

MINUTES

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2007 AT 6:00 PM*

RICHARD E. MASTRANGELO CHAMBER

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

1. ROLL CALL – 6:00 PM: 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 call of the roll were Councilors Stephen Corbett, John A. Donohue, John J. Lawn, Jr., Angeline B. Kounelis, Vice President Mark S. Sideris and Council President Clyde L. Younger. Also present were the Town Manager Michael J. Driscoll, Town Attorney Mark Reich and Council Clerk Valerie Papas. Councilors Devaney, Romanelli and Hecht were not present.

Councilor Sideris moved to go into executive session in order to discuss the lease, taking or purchase of real property, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION – 6:00 PM

3. RETURN TO OPEN SESSION – 7:15 PM

Councilors Romanelli and Devaney were present. Councilor Hecht was absent.

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

5. EXAMINATION OF MINUTES: June 12th, June 26th & July 10th. Councilor Sideris moved to approve the minutes for June 12th, June 26th and July 10th, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by voice vote.

Councilor Sideris moved to Suspend the Rules in order to bring forward agenda item 9A under Motions, Orders and Resolutions, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by voice vote.

A. Acceptance of Proclamations:

1. Honoring Douglas E. Carlson – Mark Sideris: The Chair recognized Councilors Mark Sideris and Stephen Romanelli who read and presented a proclamation, along with a copy of “Cross Roads on the Charles a history of Watertown” which was signed by members of the Public Works Department and councilors and a Public Works logo fleece shirt as a token of the Town’s appreciation for Mr. Carlson’s 41 years of dedicated service with the Department of Public Works. Councilors Sideris and Romanelli noted Mr. Carlson’s willing to lend a helping hand to all and extreme dedication to his department. Mr. Carlson received a standing ovation from the audience and councilors and stated that there were no words to describe his feelings of gratitude for this recognition. Councilor Sideris moved to accept the proclamation, seconded by Councilor Romanelli and adopted by voice vote.

2. To Rescind Partnership in “No Place for Hate” with ADL sponsorship with a commitment to no hate policy of equal justice for all – Marilyn M. Petitto Devaney. The Chair recognized Councilor Devaney who read a proclamation to rescind membership in the No Place For Hate program which is sponsored by the Anti Defamation League. Councilor Devaney stated that the Town cannot join with the ADL when they do not recognize the genocide and that she will bring the same proclamation to other towns in the state including the Mass Municipal Association who has also sponsored the program. Councilor Devaney spoke of the survivors of the genocide whom she personally knows. She noted that it is important that the town separates themselves from the ADL.

The Chair recognized Mr. Will Twombly, co-chair of the No Place For Hate organization who responded to the ADL’s denial of the Armenian Genocide. Mr. Twombly thanked Councilor Devaney for bringing this proclamation to the Council in order to discuss this complex issue more fully. Mr. Twombly stated that he only recently learned of the ADL’s stance and expressed the organizations strong objection to it. Mr. Twombly read of list of suggested amendments to Councilor Devaney’s proclamation which would include: suspending its relationship with the ADL for a period of 90 days; urging the ADL to change its position; investigating other sources of funding and to decide if the relationship with the ADL should permanently be severed after the 90 day period (attached).

The Chair recognized the following people:

1. David Boyajian, Newton – stated that it was his letter to the Watertown Tab that brought to light the ADL's stance on the Armenian Genocide. He stated that the No Place For Hate organization should have known about the ADL's stance as well and that the Town should sever their support for the ADL and the No Place For Hate organization.
2. Armen Baghdoya, Watertown Street - stated that the Town of Watertown should disassociate itself with special interest groups, noting that this is nothing but an injection of a sectarian agenda.
3. John DiMascio, Copeland Street – stated that the organization was a well intended - good idea, but no research was done. He urged the Council to rescind the prior proclamation voted in by a previous Council and put the burden of proof on the ADL.
4. Lois Mastrangelo, School Street – stated that she feels very strongly about what has brought her here tonight. She noted that most would agree that the problem is not with No Place For Hate organization but with its sponsor, the ADL. She noted that others are egregious by the ADL and that the ADL dares to defame anyone who criticizes Israel or expresses views or analysis that is pro Palestinian. She further noted that the ADL stifles debate and defames and labels others and urged the Council to sever their ties with the ADL and No Place For Hate organization.

The Chair noted that Ms. Mastrangelo is the wife of the late Richard E. Mastrangelo, former Town Council President.

