

Palmer Town Council

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 14, 2014

1. Roll Call

The Palmer Town Council Meeting of Tuesday, October 14, 2014 was called to order at 6:30 pm. Present were Town Manager Charles Blanchard, Councilors Robert Lavoie, Matt Lovell, Barbara Barry, Mary Salzmann, Jason Polonsky, Philip Hebert and Donald Blais.

2. Consent of the Agenda Order

Motion to approve the Agenda order as submitted made and seconded. Motion passed 7-0

3. Visitor's Comments

Alex Lamarshe of 11 Norman Street addressed the council regarding the upcoming vote on the bottle bill. He stated that he is leading a support effort for the passage of the bottle bill and gave statistics why the bottle bill should be supported by the voters. M. Salzmann asked where the funds would be appropriated if the proposed bill passed. A. Lamarshe stated that he believes the funds would go to a special revenue fund.

4. Meeting Minutes

September 8, 2014 – Motion to approve minutes as amended by M. Salzmann, seconded by J. Polonsky. Motion passed 6-0-1 with P. Hebert abstaining.

5. New Business

a. Senate Candidate – Anne Gobi

Senate Candidate Anne Gobi addressed the council. She gave a background of herself and her desire to be the next senator of Palmer's Senate district. She has been a representative in the Worcester area since 2001. She stated that she looks forward to pushing for industrial regrowth in Palmer. P. Hebert asked her opinion on the gas tax ballot question. She stated that she supported it because of the needed infrastructure improvements that it would bring. D. Blais voiced his support for her proposals. M. Salzmann stated that she feels there is a discrepancy between the way the state treats funding for western mass compared to the Boston area. D. Blais stated that the communities around the RT 90 corridor should ban together to push for more recognition for funding from the state.

b. Medical Marijuana Ordinance

Motion to accept the Medical Marijuana ordinance by M. Lovell, seconded by P. Hebert. Motion passed 7-0

c. Park Street Zone Change – 1st Reading

The proposed zone change for Park Street from Industrial A to General Business was read by M. Salzmann. Planning Board Chairmen Michael Marciniac stated that the proposed zone change was to help the marketability of the property.

d. Tax Classification Public Hearing – 6:45 PM

Tax Classification Public Notice read by M. Salzmann. Principal Assessor Linda Leblanc addressed the Council regarding the proposed tax classification. L. LeBlanc gave the residential and commercial summaries for FY14 and FY15 and the burden a shift to a split rate would present. She also presented the impact of adopting the Open Space Discount, Residential Discount and Small Commercial exemption. L. Leblanc stated that the Board of Assessors has recommended that the Town Council adopt a Single Tax Rate, not adopt the Open Space Discount, not adopt the Residential Exemption and not adopt the Small Commercial Exemption.

C. Blanchard stated that adopting a split tax rate would put a tremendous burden on the industrial properties in town with little benefit to the resident. P. Hebert questioned if the Town was within its 2 ½ Tax increase from the previous year. C. Blanchard stated that the town is within the limits of proposition 2 ½. C. Blanchard stated that the debt exclusion on the police station was less than anticipated because of the bonding leveraged with the state bond rating. P. Hebert stated that he wished there was more of a working session with the council leading to the hearing. C. Blanchard explained that the taxation is based on valuation and would not be favorable to support a split tax rate. P. Hebert raised his concern about raising tax rates. B. Barry explained that the split tax rate would not make sense with the residential and commercial split of the town.

J. Polonsky asked what the differential in the average tax bill would be if the debt exclusion was not included. L. Leblanc stated that the difference was approximately \$45. M. Lovell asked if the value is reflective of the fair market value of homes in the town. Assessor Mike Burns stated that the Assessors values are consistent with the market values which are audited by the state but as a property valuation drops, the rate increases to compensate for the fall in value. Planning & Economic Director Linda Leduc stated that the single tax rate has been a driver for attracting new businesses to town.

Motion to adopt a single tax rate by M. Salzmann, seconded by M. Lovell, motion passed 6-1 with R. Lavoie opposed.

Motion to not adopt the Open Space Discount by D. Blais, seconded by M. Lovell, motion passed 7-0.

Motion to not adopt the Residential Exemption by J. Polonsky, seconded by M. Salzmann motion passed 7-0.

Motion to not adopt the Small Commercial Exemption by R. Lavoie seconded by P. Hebert. Motion passed 7-0.

e. Main Street Three Rivers Easement

C. Blanchard stated that he had received a request from a resident of Main Street, Three Rivers to clean up a deed issue with Town owned property adjoining his. Due to the site constraints of the individual's property, a formal easement through the Town owned parking lot is needed to access the rear parking area of the building owned by this individual. The proposed easement has been forwarded to Counsel for review which formalizes an agreement already in place. C. Blanchard requested that the Council grant him approval to sign the easement once Counsel has reviewed it.

