

Winthrop Town Council
Regular Meeting
Monday, December 10, 2007
Winthrop Town Office

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

A plaque of appreciation was presented to Chairwoman Patrice Putman in recognition of her dedication to the town and to all its residents. It has been a fulfilling seven years.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Cookson and seconded by MacDonald, the minutes for November 5th and November 15th, 2007 were approved with corrections as noted on the minutes for November 5th, Page 5, in reference to the Chair's comment which should have read as there being 'no consensus'. Vote was unanimous.

Item #115 *Hold a public hearing on the Liquor License renewal for the Alfred W. Maxwell, Jr. American Legion Post #40, Memorial Drive.*

Public hearing opened at 7:08 p.m.

There being no comments from the public, the public the hearing was closed at 7:09 p.m.

Item #116 *Consider the Liquor license renewal for the Alfred W. Maxwell, Jr. American Legion Post #40, Memorial Drive.*

Motion by Cookson and seconded by MacDonald, the liquor license for the American Legion was approved with a unanimous vote.

Item #117 *Consider a program called Promoting Winthrop*
Margie Knight presented her proposal to the Council with an A-Z list of recommendations on how to promote Winthrop. The town's slogan of a "little town with big character" needs to be put on the website. The Chamber of Commerce has also been working on this project and has parallel interests. There is a distinct opportunity to work collaboratively on self promotion. If the town wants to increase its population, the town needs to promote the town touting what makes this town a favorable place to live for those families. Making the website robust and active is an excellent start.

Motion by Norris and seconded by Cookson to authorize the Town Manager to approve \$500.00 from the consulting budget to fund a three month contract to hire Margie Knight to enhance and upgrade the town's website. Noted: these 'Knights' are not related. This contract would be for January, February and March 2008.

Also mentioned to be included in the website is the ability to donate to this cause.

Item #118 *Update on the Regional Development Corporation's Draft Economic Development Strategy – Jayne Despres, President.*

Representatives were in attendance from the RDC to make their presentation to the Council. The group informed the Council that a major reorganization of the RDC has taken place with the end result being a major revitalization of this organization. It is reorganized to fulfill its mission to be a regional agency. Town participation is imperative for the RDC to move forward. The RDC is an important resource for the business community. It consists of a group of people who believe in our region and can see the potential for growth. A real opportunity exists for towns to speak up and become a vital part of the state's economic development.

The RDC intends to develop a strategy to work with individual towns defining their own economic development plans identifying their needs. With this in mind, the hiring of a part time executive director will further this effort. Eventually, the goal is to have this person become full time. Winthrop Municipal Park is an example of how this will work. The tax revenue alone has benefited the town of Winthrop and this park continues to prosper. The RDC plans on looking at housing, the Route 202 development, and tourism. The executive director will be the person to help the RDC focus that energy.

The RDC has met with several towns and the existing members already have links to several communities which will ultimately redefine the new Board. The RDC is made up of volunteers. The executive director will act as a point person to pull the organization together and to do the necessary convincing to demonstrate how this is will be a value to the towns and how essential their participation will be.

Three of the seats on the Board will be for businesses. But beyond the Board, there remains an opportunity for others to be included. This is a general membership. The RDC's website will have links to each community. This will give people a better sense on what is going on in Winthrop and other communities.

RDC makes sense for our area. Although it has been shown that the small town flavor is what people want, joining forces will make this area a more viable force in the economic

sector. The RDC will sell this area, sell it to its residents and provide structure. The executive director will oversee this. The committee structure is in place and increase in the general membership will be of great assistance. Money is needed to do the advertising, supply the office space, telephone, filing cabinets etc. The RDC is asking the Town Council to approve \$30,000 for this purpose. A spreadsheet was distributed as to how this will eventually be assumed by other communities.

Economic Development is what RDC is all about. The executive director will assess the present businesses, review what clusters of businesses that presently exist, and what kind of things are going on that would make a business want to move there. There was a recommendation to bring in Augusta and Gardiner but the RDC decided not to include them as they have different long term interests. Increasing the vitality of this region will help the economic base.

