

MINUTES

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2006 @ 6:00 P.M.

RICHARD E. MASTRANGELO CHAMBER

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

1. ROLL CALL: A regular meeting of the Town Council was called to order at 6:00 pm in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Chamber, Administration Building. Present for the roll call were Councilors Stephen Corbett, John A. Donohue, Angeline B. Kounelis, John J. Lawn, Jr., Jonathan Hecht, and Clyde L. Younger. Councilors Devaney, Sideris and Romanelli were not present.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION: Councilor Donohue moved to go into executive session in order to negotiations with respect to non union personnel, seconded by Councilor Kounelis and adopted by unanimous vote.

3. RETURN TO OPEN SESSION: 7:15 PM All Councilors were present.

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

5. EXAMINATION OF MINUTES: October 10 and 24th. Councilor Devaney moved to accept the minutes for October 10th and 24th as amended, seconded by Councilor Sideris and adopted by voice vote.

6. PUBLIC FORUM:

Barbara Dziewanowski, 41 Catherine Road – stated that she is disabled and is ill and has been ignored, abused and discriminated against with respect to the condition of her home and asked that the town provide her with an unbiased mediator and assistance with cleaning out her home and yard.

Councilor Sideris moved to bring forward agenda item 9A, President's Report, seconded by Councilor Romanelli and adopted by voice vote.

1. The Chair announced that the Manager received the Stanley Porter Award at a recent Chamber of Commerce Event.
2. The Chair thanked Mr. Erickson, Veterans Agent, for his help in bring the United States Army Field Band to Watertown High School for a free concert.
3. November 16th at the Library, Author Daniel Goldman will be discussing his new book, "The Price of Admission".
4. The Chair announced that the Council earlier this evening voted to release all executive session minutes regarding the Manager's contract.

6. PUBLIC HEARING:

A. Public hearing and vote on an ordinance amending the compensation of the Town Manager and contract. The Chair read the proposed ordinance and opened up the hearing to the public.

1. John DiMascio, Copeland Street – stated that the Watertown Citizens for Common Sense Government does not oppose the proposed increase in the Manager's stipend (see attached letter).

2. James Bean, Pine Street – spoke in support of the proposed ordinance and contract noting the Manager's commitment, dedication and hard work.

There being no further comments, the hearing was closed.

Councilor Hecht spoke in support of the ordinance and stated that the contract is a good contract for the town and fair contract for the Manager. He noted that the Manager has brought stability to the town and continuity of government. He further stated that the Council worked long and hard to address many issues including retention of a town owned vehicle, accrual of vacation, and reached a deal that was overall good for the town.

Councilor Kounelis commended the Manager for his long hours and noted her respect for his efforts. She noted that she looked at compensation from the viewpoint of taxpayers and stated that the Manager has reached a plateau in his salary and that there were other ways of achieving further compensation without increasing his base pay. She noted that she will be voting against the ordinance.

Councilor Corbett stated that the town is well served by the Manager and he is happy to reach a fair agreement on both sides. He noted that the compensation is a fair remuneration package and he is in support of the proposed ordinance.

Councilor Sideris applauded his colleagues for revamping and cleaning up a 13 year old contract. The town is stable with this Manager and therefore he will support the new contract and compensation package.

Councilor Devaney stated that this compensation package does not include this year's raise. She noted that the unions have been without a contract and that historically, the Manager's raise has followed the agreement of the unions' contract. She stated that she fought against an illegal retroactive raise for FY04 and that she was against the continuance of a town vehicle, which included insurance, gas and maintenance and the carry over of 83 vacation days.

Councilor Lawn congratulated the Council and the Manager and noted that the task was tough for the Council to face and that he is happy to put the matter behind him and get on to more important issues in the town. Councilor Lawn stated that in March, the Council voted 8-0-1 to retain the Manager, with no one voting against retaining the town manager. He noted that this contract was voted with the best intent for the community and was a good deal for both sides.

Councilor Romanelli thanked Councilors for putting the time into a fair contract. He noted that the Manager shows up for work and puts many hours into his job - he is fiscally conservative and in the long run is good for the town. Councilor Romanelli stated that the new contract puts him in the middle of the pack with respect to other Managers, and is a fair contract for both the manager and residents.

