

Winthrop Town Council
Regular Meeting
Monday, October 1, 2007
Winthrop Town Office

Attendance: Patrice Putman, Linda Caprara, Patricia Engdahl, Ken Buck, Kevin Cookson, Jim Norris, Cornell Knight (Town Manager) and Julie Winberg (Secretary). Absent: William MacDonald.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Norris and seconded by Cookson, the minutes for September 10, 2007 were approved. Vote was unanimous.

The Chair brought forward **Item #100 - Consider consulting services assistance to the school consolidation committee members and an update on the consolidation meetings to date.**

Kevin Cookson updated the group on the consolidation meetings thus far. The committee has met twice with the last meeting held on September 6th. The first meeting's agenda was to get to know the attendees as well as to identify the objectives. The group is 21 strong and their task is to prepare a report by December 1st. There are three representatives from each town. At the second meeting, the committee decided to break into two sub groups: finance and governance. Kevin Cookson was elected to chair the finance group and Dale Glidden was nominated, although had not accepted at that time, to chair the governance group.

A legal issue has been raised by the entire committee and a letter has been sent to the Commissioner for clarification: can a town have more than three representatives. There are 15 representatives from the Maranacook School District.

Councilor Cookson gave a brief summary with figures primarily based on school population. For example, if the merger took place today, the town's share, based on school population would be \$301,941.00. That would average out to a \$361.00 increase per student. It was strongly stressed that those figures will be adjusted as positions are consolidated which will include consolidating the positions of superintendents, administrative staff, central office staff, as well as transportation cost. This is the first start of the process.

The committee realizes that these were significant differences between towns and the Legislature will be tweaking some things.

Mr. Glidden cautioned the council that this process has just started and it will be a difficult process. The committee needs to go through many issues. The final product will be going to the public in the form of a referendum. Mr. Glidden described this process as "like peeling an onion".

The question on the table for the council to consider was hiring a consulting firm to assist the school consolidation committee members and input from the two chairs of the committee if it would be a benefit for those involved in this process. There are quite a few consulting groups with negotiation experience. And this may be something to do now rather than later.

Drummond and Woodson, a Portland law firm, for example, has done a lot of work with schools in this consolidation process. They have prepared an extensive manual outlining plans and steps to take. The strongly recommend that a town should have legal and financial experience prior to sending their final document to the commissioner as there are enormous decisions to be made all with permanent and far reaching effects on school programs and the

town. Bernstein and Shur is another firm that is out there now keeping towns on track.

Discussion centered on whether this would be a group observing or actively participating. The town's representatives, doing a good job, may need this additional support with an entity that has done this type of work as the impact on the town is enormous. However, discussion also centered on the fact that this may be viewed negatively by the entire group.

The town manager would explore the consultant resources if the committee decides they need the expertise.

Tabled from 9/10/07 **Item #91 - Consider a truck purchase for the Transfer Station.**

Motion by Cookson and seconded by Caprara to remove Item #91 from the table. Vote was unanimous.

The yard truck/tractor that moves the trailers around the transfer station needs replacing it smokes a lot, uses a lot of oil, and needs a new clutch and springs. Larry has found a replacement for \$5,500. Funds would come from the reserve account and the sale of the old tractor.

Motion by Buck and seconded by Norris to use the reserve account for the purchase of a truck for the transfer station up to \$5,500. Vote was unanimous.

Tabled from 9/10/07 **Item #92 - Update on the skateboard park drainage repair project.**

Motion by Cookson and seconded by Caprara to remove Item #92 from the table. Vote was unanimous.

The drainage pipe replacement project at the skateboard park turned out to be far more work than expected. Three hundred feet of 3 foot diameter plastic drain pipe was installed from the skateboard park to Clark Street. Costs exceeded the budget by \$5,400. Funds to cover this cost would come from the surplus account. To add to that would be approximately \$7500 for paving for a total price tag o \$12,900.

Motion by Cookson and seconded by Caprara to approve these funds from surplus and complete this project. Vote was unanimous.

Tabled from 9/10/07 **Item #94 - Schedule the meeting on Affordable Housing.**

Motion by Cookson and seconded by Caprara to remove Item #94 from the table. Vote was unanimous.

At a previous meeting the council discussed holding a meeting with all interested groups to discuss affordable housing which would include the planning board, zoning board of appeals, the chamber of commerce and interested residents. It was determined that the definition to be used to identify affordable housing was the state's definition.

In response to a question if a facilitator was needed to move this forward, the consensus was that that may be premature as this should be an open process for the purpose of getting everyone's opinion and that the council should handle this since this would be the first time it would be an agenda item in joint participation with the other town boards.

By unanimous consensus, this meeting will be held on November 15th. Invitations will be extended to the other town boards.

Item #95 - Consider the Regional Development Corporation's Economic Development Strategy, Jayne Despres, President RDC.

The Regional Development Corporation hired Clyde Dyar to write an economic development strategy for the region. Jayne Despres, President of the RDC, reviewed some of the report's highlights. This is a regional approach and that concept was well received. The report described what will be looked at for a regional plan and perhaps what the next steps will be. This, it was stressed, is a starting document. This was described as a slow and steady course as economic development comes in many facets.

