

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
Special Town Council Meeting
Weymouth Town Hall Council Chambers
75 Middle Street
June 8, 2015, Monday

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

Also Present: Susan M. Kay, Mayor
George Lane, Town Solicitor
Kathy Deree, Town Clerk
Michael Gallagher, Director of Administrative Services
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 Kathy Deree called the roll, with all members present.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor DiFazio announced the East Weymouth Neighborhood Association will hold a Proposition 2 ½ Override informational meeting on June 23, 2015 at the Abigail Adams Auditorium at 7PM. The Mayor and administrative staff will be on hand to provide input and the public is welcome.

Councilor Mathews announced a meeting of the Public Works Committee on Thursday, June 11, 2015.

Councilor Hackett announced the grand reopening of Legion Memorial Field on Saturday, June 20, 2015 from 2-6 PM.

A motion was made by Vice President Smart to take "Communication and Reports" out of order and was seconded by Councilor Mathews. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

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

Mayor Kay was invited to the table. She thanked the Council for voting a definitive date for an override vote at their last meeting and received their request to amend the measure. She read her response:

“Per request in a letter received in my office on June 2, 2015, and as a result of actions taken by the Town Council on June 1, 2015, I submit the following amendment to Measure 15 076 for consideration by the Town Council.

“Ordered, that pursuant to Chapter 59, section 21C (g) of the General Laws, the following question shall be placed upon the ballot for a special town election to be held on August 4, 2015:

Shall the Town of Weymouth be allowed to assess an additional \$6,500,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purposes of funding the following departmental expenses: School Department (\$3,000,000), Police Department (\$1,000,000) Fire Department (\$1,000,000), Public Works Department (\$1,000,000) and other Town Departments (\$500,000) for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2015?

YES _____ NO _____”

She noted that there was much discussion and that the consensus was that a June 30th election was too soon. They will be able to get a lot of information to the voters by August 4th. It’s tough to determine a date that everyone would agree to. She reminded the residents that the Council is voting to support placing the item on the ballot but not necessarily to support the override itself.

Councilor Hackett noted that she was aggressively pursuing the June 30th date with the Mayor’s office and she was very supportive of it. She prefers it be close and in conjunction with the budget. The Mayor responded that she was also in support. She received information from some of the departments and will or has passed it along to the Council.

Councilor Harrington thanked the Mayor for her cooperation and support of the measure.

President O’Connor reiterated that this measure seeks only to amend the measure.

A motion was made by Vice President Smart to ACCEPT measure 15 076 as amended and was seconded by Councilor Lacey. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

15 087-Reappointment to the Board of Registrars-Kenneth Karlberg

Michael Gallagher, Director of Administrative Services presented a request with the Mayor for the reappointment of Kenneth Karlberg of 15 Burkhall Street, to the Board of Registrars for a term to expire on June 30, 2018.

A motion was made by Vice President Smart to refer measure 15 087 to the Budget/Management Committee and was seconded by Councilor Mathews. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

15 076-Proposition 2 ½ Override- Continued from 5/18 & 5/26 & 6/1/15

A motion was made by Vice President Smart to continue the public hearing on measure 15 076 and was seconded by Councilor Mathews. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

President O'Connor read a brief statement. He noted the public has now had four opportunities to comment and for the Council to hear them. At the last meeting they voted to request the Mayor to present a request for a date certain-August 4, 2015. The Council has spent over six hours listening to the public and four hours from the departments. He asked residents who have already spoken to please allow those who have not first nor repeating comments that were already recorded. Speakers will be limited to 5 minutes.

If the public hearing closes tonight, he expects the Council will entertain a motion.

Frank Burke, 93 Bluff Rd., read remarks supporting placing the matter on the ballot, as an active resident, who raised 3 children, served as a Town Meeting Member, Director of Veteran Services, and served as Councilor. Weymouth has a revenue problem that needs to be corrected. Proposition 2 ½ was voted into law by a frustrated public and it has limited the increases. With economy swings, more often the town has not kept pace. Override is an option to allow communities to make adjustments as needed, and Weymouth has reached that point. The town has to come together as one community now to be successful with an override to provide the level of services the town deserves. He noted it can be done. He cited a press release regarding the efforts of one community to prevent cuts that would have eliminated school programs. The school staff agreed to forego raises, etc. to fund schools. He will support an override because the town needs to catch up. He urged the residents to support the override and stay active to ensure the new revenue is well spent.

