

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Weymouth Town Hall

Council Chambers

February 16, 2016, Tuesday

Present: Patrick O'Connor, President
Michael Smart, Vice President
Robert Conlon, Councilor
Kenneth DiFazio, Councilor
Jane Hackett, Councilor
Edmund Harrington, Councilor
Rebecca Haugh, Councilor
Thomas J. Lacey, Councilor
Arthur Mathews, Councilor
Brian McDonald, Councilor
Michael Molisse, Councilor

Also Present: Ted Langill, Chief of Staff
Kathleen Deree, Town Clerk
Joseph Callanan, Town Solicitor
Richard Swanson, Town Auditor

Recording Secretary: Mary Barker

President O'Connor called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM. After the Pledge of Allegiance, Town Clerk Kathleen Deree called the roll, with all members present.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor McDonald announced the designation of Weymouth as a Green Community and eligible to receive \$277,635 in grant funding to invest in local clean energy projects. He reviewed the criteria that Weymouth was required to meet.

RESIDENT AND COMMUNITY COMMENT

Updated Status of Weymouth School Funding - Gus Perez of 16 Hewett Road

Mr. Perez presented his report and a PowerPoint presentation (attached) of the updated status of Weymouth School spending. He reviewed Weymouth as compared to the Massachusetts state average, per pupil expenditures, Chapter 70 trends. He provided additional information from source material. Weymouth will not meet the Net School Spending for 2015 and is not on track to meet it in 2016. Weymouth is once again ranked close to the bottom position. The remainder of the state is spending significantly more than the town is.

The new Mayor has inherited the problem. He is hopeful that the new administration and the Town Council will increase funding and engage in a cooperative effort for the

upcoming budget, and may need to leverage to meet the shortfall in FY16. The two measures just voted will help the cause.

Chronic underfunding has had a detrimental impact on student achievement and assessments. Trailing state average in state performance: MCAS, SAT, numbers who take AP tests. The graduation rate is similar to the state, but 28% of seniors complete a rigorous course of study, while the state average is 72.4%. They should be aspiring to excellence, not mediocrity.

President O'Connor reported that he spoke with administration. They relayed there are some health insurance savings that can be included in the NSS deficit. The Council has advocated in its last 4-5 budgets, and it is a priority for them. Potential solutions were provided to the residents. He appreciated the comments and concerns, and will take them under advisement during the next budget process. Councilor Mathews thanked him for providing the letter from DESE regarding the carryover. He was under the impression that the \$755,000 includes the shortfall carryover. It does not take into account recent supplemental budgets. He suggested that if the town has a light year in terms of snow costs, it could at a minimum eliminate the carryover. He was under the impression that the department had met the spending requirement last year.

Councilor Conlon noted that 60% of the town's budget is directed to the schools and he is a firm believer that public safety should trump other departments. Mr. Perez responded that the 60% contribution is not aberrance; school budgets tend to represent a disproportionate share of any town's budget. The remainder of the state has figured out how to increase funding to schools; Weymouth has not and will not attract young families. The schools need to be the priority and they need to be funded to be successful. He is not advocating for cutting public safety budgets; there were options available to the prior administration that went unutilized. Safety nets are built into other departments (mutual aid) which isn't available to school departments.

Councilor Hackett noted that they had met NSS last year, but clarified the \$155,000 carryover- it was a health insurance estimation; but less was expended than was estimated at the beginning of the year than was presented at the beginning of the year. She believed that it had been met. The school department did not sit on \$155,000; it fell to free cash in FY16 and administration and the school department are working on a plan for it.

Councilor Haugh thanked Mr. Perez for bringing the information to the public. The reductions did not impact students directly. At the March 25, 2016 (the school committee's public hearing) the public will have the chance to be heard. She agreed with Councilor Mathews supporting that a letter should go to the administration to move a measure forward covering at least the carryover so they don't start the FY17 with a deficit.

Councilor Mathews responded that the letter was received on February 10, 2016 by the Council and this is what the school committee has been discussing. He quoted from that

letter a directive to the town: if there is a way to supplement the current year's school budget, they are urged to do so.

A motion was made by Councilor Mathews that the Town Council forward a letter to the administration requesting a measure be brought forward for a supplemental budget request of a minimum of \$285,520 to eliminate the FY15 carry over and the 2016 Net School Spending school department deficit-- and was seconded by Councilor Hackett.

Councilor Harrington noted he will support the motion since the past attempts to put the matter to ballot did not pass. He cautioned those who suggest putting more money to the school department to realize that there isn't enough to do it and fund other departments also. He supported the advocacy and assured the public that the Council will continue theirs also. This is a long-term fix that will take time to address.

