

MINUTES

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2007 AT 6:30 PM

RICHARD E. MASTRANGELO CHAMBER

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

1. ROLL CALL: A regular meeting of the Town Council was called to order at 6::30 pm in the Richard E. Mastrangelo Chamber, Administration Building. Present for the meeting were Councilors Stephen Corbett, John A. Donohue, Jonathan Hecht, Angie 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 Lawn, Romanelli and Devaney were not present.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION – 6:30 PM

Councilor Sideris moved to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing the value, taking, exchange or lease of real property and to return to open session following its adjournment, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

The Chair clarified comments in the local paper, which he stated were taken out of context, in regards to the recent election results.

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

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

5. EXAMINATION OF MINUTES: October 23rd, Councilor Romanelli moved the minutes as written, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by voice vote.

6. PUBLIC FORUM

William Twombly, Marion Road – updated the Council on the merging of the former No Place for Hate committee with the World for Watertown committee. He announced that World for Watertown, will host its annual Unity Breakfast; a Welcome to Watertown resource map is being translated into 5 different languages to reflect the diversity of the town with keys to help explain various town resources that are available to residents. Mr. Twombly stated that his group may be seeking financial help for this project.

Ruth Thomasian, Arlington Street – announced an upcoming Understanding Genocide and its Impact meeting on Wednesday, November 28th at Watertown High School.

Councilor Sideris moved to bring forward agenda item 11B, seconded by Councilor Romanelli and adopted by voice vote.

Acceptance of Proclamation honoring Officer George Hoffman: Councilor Romanelli read a proclamation honoring Police Officer Hoffman's 38 years of service to the town. Police Chief Edward Deveau stated that Office Hoffman has been a tremendous asset to the town and in the police force. He is a roll model for the newer recruits and is a senior officer with invaluable experience in police enforcement.

Councilor Sideris moved to bring forward agenda item 11A, seconded by Councilor Romanelli and adopted by voice vote.

- A. Resolution approving the Acceptance and Expenditure of a Gift of funds in the Amount of \$1,000 to offset expenses related to the "Faire on the Square 2007".

The Town Manager provided a brief overview of the transfer. Councilor Sideris moved the transfer, seconded by Councilor Devaney and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

Councilor Sideris read a proclamation honoring Michael Donham, member of the Faire on the Square Committee. Mr. Donham thanked the Council for the honor and stated that a lot of the work was done behind the scenes, and his main source of support has always been his wife, Louise. Mr. Donham thanked all past and present committee members; thanked former Councilor John Portz for his push to get the Faire on the Square Committee off the ground with a commitment from the Council; and town staff – John Flynn, Jerry Mee and crew, manager, police, fire and Lucia Mastrangelo and Watertown Savings Bank President, Ron Dean.

Councilor Devaney read and presented a proclamation regarding Italian Heritage Month to Sons of Italy Lodge 1036 President, Rudy Bisconi. Councilor Devaney spoke on past stereotyping, prejudice and our progress. Mr. Bisconi stated that he was honored to accept the proclamation on behalf of his lodge members and provided a brief introduction of various charitable fundraising events the lodge is involved in.

Councilor Sideris moved to accept all three proclamations given out this evening, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by voice vote, (attached to minutes).

7. PUBLIC HEARING AND VOTE:

- A. Public hearing and vote on Zoning Amendments regarding Affordable Housing; Off Street Parking Spaces; Special Permit Criteria for I-1 and I-2 Districts including Motel and Hotel Uses.

Mr. Watson provided a brief overview of the zoning amendments and previous Planning Board meetings on the matter. Mr. Watson highlighted key provisions including changes to 5.07 affordable housing requirements. He noted that key issues were an incentive for mixed used developments; range of 20% of market rate unit that cannot go below certain thresholds; cash payment opportunity particularly for smaller developments; density bonus would not count against gross floor area. Mr. Watson stated that with respect to the off

street parking requirement, the Planning Board determined along with Connery Consults, that new developments did not need the previously required two parking spaces per unit. The change would take more cars off the street and allow for better utilization of the site. Mr. Watson stated that with respect to 9.06 special permit criteria, residential uses in the I1 and I2 districts, it was decided to set percentage to 25% of gross floor area of the building. and 5.01 (j) include motel and hotel uses for special permit, previously excluded from those districts.