The Chamber of Commerce has a piece of this also. It was noted during this meeting that there has been very little dialogue between the town, the RDC and the Chamber. Members of the Council asked that this change and that the three groups develop a pattern of sharing information and open communication. Although the Chamber is business focused and the RDC is economically focused there still is a definite overlap between the two groups and the two need to establish a cooperative way of communication in an effort of working together even in these overlaps. It is clear that Winthrop will be a significant contributor and will have an active voice in the direction that the RDC takes.

The status of the 'draft plan' was questioned. The RDC explained that this is still a work in progress. The reorganization was key to moving this process along and that was completed two weeks ago. In addition, a job description will be drafted for this new position and presented to the Council. Coordination of the strategy developed to make this work is key to completing the economic development plan but this strategy must come from the individual towns.

Comments in support of this part time executive director position were expressed as the Council expressed their joint commitment to this at a previous meeting by specifically earmarking the funds for this endeavor and there were no qualifications made at that time. This will not be a town employee as the director must maintain neutrality and represent all towns that become a part of the RDC. The sooner this person comes onboard the sooner the strategy and planning will be developed.

Motion by Cookson and seconded by Caprara to give the RDC \$30,000 for the purpose of hiring a part time economic development director. The vote was unanimous.

Item #119 *Update on new Post Office location*

The town manager received a message this past Friday from Chris Madden that he will be viewing the sites along with the Acting District Manager of Maine on December 17th.

A decision will be made at that time. There will be a time set after that for further review and comment. Lou Carrier and others who submitted proposals will make themselves available should Mr. Madden and his group need further information. The Council asked the Town Manager to start legal action for no handicap access on December 18th if a review of the proposed sites is not done by the postal authorities on the 17th.

The Council took a five minute break and resumed meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Item #120 *Discussion of the next steps to correct Public Safety Buildings condition*

With renovations being the most viable option at this point, the Lewis & Malm report estimating the total cost for renovations and expansion (police and ambulance expansion, fire department renovations totaled \$2,753,895) was briefly discussed. It was reported that Jim Harrington, owner of HP Cummings Construction, informed the town that the police and fire building renovations could be done for between \$600,000 and \$700,000. He would offer his company's expertise at no cost to the town to hire other local contractors to get the job done in that price range. The information would also be included in the discussion that follows.

Other proposals for solving the building problem have come forward and some were presented during this meeting.

Chief Young proposed using the former Envisionet building located in the Business Park. He submitted a drawing of his idea on how this building could become a functional police department. This is a turnkey operation and with a few modifications the Police Department could move in three months. There is no need for an elevator. It is a metal and brick building. It presents itself well. Cost of renovation would be far less and he projects would cost approximately \$800,000. He suggested that a contractor be hired by the town to evaluate the structure. He noted that some residents may not like the location but that he has no problem with it. It is two miles from the town office. He explained that his officers are actively patrolling the area so this location should not be seen as a negative.

It was noted that that building was one that was previously looked at and rejected because the feedback received was that it was too far out of town and the proposal got further convoluted at the prospects of adding EMS and the Fire Department.

This definitely now has presented itself as a viable option. What makes this even more attractive is that the location is close to Monmouth and with the prospects of consolidation there would be adequate room for Monmouth to relocate. The current owner is Parker Brothers. They are offering leasing opportunities as well. The advantage to a lease is that there is no upfront cost to the town. However, the town would have to sign a long term lease. If the Council has an interest in leasing options, competitive bids/rfp's could be issued with the help of an architect and engineer. Chief Young concluded that this location provides a lot of parking.

John Dovinsky then presented his plan. He gleaned information from material previously submitted, evaluating needs and proposals. Together with the information published and the public's comments, his proposal offers the former Medical Center as the most viable location for EMS to relocate. The health center is a building that could definitely provide all the requirements that his department is sorely lacking. The building size is same as what was originally asked for. Rooms are small and the building will require some reconfiguration but it will be very manageable. There are a lot of advantages and this keeps EMS downtown as his is a regional service. In addition, this change will not be an 'identity crisis' for the community as it is referred to the old health center. There are no noise issues and this could be accomplished fairly quickly projecting a six to nine month turnaround.

