

Palmer Town Council

Meeting Minutes

Monday, December 8, 2014

1. Roll Call

The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Monday, December 8, 2014 was called to order at 6:30 pm. Present were Town Manager Charles Blanchard, Councilors Robert Lavoie, Philip Hebert, Matthew Lovell, Barbara Barry, Jason Polonsky, Mary Salzmann and Donald Blais.

2. Visitors Comments

None

3. Meeting Minutes

- a. October 14, 2014 – *Motion to approve as amended by J. Polonsky, seconded by D. Blais. Motion approved 7-0.*
- b. November 10, 2014 – *Motion to approve as amended by P. Hebert, seconded by J. Polonsky. Motion passed 6-0-1 with M. Lovell abstaining.*

4. Old Business

a. Town Manager Evaluation Form Discussion

M. Lovell gave an overview of the proposed Town Manager evaluation form. Discussion continued on the way the form would be used to complete the evaluation for the Town Manager. J. Polonsky suggested adding a space for comment under each section. M. Lovell noted that the evaluation score would be the average of each section of the evaluation. C. Blanchard stated that the average should not be lowered if an evaluator decides to skip a question due to limited exposure on the topic. B. Barry stated that the annual Town Manager's Review would be conducted in January.

5. New Business

a. 2nd Reading 1366 Park Street Zone Change

The proposed zone change for 1366 Park Street from Industrial A to General Business was read by Council Clerk M. Salzmann.

b. Public Hearing 1366 Park Street Zone Change – 6:45 PM

Public Hearing Notice for the proposed zone change to 1366 Park Street to change from Industrial A to General Business was read by Council Clerk M. Salzmann. The hearing was opened by B. Barry at 7:03 PM. No comments were made on the proposed zone change. Hearing was closed by B. Barry at 7:05 PM

c. Presentation of Palmer Green Community Award

C. Blanchard stated that the Town of Palmer was one of eight communities recognized by the DOER for reducing the Town's electrical usage by over 20% for the first five years of the Green Communities program. Economic Development and Planning Director Linda

Leduc presented the Green Communities Award to B. Barry. L. Leduc gave an overview of the projects completed to achieve the significant electrical savings. B. Barry asked for an overview of the cost savings to the town over the span of the Green Community designation. The council thanked L. Leduc for her efforts in achieving electrical cost savings over the past five years.

d. Palmer Redevelopment Authority – Discussion of Ongoing Projects

Al Lasota and Dan Slowick of the Palmer Redevelopment Authority (PRA) addressed the council regarding the ongoing projects of the PRA. They explained that the PRA has started a small business incubator program with Maple Tree Industrial Park to provide free rent for six months to anyone looking to start a small business in town. The Quaboag Valley Community Development Center will also be assisting by providing funding for the program.

A. Lasota stated that PRA is working with Pathfinder students to help graduates develop new businesses in town. D. Slowick stated that the PRA is also looking into the ongoing maintenance cost of the railroad spur within the Palmer Industrial Park.

D. Slowick stated that the PRA is also working to improve streetscapes in the Three Rivers area. They will be working with the Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce to conduct an urban renewal plan. D. Slowick also stated that they hope to create an urban renewal plan for the entire town of Palmer based off the Three Rivers plan. D. Blais gave his support for the proposed projects.

Renee Stolar of the Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce stated that the Chamber of Commerce is working to start an “adopt a business” program to help start small businesses in the downtown Three Rivers area. Discussion continued on businesses that could be attracted to Palmer.

e. Emery Street Landfill Solar RFQ – Vote on Land Lease

C. Blanchard stated that his office is moving forward with the advertisement for the lease of the Emery Street landfill for the development of a large scale solar photovoltaic system. Resolution to authorize the Town Manager to make available for lease, the former Palmer Municipal Landfill located at 181 Emery Street for the purpose of constructing and maintaining a solar energy facility read by M. Salzmann.

J. Polonsky asked how close the former landfill was to the facility which was approved at the previous meeting. C. Blanchard stated that the landfill is the adjacent property to the former airport site. He explained that the RFQ process was necessary to sign a long term lease on the property. B. Barry asked if there was any obligation to notify abutters prior to going out to RFP on the project. C. Blanchard explained that it was not necessary for this portion of the project. The solar land lease would be the same site that was awarded to Borrego Solar which did not go through due to Nation Grid connection issues.

Planning Board Chairmen Michael Marciniec stated that all solar projects require site plan approval before they are constructed and all abutters would have an opportunity to give comment to the Planning Board during that period. C. Blanchard explained that the developer and the contractor selected for the project must adhere to the requirements of our zoning ordinance in order to successfully complete the project.