The Chair opened up the hearing to the public and recognized:

Margaret Cassidy, Prentis Street – spoke against reduced parking spaces for larger developments. She noted that reducing the parking spaces will lead to increased street parking, sidewalk parking and paving over grass areas for parking.

David Leon, Standish Road and Housing Partnership – spoke against reducing the size of the affordable housing units by 20%, the affordable units he noted ought to be comparable in size to regular priced units and of the same construction quality. He proposed to address a thresh hold for the larger size units instead. With respect to mixed units, Mr. Leone also spoke in concern of raising threshold at the expense of affordable units.

Dennis Duff, Spruce Street – spoke against reduced parking requirements for larger developments citing density issues and the resulting chaos in certain neighborhoods.

Mark Krackiewicz, 77 Riverside Street – spoke in support of reducing number of required parking spaces as a good idea, noting that if you offer the paring spaces, they will come with cars.

Curtis Whitney, Grandview Avenue – spoke in support of the zoning amendments in the long term including reducing cars in the community as a good thing which promotes more green, use of bicycles. He spoke in support of flexibility in the affordable housing requirements; and in support of motel/ hotel in the I1 and I2 districts as a benefit to the community in helping increase growth.

Ruth Thomasian, Arlington Street – spoke against reducing parking requirements citing too many cars parked in the street and spoke in support of permeable surfaces.

There being no further comments, the Chair closed the hearing.

Councilor Donohue clarified through Mr. Watson, parking change is for 3 or more units and would not affect developments in the T zone.

Councilor Hecht asked how many housing units fall into this multiunit – very large developments

Mr. Watson stated that he does not have the exact number of units on hand, but will furnish it. The intent is clearly directed at the larger developments, citing test case at Repton Place on Pleasant Street. He noted that they requested only as much parking as required to market the project effectively, this was accomplished through shadow parking. Mr. Watson stated that he fully expects to see that they will not need 2 parking spaces per unit. This allows for more green space, less surface parking, fewer trips from the site etc. He noted that this is not a gift to the development community but a strategic rational approach.

Councilor Devaney spoke against the amendment noting that this type of change will result in more people parking in the streets. She cited that Watertown is 9th dense city in the country. Reducing parking makes no sense, she noted.

Mr. Watson noted that if you require more parking, you saturate the development with more two bedroom units and a higher unit count.

Councilor Devaney disagreed with the analogy.

Councilor Kounelis stated that she will not support an amendment reducing parking requirements citing 199 Coolidge Avenue, built more than 30 years ago, does not have enough parking. She cited parking issues at the east end of town and non conforming housing. She noted that vehicles are parked everywhere. She spoke in concern of the proposed development at the former Aggregate site, in a perfect world would love to see more green, but the developers need to be more creative, she noted.

Councilor Corbett spoke in support of the change in required parking, he noted that Watertown is presently more restrictive than the four surrounding towns. He noted that there is no public purpose served in requiring more parking than is needed. He stated that it makes sense, with smaller units, fewer bedrooms, requires less parking. Developers have no incentives to push for less parking and that the existing rules unnecessarily burden better development and concurs with the consultants that people only want to pay for, what they will use. He lastly noted that the existing rules provide incentive for developers to build larger units.

Councilor Hecht stated that this amendment has been looked at as thoroughly as one could possibly hope for. Councilor Hecht indicated that he is persuaded based on everything he has heard that reducing parking requirements lead to more viable developments and more with green space. He inquired how we can ensure that the freed up space is used as green space. He lastly stated that our current parking problems still need to be addressed, generally. Parking related to other problems, paving over of grass strips, emergency access need to be looked at in a serious, comprehensive way including enforcement issues.