Dan Brooks informed the Council that he had no proposal at this time as he was under the assumption that this meeting was a general discussion. He informed the Council that he would like more direction. He reiterated that his issues are that of space. There is no parking for his 26 men. The interior offers very little space as well. The Jr. Fire Fighter program is on hold as there is no room for it. He can't replace any apparatus without doing renovations to the existing building.

The last proposal was to build a facility for all three agencies off of Metcalf Road on top of the hill but off the Peck Farm Road. This proposal has an estimated cost of \$1.8-\$1.9 million. There is a major access on Metcalf Road. There are zoning issues however as one-half is zoned limited residential and the other half is rural. This is close to the center of town and high on the hill giving easy access.

Another proposal was offered to move the Police Department in the vacant space above the town office in the Grade School (separated by a wall), move EMS to the Fire Station after it is renovated and construct a new building on one of the WRDC lots on Route 202, next to the Transfer Station.

The Council decided that there was a lot of information and quite a few proposals to review. They decided to meet on Monday evenings at the town center in January to go over all of the proposals presented. The meeting dates are January 14, 21 and 28.

The Town Manager was authorized to work with the Chief to get more information on the cost of purchase and leasing options for his Envisionet proposal.

Some council members noted that the whole issue on the public safety complex comes down to money. Some recommended the need for the Council to pick an amount that the voters would consider in a positive way and vote in favor of. The need still remains that an estimate to renovate all three buildings must be the first step to take.

The Town Manager was asked to contact Mr. Harrington to have his architect go through the three buildings at no charge to the town. There seemed to be a lot of discrepancy on the cost of renovations of the existing building.

Item #121 *Hold a public hearing on the amendments to the Town of Winthrop's General Assistance Ordinance.*

Each year the state updates the maximum levels of assistance that towns follow in their GA ordinance. Enclosed in the Council's packets were the latest levels.

The public hearing opened at 10:19 p.m. The public hearing closed at 10:20 p.m.

*Motion by Cookson seconded by MacDonald to accept these amendments.
The vote was unanimous.*

Item #122 *Consider the first reading of the amendments to the General Assistance Ordinance*

Motion by Cookson seconded by Caprara to wave the first reading. The vote was unanimous.

Item #123 *Consider an abatement request for the 2006-07 tax year upon recommendation from the Town Assessor*

Motion by Caprara seconded by MacDonald to approve the abatement request for the 2006-07 tax years upon recommendation from the Town Assessor. Vote 7-0.

Item #124 *Appointments Committee report*

The committee members are Councilors Engdahl, Norris and MacDonald.

Motion by MacDonald seconded by Norris to approve the recommendations of Jan E. Saleeby as the 1st alternate and Kenneth F. Johnson as the 2nd alternate to the Board of Assessment Review. Vote 7-0.

Manager's Report

The Augusta housing report was included for Council's review.

EPA will be removing equipment from the landfill area on the 17th of December. Abutters were all notified. The town should take it over in February.

December 20th will be a county budget hearing.

There will be a joint public hearing with the Planning Board on January 7th, 2008 in reference to the proposed zoning changes.

The town office will close at 1:00 on Christmas Eve with the Council's approval.

The Chair informed the Council that Rita Moran and the People for Peace, along with Phil Locashio, will be the recipients of the Spirit of America Award. The awards will be given at the January 7th meeting.

Motion by MacDonald and seconded by Cookson to approve these recommendations. The vote was unanimous.

*The Council went into Executive Session at 10:30 p.m. to discuss **Item #125** - Consider an Executive Session for a property abatement application Title 1 Sec 405-6(F).*

Return to Regular Session

Motion by Cookson Seconded by Caprara to deny the abatement application because the applicant is not a resident of Winthrop. Vote 7-0.

Motion by Cookson Seconded by Caprara to adjourn at 10:45 pm.