B. Barry stated that she would like to wait to take a vote over the period of a meeting to see if any residents come forward with concerns before allowing the town to go out for a lease on the property. C. Blanchard explained that because of the timelines involved with the SREC II program, the town would need to move forward as soon as possible on the RFP phase. J. Polonsky stated his concern that predetermined advertisement dates had been set prior to town council approval of the lease. P. Hebert stated that he supported the idea of the land lease because there is no other use for the property.

M. Marciniec stated that if the town does not act to get the paperwork into the pipeline, the town could lose its opportunity to develop the parcel due to demand from area towns and other solar applications. J. Polonsky stated that he is concerned newer abutters to the property may have an issue with a solar field being built. M. Salzmänn stated that she was concerned with the potential of losing out on the opportunity if the town council waits.

Motion to authorize the Town Manager to make available for lease, the former Palmer Municipal Landfill located at 181 Emery Street for the purpose of constructing and maintaining a solar energy facility by P. Hebert, seconded by D. Blais. Motion passed 4-3 with R. Lavoie, J. Polonsky and B. Barry opposed.

f. Vote to Rescind Authorized & Unissued Debt for Completed and/or Postponed Projects

Motion to rescind authorized and unissued debt for completed and/or postponed projects as proposed read by M. Salzmänn. Motion seconded by P. Hebert. B. Barry asked what the Land Acquisition debt authorization was intended for. C. Blanchard stated that it was voted to pursue land takings on Mt. Dumplin Road. C. Blanchard explained that the vote requested by the council would be to relieve debt that is currently being held against the Town's debt limit. Finance Director John Kuzmiski stated that relieving the \$5 million in authorized unissued debt proposed would raise the town's debt limit. M. Salzmänn asked if there was any other old debt that should be included as part of this motion. J. Kuzmiski stated that the only authorized unissued debt that should be carried forward are ongoing projects. Motion passed 7-0.

g. Acknowledgement of Chief Robert Frydryk's Notice of Retirement

Motion to accept Chief Robert Frydryk's notice of retirement with regret by J. Polonsky, seconded by P. Hebert. Motion passed 7-0.

h. 6th Grade MMA/Town Essay Contest

B. Barry stated that she had the opportunity to speak with the Converse Middle School 6th grade class about local politics. The class participated in the MMA's annual essay contest. She proposed that the council hold its own local essay contest with the MMA submissions. She would like to form a subcommittee to review the essays and recommend finalists to bring to the full council. B. Barry stated that she hopes the program would spark interest in local government for the students if they could see some of their ideas used by the council.

R. Lavoie supported the idea of holding a local contest. B. Barry suggested that winners be awarded savings bonds which would be funded by the council members. R. Lavoie asked when the essay contest would be awarded. B. Barry stated that she would come up with a schedule after she found out when the essays would be completed.

i. Other New Business

M. Salzmann asked if there was a plan to set up decorations for the holiday season. A. Golas stated that Recreation Jim Ostrout was in the process of distributing decorations which were donated to the Recreation Department throughout town.

6. Subcommittee Reports

a. Ordinance Subcommittee

D. Blais stated that the Ordinance Subcommittee would be meeting to discuss the proposed False Alarm Ordinance and hoped to get a recommendation to the full council for the next meeting.

b. Open Space and Recreation Committee

D. Blais stated that the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan had been conditionally approved by the state.

7. Town Manager Reports

C. Blanchard stated that a copy of the town wide trash collection feasibility report had been provided to the council for their review. The town council should decide whether or not to undertake this effort after reviewing this report. J. Polonsky asked that all types of costs for private trash removal be provided as part of the feasibility study. C. Blanchard stated that the information provided was the result of the trash collection survey circulated to council members.

J. Polonsky asked that as part of the review, the town consider adopting consumer protection regulations to prevent haulers from dramatically increasing costs for subscribers. B. Barry stated that all issues would need to be addressed before the council would recommend adopting any municipal trash collection system. C. Blanchard explained that in order to generate the necessary interest in the program from the community to make it cost effective, the program should be paid through the tax rate to prevent residents from opting out. B. Barry asked that a recommendation

from the manager be provided at the next meeting. Discussion continued on the ability of residents to opt out of their current trash collection contacts.

C. Blanchard provided an update of his 2014 goal status. He also provided a copy of the December 2nd Business West Community Spotlight which presented the town's Economic Development efforts in a positive light. C. Blanchard also provided updates on the State Street Landfill well contamination issue.

8. Misc. Correspondence

B. Barry acknowledged receipt of the resignation letter from Margaret Higgins from the Palmer Housing Authority. She also acknowledged receipt of the FY15 assessment adjustment notification from Pathfinder.

9. Councilor Roundtable

D. Blais acknowledged the passing of Walter Haggerty. He also thanked Todd Smola for his presentation at the PHCC and acknowledged Senator Brewer's final weeks in office.

P. Hebert wished everyone a happy holiday.

10. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn made by J. Polonsky, seconded by P. Hebert. Motion passed 7-0 at 8:45 PM.