Councilor Romanelli stated that he will not support the amendment noting that currently cars are parked everywhere, blocking sidewalks, etc. He stated that he can't make changes to add more cars to the street.

The Chair asked, using Repton Place and its shadow parking, what else aside from that development would benefit from this change and what mandates consideration of the amendment.

Mr. Watson noted that these amendments are the result of a request to have our zoning ordinances updated and the particular proposed changes are from Connery Associates' recommendations.

Councilor Lawn spoke in support of the amendment stating that it will not result in expanded parking, but in fewer cars. This is a step in the right direction and he questions people's comments about it exacerbating the parking problems.

Councilor Donohue concurred with Councilor Lawn and further stated that this will not address our neighborhoods but new development and it is good change. He spoke in support of also looking at our current neighborhood situation which needs to be addressed.

Mr. Watson stated that there is nothing in the ordinance to say that developers cannot put in more parking spaces.

Councilor Sideris asked if this will attract more residential development.

Mr. Watson stated that he doesn't know that this per say would induce more residential units than commercial. We are seeing an upswing in commercial development currently.

Councilor Sideris stated that some of the assumptions are speculative.

Upon a roll call vote, the amendment was defeated 4 in favor and 5 against with Councilors Hecht, Lawn, Donohue and Corbett in favor and Councilors Romanelli, Devaney, Kounelis, Sideris and President Younger against.

Councilor Donohue moved section 5.07 affordable housing, seconded by Councilor Devaney.

Councilor Corbett spoke in support of the amendment as a public policy issue.

Councilor Hecht spoke in support of the amendment as an improvement in many ways from what we currently have despite the differences he has with reducing size of affording units.

The Chair stated that he will be voting against the amendment as he shares Councilor Hecht's concerns with reducing the size of the affordable units.

Upon a roll call vote the amendment was adopted by a vote of 8-1 with President Younger voting no.

Councilor Sideris moved section 9.06, seconded by Councilor Donohue.

Mr. Watson provided a brief overview of the amendment regarding mixed use in the I1 and I2 districts.

Upon a roll call vote, the amendment was adopted by unanimous vote.

Councilor Sideris moved 5.01 Hotel/Motel by special permit in I1 and I2 districts, seconded by Councilor Hecht.

Councilor Devaney spoke in support of the amendment.

Upon a roll call vote, the amendment was adopted by unanimous vote.

7B. Public hearing and vote on a proposed Amendment to the Fiscal Year 2008

Budget. The Manager provided a brief overview of the proposed amendment.

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

Councilor Devaney asked how many students in Charter Schools. The Manager stated that he will forward that to the Council.

Councilor Sideris moved the amendment, seconded by Councilor Hecht and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

C. Public hearing and vote on a proposed Amendment to the Fiscal Year 2008

Enterprise Budget. The Chair recognized Town Auditor, Thomas Tracy who provided an overview of the water rates and consumption levels. Due to the lowest consumption the town has realized in ten years, Mr. Tracy stated that both the water and sewer fund have a shortfall and thus a deficit and the need for tonight's amendment. The Chair opened up the hearing to the public and recognized:

Susan Falkoff, Oliver Road – stated that she is happy to hear that water consumption has decreased even though it has negatively affected the water and sewer budget.

There being no further comments, the hearing was closed.

Councilor Sideris moved the amendment, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

8. PRESENTATIONS OF PETITIONS AND SIMILAR PAPERS AND

MATTERS:

A. A Request for Considering the Honorable Town Council go paperless – Councilor

John A. Donohue. Councilor Donohue Tabled the agenda item to the next meeting due to lateness of hour.

9. INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATIONS FROM TOWN OFFICERS AND
EMPLOYEES:

A. Informational Presentation on the Status of Ongoing and Upcoming Town Wide

Developments and Introduction of the Town's New Senior Planners, Joseph Merkel

and Danielle Fillis – Gregory P. Watson, Planning Director. The Chair recognized Mr. Watson who provided an update on town wide developments including the proposed expansion of Russo's; a proposed recreation center at the Gore property; the expansion of Target Store; a proposed 14 rental unit at former Casey's Bar; a proposed 182 unit development at the former Aggregate Industries on Grove Street; and proposed 14 housing units at 264 Arlington Street.

