

MINUTES

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY, MARCH 14, 2006 AT 6:00 PM

RICHARD E. MASTRANGELO CHAMBER

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

1. ROLL CALL: 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 roll call were Councilors Stephen Corbett, John A. Donohue, Jonathan Hecht, Angeline B. Kounelis, Stephen Romanelli, Vice President Mark S. Sideris and Council President Clyde L. Younger. Councilors Devaney and Lawn arrived after the call of the roll.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION – 6:00 PM: The Chair asked for a motion to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to non union personnel. The Chair also announced that the Council will return to open session following the adjournment of the executive session. Councilor Kounelis moved the matter, seconded by Councilor Hecht and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

3. RETURN TO OPEN SESSION – 7:15 PM

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

5. EXAMINATION OF MINUTES: February 14th and February 28th. Councilor Devaney moved the minutes of February 14th as amended, seconded by Vice President Sideris and adopted by voice vote. Councilor Devaney tabled the minutes of February 28th.

6. PUBLIC FORUM – none noted.

Vice President Sideris moved to Suspend the Rules in order to move forward agenda item 9A, seconded by Councilor Devaney and adopted by voice vote.

9A. Acceptance of Proclamations as follows: recognizing March as National Women's History Month; honoring E. Joyce Munger and congratulating Bill Eaton on his 90th birthday.

The Chair read a proclamation recognizing March as National Women's History Month. The Chair read and presented a proclamation honoring E. Joyce Munger for her many years of community service. Councilor Devaney presented Ms. Munger with a proclamation from the Governor's Council. Ms. Munger thanked the Council for the honor and stated that she has worked with many wonderful and talented people on various committees throughout the years. Ms. Munger also thanked Representative Kaprielian and State Senator Tolman for nominating her as 2006 Unsung Heroine. The Chair asked for a motion to adopt all three proclamations, including Bill Eaton on his 90th birthday. Vice President Sideris moved the proclamations, seconded by Councilor Devaney and adopted by voice vote.

7. COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS FROM TOWN OFFICIALS & EMPLOYEES:

A. Informational update on the proposed Coolidge School Reuse Project by Mitchell Properties.

The Town Manager introduced Mr. Bart Mitchell who provided the Council with an update on the proposed Coolidge School Reuse Project. Mr. Mitchell noted that the survey of 319 Arlington Street parcel has been completed and that the hazardous materials study showed more extensive hazmat removal; schematic drawings have been completed by architects with the auditorium being preserved and not used for housing units reducing the number of units to 38 from 45; project financing includes \$375,000 from Watertown Housing Partnership on the condition that 40% of units are affordable; the drafting of a long term lease has begun; and zoning approval hearings scheduled for April.

Councilor Kounelis stated that residents signed a petition for a project targeted toward 65 years of age and older residents. She noted that she does not support the current project as it is not designated for Watertown residents and does not support the 40% affordability contingency.

Vice President Sideris stated that the project keeps changing and asked who gave permission for these new changes in the project. Vice President Sideris indicated that he has concerns about the Transit Orientation Bond and that the town is going down a path we do not want to go down.

The Chair asked Mr. Mitchell where he received his policy guidance from.

Mr. Mitchell stated that it was his understanding that he was sent off to do further homework.

Councilor Devaney echoed the comments of the Vice President and stated that she is concerned about the State mandates that come with state funding, with all the strings attached. She asked, what is the point?

Mr. Mitchell stated that 70% of the units will be targeted toward Watertown residents.

The Chair noted that the guidance lacks specificity.

Councilor Sideris asked, if the town does not receive the Transportation money where does that leave us?

Mr. Mitchell indicated that he will apply for historical tax credits to equal that loss out.

Councilor Corbett asked where Mr. Mitchell is on the third party review.

The Town Manager indicated that it will be forwarded this month.

Councilor Corbett spoke in support of the project and noted that the current project is not that different and is consistent with policy direction that has been given. He noted that there are always a lot of variables as it is a fluid situation.

Councilor Hecht concurred and stated that a clear policy direction has been given and so we are not now on different pages.

Councilor Kounelis expressed great concern that at one point the property will be 100% affordable.

The Chair recognized:

Ms. Margaret Cassidy, Prentiss Street – stated that the neighbors have been ignored, their petition has been ignored and that the developer wants a permanent tax stream. She noted that the project has to make a profit or she does not want it and that 29% affordability is plenty.

John DiMascio, Copeland Street – asked a rhetorical question – what if the project does not receive the historical tax credits as it is contingent on getting state monies.

Vice President Sideris moved the Suspend the Rules in order to move forward agenda item 7D

Informational Power-point Presentation on Prescription Drugs – Marilyn M. Petitto Devaney, Councilor.