The Chair noted that he has not tried to hide his feelings on the matter but that he will take the advice he has received and extend an olive branch to the manager noting that working together is best for the community and therefore he supports the contract.

Councilor Sideris moved the compensation as outlined in the ordinance, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by a roll call vote of 7-2-0 with Councilors Devaney and Kounelis voting no.

Councilor Sideris moved the negotiated contract, seconded by Councilor Donohue. Adopted by roll call vote of 7-2-0, with Councilors Devaney and Kounelis voting no.

Councilor Sideris moved to authorize the Council President to sign the contract on behalf of the Council, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by a roll call vote of 8-1 against, with Councilor Devaney voting no.

The Manager stated that he is happy that the contract is completed and looks forward to working with the Council and with building on the progress that has been made.

B. Public hearing and vote on a petition by Teleport Communications Boston requesting permission to lay, maintain, operate underground conduit with cables to School Street, Pleasant Street, Main Street and Cross Street – David Edgar, Project Manager. The Chair recognized Mr. Joe Agresta, from Surveying and Map Consultants working on behalf of TCB a subsidiary of ATT, who provided an overview of the proposed work order (attached). It was noted that most of the conduit will be placed in existing manholes with little disturbance of sidewalks.

The Chair opened up the hearing to the public. There being no comments, the hearing was closed.

Councilor Kounelis spoke in concern of past work done by utility companies that needed repairs years later due to settlement. Councilor Kounelis asked what the time frame is for completion of the work described.

Mr. Agresta noted that the work will be completed in 5 to 7 work days.

Public Superintendent, Gerald S. Mee, Jr., stated that the trenches will be filled with "flowable fill", but that a temporary patch will be placed first followed by a permanent patch later in the spring.

Councilor Sideris indicated that Watertown Street and Galen Street were mentioned tonight but not included in the correspondence to the town and he had concerns.

Mr. Agresta stated that 350 feet of conduit is slated to be placed within Watertown/Galen Streets existing manholes and were not mentioned in the correspondence due to TCB's rush to get materials in on time.

There was discussion on amending the resolution to include the 350 feet and the Chair moved on to other agenda items while Mr. Agresta found suitable language for an amendment.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Budget & Fiscal Oversight Committee updates on the Fiscal Year 2008 budget – Jonathan Hecht, Chair.

Councilor Hecht read the Committee report and noted that the Committee continued their discussion on the Fiscal Year 08 budget and the Capital Improvement Program. Adoption of a formal policy on debt was discussed and as well as a draft study on Benchmarking. There was discussion on drafting a policy guidance document on the FY 08 budget in accordance with Article 5 of the Town Charter. Ideas can be submitted in writing by the week of November 27th. Further meetings will be scheduled. Councilor Romanelli moved to accept the attached report, seconded by Councilor Kounelis and adopted by voice vote.

B. Committee on Rules and Ordinances update on appointments to boards and an email policy, Jonathan Hecht, Chair. Councilor Hecht provided a verbal update on appointments to boards and commissions and an email policy. Councilor Hecht noted that the committee is working very carefully on these matters and welcome input as they continue their work. Councilor Kounelis moved to accept the verbal report, seconded by Councilor Sideris and adopted by voice vote,.

Councilor Sideris noted that he will be using his Charter privilege on the petition by Telecommunications Boston due to incomplete information.

Mr. Agresta apologized to the Council for the incomplete proposal.

C. Joint Committee on Economic Development/Human Services report on branch libraries – Stephen Corbett/John Lawn, Chairs. Councilor Corbett stated that the joint committees met for the first time to take up the matter of the disposition of the branch libraries. The Committees met with Ms. Robert Miller who offered to facilitate meetings giving interested parties a forum to discuss possible reuses. A report from Ms. Miller will be forthcoming outlining how she will proceed.

The Chair stated that some representation from the east neighbors and north neighbors be included as part of the group. Councilor Lawn agreed and stated that it was a good idea. Councilor Sideris moved to accept the report, seconded by Councilor Lawn and adopted by voice vote.