Comments made centered around this draft plan as being very ambitious and issues such as which communities will come along with this regional concept and their financial contribution needed to be addressed as well. It was also noted that it is very important to make sure the town's comprehensive plan encompasses the economic development plan. Although aggressive, the plan was well received.

The RDC will meet with each one of the towns and will, at that point, have a better idea of what each town is looking for and willing to contribute. That is the RDC's first step. The council was urged to email, or contact through the town manager, Ms. Despres with their comments and suggestions.

Item #96 - Hold a public hearing on the \$2,800,000 Public Safety Building referendum question.

The public hearing opened at 8:08 p.m.

The town manager briefly reviewed the history of Item #96 and what lead to this referendum question. The council approved Order #129 last month. In that order, a public hearing needs to be scheduled on the \$2,800,000 Public Safety Building question. The council is now to the point that they need to discuss whether a position is going to be taken on this question and what, if anything, is going to be distributed prior to the election or a question and answer pamphlet etc. The increase in property tax to homeowners must be included in whatever forum the council uses to pursue. This complex will be erected at the water district site on U. S. Route 202. The site is the same as that proposed in February, but at 19,000 square feet, the building is about a third smaller than the 28,800 square foot structure originally proposed. The price is \$2.8 million less than the \$4 million the voters declined to spend in February which was defeated 836-646. The smaller facility is intended to house the town's fire, police and rescue departments.

The public hearing closed at 8:17 p.m.

The council then proceeded with discussion on how to communicate to the community all the information they need to have on hand prior to the vote on November 6th. It was decided that some type of question and answer format would be done and posted around town, in flyers and in newspapers. The council was in unison in their position that this format will go a long way to enlighten the community with the information they need to make an informed decision as well as show how open to all information the town government is on this issue. Of importance to note is that this has the backing of the town's fire, police and ambulance chiefs, a factor cited by the town manager and councilors alike.

A council resolution was not necessary because all members did not share the same view.

The town manager was assigned the task of drafting this question and answer brochure and to email it to the council prior to advertising.

Item #97 - Consider the formation of a Comprehensive Plan Committee to update the town's Comprehensive Plan from 1996.

The council set aside \$10,000 in the 2007-08 budgets to update the town's comprehensive plan. It was last done in 1996. It was recommended that the town hire the KVCOG staff to work with a committee on the update. It will take 12-18 months to complete the work.

Motion by Norris and seconded by Cookson, to start the comprehensive plan update in January, 2008. Vote was unanimous.

Item #98 - Consider the Public Safety Answering Point Services Contract with the Main Department of Public Safety.

Kennebec County Sheriff's office will transfer the PSAP (E-911 answering calls) service to the state Dept. Of Public Safety on October 11. After Oct 11th, there will only be one PSAP in Kennebec County. The county, August and Waterville PSAP's all will join the state's site. After Winthrop's E-911 calls are answered at the PSAP, they will be transferred to the Winthrop dispatch center. The cost of the service is \$2.50 per capita but is pro-rated from October 11 to June 30, 2008. There is \$11, 685 budgeted for the service.

Chief Joe Young urged the councilors to reject the agreement, saying the town gets the service for free from Kennebec County. However, that service will discontinue after October 11th. Motion made, but rescinded, showed a 4-2 vote against signing. John Dovinsky,

emergency medical services director, spoke in support of this contract and stressed the importance of this service.

After much discussion on whether the council believed that the dispatch center should be part of a consolidation effort which would be a cost savings, and whether this was a more efficient way to answer 911 calls, as well as if this was a mandatory contract that every town must sign, a motion by Cookson and seconded by Caprara that the town sign the contract, however reluctantly, as the state may be in error and is not accurate in making these charges. The vote was unanimous.

Item #99 - Consider scheduling a public hearing on the National Incident Management System Ordinance.

Chief Brooks recommends the council adopt the enclosed Emergency Management Ordinance. This is a requirement for towns participating in the Federal Incident Command training program. Police, fire, ems and administrative personnel are all participating in the training. A public hearing could be scheduled for the November 5th meeting.

Motion by Cookson and seconded by Caprara to schedule a public hearing on the National Incident Management System Ordinance. Vote was unanimous.

Item #101 - Consider charging the mechanic account fund balance to the General Fund.

The mechanic department was eliminated in June. The carried balance overrun of \$34,652 needs to be charged to the general fund to clear the account. Motion by Caprara and seconded by Cookson

that the mechanic account fund balance be transferred to the general fund. Vote was unanimous.

Manager's Report

The town manager informed the council that he will be receiving a letter from the postal authority later this week which will be describing the four proposals that have been received to date. The town will then have thirty days to comment. A final decision will be made two weeks after that with a fifteen day comment period. By Thanksgiving, a final decision should be made.

There is a drive-thru tax payment box that is being well received.

The Chair noted that she briefly met with a representative from the Spirit of America which has been in operation since 1993. The local chapter is now disbanding and in some communities, the council has taken that over. The choice for our council could be to take over the whole process or nominate a representative. This was an excellent way to recognize people who have contributed to their community.

The town manager was directed to gather the forms and information on this group and to put it on the agenda for the council's next meeting in November.

The Chair informed the council that she will not be in attendance in the December Council meeting and would like to schedule a meeting after the referendum on the public safety complex. It was decided that that meeting will take place on November 15th in the town office.

Motion by Caprara and seconded by Buck the meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.