

Winthrop Town Council
Regular Meeting
Monday, January 13, 2014 at 7 p.m.
(January 6, 2014 Council Meeting was move to January 13th due to weather)
Town Office

Regular Meeting Called to Order at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call - Chairman Kevin Cookson, Councilors, Sara Fuller, Linda Caprara, Ken Buck Sr., Larry Fitzgerald (arrived at 7:15), Don Ellis Jr., Richard Henry. Town Attorney Lee Bragg, Town Manager Jeff Woolston, and Recorder Joyce Tillson were in attendance.

Ordered that the Winthrop Town Council meet to consider the following items:

Swearing in of elected officials:

Not needed this year, Oaths taken during Town hours.

Election of Town Council Chair,

Motion Made: for Councilor Cookson to be Chairman of the Town Council; Councilor Caprara

Seconded: Councilor Ellis

Vote: All in Favor (6-0) (Councilor Fitzgerald not in attendance at time of vote)

Vice-Chair ,

Motion Made: for Councilor Fuller Vice-Chair of the Town Council; Councilor Caprara

Seconded: Councilor Ellis

Vote: All in Favor (6-0) (Councilor Fitzgerald not in attendance at time of vote)

Approve the December 2 & 16, 2013 Meeting Minutes

Motion Made: Councilor Fuller

Seconded: Councilor Ellis

Vote: All in Favor (6-0) (Fitzgerald not in attendance at time of vote)

Item #8 – Recreation Committee Ice Rink Discussion (taken out of order)

Putman provided update on the Recreation committee. Slogan “We Play Outside” A grant for snow shoes has been received and a grant for a 10 hour a week coordinator; Marjorie Knight has taken that position.

Committee has been looking to see if an Ice Rink can be brought back to town next to the tennis courts. Something easy to manage by use of water and simple barriers. Skating safely and in the evenings. This would mean moving the skate boarding ramps in the winter. The ramps need to be repaired or replaced if we are going to continue with a skate park. The request at this time has been around an ice rink and the rec committee didn't want to make this decision on their own. Not sure if this could be done this year, it is the hopes by the rec committee that it can be done this year and the weather seems to be on our side. Come spring if the skateboarder and their families want to pursue a skateboard park and would work with us and help to do this we would like to explore this for the summer months, 3 seasons. Asking councilors for permission to explore the idea and start the work to move the equipment and flood for an ice rink. Not asking for any money. The fire department said they will flood the area.

Chairman Cookson asked councilors to respond. Vice-Chair Fuller mentioned the school kids had interest in raising funds for the Skate Park in the spring. Would not want to lose the skate park. Is there

a long term consequence to the flooding and thawing that may require resurfacing. Putman does not believe so. Ginny Geyer; citizen spoke to the fact that she has firsthand knowledge as she was part of the original skate rink. And that previous history there is deterioration when using places like the tennis court. Vice-Chair Fuller would want to see a more thorough plan on how it would be maintained throughout the ice skating season. Where do we store and how does the skate park equipment get taken care of.

Chairman Cookson asked the cost to revamp to get park back to safe condition. Putman stated \$13,000 to \$15,000 was original and she thinks it would take that to rebuild. Cookson stated that the grant account still has \$3,000 in it and does not know if it could be reverted to rink. Putman believes the funds were put towards the skate park came from a high school account (a class not attending their trip donated the money). She believes it could be used for either recreation and still maintains the integrity of the gift.

Cookson asked other council members to chime in. He agrees with Fuller we need more information. Caprara agreed need more information. Putman said they would gather more information yet asked councilors to vote via email. Cookson said no it is illegal to do. Caprara suggested council give permission to Jeff Woolston and the council could give Jeff feedback. Cookson stated that the council could give the permission to have the skate rink with stipulations as to how it's flooded, taken care of and other areas. Tavis Hassenfus and Heidi Rett spoke about how to build Skate Park. Knowles lumber has indicated they would be willing to help with some of the supplies and possibly Audette's and community Dad's. It is pretty simple based on how elaborate one wants to get.

