

**Winthrop Town Council
Regular Meeting
Monday, February 2, 2009
Winthrop Town Office**

Attendance: Kevin Cookson, Chair: Patricia Engdahl, Ken Buck, David Rheume, Priscilla Jenkins, Linda Caprara, Sarah Fuller, Cornell Knight (Town Manager) and Julie Winberg (Secretary)

Approve the Minutes of January 5th, 2009.

Motion by Rheume and seconded by Caprara, the minutes of January 5th were approved with a unanimous vote.

Item #12 Audit Review of 2007-2008 Fiscal Year

This audit report is for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008.

Gregory Chabot, a certified public accountant with Runyon Kersteen Ouellette, presented a report on the town's financial picture.

There were no departures from generally accepted accounting principles. The town ended the fiscal year with a balance just over \$1 million dollars. The town spent \$16.2 million from the General Fund last year of which \$9.8 million of that on education. It was also noted that two-thirds of the property tax levy supported education.

The segregation of duties was discussed and consensus was by all as not being practical as the town office is staffed with few employees and segregation of duties would be a difficult if not impossible task. However, it was noted, that the employee who may enter, process and sign the invoices is not the same employee who would do the bank reconciliations or who would prepare the financial statements.

Item #13 Hold a public hearing on proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance that allows for flashing signs.

The public hearing opened at 7:40 p.m.

Rick O'Brien, Chair of the Planning Board, was in attendance and gave a brief yet thorough explanation of this zoning amendment proposal which came about at the request of one of the town's retail stores. Allowing this change to 10 second intervals allows more people to view the sign at least one time as they are driving by. The state's ordinance allows the change every twenty minutes which decreases visibility drastically. The public hearing closed at 7:43 p.m. with no public comment.

The councilors voted unanimously to amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow commercial signs to change messages every ten seconds and noted that the word 'changing' and not 'flashing' would be more appropriate.

Motion by Caprara and seconded by Jenkins to approve the amendment with a vote of 7-

0. This change would be effective immediately. CEO Beth Young said that at this time, there are only two of these signs in town and that anyone wanting a sign or to change a sign that they have would have to submit an application for review and approval with all criteria being met.

Item #14 Consider the first reading of amendments to the zoning ordinance, Section 4.1.5.1(3) flashing signs

Motion by Rheaume and seconded by Jenkins to waive the Second reading of the amendment. Vote 4-3 (Yea- Cookson, Rheaume, Buck, Caprara; Nay Engdahl, Fuller and Jenkins .

Item #15 Consider the purchase of lockers, office furnishings and phone system at the police station

Chief Young was in attendance to present his request to the councilors. Law enforcement officers have a lot of equipment to store that needs to be stored on the premises safely. Evidence lockers are needed for the continuity of evidence and proposed is a one way pass through locker with sufficient air flow to allow for proper preservation. Chief Young went through each request and the amounts proposed along with the reasoning behind each group of items.

With a motion by Rheaume and seconded by Jenkins, by a unanimous vote, the councilors approved spending \$33,131 for wardrobe lockers, evidence lockers, phone system upgrades and furnishings for the new police headquarters which will be undergoing extensive renovation. More than \$10,000 was included in the building budget and \$7,000 is to come from a dispatch reserve fund.

Item #16 Consider a request from the Rockwood Fire Department that Winthrop donate Engine 5 to them, an 1972 International, after the new truck arrives – Al Godfrey and Chief Brooks in attendance

Motion by Buck and seconded by Jenkins to give the tank truck to the Rockwood volunteer fire department in exchange for a donation of \$500.00. Vote 6-1, Rheaume opposed.

The exchange is to be made once Winthrop takes possession of a replacement truck. Albert Godfrey, who served 30 years with the Winthrop fire department, proposed the deal. Godfrey is administrative officer, compliance officer and safety officer for the Rockwood volunteer fire department.

Winthrop fire chief Dan Brooks said the most the town has ever gotten for a used fire truck was \$1,500. He too approved this request with the provision that the town receive a formal letter from the township seeking the truck.

Councilor David Rheaume opposed this donation to Rockwood explaining that he preferred that it go out to bid, and added that someone has already stopped by his store expressing an interest in the truck. The remaining councilors however were all in

agreement explaining that they thought it was not only the right thing to do but that the truck should go to another fire department and used for its specific purpose.

Item #17 Discuss possible community uses for the former Ambulance Building on Town Hall Lane

Margy Knight was in attendance along with several high school students to discuss this buildings future. They heard from Corena Richards, a Freshman at Winthrop High School who proposed their committee's recommendation to use this building as a youth center or teen center.

