

MINUTES

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2006 @ 7:15 pm

RICHARD E. MASTRANGELO CHAMBER

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

1. ROLL CALL: A regular meeting of the Town Council was called to order at 7:15 pm, in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Chamber, Administration Building. Present for the meeting were Councilors Stephen Corbett, Marilyn M. Petitto Devaney, John A. Donohue, Angeline B. Kounelis, John J. Lawn, Jr., Jonathan Hecht, Stephen E. Romanelli, Vice President Mark S. Sideris and Council President Clyde L. Younger. Also present were the Town Manager Michael Driscoll, Town Attorney Mark Reich and Council Clerk Valerie Papas.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. EXAMINATION OF MINUTES: September 26th and October 10th. Councilor Devaney moved the minutes of September 26th as amended, seconded by Councilor Sideris and adopted by voice vote. Councilor Sideris moved to Table the minutes of October 10th, seconded by Councilor Devaney and adopted by voice vote.

4. PUBLIC FORUM – none noted.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Budget & Fiscal Oversight Committee report on the Fiscal Year 2008 budget – Jonathan Hecht, Chair. Councilor Hecht read the Committee report regarding a follow up to the FY 08 Preliminary Budget Overview (attached). It was noted that the Manager provided written materials on financial management, bond ratings, and other municipal finance issues. These three issues were discussed in detail. It was noted that once MUNIS is fully operational, quarterly reports will be provided to the Council.

Councilor Sideris moved to accept the report, seconded by Councilor Kounelis and adopted by voice vote.

B. Committee on Rules and Ordinances report on appointments to boards and an email policy, Jonathan Hecht, Chair. Councilor Hecht read the committee report regarding appointments to boards and a draft email policy. The Committee discussed spreading out the appointment process and creating a “tickle list” as well as posting requirements and the interview process. Discussions on these issues will continue. Lastly, Councilor Hecht noted that the Committee briefly discussed a draft email policy for which a copy was provided to the Town Attorney. Discussion will continue with the Committee on this issue as well.

Councilor Sideris moved to accept the updated report, seconded by Councilor Kounelis and adopted by voice vote.

The Chair asked that long time members who have served faithfully on these committees be included in the discussions with respect to reappointments.

Councilor Devaney recommended that “serial calling” be included in the policy when discussions continue.

6. PRESENTATIONS AND REPORTS BY TOWN OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES:

A. Informational Presentation on the collaborative efforts regarding School Safety – Police Chief Edward Deveau and School Superintendent Dr. Steven A. Hiersche. The Chair stated that he had requested Chief Deveau and Dr. Hiersche provide an overview of their collaborative safety procedures that police and school staff have implemented. The Chair indicated that a recent school incident in Pennsylvania and past incidents, particularly at Columbine, Colorado prompted him to request this presentation for the Council and parents watching at home.

Dr. Hiersche noted that the school has a close relationship with the police department and for the past four years have established a “Critical Incident Team”. The Chair recognized Headmaster Paul Noftsker who noted that the school has three full time officers to lend backup, security and advice which are a valuable asset for the elementary, middle and high schools.

Chief Deveau provided an overview of NEMLEC (Northeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council) which is comprised of 44 communities and the STARS (School Threat Assessment Response System) program. Also discussed were the blue prints of all Watertown schools, room by room, which have been downloaded onto police cruiser computer systems to assist them in their response to any school threats. Chief Deveau introduced Watertown police officers Lloyd Burke, Jamie O'Connor and Anthony Fantasia who are part of the STARS program. A power point presentation and overview of the STARS program was provided. It was noted that these officers train together everyday thru the NEMLEC program, and are on call with other community police officers, 24 hours a day, working together to provide a comprehensive resource locally and regionally. Locally, newly installed electronic surveillance cameras, door locks and call boxes have been installed as part of added school safety procedures in Watertown schools.

