



Town Council

Kevin M. Manley, President
Paul L. Federici, Vice President
Kathleen G. Hill

Donald J. Anderson
Eric H. Madison
Michael J. Kane
Joseph Ford

Town Hall – 60 Center Square
Phone: (413) 525-5400 x 1100
Fax: (413) 525-1025

MINUTES

Town Council Minutes

Wednesday, February 1, 2017 at 6:00 P.M.

**Council on Aging Media Room, 328 North Main Street
East Longmeadow, Massachusetts 01028**

Present: Kathleen G. Hill, Eric H. Madison, Michael J. Kane, Donald J. Anderson, Joseph Ford, Denise Menard, Town Manager, Thomas P. Florence, Clerk of the Council.

In President Manley's absence, Councilor Anderson opened the meeting at 6:01 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a Moment of Silence. Announcements were made in accordance with Mass General Law, and it was noted that ELCAT was taping the meeting.

School Committee Chairman Bill Fonseca called the joint meeting to order of the Town Council and the East Longmeadow School Committee at 6:02 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Peter Punderson appeared before the Town Council regarding a matter he had previously discussed with the Council at the December 13 Town Council meeting. At that time he had questioned the manner in which the Council decided on the rate of pay (or stipend) the Council members receive. Mr. Punderson feels that the Council needs to withdraw their vote which was taken at the October 13, 2016 meeting regarding the Council's compensation. He suggested that the vote should be rescinded since no action will be taken until next year, and the compensation will be discussed in the budgetary process. Mr. Punderson then asked that if anyone had any comments that they go through Councilor Anderson. There were no comments made by the public, nor the Council.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Ms. Menard reported that East Longmeadow's first Human Resources Director Karin Decker started on Monday, January 30. She invited the Council to stop in and say hello to Ms. Decker. Ms. Decker is sharing her office with Board of Health Director Aimee Petrosky while construction continues for Ms. Decker's new office. The DPW staff is doing a great job with the town office renovation.

The Capital Plan and Annual Report are moving forward and Ms. Menard is continuing to research vacancies on Town boards and commissions.

The Board of Health would like to appear at the Council's February 28 meeting to review their goals.

The new Library Director Layla Johnston has hit the ground running and Ms. Menard distributed information regarding two Library programs that are currently happening.

The Police and Fire Chiefs, Councilor Federici and Ms. Menard are a part of a group of six communities working toward regional dispatching. They are working on a grant application and any agreement will come before the Council for approval. This is likely to happen sometime in March.

Ms. Menard and DPW Superintendent Bob Perient met with representatives from GreatHorse (Hampden golf course) in order to understand their plans to tie in to East Longmeadow's water and sewer lines. GreatHorse was under the impression they had a gentleman's agreement with East Longmeadow to do so, but there is no evidence of such an agreement.

Councilor Ford does not feel comfortable with GreatHorse tying into East Longmeadow's water, especially given the fact there was a voluntary ban on water this summer. Mr. Peirent may be able to answer questions regarding the burden of such a project on East Longmeadow. Also, the question was raised as to whether the Town has the authority to enter into such an agreement with a private entity of a neighboring community. The Council and Ms. Menard discussed other various concerns about the size and complexity of the project. All these issues have been brought before GreatHorse, and another meeting is planned for March once Mr. Peirent has the opportunity to get answers to his questions.

Town Managers, Planners, Accountants, Assessors and Public Works Directors from Longmeadow and East Longmeadow have been meeting with a developer who is planning a rehab and possible expansion of a nursing home in East Longmeadow and a medical office building in Longmeadow. In anticipation of added traffic, they are proposing establishing District Improvement Financing (DIF) to finance traffic improvement. Ms. Menard distributed materials explaining what a DIF is and how it works. The developer has asked to appear before the Council at their February 14 meeting to discuss the DIF proposal.

ACT ON MINUTES AND MOTIONS OF OPEN SESSION MEETING OF JANUARY 10, 2017

Councilor Anderson requested two corrections be made to the minutes. One is that Robyn Macdonald is the "Director of Planning" and not "Planner" and the "Board of Education" should be changed to the "School Committee".

Motion: Councilor Hill made a motion to approve the minutes of the Open Session Meeting of January 10, 2017, as amended. Councilor Madison seconded and all were in favor.

OLD BUSINESS

Town Manager Contract Status

Councilor Madison stated there was nothing to discuss regarding the Contract for the Town Manager. They are still in negotiations and they hope to complete the process soon.

Patrick Higgins' Response to Open Meeting Law Inquiries

Mr. Florence reported that Patrick Higgins was satisfied with East Longmeadow's response to his complaints to the Attorney General's Office regarding Open Meeting violations. Mr. Higgins commented in his response that he was impressed by the Council's professionalism as he watched the Council meetings.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to discuss.

