

MINUTES OF THE TOWN Council
Town Hall Council Chambers
November 19, 2007 - Tuesday

Present: Michael Smart, President
Jack Carey
Kenneth DiFazio
Ed Harrington
Arthur Mathews
Michael Molisse
Patrick O'Connor
Kevin Whitaker
Sue Kay

Absent: Thomas J. Lacey
Gregory Shanahan
Jane Hackett, Chief of Staff

Also Present: Kathy Deree, Assistant Town Clerk
George Lane, Town Solicitor
Maureen Duffy, Town Auditor
James Wilson, Chief Financial Officer

Recording Secretary: Mary Briggs

President Smart called the Town Council Meeting to order at 7:30 PM. He noted Councilors Lacey and Shanahan would not be in attendance, and Councilor Kay would arrived late.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Molisse reported on the annual holiday festivities to take place on Sunday, December 2, 2007, beginning with a movie at the Maria Weston Chapman School, followed by the holiday stroll up Maple Street to the Veterans Wall outside Town Hall. The ceremonial tree lighting and caroling will complete the day of festivities.

Councilor DiFazio noted the Planning Board will continue the hearing concerning the Clapp Memorial Building on December 11, 2007, 7:45 PM, at the Whipple Center. He encouraged area business owners to attend.

Councilor DiFazio also announced the Board of Zoning Appeals meets Wednesday, November 28, 2007, at 7 PM, concerning the Planned Urban Development for a 21-unit housing complex on Meredith Street, and recommended area residents attend.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A MOTION was made by Councilor Matthews to approve the minutes of the Budget/Management Committee Meeting of October 23, 2007, and was seconded by Councilor Molisse. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

A MOTION was made by Councilor Matthews to approve the minutes of the Town Council Meeting of October 29, 2007, and was seconded by Councilor Molisse. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

CITIZEN CONCERNS/COUNCIL RESPONSE

PUBLIC HEARINGS

07 132 – Tax Classification

A MOTION was made by Councilor Matthews to open the public hearing on item 07 132 Tax Classification and was seconded by Councilor Molisse and UNANIMOUSLY VOTED. This was published on November 9, 2007.

Mr. Wilson and Paul Haley, Chair of the Board of Assessors, presented the request to change the tax classification shift from 1.75 in FY07 to 1.60 in FY08, with no residential exemption. Revaluation of all town property has been completed by the board with PK Appraisal. The purpose of the shift is to place the tax burden onto commercial and industrial properties. Preliminary certification has been received by the Department of Revenue. 59% of all town property valuation will remain the same. 14% will increase by more than 10%, mostly associated with proximity to waterfront. This trend appears to be continuing. Average increase in value is between 2.5 and 5 percent to residential property, and 20 to 25 percent on commercial property, based on sale analysis. The intent is to place the burden of any tax increase on the commercial property owners.

Towns can elect under state law to shift the tax burden within certain limits, and is determined by tax levy. The recommendation by the board is for a shift of 60 percent, resulting in average tax increase to residential owners of less than 2 percent, and 12 percent to commercial owners. The last three years, a shift of 75 percent has been requested.

Councilor Matthews noted while he agreed in general with the shift change, he is disappointed with the general increase in valuation to waterfront properties. Mr. Haley noted the values have held up in the preliminary DOR certification, and he will continue to monitor sales going forward.

Councilor Molisse reported that this was presented at length to the Budget/Management Committee.

With the shift, rates will increase from \$9.07 last year to \$9.29 (per \$1000) this year for residential, and from \$16.50 to \$17.91 for commercial.

Peter Foreman, President of the South Shore Chamber of Commerce accompanied by a representative of the Weymouth Business Council, noted that he is in favor of a modest reduction in shift, with an eventual goal of no shift. He applauded the work of the Assessor's office, the Mayor and the Town Council.

During this discussion, at 7:40 PM, Councilor Kay arrived.