Council decided not to act on request, recreation committee to come back to February meeting with more detailed plan.

Item # 1 - Council Appointments

Priscilla Jenkins has always operated the Green Committee. Cookson recommends Priscilla continue to serve and update council as needed. Some committees need no appointments per their own bylaws.

Item # 2 - Chairman Appointments

Appointments and Finance committee. Chairman Cookson says finance committee did a good job so keeping it the way it was with Councilor Caprara, Councilor Fitzgerald, and Councilor Ellis. Appointment committee will be Councilor Sarah Fuller Chair with Councilor Ken Buck and Councilor Richard Henry.

Item # 3 – Hold a public hearing on the 2013-2014 School Budget, Resolution #101A- Part II

The Public hearing opened at 7:28 with a presentation from Superintendent Gary Rosenthal.

Gary states he has worked with and addressed most concerns and questions from the council and he has put together a power point presentation along with Ginny Geyer, with numbers from the past few years. Gary stated this is a very fragile budget given the data and marching orders given at the beginning of the budget building session back in January\February last year. Told to come in with flat , no increase at all; this budget comes in flat and \$542 below last years. While subsidy went up we also have some

additional expenses put in. Had to pick up teacher retirement. Despite that the budget has decreased. Article 1 has already been decreased. Decrease in Special Ed cost and budget went down somewhat. Last year 13% rate of students in Special Education with a state average at 19%, this year our rate has gone down to 11%. The kids with Autism have been brought back from the Wayne center and this has helped to lower the cost. The subsidy has gone; a portion of that is retirement cost. Third year in a row there has been an increase in enrollment and an increase at the Carlton Center; we have been pretty judicious and brought in some additional funds and upgrading some of the services which has contributed to the increase in subsidy and helped to keep tax rate level. Increase in enrollment for about 10 students at \$9000 will add about \$90,000 in additional funding through subsidy. Federal funds, this year the title funds are up a little bit. Title funds for needy students are up a bit and those in poverty doesn't help the percentages although the percentages are up a bit. We are a town who can't get above 43% of free and reduced lunch; unless you can get 50% you miss out on a lot of federal programs. The percentage doesn't mean Winthrop doesn't have the need but if families don't fill out the paperwork at the beginning of the year it isn't calculated. Title 1 money has gone up a little bit from last year, about \$9,000. Title 2A – professional development; class size reduction has dropped about \$3,000. Title 6 – rural grant fund, which may be eliminated in the next few years, is now down to \$14,000. Local entitlement money has gone up this year the federal and state government has provided a little bit of additional money. It has gone up about \$15,000 but last year had a revenue stream of about \$8,000 in Medicaid monies, this year will be 0, this cannot be counted as a revenue source this year. Preschool and handicap money down a little bit, \$3800, leaving a little bit of money to support the program. Not wanting to increase class sizes even though currently there is a little bit of money to hire an Ed Tech for Kindergarten classes which are currently at a minimum of 17 yet need some support. Hoping article 1 stays intact or kindergarten classes will become too large. Have not been able to reinstate classroom and library resources and have not provided any money to library improvement this year, with the uncertainty of the budget. Have tried to be judicious with regards to budget and program reduction. This is probably the most transparent budget we have built and most solid built. Have had some increase in staffing due to enrollment increases. Over half the budget goes to regular and special ed. Note: Every student 3 to 12 has access to a laptop and others have labs. 75 teachers on staff currently, a loss of 22 since 2005.

Ginny Geyer presented on compensation: (which requires negotiation); salary, health benefits, dental, cash in lue, mileage, days teaching, etc. Ginny presented a comparison with several area schools on salary and health benefits. Winthrop is at the lowest in comparison. Ginny also did a tax base comparison. Winthrop is \$13.98, average is \$15.29.