Mr. Watson introduced two new Senior Planners, Danielle Phyllis and Joseph Merckel.

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Committee on Public Works report on a Bus Stop at the Delta; Wells Avenue

Parking Meters and Town Wide Parking Meters; Trees for Watertown; DPW Rules and Regulations - Marilyn M. Petitto Devaney, Chair.

The Chair recognized Councilor Devaney who read the Public Works committee report (attached). The Committee voted to approve a bus stop in the Delta, an updated fee

schedule for Public Works, asphalt berm for Wells Avenue parking meters including street trees, development of tree maintenance for next years budget and increased monies in the budget for more staff in the Conservation Department. Councilor Corbett moved to accept the report, seconded by Councilor Kounelis and adopted by voice vote.

11. MOTIONS, ORDERS AND RESOLUTIONS:

- A. Resolution approving the Acceptance and Expenditure of a Gift of funds in the Amount of \$1,000 to offset expenses related to the "Faire on the Square 2007".

Previously adopted.

- B. Acceptance of Proclamations honoring Michael Donham, Police Officer George Hoffman and Italian Heritage Month. Previously adopted.

- C. First Reading on a proposed Order allocating the property tax levy among and between property classes for Fiscal Year 2008. The Town Manager provided a brief overview of the Order and noted that the matter will be advertised in the local paper for a public hearing and vote at the November 27th Town Council Meeting.

- D. First Reading on a proposed Order setting optional tax exemptions for Fiscal Year 2008. The Town Manager provided a brief overview of the Order and noted that the matter will be advertised in the local paper for a public hearing and vote at the November 27th Town Council meeting.

- E. Resolution authorizing a transfer from Town Council Reserve Accounts to various Police Department Salary Accounts related to the Agreement with the Watertown

Police Association. The Chair recognized the Town Manager who provided a brief overview of the transfer. Councilor Devaney moved the transfer, seconded by Councilor Sideris and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

F. Resolution authorizing a transfer of monies to the Fiscal Year 2008 Vehicle

Replacement Program for the purchase of a Replacement Ambulance. The Chair recognized the Manager who provided an overview of the transfer which included a transfer of \$100,000 from the Capital Improvements Program and \$45,000 from Town Council Reserve. Fire Chief Mario Orangio stated that a new ambulance is needed as the 10 year old ambulance requires costly repairs that he cannot justify. Councilor Donohue asked if the town can continue to afford to run the 2nd ambulance. The Chief replied, yes. Councilor Sideris moved the transfer, seconded by Councilor Devaney and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

G. Consideration and Vote on a proposed lease of the Former Coolidge School. The Chair noted that this agenda item has been Tabled.

12. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Chair read a letter from the Taxiarchae Greek Orthodox Church thanking Mr. Younger for the generous award of \$5,000 from the O'Neil/Harvard Community Enrichment Charitable Fund (see attached).

The President noted that he will extend the deadline for submission of Budget Policy Guidelines and asked Councilors to please forward their input to the Committee as soon as possible.

Evaluation instruments have been forwarded to Councilors for the Manager, Auditor and Clerk to be submitted by November 30th.

13. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER – none noted

14. REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Councilor Kounelis asked for an update on the Quarterly Water Billing conversion.

Councilor Kounelis asked for an update on a survey regarding the Municipal Parking lot on Wells Avenue.

Councilor Hecht asked the Manager for a report of the number of vehicles garaged in town over the last few years.

15. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Hecht announced that the Budget and Fiscal Oversight committee will meet on November 19th, 28th and December 5th to discuss Budget Policy Guidelines for Fiscal Year 09.

16. PUBLIC FORUM – none noted.

17. ADJOURNMENT at 11:30 pm.