Chief Deveau introduced police officer Daniel Unsworth who is the recipient of the Trooper Hannah Award"

Councilors and audience members asked a number of safety questions of the officers. Following the question and answer period, Councilors expressed their appreciation and thanked Dr. Hiersche, Chief Deveau, Mr. Noftsker and officers Fantasia, Burke, O'Connor and Unsworth for their in-depth presentations and continued dedication to the students and community.

B. Informational Presentation on Streets/Sidewalks, Planting Strips and Town Wide Policy on Curbs – Gerald S. Mee, Jr., Superintendent of Public Works. Mr. Mee provided a presentation on the town's Betterment Policy including the 2001 policy on granite curbing. It was noted that granite curbing can be installed at the request of a resident at their expense. Street width and material consistency was also discussed as part of an overall town wide strategy with respect to granite curbing.

Mr. Mee noted that asphalt curbs can be requested and will be installed to control erosion on down hill slopes, while granite curbing will be installed only during full reconstruction of the street and together with an overall betterment policy.

Mr. Mee stated that the vast majority of planting strips are maintained by residents, as it is the unwritten rule that it is their responsibility. The town does not have a policy with respect to maintaining planting strips, nor do they maintain them currently.

Councilor Kounelis thanked Mr. Mee and provided kudos to the improvements to Filipello Park.

Councilor Kounelis noted that east end planting strips are unappealing and some are unsightly and asked what other communities are doing with respect to this.

The Chair opened up the presentation to the public.

Ms. Ann Asnas of Bellevue Road read a letter from the WCES secretary Deborah Peterson (attached) regarding planting strips and cars parking on sidewalks.

Roger Simpson, George Street – stated that he would like to see the details of the Betterment Policy worked out to improve curbs.

Steve Smith, Windsor Avenue – spoke against the paving of planting strips which encourages motorists to park too close to the sidewalks.

There was also discussion on having demonstration projects of various planting strips and a general concern over the paving over these planting strips with asphalt that has led to the deterioration of sidewalks. Mr. Mee stated that the town has a policy that they no longer will pave over these areas at the request of residents.

Councilor Hecht concurred with the suggestion for demonstration projects for planting strips.

Councilor Kounelis moved to refer maintenance of planting strips and the restoration of a formal betterment policy to the subcommittee of public works for further discussion and recommendation, seconded by Councilor Sideris and adopted by voice vote.

Councilor Devaney added that the meeting should include input from Mr. Mee.

7. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Chair requested a late agenda item to begin process to establish committee members to serve on the Charitable Ad Hoc. Councilor Sideris moved to continue with the past practice of the Charitable Ad Hoc Committee, seconded by Councilor Devaney and adopted by voice vote.

The Chair asked that Councilors interested on serving on the Committee which will include two members from the public, should contact him as soon as possible.

8. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER

1. The Town Manager noted that attorney Carolyn Murray is filling in for absent Mark Reich tonight.

2. Yard waste dates: November 3, 17th

3. Hosmer School playground rubber surface completed.

4. Health Director, Steven Ward recipient of 2006 David M. Ozonoff Unsung Hero Award.

5. Request for late agenda item, for an executive session on litigation.

9. REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Councilor Devaney requested a report on any employees involved in a lawsuit whose attorney is being paid by town funds.

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Kounelis announced that Tufts corporate offices are moving to 705 Mt. Auburn Street.

Councilor Devaney announced that Watertown Handicapped Accessibility Guide is available and prepared by George Donahue, member of Commission on Disabilities.

11. PUBLIC FORUM none noted.

The Chair stated that the Town Manager has requested a late agenda item to go into executive session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation. Councilor Sideris moved the request for executive session, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by unanimous roll call vote. The Chair stated that the Town Council will not return to public session following the adjournment of executive session.

12. ADJOURNMENT OF PUBLIC SESSION – 9:30 PM.

I hereby certify that at a regular meeting of the Town Council for which a quorum was present, the above minutes were adopted on November 14, 2006.

Clyde L. Younger, Council President