He stated that fees would not be increased from the previous year and more information would be provided.

J. Ostrout stated that a Summer Concert Series will be held on Thursdays in July and August with assistance from the Yellow House. He stated that the concerts will be held in Three Rivers Park and Depot Park.

J. Ostrout stated that the Recreation Department has partnered with the Pathfinder Senior Class to hold a carnival as a fundraiser. The proceeds from the carnival would be split between the Pathfinder Senior Class and the Recreation Department. He stated that he would like the carnival to be an annual program and benefit new non-profit each year. He stated that the department will try to push the carnival for a later time in the year next year. J. Ostrout stated that they may hold the carnival at Chase field but he needs to speak with Police and emergency personnel regarding parking and emergency access. M. Salzman stated that she is concerned with parking at that location. J. Ostrout stated that parking would be done on field if possible. P. Hebert suggested that Burleigh Park, Converse Middle School Parking Lot or St. Joes Field be used. J. Ostrout stated that there are logistical barriers to using any of those locations. B. Barry stated that she is concerned with destroying field at Chase Park. J. Ostrout stated that the field is already in bad condition and no sports are currently played up there.

J. Ostrout stated that he has been working with the Wellness Leadership Team which through the Mass in Motion grant, has funded a dedicated walking trail study. He stated that the group hopes to start walking the proposed trails next month. The group is also working with MassBike to develop bike maps for the Town

J. Ostrout stated that the Wellness Leadership Team and Recreation Department are working on developing a community garden at Chase Field. He stated that some residents have helped to establish regulations for the community garden and the Parks Department has offered to build raised garden beds. He stated that emails will be going out to those interested next week.

J. Ostrout stated that the landscaping at Eager Playground has begun and new swing sets have been erected as part of the revitalization of that park. He stated that Endleson Playground will be breaking ground soon. He thanked entire Better Parks for Palmer Committee for their dedication to that project.

J. Ostrout gave an overview of the proposed building at Burleigh Park. He thanked Architectural Insights for their assistance with developing plans for the building. He stated that he has met with Pathfinder to discuss plans for building the 30' x 100' structure. He gave an overview of the building proposal. The building would be a 167 person capacity building, 3 season building. He hope to use to the building to generate revenue for more recreation programing and use the building as a springboard for more development at Burleigh Park.

M. Salzman asked about how he plans to deter vandalism at the building. J. Ostrout stated that the electrical specifications included surveillance cameras and hoped for additional patrols of area from the police. The initial estimate for electrical work was \$8,000. He is currently waiting on estimates on the carpentry and septic work. He is also working with the Parks Department and Thorndike Water to run water for watering the fields and potable water at the recreation building. J. Ostrout gave a preliminary estimate of \$150,000 to \$200,000 for the full cost of the building. He would like to raise

as much funding locally as possible and asked that the remaining Mohegan Sun Community funding be allocated to project. C. Blanchard explained that the funding needs to be in place for Pathfinder to commit to project. He also stated that he will need a firm price to bring to council in order to appropriate the funds. J. Ostrout stated that he would need commitments from local business to make donations to the project. B. Barry asked if the \$200,000 estimate was the total amount of the project. J. Ostrout stated that would be the full amount needed.

B. Barry stated that there needs to be water in the concession area in order for it to be functional. She also asked where the building would be located. J. Ostrout stated the building would be located left of existing parking area. P. Hebert asked if grills would be available at the building. J. Ostrout stated that that providing grills would cause a number of liability issues that the department would not want to handle. B. Barry asked how J. Ostrout planned to reach out to businesses for donations. J. Ostrout stated that he will have a sponsorship letter he hopes to deliver by hand to local businesses. P. Hebert stated his support for committing the Mohegan Sun funds to the project. J. Ostrout stated that his objective is to bring enthusiasm back to recreation in town. He plans to come back to the council for the May meeting with figures and commitments on donations.

b. Pump Station 1-5 Capital Improvements Study

Tighe & Bond Senior Project Manager Antonio da Cruz and Wastewater Superintendent Gerry Skowronek address the Town Council. G. Skowronek stated that he planned on replacing pump station 2 in FY15 but did not want to buy oversized pumps for the sake of replacing pumps. He stated that he would like to re-appropriate \$60,000 from unexpended funds in the Sewer Special Revenue Fund to develop plan for generator replacement on all five of the larger pump stations. Properly sizing the pumps would dramatically reduce energy costs at the pump stations.