Harvey Welch, 674 Pond St- asked if there will be a printed report that shows a comparison between current spending- where is this going and how will it be spent. Is it a blind vote? Council President O'Connor responded that each town department has come before the Budget/Management Committee and Town Council to discuss specific line item expenses should the override pass. Some were not specific enough and they are being further addressed through the administration. The Council believes the public will be fully educated and the process will be as transparent as possible. The budget is available in town buildings, recorded and available at WETC and posted to the town website, including the power point presentations.

Irving Murstein, 463Broad Street asked if the commercial property will be taxed the same way? President O'Connor responded yes. Taxes will be proportionally increased.

Robert Montgomery Thomas proposed an idea for more school funding if the override fails, which he believes it will. He suggested seniors will vote their wallets and their circumstances. He recommended a 503-C nonprofit education foundation funded by share contributions. He will not support an 11% yearly tax increase.

Councilor Harrington responded that it's not an 11% increase for life. He said it should be phrased correctly so as to not mislead the public. Not all old people who are on fixed incomes are going to vote it down. It's not the way this country is; no man is an island. There are a lot of decent people who care about their children and grandchildren. He ordered that Mr. Montgomery Thomas not paint him with the same brush. He suggested the speaker is in the minority.

Donna Shea, resident since 1965- urged the matter be put on the ballot and that she would like to see good publicity.

Chris Primiano of 82 Rindge St- put aside issues and dispute. It will happen August 4th and it's overdue. It's necessary to come together as a community. He encouraged each department to define specific needs and where the funds will go and that the administration make it available on the town website. He recommended use of the reverse 911 system to get registration and election information out to the public. Whether pro or opponent, it is each individual's civic responsibility to become informed. The town's financial viability relies on this passing.

Robert Montgomery Thomas responded to Councilor Harrington's rebuttal. He reviewed the tax increase this year. He reviewed how he arrived at his figures. He said he is not opposed to giving funds to the departments, but he is concerned that capital improvements are not addressed in it nor is the OPEB liability. He will be voting against it because he cannot afford it. GIC costs will be endless.

Dan Daley, 28 Fisk Ave. commended the Mayor for putting a date forward, and urged the Council to support putting it to the ballot.

A motion was made by Vice President Smart to close the public hearing on measure 15 076, as amended by Mayor Kay and was seconded by Councilor Mathews.
UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

A motion was made by Councilor Harrington to approve measure 15 076 Proposition 2 ½ Override, as amended for a special election on August 4, 2015, and was seconded by Vice President Smart.

Councilor Harrington reviewed the decreases over the years to each department and outlined them to show why an override is needed. He responded to an earlier comment and said that not passing the override is more apt to kill old people. He reviewed the effects of underfunding to schools, public safety, and DPW maintenance. He cited many studies in his research. The town needs new revenues. Weymouth taxes are amongst the

lowest in the state. This is an opportunity for owners to protect their interest in the town. The people of Weymouth need to come together for the good of the town.

Councilor Conlon reported he is in favor of a menu override but not this measure. It will cost the taxpayers \$40K. Why not wait 90 days. There is not enough time to educate the voters. He will be voting against the measure.

Councilor Lacey responded that this is an easy decision; it gives the residents the opportunity to decide. He was in favor of the earlier date to ensure funding available in the fiscal year and they have struck a balanced approach on the amount and the impact. He thanked his colleagues, the administration and the public and look forward to the next thirty days.

President O'Connor read a prepared statement:

“The vote of the Town Council today would be to raise and appropriate \$6.5 million should the residents of our great community decide at the ballot box on August 4, 2015 that they would like to invest \$284 per household for improved services. We’ve heard from our department heads twice now about what the funds would be spent on; it will be spent on police officers and firefighters to protect our residents, public employees and equipment to keep our streets clean, teachers and curriculum to better educate our children, long overdue capital needs such as repairs to the senior center, a fire station replacement in North Weymouth, and an improved memorial wall honoring those who served Weymouth. The needs of our town are immediate. We’ve searched high and low for a smoking gun and for ways for consolidation and investment opportunities. We have tightened our belt just like so many residents have. We have looked at every line item in our budget and when we were done, we look again. This is a process at Budget/Management and we do it every single year. When we’re done looking at every line item we then have our auditor audit departments and then when we’re done doing that we have an external auditor audit all the work we’ve done. After repeating these steps for the better part of the last decade, it became very apparent that the issue before us is revenue. Weymouth is a largely residential community built out with sparse commercial scattered throughout the town. We do not have a town center; instead we have town villages. All of these villages are unique and special to us all, but they do not generate the commercial tax revenue that surrounding communities and communities our size in the Commonwealth have been able to generate. Without a strong commercial base, communities especially those as large as Weymouth have to rely heavily on residential taxes, which cannot be raised by more than 2 ½ percent, and in addition to that, local aid. The increases in local aid in the last three years have been 2.7%, 1.3% and 0.8%. It is clear that local aid is not coming through to Weymouth. An average increase of 1.6% in the last three fiscal years when the rate of inflation rose 2.1% is unacceptable. The state’s commitment to local aid has not been there for quite a few years and we cannot sit idly by to wait for Beacon Hill to get its act together. There are a lot of costly problems facing the Commonwealth such as health care and public transportation and it might be years before those costs and reforms are under control. So then, we’re left with the 2 ½%, which allows us to increase the levy limit and leaves very

little room for fixed costs, such as health care and pension liability and the increases in state mandates. So what we are left with now is growth, which is very limited outside of Southfield. The state's failing in their commitment to local aid and increasing fixed costs and mandates eating away at almost all of our growth that we are allowed to raise from our residents. Our budget, looking at its services, there's no room for investment to long-term plans as to what we're trying to do or build up and establish new programs. We simply budget to prevent layoffs. It's the mantra of our community and has been for far too long and has led us to where we are today. For the past ten years it hasn't been an easy situation to sit in this chamber and listen to what's going on for our revenue. Our department heads, as we've all said to them have done a great job of providing services to the residents of this town, with limited resources. They have done more with less, and now it is time to do more. Since we began this process there have been some extremely alarming statistics that all residents should know. And before this, since Councilor Harrington's been on this issue for the better part of the last five years. There are some alarming things going on in this town and it's why we have to do more. We have a narcotics unit comprised of three detectives. As of last month, there had been 87 overdoses in the Town of Weymouth. It's time to do more. Our fire department's headquarters is closed. It's time to do more. For years our schools did not meet Net School Spending – the minimum amount the state requires a school district to put into their education budget. We busted our tail, administration included, to scrape together every nickel and dime we could find in 002 accounts, in an account that paid for damaged soil; we scraped together all these and celebrated because we just barely exceeded the minimum. It's time to do more. Our libraries needed a waiver in order to be open- for the state to recognize them as a library. It's time to do more. Our public works employees are using equipment that's decades old to clean up our parks and our streets. It's time to do more. As Councilor Harrington noted, we're down to double-digit police officers and fire fighters, public works employees and teachers from when this government changed from town to a city. We lost these positions at a time when we started facing crucial problems. The town of Weymouth faces drug abuse and distribution issues, declining opportunity, infrastructure failures, foreclosures, homelessness, etc. The list goes on and on. Together we've looked these issues in the face and we as a community, a Council, and administration have managed to keep the ship afloat financially and have progressed, in my opinion in spite of the grave problems we face. I give so much credit to my colleagues, engaged residents of this town, and the administration because we've had to think outside the box to solve a lot of problems facing this community. I know that due to the revenue shortfall, Weymouth has not progressed as we know it all can or we want it to. I hate quoting, but this has stuck with me when we have debated revenue issues and it's paraphrased from President Kennedy; we have to move very fast to stand still and we can't stand still any longer; it's time to move forward. It's time to do more. “

A roll call vote was taken: Councilor Conlon- NO, Councilor DiFazio- YES, Councilor Hackett-YES, Councilor Harrington- YES, Councilor Haugh-YES, Councilor Lacey- YES, Councilor Mathews- YES, Councilor McDonald-YES , Councilor Molisse-YES, Vice President Smart-YES, President O'Connor-YES. Vote PASSED 10/1.

ADJOURNMENT

The next regularly scheduled Town Council Meeting will be held on Monday, June 15, 2015 at 7:30 PM. At 8:22 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 Council President Patrick O'Connor
Approved on 24 August 2015