

MINUTES

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY, APRIL 24, 2007 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, John J. Lawn, Jr., Jonathan Hecht, Stephen E. Romanelli, Mark S. Sideris, and Council President Clyde L. Younger. Also present were the Council Clerk Valerie Papas, Town Manager Michael J. Driscoll and Town Attorney Mark Reich.

The Chair called for a Moment of Silence for the victims of the Virginia Tech Massacre.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. EXAMINATION OF MINUTES: April 10, 2007 Councilor Romanelli moved to adopt the minutes of April 10th, seconded by Councilor Sideris and adopted by voice vote.

4. PUBLIC FORUM:

Mr. David Smith, President of the Civil War Round Table – spoke out against the disposition of the Eaton Priest plaque stating that miscommunication between the library board of trustees and other parties have resulted in a stalemate in the dedication and installation of the antique plaque.

Ms. Margaret Winston, 48 Bigelow Avenue – spoke in support of proposed wage increase, noting that she and others have not received a raise in eight years. She asked that the raise be voted tonight.

5. MOTIONS, ORDERS AND RESOLUTIONS:

A. Acceptance of Proclamations honoring Target Store Manager Donald Aldrich and Watertown Home Improvement Director Edward Dutkiewics – Stephen Corbett. Councilor Corbett read a proclamation honoring Donald Aldrich, which was accepted by Michael Donham. Councilor Sideris moved to accept the proclamation, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by voice vote. Councilor Corbett read a proclamation honoring Edward Dutkiewics, which was accepted by former Councilor Alex Liazos. Councilor Devaney moved to accept the proclamation, seconded by Councilor Kounelis and adopted by voice vote.

B. First Reading on a proposed Ordinance to Temporarily Modify Hours of Operation of the Administration Building. The Town Manager provided a brief overview of the Ordinance which will be advertised in the local paper for a public hearing and vote on May 8th.

Councilor Devaney moved to Suspend the Rules in order to move forward agenda item 5 E. Motion to refer compensation of Crossing Guards to the Budget & Fiscal Oversight Committee, seconded by Councilor Romanelli. Councilor Devaney spoke in support of a \$2.00 an hour raise noting that many of the crossing guards have received less than a .40 raise in eight years and spoke against sending the matter to committee for further study.

Councilor Lawn asked what account the monies for the raises will be taken from.

Councilor Sideris asked where the required fiscal note is for the compensation request.

Councilor Sideris spoke in support of sending the matter to committee for further study and recommendation.

The Chair agreed, stating that sending the matter to committee will expedite the matter and allow the Council to consider the request along with the budget.

Councilor Kounelis concurred with the Chair.

Councilor Devaney asked that the matter be referred to Public Safety.

Councilor Hecht stated that the matter can be referred jointly, to include Public Safety.

Councilor Romanelli moved to refer the matter jointly to the Budget and Fiscal Oversight Committee and Public Safety Committee, seconded by Councilor Kounelis and adopted by voice vote.

C. Resolution authorizing a transfer to fund the Watertown Town Hall Associates SEIU, Local 888 Agreement. The Town Manager requested the matter be Tabled until the next Town Council meeting of May 8th stating that he would like more time to put together the dollar amounts. Councilor Romanelli moved the request to Table, seconded by Councilor Sideris and adopted by voice vote.

D. Resolution authorizing a transfer in the amount of \$20,000 to fund the Veterans Benefits Account for the remainder of the fiscal year. The Chair recognized Mr. Robert Erickson, Veterans Agent who provided a brief explanation of the monies request. Councilor Devaney moved the transfer, seconded by Councilor Kounelis and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

E. Motion to refer compensation of Crossing Guards to the Budget & Fiscal Oversight Committee. Previously taken up.

5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Chair read the budget hearing dates (attached).

The Chair read a letter from Even Start Program regarding their previously held Open House.

6. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER

A. Submission of the Fiscal Year 2008 Budget.

The Town Manager read his Budget Message (attached) and submitted the Fiscal Year 2008 Budget.

Councilor Sideris stated that he has been on the Council for many years, and each year the Council receives preliminary budget figures from the Manager regarding a projected deficit and each year we find the money and balance the budget. He noted that there is a concern that either we are predicting dire forecasts on purpose or we are not projecting accurate forecasts. He requested that the Manager provide an answer in the next few weeks as the Council goes through this budget and preliminary budgets for FY 09 and 10.

Councilor Devaney concurred with Councilor Sideris' comments and stated that she has been saying for years that every year a 2 million dollar deficit is projected and three weeks later the money is found and the budget is balanced.

The Chair stated that for the first time he has been approached by many residents who say that they are feeling the pinch with many requesting tax abatement forms.

7. REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Councilor Kounelis stated that on March 27th she requested a follow up from the Manager as to why the Pilot Program for Tufts is based on membership and not financials. She asked that the Manager follow up on her previously made request.

The Manager noted that he has asked the Town Assessor to work on the request.

Councilor Kounelis following up on a memorandum dated April 17th to the Manager requesting a report on where the escrow monies from Stop & Shop are being held, what the current value is and where the monies can be located in the budget and past audit reports from Melanson & Heath.

The Manager stated that he will forward a response this week on the matter.

Councilor Sideris stated that the parking lot at the corner of Bacon and Main Streets is in disrepair and asked who is responsible for its maintenance, the town or abutting businesses who use the lot. She asked if the town has an agreement with the businesses on its maintenance and if not, what is the town doing to maintain the lot.

Councilor Devaney asked for a report on what is the continued delay on appointments, which have been allowed to expire and asked specifically on the disposition of the expired Conservation Commission members.

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Hecht provided an update on local initiatives in the State House, such as health insurance issues, pension issues, meal tax, and a telecommunication loop hole; and asked that these initiatives be discussed jointly in the Budget & Fiscal Oversight Committee and State, Federal and Regional Government Committee. Adopted by voice vote.

Councilor Hecht stated that he will be brining forward a draft letter to the Town Council with respect to \$250,000 in monies from the State for improvements to Nonantum Road.

Councilor Lawn announced that on Saturday, May 12th the Boys & Girls Club will host its 31 Anniversary Dinner. Donations are welcome.

Councilor Devaney stated that she will place on the next agenda an update on the State's Fiscal Policy Committee regarding a variety of issues.

9. PUBLIC FORUM – none noted.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION: There being no further business to come before the Town Council, Councilor Sideris moved to adjourn the open session at 9:45 pm, in order to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing real property and litigation and the Town Council will not return to open session following its adjournment of the executive session, seconded by Councilor Lawn and adopted by roll call vote.