J. Polonsky asked how long study would take to complete. A. da Cruz stated the overall assessment would take 8 to 12 weeks. He stated that the final plan would be capital improvements plan to address most pressing issues first. G. Skowronek stated that the full replacement of all pump stations could be up to \$2.5 Million. J. Polonsky asked how many committees are currently doing this study. A. da Cruz stated that MassDEP requiring plans be developed before considering for grant opportunities so the plan will be valuable when seeking funding from the state for replacement. C. Blanchard stated that the plan would look at design deficiencies of the current system and how replacement equipment should be specified.

C. Blanchard stated that the funding could be included in the FY16 budget and added to the capital budget which would build a moderate increase into the FY16 budget since the debt service which was incorporated into the original budget estimate will not be paid off until FY17. G. Skowronek stated that there would be no downside to taking the

funding from the sewer surplus other than reduction in surplus funds. B. Barry stated that waiting till next meeting to appropriate the funds will not delay project.

Motion to transfer \$60,000 from the Sewer Surplus Fund to Fund the Pump Station 1-5 Capital Improvement Study by M. Salzman, seconded by M. Lovell. Motion passed 7-0.

c. Police Sergeant and Chief Assessment Centers

The proposal for the Sergeant and Chief Assessment center was outlined by C. Blanchard. The original RFP for an assessment center was distributed to the Council. C. Blanchard stated that the Assessment Center would assist in selecting best person possible for each position. He outlined scope of services in the RFP. He stated that the plan would be to work on filling the Sergeant position first, then if the process were successful, follow the same process for the chief position. The cost of the assessment center would be between \$4,000 and \$5,000.

B. Barry asked why the process could not be handled internally. C. Blanchard stated going through the assessment center would create a more structured process within the criteria of the civil service process. The plan for the assessment center would be to consider individuals from within the department. C. Blanchard stated that previous appointments had been done upon recommendation of chief internally. He stated that the assessment center would be done within the police budget and done within the next 60 days. B. Barry asked for timetable on chief assessment center. She stated that she felt the Chief position should be done before the Sergeant assessment. Discussion continued on the time period of the assessment.

d. FY16 Budget Discussion- Moved to the next Meeting by B. Barry

The departments to be brought in for the budget review will be DPW, Police, Library and School

5. New Business

a. False Alarm Ordinance

D. Blais stated that the Ordinance Committee looked at addressing the concerns brought forward by the council at the previous meeting. He stated that the committee reevaluated the penalties called for in the ordinance and placed a clause that municipal buildings, schools and hospitals are exempt from the ordinance. B. Barry asked for information on the number of false alarms responded to by the police department. D. Blais stated that information was not provided to the Ordinance Committee.

M. Salzman stated the worst offender was the schools at one time. R. Lavoie stated he spoke with Interim Chief Janulewicz who stated that they have a list of repeat offenders.

He stated that typically the same issues are not addressed by the property owner which is why they respond to multiple false alarms. C. Blanchard stated that from information provided by Chief Janulewicz, only one resident had more than one activation over the past 12 months. Pathfinder had 16 false alarms and the Palmer Municipal Building had 6 over that time span.

J. Polonsky asked why hospitals are excluded from the ordinance. R. Lavoie stated that according to the police, alarms are normally contained to ER from accidental activation and are not a function of issues with the system. M. Lovell stated that the point of the ordinance is to detour false alarms and to avoid complacency from the police force.