The activities at the proposed youth center would be after school and during school vacation weeks.

Chair Cookson informed the council that he had a meeting with this high school group on their proposal and he asked them to come to the meeting on this night and present their wishes to the council and the public in attendance.

It was suggested that this building could also house the food bank but size might be an issue. Questions also arose as to how this would be funded as these are hard economic times for all. The students explained that they would ask for volunteers. Councilor Jenkins offered her time for this good cause.

Councilors were in unison as to the worthiness of this proposal and noted that this was a specific need noted in the Winthrop Unites Group. Councilor Buck commented too that he too was in agreement and that this was a worthwhile endeavor. He asked the students present to come back to the council with specific ideas and suggestions on getting started.

Their was a unanimous agreement to have the students return with their suggestions and overall goals in this venture and specifically their plans to have adequate adult supervision which could also include incorporating a Senior Center as a joint effort as there is a need for that type of facility as well.

Item #18 Consider bids for a new Ambulance

With a motion by Engdahl seconded by Fuller, the councilors voted 6-1 to approve the purchase of a new ambulance from Professional Vehicle Corporation of Mexico, Maine. This firm was the lower of two bidders at \$164,550. Sugarloaf Ambulance's bid came in at \$183,231. Approximately \$20,000 will be taken from a reserve fund for the purchase. The ambulance will be bought through a lease-purchase program and funded with revenue from patient billing, according to the Director of the Winthrop Ambulance Service, John Dovinsky. He said that the new ambulance will replace the 1998 Ambulance. He also informed the councilors that a leak in the metal roof of the new

ambulance headquarters was taken care of. He said that it came from an ice dam. He said that this section of the roof will have to have ongoing raking to prevent this kind of incident from happening again.

Item #19 Hear an update from the Western Kennebec Economic Development Alliance-Amy Lawson, Executive Director

Amy Lawson was in attendance to review the activities at the Alliance over the last few months. There are two lots on Route 202 and interested parties for each. Also, they are fostering a relationship with the University of Maine's economic development department. The present economic picture has slowed progress.

Item #20 Discuss the upcoming budget process

The following report was presented to the councilors: the property tax levy is well below the limits under LD1; the county tax levy increase this year was 3%; state revenue sharing will be \$65,000 less next year; excise tax collections may be 8% below budget levels; recyclable income has fallen; and building permit demands is down as well as interest earned on investments.

The budget presentation and review will begin in April.

A consensus was reached to hold the line on the property tax rate. Thus, the school and town budgets would be prepared accordingly. At the present time, the school consolidation issue was still up in the air. And the impact of that is yet unknown.

Item #21 Consider a report from the Appointments Committee

The following names were proposed for the Comprehensive Plan Committee: Terry Shehata, Jack Kaiser, Ken Johnson, Jim Norris, Kristen Bartlett, Andy Wess, John Scott, Michael Czado, John Carpenter, Phil Locashio, Sarah Fuller, John Callinan, Brian Ketchen with chairwoman, Patrice Putman.

The committee's task is to update the Winthrop Comprehensive Plan which will help determine the shape of the town in 2020 and 2030. The preliminary meeting will be held on February 26th at the town office. This first meeting will allow these new members to get acquainted with each other and go over their tasks. The old plan which was written in 1996 will be reviewed. When asked just how the committee members were chosen, Ms. Putman explained that the guidelines call for some longtime residents, some newcomers and some with specialized interests, such as natural resources or the economy. She went on to say that all the meetings are open to the public and she would encourage everybody to get involved with an ultimate goal of having at least 100 people involved in the process.

Motion by Caprara and seconded by Jenkins to approve the Appointment's Committee's slate of members for the Comprehensive Plan Committee. Vote 7-0.

Manager's Report

*Two snowmobiles that are owned by the Police Department should go out for bid.
Motion by Rheaume and seconded by Caprara to approve the sale of two snowmobiles.
Vote 7-0.*

Harper's Development has arranged a payment schedule with interest to make their bond payments by April.

Item #22 Consider an executive session with legal counsel to discuss pending litigation pursuant to Title 1 MRSA Section 405(b) (E).

Motion by Caprara and seconded by Buck to enter executive session with legal counsel to discuss pending litigation pursuant to Title 1 MRSA, Section 405 (b)(E). Vote 7-0.

Return to Regular Session

Motion by Caprara Seconded by Jenkins to adjourn at 9:45 pm. Vote 7-0.