Councilor Devaney introduced Anthony Howard from CanaRx who provided a PowerPoint presentation on Prescription Drugs (see attached materials). It was noted that 96% of CanaRx business is geared toward working employees offering them a choice of 320 medications.

Councilor Kounelis asked what the turn around time is for ordering prescriptions. Mr. Howard answered 21 days.

The Chair thanked Mr. Howard for the presentation.

C. Informational Presentation on Fiscal Year 2006 Water Billing to date and the upcoming billing for the remainder of the Fiscal Year.

The Chair recognized Councilor Kounelis who read a memorandum regarding a staggered, overlapping billing cycle that combines previous fiscal year water usage with new fiscal year, more costly billing rates. Councilor Kounelis noted that the taxpayers deserve clarification and adjustments if warranted and a goal of town-wide consistent billing.

The Chair recognized Gerald S. Mee, Jr., Superintendent of Public Works who stated that the department has 8,500 accounts with 7 cycles being billed twice a year. He noted that the old system produced 35-40% estimates compared to the new system which has reduced it to 2-3%. The late billing is due to expectation level being too high for the department as it is virtually impossible to bring the estimates to 1%. Therefore one group of 19 accounts were 6 weeks behind but that it balances out at the end of all the cycles.

Mr. Mee stated that the solutions are to modify expectations. He noted that Munis provides more checks and balances to the system and that currently the department is ahead by one week.

Councilor Sideris asked why it takes so long to get the bills out to residents. Mr. Mee noted that it takes between 28 and 30 days to get the bills out as an independent company does the mailings.

The Chair asked Mr. Mee to fix the situation.

Councilor Devaney stated that water should be charged at the rate when it was used.

Councilor Kounelis stated that quarterly cycles should be used town wide and consistent for all residents within the fiscal year.

Mr. Mee concurred and stated that they are moving toward that.

Councilor Donohue stated that everyone is paying for 12 months of water at the same rate.

Councilor Kounelis moved that the goal of the Water Department is to begin quarterly billing process town wide by July 1, 2007, seconded by Councilor Devaney.

Councilor Corbett stated that it is a fairness issue if your bills are straddling because you will continue to straddle which will affect your bill at the higher rate.

The Chair recognized:

John DiMascio, Copeland Street – asked the town to change what needs to be changed.

Louis Hegger – stated that he was billed for a 9 ½ month water bill which was \$380.00 more and received no help from the town.

Upon a roll call vote, the motion for quarterly billing was adopted unanimously.

B. Informational Presentation on a report from the Environmental and Energy Efficiency Committee regarding their activities and an upcoming Speaker Series. The Chair recognized Lisa Alexander who provided a synopsis of the committee's meetings and activities in 2005 and upcoming dates for their Speaker Series (attached).

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Committee on Human Services Report on Branch Libraries and action on the appointment of Dr. Brownsberger to the Board Health for an unexpired term ending May 15, 2007 – John J. Lawn, Jr. Chair. The Chair recognized Councilor Lawn who read the Human Services Committee report (attached) on the closings of the branch libraries. Councilor Lawn stated that the closings are unfortunate, but that the buildings should not be sold and consideration be given toward leasing them to community groups. Councilor Lawn further stated that the Committee interviewed Dr. Brownsberger for appointment to the Board of Health and unanimously voted to recommend his appointment to the full council. Councilor Lawn moved the appointment of Dr. Brownsberger, seconded by Councilor Devaney and adopted by voice vote.

Councilor Lawn moved to accept the committee report, seconded by Vice President Sideris and adopted by voice vote.

Councilor Devaney noted that she accepts the report but is against branch closings.

9. MOTIONS, ORDERS AND RESOLUTIONS:

B. Resolution committing to appropriate \$100,000 from available resources pursuant to a proposed Community Development Block Grant Application to help fund the continuation of the Home Improvement Program for lower income and elderly homeowners. Mr. Gregory Watson and Mary Crain, Planning Board provided a brief overview of the Home Improvement Program.

Councilor Devaney commended Watertown Community Housing.

Councilor Donohue asked if the program is self sufficient. Ms. Crain stated that since the program began in 2000, two loans have been paid off. Ms. Crain noted that loan payoffs are triggered only by sale of the property or transfer of the property.

Councilor Donohue inquired what the \$50,000 portion of the appropriation is going toward. Ms. Crain stated that was to pay for administrative costs.

Councilor Kounelis made a query regarding the lead abatement requirement.

Ms. Crain stated that if the applicant is spending \$25,000 or more and has children age 6 and under, than a lead abatement is required.