Winthrop High School has been designated by US News as Silver Award winning school. State report card shows Winthrop had 2 A's and a B, recognized as the highest performing school district in Central Maine based on the work of our staff and the performance by our kids. All this is done with considerably less than the state average. Have tried to address the Board's needs, cuts. You cannot just take \$100,000 out of a budget and expect everything to remain as is. If there are cuts made above the cuts already made it will result in services and programs to kids being affected, there is no other

alternative. Currently going through negotiations for health insurance at this time, this is the time to look at cost; during the negotiations.

Jana Diket Thanked the Superintendent for his presentation. States most towns do not have fire, police and ambulance and if tax rate needs to increase do to these services and education, is all for that. Is a teacher in another town and wanted to speak a little about school days; teachers get a bad rap because of number of days they work. Teachers work 180 days (based on contract), they do not get holiday pay, vacation pay, they work contracted days only. If you look at municipal employees in Winthrop, most teachers have a bachelor's degree, a lot of them are required now to have a master's degree with the new teaching standards. If you take \$100,000 out of municipal benefits package you need to take \$100,000 out of the teachers. Full time year round employees work an average of 249 days five days a week. Most get 2 weeks' vacation that is now 261 and 11 holiday paid. So 249 days, so keep in mind the difference in days worked and teachers require college education the town has started to tap into retirement. The town does not have to pay into teacher's retirement fund and teachers can not withdraw the same as state retirement. Back in December meeting a survey was mentioned about cutting benefits; have a copy of survey and where is this overwhelming answer to cut benefits? Chairman Cookson said survey by Jeff and he can speak more to this. Chairman Cookson stated that he discussed this back in December the day after meeting and that whoever made the comment that question was on survey he agrees that it is not on the survey. Chairman Cookson stated that Linda. Ken and he have tried for many years to cut the cost to the town in health care cost. If it was 100,000 or 200,000 cut and it was a one time you could negotiate but it is not it is year after year after year. Chairman Cookson asked how many have sat down and figured out how much a cut to teacher's vs taxes going up a half mill, for the average person. The average person for every 5% decrease in school department you're talking about \$11,000. Superintendent said it will be a substantial teacher pay cut. The further you go down the larger the cut. Ginny states that we are already below the area schools and it makes it hard to compete for staff. Superintendent stated in every category we are already at the bottom, if we take any additional funds out of the budget and force reductions, which we can't do because of negotiations. We understand you want health care addressed, and it has not gone unnoticed at the bargaining sessions. We have out sourced \$375,000 health insurance benefits over the last 3 years and saved anywhere from \$36,000 to \$160,000 this current school year alone, this school year alone based on the fact that we didn't have a 3% to a 13% increase under anthem blue cross we have done everything we know to do to keep health insurance cost down. We hear what the Councilors are saying and no one is denying it isn't an issue but at this point in time #1 we couldn't cut health benefits if we wanted to and #2 we already have an outstanding policy that beats the one you have gone and renegotiated. We have numbers of people involved. I have no other options than to affect program and services to kids, there is no other option. Chairman Cookson explains comment not his he repeats that of the Town Attorney, and if they cut the town is on solid ground, the Superintendent says per his attorney that for the town to make that cut it is 3rd party negotiating and against the law in the state of Maine. Chairman said town is not a 3rd party as the school is part of the town. Ginny asked if town was in arbitration, Chair states no Ginny asked if Negotiations, Chair said we are in mediation the step before. Meg Cook – teacher/resident asked if approved as is tonight does mill increase; Chair said no. If cut as proposed then would taxes go down, Chair states No, Megs question is then does that mean a

refund is do? Where does that money go? Chairman Cookson if there is a cut made, because the school wasn't done when tax bills went out there wouldn't be a change, the treasurer and finance had to set a mill rate to send out bills based on last year budget.. Then why the need to cut money. The Councilors want to reduce health care cost, the public want to know why. Sara McLaughlin _ Ed Tech challenges the Council and Municipal to walk in the shoes of a school employee. Jane Frigon ask what does council want, there is no increase so you have what was asked.

