

MINUTES

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2006 AT 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, Jonathan Hecht, John J. Lawn, Jr., Stephen E. Romanelli, Vice President Mark 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: November 14th. Tabled.

4. PUBLIC FORUM:

Russ Arico, Fayette Street – spoke against a parking garage in Watertown Square citing cost, aesthetics, and safety concerns. A petition against the parking garage (attached) was submitted.

John DiMascio, Copeland Street – spoke in support of a master plan for improvements including the Cross Street police station, Watertown Square and Charles River and a proposed recreation center.

5. PUBLIC HEARING AND VOTE: On a petition by Telecommunications Boston requesting permission to lay, maintain and operate underground conduit with cables to be placed within the public right of way of School Street, Pleasant Street, Main Street, Cross Street, Galen Street and Watertown Street – Joseph Agresta, Map & Surveying Supervisor. Mr. Agresta provided a brief review of the proposed work that was previously Tabled. The Chair noted that at a previous meeting, a public hearing was held on this petition and that the Council will move the matter to its legislative mode. Councilor Sideris thanked Mr.

Agresta for forwarding the detailed maps and resolutions for proposed work as requested and noted that this kind of detailed information is necessary and will be expected in future requests for conduit.

Councilor Sideris moved the resolutions, seconded by Councilor Romanelli and adopted by voice vote.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Committee on Economic Development & Planning update on parking in Watertown Square and the Pleasant Street Corridor – Stephen Corbett, Chair. Councilor Corbett read the Committee's report (attached) which was in support of a comprehensive review of the town's inventory and parking needs. Councilor Corbett also noted a need for a master plan for the Pleasant Street corridor and the importance of keeping abreast of any developments in that area. Councilor Corbett spoke in support of the Watertown Community Housing's application for grant monies for a planning process.

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

B. Joint update by the Planning Board & Economic Development & Planning Committee regarding revisions to the Zoning Ordinance – Gregory P. Watson, Planning Director and Stephen Corbett, Chair. Mr. Watson stated that the two committees met for approximately three hours to discuss substantial changes to the I1 and I2 areas. The meeting was continued until December 13th at a regular meeting of the Planning Board.

Councilor Corbett added that new definitions to 2 ½ stories in the industrial areas will allow for affordable housing.

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

7. PRESENTATIONS AND REPORTS BY TOWN OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES:

A. Informational Presentation on the developments of a scope of services for analysis and design for traffic associated with improvements in Coolidge Square – Gerald S. Mee, Jr.,

Superintendent of Public Works and Gregory P. Watson, Community Development and Planning Director. Mr. Watson and Mr. Mee provided an overview to date. Project limits, design, were discussed. It was noted that a draft of the scope of services was done on July 06 and that further direction from the Council was needed at this point as the cost has increased. Mr. Mee estimated that the costs for the study may have increased from \$150,000 to \$180,000 and as high as \$210,000.

Councilor Kounelis stated that 12 key items relating to safety issues were discussed before the Traffic Commission in 2004. In May of 2006 Mr. Mee indicated the boundaries of the study would include: 100 feet west of Dexter Avenue along Mt. Auburn Street and east along Mt Auburn Street to St. Mary's Street. On Bigelow Avenue south to Artsakh Street and south on Arlington Street to the Grove Street Bridge and Merrifield Avenue. North on Arlington Street to Maplewood Street and west to School Street.

Mr. Mee noted that Mount Auburn Street is a posted highway and that that the study would only address safety issues, not street scaping. He indicated that the town would be against any diverting of traffic to side streets and would look into traffic calming on Maplewood Street

Recent pedestrian accidents in Coolidge Square were discussed and it was stated that the accidents were not due to design flaws. Pedestrians have to be more careful in crossing this busy street and motorists need to drive through this area with more caution.

The Chair spoke in support of moving forward with the scope of services as voted on May 23, 2006.

Councilor Sideris asked Mr. Mee and Mr. Watson, what they wished from the Council at this point.

Councilor Kounelis stated that she was perplexed and thought that the Council was quite clear on what it wanted when in May of 06 the Council voted to move forward with funding the study in the amount of \$150,000.

Councilor Donohue suggested that in the meantime a flashing light "high density area" be appropriate at this time.

It was noted that Councilor Kounelis and Mr. Mee had discussed such a signal in 1999.

There was discussion on funding a \$60,000 preliminary study.

Councilor Hecht asked Mr. Mee and Mr. Watson to return with a price for a needs assessment study.

The Manager suggested that a Needs Assessment VS a Defined Scope be brought back on December 12th.

The Chair spoke against another presentation and asked to move forward with the study.

Councilor Kounelis stated that she never received any material relating to a July 06 draft and asked Mr. Watson if the draft was provided in house. Mr. Watson stated it was.

Councilor Kounelis requested that the material be given to the Council as soon as possible.

Councilor Devaney asked what the delay has been in moving forward with the Council's vote of May 23, 2006 to fund the study in the amount of \$150,000.

After further discussion, it was decided to move forward with an additional presentation for the December 12th meeting.