Councilor McDonald noted they will continue to be supportive but there is a limited revenue stream. He gave kudos to the school department employees for what they can accomplish with limited resources.

Councilor Lacey agreed with the previous speakers and supported the measure. He reviewed the per-pupil spending slide and noted the gap. He reminded everyone that the NSS calculation is fundamentally flawed; some communities are allowed to factor in certain items to NSS that others cannot. He noted he appreciated the time, effort and advocacy. He also questioned the slide that 28% of the students are in a non-challenging curriculum. Mr. Perez pointed it out in the DESE study. He asked if that had been brought before the school committee? Mr. Perez responded that there are certain philosophical changes in the school committee's meeting process restricting public participation. The current chair is controversially looking to change the participation policy. Last year the legislation enacted a change to allow communities to opt-in to allow them to claim retiree health care costs in the calculation of NSS; Weymouth has done so. 120 other communities were also in the same circumstance; however, they all spend more than Weymouth does on school funding. The formula is the same for everyone. Councilor Lacey reiterated that it is not a stacked ranking.

Councilor DiFazio asked for an opinion from Mr. Perez. Aren't there two separate issues- the NSS, which they are slowly chipping away at. The second, trying to compete with the rest of the state. We are in a different position than last year as far as the failed referendum. Now that is has; where does the town stand? How could they possibly come up with the funding to get off the last page of that report? What is the plan to go forward? Mr. Perez responded that as a resident he isn't suggesting they can find it- he presents it to put into context where they stand. It took years to get into this position and it will take years to recover from it. It needs to be a collaborative effort and the school department and school committee need to be more active in the process. He suggested that Councilor Haugh as chair of the Education Committee begin the process of discussion as soon as possible.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

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

16 010- Authorization to Overspend for Snow and Ice Removal 2-9(b) action requested

Nick Bulens requested on behalf of the Mayor that the Town Council, in accordance with Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 44, Section 31D, authorizes the Department of Public Works, with the approval of the Mayor, to over expend any and all line items associated with snow and ice removal.

A motion was made by Vice President Smart to consider 16 010 under 2-9b, same night action and was seconded by Councilor Mathews. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

A motion was made by Vice President Smart to approve measure 16 010 and was seconded by Councilor Mathews. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

16 011- General Fund Reserve Appropriation for Department of Municipal Licenses and Inspections Expenses

Nick Bulens requested on behalf of the Mayor that the Town of Weymouth raise and appropriate the sum of \$6,897.84 from the General Fund Reserve for the purpose of funding expenses through the weights and measures account associated with automotive repairs to the Sealer of Weights and Measures' vehicle and the replacement of equipment damaged in a vehicular accident on January 25, 2016 and further, that the Town of Weymouth raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,605.00 from the General Fund Reserve for the purpose of funding expenses through the conference registration account associated with continuing education and recertification courses for staff in the Department of Municipal Licenses and Inspections.

A motion was made by Vice President Smart to refer measure 16 011 to the Budget/Management Committee and was seconded by Councilor Mathews. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

REPORT OF COMMITTEES

BUDGET/MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE- Michael Molisse, Chairman

Councilor Molisse reported that the Budget/Management Committee met earlier this evening to deliberate the following measures:

15 140-Community Preservation Committee-Housing Authority Security Cameras at Lakeview Manor

This matter was referred to the Committee on December 15, 2015. The committee met on January 19, 2016 and a public hearing was held at the Town Council meeting that evening. The Council has received a letter from Mayor Hedlund requesting formal withdrawal of the measure. A new measure will be filed at a later date.

16 009- Appointment WETC Board of Directors-Christopher Castro

This matter was referred to the Committee on February 1, 2015. The Committee met to review this measure on February 16, 2016. Mr. Castro was invited to the table to review his interest and qualifications.

On behalf of the Budget/Management Committee, a motion was made by Councilor Molisse to approve measure 16 009; that in accordance with 2-10 of the Town Charter, the Town of Weymouth appoints Christopher Castro of 90 Sea Street to the WETC Board of Directors for a term to expire on June 30, 2018 and was seconded by Vice President Smart. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

ADJOURNMENT

The next regularly meeting of the Town Council is scheduled for Monday, March 7, 2016.

At 8: 27 PM, there being no further business, a motion was made by Vice President Smart to adjourn and was seconded by Councilor Mathews. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Barker as Recording Secretary.

Approved by Patrick O'Connor as President
Voted unanimously on 21 March 2016