5. Andy Tarse, Regional Director of the ADL – stated that he has had a difficult but respectful discussion with the No Place For Hate organization last night and reached some degree of mutual respect in the process. He noted that the NPFH organization has been successful here in Watertown and around the State. He noted that the ADL has never denied the facts of the great tragedies that have afflicted the Armenian people. He noted that many facts have been grossly distorted with respect to the ADL and that the ADL protects the Jewish community and believes that Turkey needs to do more to work with Armenians and hopes that the ADL can push Turkey to confront their history in a meaningful way.

6. Narmi Badalian, Walnut Street – stated that as a Watertown resident she has not experienced hate or bigotry in Watertown and urged the Council not to be bullied by politics and stand up against hate, bigotry and racism and the ADL.

7. Mary Najimy, Fuller Road – teacher, educator, Arab American – stated that the ADL does not separate legitimate, first amendment activities from groups that conduct hate activities and have a well documented record in the courts with respect to their surveillance on activists (reading a list of targeted organizations and activists). She noted that she shares the outrage of the Armenian community and stated that it is a large issue.

8. Grace Kulegian, Carol Street – stated that the ADL is a blatant hypocrisy as they preach tolerance but practice divisiveness and denial. She is confident that a resolution to this matter will strength Watertown with moral clarity and end the ADL’s affiliation with genocide denial. She urged the Council to disassociate with the ADL until they acknowledge the Armenian Genocide.

9. Dikran Kaligian, Spring Street – NPFH committee member stated that he hopes the NPFH committee continues to press the issue with the ADL as their response has been less than honest as the ADL refuses to acknowledges the Armenian Genocide and spoke in support of continued discussions with the ADL.

10. Ruth Thomasian, Arlington Street – NPFH committee member stated that she takes pride in her work with the committee and spoke in support of the 90 day period to work out this issue and asked for more participation from the community and asked the committee be allowed to continue its good work.

Councilor Kounelis thanked the public for their attendance and stated that there is bias and hate and that as a community we will work together to make our community stronger. She noted her support for the proclamation.

Councilor Sideris stated that he attended the NPFH’s committee meeting last night and was surprised at the ADL’s stance and noted that it is a problem for Watertown. Councilor Sideris stated that the NPFH committee has done a tremendous job and that the committee should be expanded to bring the issue to the forefront. By Watertown withdrawing its support it is sending a message to the ADL, Watertown and state-wide, he noted.

Councilor Donohue stated that the NPFH committee should not be blamed for the ADL's stance and that pressure should continue against the improper stance by the ADL.

Councilor Devaney thanked the Armenian community and noted that it is proper that Watertown should take the lead against the ADL's stance. She noted that she will ask other communities to rescind their support and that she will personally carry the proclamation to the MMA. She lastly stated that she will personally see to it that the NFPH sign in front of the Town Hall is removed.

Councilor Corbett stated that Watertown should continue with the program under our own name without sponsorship and noted the great work the NPFH committee has done.

Councilor Lawn spoke in support of the work of the NPFH committee and stated that their work should continue, perhaps under a new name, and thanked all the committee members for all their hard work and dedication.

Councilor Romanelli stated that he wants to extend an apology to the Armenian community for all that has happen to them indicating that they have gone through enough.

The Chair indicated his thanks for all those who came out this evening and that he has heard and understands everyone's concerns about the community and where it is going with this issue. He noted that he knows many that have spoken tonight and also knows the work of the NPFH group and noted their wonderful programs. He spoke in support of an umbrella approach in keeping Mr. Twombly as the Chair of a new committee as we divorce ourselves from this ADL sponsored group.

Councilor Devaney thanked Mr. Twombly and moved to adopt the proclamation which severs all ties with the NPFH committee and the ADL, seconded by Councilor Sideris and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

Councilor Devaney asked the Manager to take down the No Place For Hate sign tomorrow morning.

Councilor Sideris moved to have the Council assist Mr. Twombly and Officer Sampson in establishing a new committee and to continue its good work, seconded by Councilor Corbett and adopted by voice vote.

The Chair called for a five minute recess.

6. PUBLIC FORUM – none noted

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A. Committee on Rules and Ordinances report on use of a Chaplain and Boards & Commissions term expirations – Jonathan Hecht, Chair. Postponed.

- B. Ad Hoc Charitable Committee report and action on recommendations for disbursements of charitable monies for 2007 – Mark S. Sideris, Chair. The Chair recognized Councilor Sideris who read the committee's report (attached) explaining the disbursements and elaborated on the larger grant awards. He noted three special project grants to Miller/Tracy foundation; Arts Center Children's Theatre and the Boys & Girls Club. Councilor Sideris thanked the committee members for all their hard work and Harvard University for their donation. Councilor Devaney moved to accept the report, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by voice vote.