B. Barry stated that she thought fines proposed were too high. Discussion continued on fine structure. J. Polonsky stated that the collection process and enforcement of the ordinance should be addressed. B. Barry stated that she would like to require the registration of alarm systems with the police department. M. Lovell stated that according to the police department, police will not respond to unregistered alarms unless a third party calls to report it. R. Lavoie asked if different rates between residential and commercial properties should be established. B. Barry stated that residential and commercial alarms should be treated equally.

b. 1st Reading Adoption of 138 Section 33B

The proposed ordinance to adopt local option Chapter 138, Section 33B to allow licensees under section twelve to sell alcoholic beverages between the hours of 10:00 am and 12:00 pm on Sundays, was read by M. Salzmann. J. Polonsky gave an overview of what the ordinance would allow. He stated that each license holder who wishes to expand hours must still apply to the licensing commission. He stated that he hopes the council can pass this option quickly to assist local businesses.

c. Palmer Housing Authority Appointment

C. Blanchard recommended David Bussell be appointed to the Palmer Housing Authority. *Motion to approve the appointment by J. Polonsky, seconded by M. Salzmann. Motion passed 7-0.*

6. Town Manager Bonus

B. Barry stated that \$5,000 is maximum amount allowed in the contract. She recommended a bonus of \$4,300 be given to C. Blanchard based on his evaluation. P. Hebert recommended full amount be awarded based on full goal attainment. M. Lovell agreed that the full amount should be awarded. B. Barry stated that she believes the bonus should be based on performance rating. C. Blanchard explained that he believes the revised wording in his contract is to allow for full amount to be awarded based on goal attainment. D. Blais stated his support for the full amount to be awarded.

Motion to award a \$5,000 bonus to C. Blanchard by P. Hebert, seconded by M. Lovell. Motion failed 3-4 with J. Polonsky, B. Barry, M. Salzman and R. Lavoie opposed. Motion to award a \$4,650 bonus by J. Polonsky, seconded by M. Salzman. Motion passed 5-2 with D. Blais and R. Lavoie opposed.

7. Subcommittee Reports

Police Station Building Committee - D. Blais stated that the Police Station Building Committee has completed their work and has voted to disband.

Town Manager Goals Committee - J. Polonsky distributed the 2015 Town Manager Goals agreed on by both the committee and C. Blanchard. The council should review the proposed goals and discussion on the goals will be held at the next meeting. C. Blanchard noted that the goals would be for the 2015 calendar year.

8. Town Manager's Report

C. Blanchard stated that he will be meeting with Arlene Miller from Mass DEP this week to discuss revising the town's waste hauler regulations.

C. Blanchard stated that the Superintendent Search Committee is looking for a representative from the Council to be a voting member of the search committee. D. Blais stated that he has submitted his letter of interest to serve on the committee. The Town Council confirmed D. Blais' appointment to the superintendent search committee as representative from council.

C. Blanchard stated that a department managers meeting had been held on April 7th and the minutes of the meeting had been provided to the council.

C. Blanchard stated that the cost estimate for renovations to the Town Administration Building would be approximately \$567,040. Overview given by C. Blanchard of the proposed renovations to Town Hall. He stated that the next step would be to send out an RFP for architectural services.

C. Blanchard stated that the Endleson Playground bid awarded to JL Construction for the base bid amount of \$572,000.

C. Blanchard stated that a \$10,000 Downtown Initiative grant had been awarded by the DHCD to complete an economic development study of downtown Three Rivers.

9. Misc. Correspondence

B. Barry distributed the revised assessment provided by Pathfinder for the FY16 School Year

10. Councilor Roundtable

- R. Lavoie stated that the Palmer High School Sophomore Class will be holding a shoe drive until April 18th

- P. Hebert stated that he supported the editorial in the Palmer Journal to keep veterans services in town rather than forcing regionalization. C. Blanchard stated that the editorial was sent to the MMA for their consideration. P. Hebert stated that he would support building a park to be built for skateboarders.
- D. Blais stated that he was glad the reconstruction of Eager Park was almost complete. He stated that he has pushed the legislature to have Red Bridge in Ludlow repaired and reopened prior to their 2020 scheduled timeline. He also stated that he is giving talk at PHCC on April 15th about Abraham Lincoln's Assassination.
- J. Polonsky stated that the yard waste dump will be open beginning May 1st on Friday Saturday and Sundays.

11. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by J. Polonsky, seconded by P. Hebert. Motion passed 7-0 at 9:05 pm