9:05 Hearing closed.

101A-Part II

Article 1:

Motion Made: Councilor Fuller

Seconded: Councilor Ellis

Vote: All in Favor (2-5) Cookson, Councilor Caprara, Councilor Fitzgerald, Councilor Buck, and Councilor Henry **FAILED**

Article 1

Motion Made: to reduce Article 1 to \$3,510,175.58 Councilor Caprara

Seconded: Councilor Buck

Discussion: Councilor Fuller in support of employee contribution overall but doubted that decreasing the budget at this point in time will get us anywhere. Councilor Fitzgerald read some of survey comments; was asked if these comments were made based on a statement or the survey. Public reminded that the public hearing is over and discussion is for Council only. Councilor Ellis agrees also health benefits need to be looked at; voted for the original amount because of the ongoing negotiations.

Vote: All in Favor (5-2) Councilor Fuller, Councilor Ellis **PASSED**

Article 2:

Motion Made: Councilor Fuller

Seconded: Councilor Ellis

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Article 3:

Motion Made: Councilor Fuller

Seconded: Councilor Fitzgerald

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Article 4:

Motion Made: Councilor Fuller

Seconded: Councilor Fitzgerald

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Article 5:

Motion Made: Councilor Fuller

Seconded: Councilor Fitzgerald

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Article 6:

Motion Made: Councilor Fuller

Seconded: Councilor Fitzgerald

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Article 7:

Motion Made: Councilor Fuller

Seconded: Councilor Fitzgerald

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Article 8:

Motion Made: Councilor Fuller

Seconded: Councilor Fitzgerald

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Article 9:

Motion Made: Councilor Fuller

Seconded: Councilor Fitzgerald

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Article 10:

Motion Made: Councilor Fuller

Seconded: Councilor Fitzgerald

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Article 11:

Motion Made: Councilor Fuller

Seconded: Councilor Fitzgerald

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Article 12-17:

Motion Made: in the amount of \$9,808,349.20 by Councilor Fuller

Seconded: Councilor Fitzgerald

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Article 18:

Motion Made: Councilor Fuller

Seconded: Councilor Fitzgerald

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

SECOND READING: 101A-Part II

Motion made: **waive second reading** and send to public referendum; Councilor Fuller

Seconded: Councilor Fitzgerald

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Item # 4 – Consider Investment Committee Application

Motion Made: Councilor Fuller motioned to table until review committee can review

Seconded: Councilor Ellis

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Item # 5 – Consider Uncollectable Personal Property Tax Abatement

Motion Made: Councilor Buck

Seconded: Councilor Fuller

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Item # 6 – Consider a Municipal Review Committee Resolution

Jeff Woolston explained that MRC stands for a lot of things and there are different Municipal Reviews throughout the State. This one represents charter municipalities to the PERC waste to energy facility in Orrington, Maine. This resolution would commit the town to not actually signing any contracts with other waste processing facilities until early 2017.

Motion Made: Councilor Fitzgerald to take no action

Seconded: Councilor Fuller

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Item # 7 - Review draft Municipal Personnel Policy Change

Longevity pay; to bring Municipal employees not in a union pay increase like those who belong to a union. More discussion at a later date, need more information.

Item #8 – Recreation Committee Ice Rink Discussion - Moved to beginning of meeting:

Item #9 – School Budget Line Item Clarification

Councilor Fitzgerald asked for clarification, Town Attorney Lee Bragg, gave the guidelines per State Law; City Charter and Ordinances. Charter may need updating.

Motion: Finance committee work with school, look at which articles we should have. Councilor Fitzgerald

Seconded: Councilor Fuller

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)

Other Business

None

Managers Report

None

Adjourn (10:00 pm)

Motion: Councilor Buck

Second: Councilor Caprara

Vote: All in Favor (7-0)