LICENSING MATTERS**One Day Beer License for St. Paul the Apostle Church**

Motion: Councilor Madison made a motion to approve a one day beer license for St. Paul the Apostle Church for Sunday, February 5, 2017 from 5:00-10:00 p.m. at St. Paul Social Hall, and Councilor Kane seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Approval of DBA Name Change from "The Meadows" to "Fogueira"

A Local Licensing Authority Review Record was brought before the Council to approve a name change on a DBA from "The Meadows" to "Fogueira." Town Attorney Jim Donahue spoke with the owner's attorney so it's understood that a conversion from a bar to a restaurant would need a special planning board permit. The Council discussed the ramifications involved for the owner; however, the matter currently before the Council is to approve the name change only.

Motion: Councilor Kane made a motion to approve the DBA name change for the applicant from "The Meadows" to "Fogueira." Councilor Madison seconded and all were in favor.

FINANCIAL MATTERS**Article 6 of Charter, Financial and Fiscal Procedures**

Ms. Menard introduced Town Accountant Sara Menard to make a presentation regarding the financial health of the Town. Ms. Sara Menard reported that the Town is on track or in slightly better shape than projected. We are half way through the year and have spent 54% of expenditures. The Town is slightly under budget, but the recent and anticipated snow removal may cause a deficit. Salt is the Town's biggest expenditure relative to snow removal. Overall, when comparing last year to this year, the Town is in a slightly better position and is very healthy financially.

Councilor Madison asked Ms. Sara Menard if she has done any forecasting relative to revenue and expenditures. She responded that she had not and was hoping that, with this meeting, the Council could give her direction and discuss goals that could shape that projection. Ms. Sara Menard also discussed different options and methods as to how she can make her projections based on what the Council asks for.

Councilor Madison said he didn't think the Council can give that direction until they see a level funded budget with contractual obligations. Ms. Sara Menard said she can do the forecasting the same as was done last year with the Appropriations Committee. The assessor's office could give an estimate on new growth, and she will get that information from them to present at the next meeting.

Debt Advisory Committee Presentation

Debt Advisory Committee Chair Jim Broderick distributed Debt Management Recommendations to the Council. Mr. Broderick thanked each member of the Committee (Russ Denver, Dawn Starks, Town Accountant Sara Menard, Town Council Liaison Eric Madison), as well as DPW Superintendent Bob Peirent and Peter Fraser, Bond Counsel of First Southwest Company. He reviewed the following recommendations as outlined in the handout:

1. Definitions of “debt” and “debt service”
2. The Town’s debt service should be based upon percentage of the Town’s prior year’s projected General Fund Sources.
3. The percentage of Town debt service to the prior year’s projected General Fund Sources should be between 8-10% for FY18, and thereafter reviewed by the Town Manager pursuant to recommendations of the Town’s Bond Counsel, and a review of comparable local communities’ debt service percentages.
4. Debt service for the Water Enterprise Fund, the Sewer Enterprise Fund, and the Community Preservation Fund should be covered by each fund’s operating revenue.
5. A goal of 65% of the Town’s General Fund debt, Water Enterprise Fund debt, Sewer Enterprise Fund debt, and Community Preservation Fund debt, each measured separately, should be retired within a 10 year span.
6. Debt issued for a project should not be for a term that exceeds 80% of the useful life of the project.
7. Lease-to-own equipment should be completed paid off within 80% of the useful life of the item.

Councilor Madison asked Mr. Broderick if the Committee had explored where we are in three years, or five years, and Mr. Broderick replied that he did not. Councilor Ford asked if there were any large debts being retired soon. Ms. Sara Menard replied there are a large amount of final payments coming in 2021. At the Council’s next meeting she could identify those items that will be retired in each of the next 5 years.

The Council thanked the Committee for the fantastic work done and Councilor Madison commented that the financial procedures be looked at as a whole, and possibly look at the debt information and adopt it as policy for a budget planning guideline.

Joint Meeting with School Committee to discuss FY18 Financial Update/Budget

Councilor Anderson welcomed East Longmeadow School Committee Chair Bill Fonseca. The purpose of the joint meeting with the School Committee is to have open discussion regarding the budget, and to hear what the school’s plans are for capital projects and what their short term project goals are. These will be considered when the Council discusses the budget with the Town Manager.

Superintendent Gordon Smith said that schools are being impacted nationally with social emotional elements that are challenging to students to make academic progress and keep them in the mainstream. For those students who “age out” of special education, those tuition funds can be reallocated for special education contracted services. We may need more special education professional development at our younger schools to deal with social and emotional challenges. At our older schools we could possibly contract with an agency where a counselor or two can be brought in to assist us. Also, math and science items are consumables for the elementary grades that become more expensive each year, and they are ensuring funding is available to provide the resources for those curricula.

School Committee Richard Freccero said there are three different ways to look at this year's budget: (1) contractual obligations; (2) the 2014-2015 reduction of four staff members; and (3) the leadership team's list of requests. They are progressing from a wider funnel to a smaller package to present to the Council.

Councilor Ford asked about the staff reductions and was told the positions cut were a position at Birchland Park Middle School, a custodian at the high school, a third grade teacher at Mountain View Elementary School, and a .5 interventionist at Meadow Brook Elementary School. Councilor Kane asked if these were monetarily made decisions and Mr. Freccero responded that this was a result with working with the Appropriations Committee in 2014-2015 in keeping a reasonable budget.