**8. INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION FROM TOWN OFFICERS
& EMPLOYEES:**

- A. Informational Presentation on Patriot Day 2007 Observance, Tuesday, September 11th – Robert Erickson, Veterans' Services Officer. The Chair recognized Mr. Erickson who provided a brief overview of the agenda for Patriot Day 2007 to take place on September 11th.

- B. Informational Presentation on the Pleasant Street Corridor Study – Kathryn J. Madden, AICP, Principal Sasaki Associates. The Chair recognized Ms. Madden who stated that she welcomes feedback on the draft plan. She highlighted comments received during the charettee process. Ms. Madden stated that the comprehensive vision included a mixed use which would support the bottom line and an enhanced connection to the Charles River. She further noted that a mixed use would have a positive tax impact and only a slight increase of traffic. Ms. Madden spoke in support of using the principles of the charrette with respect to economics, social, environmental and sustainability citing a corridor which would be walk-able, small business like, a networking of streets with traffic calming measures and a district resilient to dynamics.

Councilor Corbett asked about the height limits on buildings. Ms. Madden stated that she does not see the town going over four stories.

Councilor Donohue asked about structured parking. Ms. Madden stated that parking can be below street level, built into hill area, similar to Ford Motor.

9. MOTIONS, ORDERS AND RESOLUTIONS:

- B. Acceptance of Proclamations: **previously adopted.**

- 1. Honoring Douglas E. Carlson – Mark Sideris

- 2. To Rescind Partnership in “No Place for Hate” with ADL sponsorship with a commitment to no hate policy of equal justice for all – Marilyn M. Petitto Devaney.

- C. First Reading and referral to the Planning Board and Committee on Economic Development and Planning on a proposed Municipal Use Ordinance, which encourages the orderly reuse and redevelopment of land and structures already owned and used for municipal purposes by the Town. The Chair recognized Mr. Gregory P. Watson, Planning Director who provided an overview and first reading on a proposed Municipal Use Ordinance. He noted that he will include the subcommittee in that process and report back to the Council, earliest date, end of September.

- D. Resolution authorizing a transfer of funds from the Fiscal Year 2008 Town Council Reserve Account to various Fiscal Year 2008 Library Salary Accounts related to the Agreement with the Library, AFSCME Council 93 Union. The Chair recognized the Town Manager who provided an overview of the transfer. Councilor Sideris moved the resolution, seconded by Councilor Devaney and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

- C. Resolution authorizing a transfer of \$128,779 from the Fiscal Year 2008 MWRA Sewer Assessment Account to the Fiscal Year 2008 Sewer Retirement of Debt Principal Account and the Fiscal Year 2008 Sewer Reserve Fund Account. The Chair recognized the Town Manager who provided an overview of the transfer. Councilor Kounelis moved the resolution, seconded by Councilor Sideris and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- A. Consideration and Action on proposed Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance. Councilor Sideris used his Charter Privilege to Table the matter.

Councilor Kounelis stated that she is against reducing parking spaces noting parking spaces are at a premium at the East End. She spoke in support of keeping the multi-family parking separate from the affordable housing parking amendment.

11. PRESIDENT'S REPORT – none noted.

12. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER

The Manager thanked the Town Council for continuing the commitment toward the NPFH program and stated that he will look toward local monies for funding.

13. REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Councilor Sideris read two requests from Councilor Hecht asking that presentations be made on the State's pension reforms inviting the Retirement Board members and on the local option to join the State's health insurance program and how it will affect the town's health insurance program.

Councilor Kounelis stated that she did not receive a response from the Administration relating to Stop & Shop monies.

Councilor Kounelis stated that the Aggregate site on Grove Street should give back to the community and asked the town to seek monies for the Grove Street/Coolidge Avenue intersection.

Councilor Kounelis stated that her request of March 13th regarding Elm Street was bypassed and would like it re-addressed.

Councilor Devaney stated that she has been involved in 3 or 4 linkage projects and that the Target project is a good thing and a one time opportunity and the town should be grateful for the \$350,000. She stated that she will continue to ask for linkage monies.

Councilor Devaney asked the Manager to follow up on books being thrown out by the Library, stating that it is unacceptable.

14. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Lawn announced that the Police Station Building Committee will make a report on September 11th.

15. PUBLIC FORUM – none noted.

16. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Town Council, Councilor Sideris moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 pm, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by voice vote.

I hereby certify that the minutes of August 14, 2007 were adopted on September 11, 2007 by voice vote as amended.

Clyde L. Younger, Council President