A MOTION was made by Councilor Matthews to close the Public Hearing and was seconded by Councilor Molisse. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

07 137 – Fiscal Year 2008 Supplemental Appropriation

A MOTION was made by Councilor Matthews to open the public hearing on item 07 137 – Fiscal Year 2008 Supplemental Appropriation and was seconded by Councilor Molisse and UNANIMOUSLY VOTED. This was published on November 9, 2007.

Mr. Wilson requested on behalf of the Mayor to increase the FY08 budget by \$405,825 in three categories: salary calculation error of \$2600, increases to DPW- utilities and gasoline of \$75000 and increase of \$3300 for military service retirement benefits for staff currently serving in Iraq. There is also deficit as a result of claims exceeding revenues in the health insurance claims of \$543,963. In order to certify the tax rate and proceed to send out tax bills the town is required to raise and appropriate funds to cover the deficit. The Mayor proposes to do so in the following manner: reimbursement of \$219,000 from the insurance stop loss program and the balance of \$324,000 raised through tax levy.

Health insurance costs are increasing significantly. An original surplus in the health insurance trust fund of \$2,000,000 has decreased, to an approximate deficit of \$500,000 this year. It will see further deficits, easily \$1,000,000 by close of this fiscal year. There will be an increase in health insurance premiums due January 1st of 14 percent for all covered town employees. Mr. Wilson has met with the insurance advisory committee, essentially made up of the town's unions for discussion, and will meet again during the summer.

The additional \$400,000 will be made up by increasing the revenue stream. \$100,000 in local receipts, \$800,000 in tax foreclosures, and high school project reimbursement of \$329,000. To offset these costs the delay in the sale of the Fulton School, for \$1,290,000 which now will not close until FY09, and the sale of two town properties on Randall Avenue. These, along with new growth figures which has been increased to \$900,000 will cover the increase. In addition, there is one reduction, from \$80,000 to \$60,000 charged to the Waterways fund in the budget submitted.

There was no public comment.

A MOTION was made by Councilor Matthews to close the Public Hearing and was seconded by Councilor Molisse. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS FROM THE MAYOR, TOWN OFFICERS, AND TOWN BOARDS

Lynn Frano, Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator and Teen Advisory Youth Coalition were invited to the table to report on the receipt of a \$10,000 mini-grant to combat tobacco use in town. Each of the members introduced themselves and reported on the various activities presented at school and community level under the grant, and also thanked their advisors, Kathy Lavery, Kathy Olsen, Mary Heinrichs of WETC and Weymouth's IT department for supplying the link. They provided a handout to the Council.

Councilor Kay thanked them for their presentation, and applauded their efforts.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Budget/Management Committee- Chairman Kenneth DiFazio

07 137 Fiscal Year 2008 Supplemental Appropriation II

This item was referred on October 29, 2007 and the committee met on November 8, 2007, and recommended favorable action. It was heard at Public Hearing on November 19, 2007. A MOTION was made by Councilor DiFazio requesting favorable consideration under item 07 066 – that the FY08 Appropriation for general government be increased by the sum of \$405,825 from \$125,978,686 to \$126,384,511 in order to provide for all of the expenses, maintenance and operation of all of the town's several departments and activities for fiscal year 2008. Additionally, that the sum of \$60,000 be appropriated from the Waterways Fund. This was seconded by Councilor Molisse and UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

07 127 – Tax Classification

This item was referred on October 1, 2007 and the committee met on October 23, 2007, and recommended favorable action. It was heard at Public Hearing on November 19, 2007. A MOTION was made by Councilor DiFazio to approve a classification tax rate shift of 1.60 of commercial and industrial with no residential exemption. This was seconded by Councilor Kay and UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:05 PM, there being no further business, a MOTION to adjourn was made by Councilor Matthews and seconded by Councilor Kay. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully Submitted

Mary Briggs, Recording Secretary