Mr. Fonseca commented that there are a lot of changes coming, one of which is the Every Student Succeeds Act, which is the successor to the No Child Left Behind Act. They are trying to prepare for this financially in moving forward for the next four or five years and stay within the guidelines.

Councilor Madison asked about the contractual obligations impact. Pamela Blair, Assistant Superintendent for Business, replied that 85% of the budget is personnel. She is still working on the contractual obligations information and may have more information for the next meeting. Councilor Hill asked at what stage they were with contract negotiations and Superintendent Smith replied that Unit A (teachers' union) is still under contract for one more year, and paraprofessionals are in current negotiations with the School Committee.

Councilor Ford asked about the cut positions and wanted to know if these were essential positions, and what it would take to restore those four positions. It would cost approximately \$200,000 from a \$28,000,000 budget, which does not include benefits. Councilor Hill asked if they would replace those exact four positions or replace four open "slots." Mr. Freccero responded he would want to regain the custodial position and the third grade teacher, which was cut due to retirement.

The average class size is approximately 25 students at Mountain View Elementary School in the third grade and it is very challenging to keep the class size down, given the economic times. The school has offered parents to attend Mapleshade Elementary School to help out, including transportation if they choose to attend there. Mountain View Elementary School has grown over the last few years, but in general there has been a slight decline in the schools' population and it's starting to "flatten out".

Councilor Ford commented that East Longmeadow was rejected by the Massachusetts School Building Authority for the construction of a new school, and would like to have more information as to why. Also, if we get accepted and can't begin a project until two years after, how would we maintain our buildings. The Council receives requests for residents trying to understand the long term vision for the schools, and he would like to see more information at the next meeting.

Mr. Thompson discussed the needs for a roof at the high school and said Superintendent Smith is in constant communication with the MSBA. There was discussion regarding the pros and cons, financially and otherwise, of renovation versus construction of a new building, and what would be the best course of action, including not disturbing the students. The high school's electric problems and the need of a roof are becoming critical, as well as real needs in the other school buildings. Ms. Blair commented that the MSBA looks at what avenue is in the best interest of the students. Councilor Ford stated that the Council needs to determine what the Town can afford and make the best recommendations. The high school may have to be considered as one project, and then address the other schools together.

Mr. Freccero discussed the high school and the MSBA's Accelerated Repair Program being two separate issues. Mr. Fonseca added that the average wait for a new building is eight to ten years depending on the urgency. Superintendent Smith said the high school needs to be kept viable and he is constantly discussing this with the DPW and planning with Building Facilities Manager Bruce Fenney, as well as Diane Sullivan from the MSBA. A big challenge with the high school is that it is a fifty-six year old building and the wires in the concrete are beginning to fail. The MSBA was impressed with a tour of the school, and we are moving up in terms of urgency.

Mr. Fonseca informed the Council that the MSBA gets their funding by receiving 1% of Massachusetts' sales tax. Last year they funded twelve projects out of eighty-three submissions. Superintendent Smith said he has been working on a five year plan with the Town Manager and Town Accountant. He discussed how they will be looking at projects, including timeframes of the facilities study, and the Accelerated Repair Program's Statement of Interest and its limitations.

Councilor Kane asked if the pool was a separate entity and was told that the MSBA does not fund for the pool. However, the School Committee would not put forth a project without including it.

Superintendent Smith said if the Council approved the vote to go forward with the Statement of Interest for the Accelerated Repair Program, the School Committee would submit it in February and hear as early as May, or more likely June/July. Councilor Ford asked what is the downside of submitting, and Mr. Fonseca replied that you're not committed to going back to them for twenty years to request a core project. Superintendent Smith said, if approved, the MSBA has a very structured process; for example, if we were to go ahead with a project, they would refer us to a recommended project manager and architect. Mr. Thompson said the downside is if they reject East Longmeadow's funding for a roof for the high school, the Town has to decide to fund the roof as a community or wait another year to request through the MSBA again. Councilor Ford suggested they make a contingency plan for funding if they are rejected, which would have to be considered by the Town Manager. Discussion ensued regarding bonding and taxing to the full levy capacity.

The School Committee and Town Council agreed to have a joint meeting again on Tuesday, February 28, 2017, at 6:00 p.m. at which time the entire Town Council meeting would be a joint meeting, including the Town Accountant's presentation.

Required Motion and Vote for Approval for Massachusetts School Building Authority Statement of Interest for 2017 Accelerated Repair Program

Councilor Anderson read the vote to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the MSBA the Statement of Interest Form for the Accelerated Repair Program.

Motion: Councilor Madison made a motion to approve the vote to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the MSBA the Statement of Interest Form for the Accelerated Repair Program as read. Councilor Ford seconded and all were in favor.

Motion: Mr. Fonseca made a motion to adjourn the joint meeting of the Town Council and East Longmeadow School Committee at 7:42 p.m., and Ms. Deirdre Mailloux seconded. All in favor and the motion passed.

Motion: Councilor Madison made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 p.m. Councilor Ford seconded and all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne R. Guertin
Assistant Town Clerk