Motion to allow the Town Manager to sign the proposed easement pending review by Town Counsel by M. Lovell, seconded D. Blais. Motion passed 7-0

f. Approval of November 4th Election Warrant

Motion to sign the election warrant for the November 4, 2014 election by R. Lavoie, seconded by P. Hebert. Motion passed 7-0.

g. CSO Phase 4 Authority to file

C. Blanchard explained that since the Town Manager has changed since the beginning of the project, the Town Council would need to grant him authority to sign the closeout documents.

Motion to authorize Charles Blanchard as the Town Manager to sign the closeout documents for the CSO Phase IV project by M. Lovell, seconded by P. Hebert. Motion passed 7-0.

6. Old Business

a. M-Pact Video – Industry Alive in Palmer

C. Blanchard stated that in order to help promote economic development in Palmer, he has partnered with the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce, M-PACT and the Planning and Economic Development office to create a video to highlight the industry that we do have in Palmer. He stated that additional business spotlights will also be played on M-PACT along with this video.

The video Industry Alive in Palmer was played for the Council.

J. Polonsky asked that the video be placed on the front page of the Town website. M. Salzmann stated that she is surprised at how much industry there really is in Palmer. D. Blais stated that he believes this will be a good tool for economic development.

7. Sub Committee Reports

D. Blais stated that the Ordinance Committee met to reorganize and will be looking forward to working on proposed ordinances over the next year.

J. Polonsky stated that the Council Rules Committee has met to review the proposed changes to the Council rules which were discussed over the previous year. He hopes to have a final draft of the proposed rules together for the next meeting.

8. Town Manager Report

C. Blanchard stated that the town had been awarded an in kind technical assistance grant for municipal trash collection had been granted to the town by MassDEP. He also stated that David Swirk as requested not to be reappointed to the PRA for an additional 3 year term. His opening on the PRA will be advertised. C. Blanchard provided an update on the Sewer Replacement Project to the Town Council. B. Barry requested that the updated schedule be posted on the town website.

9. Misc. Correspondence

B. Barry acknowledged receipt of the letter from Danielle Fornataro and corresponding response from Chief Frydryk. She also acknowledged receipt of correspondence from the Planning Board,

Department of Housing and Community Development and the Ludlow Police Department. She also acknowledged correspondence from the Veterans agent notifying the council of the Veterans Day parade on November 11th as well as notification of the Take Back the Night event being held at Depot Park by the Community Development Office.

10. Councilor Roundtable

R. Lavoie noted that the Veterans Day Parade will be November 11th at 10:45AM

M. Salzmann thanked everyone who helped put on the September 11th remembrance ceremony. They raised 33 pounds of food for Food Share.

D. Blais acknowledged the September 11th ceremony. He also thanked the health department for conducting Drug Take-back Day. He stated that he attended the Legislative Breakfast in Oxford.

J. Polonsky acknowledged the technology run for the palmer schools. He also thanked Gills Gym for the donation of the Exergames system donated to the Recreation Department. J. Polonsky congratulated Andrew Golas on becoming a new father. J. Polonsky asked that the town receive more press coverage on positive events.

11. Executive Session

Motion to enter executive session as per Chapter 39, Sec. 23B (3) for contract negotiations and return to open session by P. Hebert, seconded by M. Salzmann, Motion passed by roll call vote 7 – 0 D. Blais – Yes, M. Lovell – Yes, P. Hebert – Yes, R. Lavoie – Yes, M. Salzmann – Yes, J. Polonsky – Yes – B. Barry – Yes. At 8:15PM

The Town Council voted to reopen from executive session 7-0 D. Blais – Yes, M. Lovell – Yes, P. Hebert – Yes, R. Lavoie – Yes, M. Salzmann – Yes, J. Polonsky – Yes, B. Barry – Yes at 9:00 PM.

12. Palmer Library Collective Bargaining Agreement Funding Appropriation

Motion that the Town Council vote to appropriate the amount of \$4,671.82 for the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Palmer Public Library and AFSCME, Council 93 (the Library bargaining unit), for the period of July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2017 from the approved Library budget account #016103-56900 by M. Salzmann, seconded by P. Hebert. P. Hebert clarified that this funding would come directly from the funds approved by the Council for the library in the FY15 Budget. Motion passed 5-2 with D. Blais and R. Lavoie against.

13. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by D. Blais, seconded by M. Lovell. Motion passed 7-0.

Minutes Submitted by Andrew M. Golas