The Chair recognized:

Dori Pelham, Director – stated that the program needs \$98,000 to keep it going.

Michael Keenan – spoke in support of the program.

Leslie Evans, Bates Street – spoke in support of the program.

C. Resolution authorizing a transfer of funds in the amount of \$320,895 from the Fiscal Year 2006 Town Council Reserve Account to various Fiscal Year 2006 Police Department Accounts in accordance with a previous Police Association Arbitration Award covering Fiscal Years 2004 and 2005. The Town Manager provided a brief

overview of the transfer. Councilor Devaney moved the resolution, seconded by Vice President Sideris and adopted by a roll call vote of 7 for, 0 against and 2 present.

D. Resolution authorizing a transfer of funds in the amount of \$96,106 from the Fiscal Year 2006 Town Council Reserve Accounts to various Fiscal Year 2006 Town Hall Associates and Non-Union Confidential Clerical Salary Accounts in accordance with a previous Town Hall Associates Union Agreement covering Fiscal Year 2005. The Town Manager provided a brief overview of the transfer. Councilor Devaney moved the resolution, seconded by Councilor Romanelli and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

E. Resolution authorizing a transfer of funds in the amount of \$12,948 from the Fiscal Year 2006 Town Council Reserve Account to various Fiscal Year 2006 Library Accounts in accordance with a previous Library Employees Union Agreement covering Fiscal Year 2005. The Town Manager provided a brief overview of the transfer. Councilor Romanelli moved the resolution, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

F. Resolution authorizing a transfer of funds in the amount of \$2,120 from the Fiscal Year 2006 Town Council Reserve Account to the Fiscal Year 2006 Town Auditor Full Time Salaries Account in accordance with a previous Town Council Ordinance amending the Fiscal Year 2006 compensation of the Town Auditor. The Town Manager provided a brief overview of the transfer. Vice President Sideris moved the resolution, seconded by Councilor Kounelis and adopted by unanimous roll call vote.

G. First Reading: on a Proposed Loan Order authorizing the Town Treasurer, with the approval of the Town Manager to borrow and/or expend monies in the amount of \$643,000 under Chapter 44 of the General Laws or any other enabling authority for the purpose of constructing an addition to and remodeling, reconstructing and making extraordinary repairs to the Watertown Free Public Library, including the cost of original equipment and furnishings, landscaping, paving and other site improvements incidental thereto; that this appropriation shall be used for said project, together with the \$6,700,000 borrowing previously authorized, a state grant of \$2,972,408 and donations and pledges of \$1,000,000; and that the Board of Trustees of the Public Library are authorized to accept and expend any gifts or donations received in connection with the project, provided that the amount of the additional borrowing authorized under this order shall be reduced by the amount of any additional gifts and donations (in excess of \$1,000,000 received or pledged to

date received prior to the issuance of bonds under this order; and that the Board of Trustees of the Public Library are authorized to take any other action necessary to carry out the project.

The Town Manager reviewed the dollar amounts related to the loan order totaling \$643,000 relating to the new public library. The loan order will be advertised for a public hearing and vote at the March 28th Town Council meeting.

10. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A. Appointments to the Budget and Fiscal Oversight Subcommittee. The Chair announced the following individuals to the subcommittee: Councilors Hecht and Kounelis; Town Auditor Thomas Tracy and the Council President.

11. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE TOWN MANAGER

The Manager announced that motor vehicle excise tax can be paid on line.

The Manager announced that Watertown received the Tree City USA award.

12. REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Councilor Donohue inquired as to the disposition of the recycling center issue. The Chair stated that it was referred to Public Works and asked that the committee members meet on matter and report back to the Town Council as soon as possible. It was noted that the matter was also jointly referred to the economic and development subcommittee.

Councilor Hecht requested that Mr. Thomas Thibeaut, Chairman of the Watertown Contributory Retirement Board make a presentation on the board's duties, budget and responsibilities.

Councilor Romanelli requested that the Town Manager look into the streets being swept while the town is still under the winter parking ban.

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS – none noted.

14. PUBLIC FORUM

The opened up the public forum and recognized:

Burt Greenberg, Duff Street – commended comments made by Councilors Hecht and Corbett regarding coalition bargaining.

Pat Gold, Duff Street – stated that the Brigham House is 100% occupied.

16. EXECUTIVE SESSION – continued due to lateness of hour.

There being no further business to come before the Town Council, Councilor Romanelli moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:20 pm, seconded by Councilor Donohue and adopted by voice vote.

I hereby certify that at a regular meeting of the Town Council for which a quorum was present, the above minutes were adopted as written on March 28, 2006.

Clyde L. Younger, Council President