8. PRESENTATIONS AND REPORTS BY TOWN OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES:

A. Introduction of new Skating Rink Manager, Daniel Brothers. Mr. Brothers provided an update on the rink since November 3rd. He applauded the efforts of Mr. Jones, Assistant Skating Rink Manager who worked tirelessly since the departure of the former skating rink manager. He noted the following changes: a new billing system and pre-bill for rink time stating in fiscal year 08; generate monthly revenue report; and purchase a new Zamboni machine.

Councilor Devaney welcomed Mr. Brothers and noted that she was against the rink's privatization and inquired of plans for an enterprise system.

Mr. Brothers stated that the rink will become self sufficient and fund its own capital improvements.

Councilor Donohue congratulated Mr. Brothers and inquired about plans for growth.

Mr. Brothers stated that he plans to meet with the Recreation Director about new programs and model Arlington's rink and by using his contacts in the business to book more ice time.

9. MOTIONS, ORDERS AND RESOLUTIONS:

- A. Order transferring custody and control of Browne School. The Manager provided a brief overview of the Order and noted that it is in compliance with the completely vacated Browne School which took place on November 30, 2006. Councilor Sideris moved to approve the Order, seconded by Councilor Lawn.

Councilor Devaney stated that voting against the Order won't accomplish anything and spoke against the Browne School being demolished for a new police station.

Councilor Lawn provided a verbal update on the Police Station Building Committee noting that the committee has viewed the police stations of three of the finalists bidding for the project.

Councilor Romanelli moved to accept the verbal update, seconded by Councilor Sideris and adopted by voice vote.

B. Acceptance of Proclamation honoring The United States Army Field Band. The Chair read the proclamation, which was moved by Councilor Donohue, seconded by Councilor Sideris and adopted by voice vote.

10. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Chair read a proclamation regarding Greek American Veterans who were honored at a recent event at the Taxiarchea/Greek Angels Orthodox Church. Councilor Sideris moved to accept the proclamation, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by voice vote.

11. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER

1. Yard Waste dates: November 17th, December 1st.
2. Household Hazardous Waste Collection dates: November 18th.
3. Flu Shots – 9-12 at the Senior Center.
4. Winter Parking Ban – November 26th with a letter going out to remind residents.
5. Financing of three long term bonds.

12. REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Councilor Donohue asked for the status on an Ad Hoc Group's study on Councilors' salaries.

Councilor Kounelis stated that 2 more pedestrians have been struck in Coolidge Square over the last 72 hours and asked what the status is on a vote by the council in May to allocate monies to study safety improvements for Coolidge Square. She noted that with corporate headquarter for Tufts moving to 705 Mt. Auburn Street, traffic will only get worse.

The Chair asked that the Manager provide a report with a timetable for the voted study and improvements to Coolidge Square.

Councilor Romanelli asked Sue Tamber, Assistant Superintendent of Public Works to mediate the situation at 41 Catherine Road.

Councilor Devaney suggested having the Council on Aging help out as well.

Councilor Lawn asked for the police reports on the accidents in Coolidge Square.

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Hecht announced a workshop on Saturday, November 18th regarding improvements to MDC parkland and Charles River funded by the Solomon Family.

Councilor Devaney asked the Manager for the status on coalition bargaining and suggested looking into a one-carrier insurance with increased co-pays in order to avoid increasing health insurance premiums to 80/20.

Councilor Romanelli announced that Councilor Devaney won her seat on the Governor's Council noting that her seat was the only unopposed seat on the Council.

Councilor Devaney announced that the town manager has been ordered by the Supervisor of Records, Alan Cole, to release the resumes of those who applied for the retirement board seat to the chairman of the retirement board and asked why the documents have not been released.

The Manager noted that the matter is a public records issue.

14. PUBLIC FORUM

James Bean, Pine Street – thanked the Manager and town officials for their efforts regarding 41 Catherine Road.

Councilor Donohue moved to go into executive session at 9:30 pm for the purpose of discussing the value of real property and stated that the Council will not return to open session following its adjournment, seconded by Councilor Kounelis and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.