B. Presentation on a proposed Recreation/Community Center at the former Browne School – John J. Lawn, Jr. Councilor Lawn provided a power point presentation on a proposed recreation center for the Browne School location. It was noted that this would address long term needs and would attract young families to town. It was noted that Watertown has the highest population in the Middlesex league but has the least number of students. He noted that this may be the last opportunity to build such a center and put forth a number of fund

raising possibilities. Councilor Lawn suggested a special town council meeting for future discussions and a town wide questionnaire distributed to all residents (materials attached).

Councilor Romanelli spoke in support of the proposed center and stated that it would be a win/win situation for the town.

Councilor Donohue spoke in support of the proposed center and noted that the council needs to give their full support to Mr. Thomas Sullivan, Recreation Director to build new programs for our youth.

Councilor Corbett commended Councilor Lawn and stated that the idea is worthy of further discussions.

Councilor Hecht also commended Councilor Lawn and noted that space is critical and there is an opportunity with the Browne School land.

Councilor Sideris thanked Councilor Lawn and stated that he looks forward to future discussions.

Councilor Kounelis echoed the comments of Councilor Sideris.

John DiMascio, Copeland Street – suggested extending an invitation to the police department and school department for future discussions.

8. MOTIONS, ORDERS AND RESOLUTIONS:

A. First Reading on a proposed ordinance adjusting the compensation of the Council Clerk. The Chair read the proposed ordinance and hourly rate increases and noted that the matter will be advertised for a public hearing and vote on December 12th.

B. Acceptance of Proclamation recognizing the 75th Anniversary of St. James Armenian Apostolic Church.

The Chair read the proclamation. Councilor Sideris moved to accept the proclamation, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by voice vote.

C. Resolution Accepting the Provisions of Chapter 137, of the Acts of 2003, as Amended by Chapter 77 of the Acts of 2005 acts related to public employees in the armed forces of the United States and further regulating salaries of public employees serving in the armed forces of the United States. The Chair recognized Mr. Robert Erickson, Veterans Agent who provided a brief overview of the resolution. The Chapter will make up for any difference between the veterans military pay and the city/town. Councilor Devaney moved the resolution, seconded by Councilor Sideris and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

9. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Chair announced the upcoming December 12th Holiday Reception at the Town Hall which is open to the public.

The Chair read a letter with respect to opposition to a proposed cell antenna placement in Bigelow Avenue. It was noted that the Zoning Board of Appeals will meet on the subject matter next evening. The Chair spoke in support of the neighborhood's position. Councilor Hecht stated that the Council should allow the Zoning Board of Appeals to meet on this issue and decide the matter as it is not something that the Council should adopt an opinion on.

The Manager noted that a municipality cannot deny a petition or cite environmental or health effects.

Councilor Kounelis indicated that our own Town ordinances prohibit cellular antennas within 50 feet of a residential property or school, yet we allow it.

Councilor Devaney noted that the town already has 101 cellular antennas, and in a four square mile town, how many do you need for service.

The Chair read and passed out a letter and photo of how the Family Network has utilized their O'Neil Charitable monies.

The Chair asked the Town Manager to look into getting the Veteran's Agent a larger office, noting many complaints he has received from veterans who visit the town hall.

The Chair noted that the School Committee meets monthly in executive session to keep abreast on the progress of union negotiations, and asked that the Council take the same proactive steps starting in January.

Councilor Hecht presented a letter to be sent to Mr. Golledge, Secretary of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs requesting funding to improvement the Charles River front between the Watertown Yacht Club and Watertown Square. Councilor Devaney moved to approve the letter, seconded by Councilor Sideris and adopted by unanimous voted.

10. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER

A. Faire on the Square Final Report. The Town Manager presented a written report of revenues, expenditures and in-kind contributions relating to the accounting of Faire on the Square held on September 30, 2006 (attached).

11. REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Councilor Donohue spoke in support of closing a portion of Main Street during the next Faire on the Square.

Councilor Kounelis spoke in concern with the chemical blast in Danvers, Massachusetts recently and asked that the Fire Chief provide an information presentation on safety guidelines for these types of business in Watertown, noting that there are 10 such companies and a significant number are located in the east end.

The Chair asked for signage on Galen Street after the bridge to distinguish lanes. The Chair also asked that a speed limit sign be placed along Galen Street, as none exist.

The Chair also indicated that no welcome sign exists in the south side as motorists enter Watertown and requested one be installed at Galen Street.

12. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Kounelis announced that she participated in a show that has been taped on cable broadcast with host, Jack Zollo, and Town Assessor Daniel Loughlin regarding a broad discussion on the issue of taxes.

The show will air in the near future.

13. PUBLIC FORUM

Doreen Munger Dawson – spoke in support of a community center and asked that the Town Council also look closely at the needs for a recycling center as well. Ms. Dawson noted her concern over the demolition of the Brown School and noting the expansion of new housing along the Pleasant Street corridor and the possibility of an influx of children with that development and also spoke regarding safety issues of police cruisers in close proximity to children coming and going to the proposed recreation center.

John Hughes, Longfellow Road – spoke in support of a recreation/community center.

There being no further business to come before the Town Council, Councilor Hecht moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 pm, seconded by Sideris and adopted by unanimous vote.