

**Minutes
Winthrop Town Council
Regular Meeting
Monday, August 7, 2006 at 7 p.m.
Winthrop Town Office**

Attendance: Chairman Jim Norris; Councilors William MacDonald, Jayne Despres, Kevin Cookson, Patrice Putnam, Ken Buck, and Linda Caprara (arrived at 7:50 p.m.). Town Manager Cornell Knight and Secretary Julie Winberg.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Cookson and seconded by Putman to approve the minutes of June 5th and July 10th, 2006. Vote was unanimous with the following corrections made:

June 5 – page 2 correct the spelling of the superintendent's name

July 10 – page 5 change the wording from 'will be' to 'considering' offering a class.

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

Item #86 – Consider a transient seller's license renewal for Scott Darville, Novelty Ice Cream.

Motion by Buck and seconded by Cookson approving a transient seller's renewal license for Scott Darville, Novelty Ice Cream. Vote was unanimous.

Chairman Norris announced that Council Member Putman had to leave at 7:55 p.m. for a prior commitment. The Council will now consider Item #91 out of order and opened it for discussion.

Item #91 – Hear an update from the Winthrop Unites Advisory Committee:

Councilor Putman informed the group that the Winthrop Unites and the Advisory Committee met and had a good discussion on the process and are now requesting some clarification from the Council on what their thoughts were. The nine-member board was formed to provide direction and recommendations of what could be done to bring the community and youth together.

Councilor Putman said before going into updating the Council on the process, if there is a possibility of dissolving the Advisory Committee on the table, this may be moot. We don't need to spend time working on the process if in fact that is an accurate assessment of where the Council stands.

A consensus of the group was indeed not to make any adverse decision that may negatively affect the children in the community and that both Council Member Putman

and the committee members have done a commendable job for the community. However, that said, the original charge was fulfilled and although monies were not able to be obtained for the porch light program, both Council Member Putman and the two committees could not be faulted for that. Councilors who supported the disbanding argued that it did not at all mean an end to the good work. It just meant that a new committee would need to be formed; one that would be more specialized whose members would provide a deeper cross-section of the town.

The original charge was to review Winthrop Community's' Maine Youth Suicide Prevention Report; review the report recommendations and action steps given by the report and the Winthrop crisis team; seek professional guidance from specialized organizations; establish a timeline for implementing actions steps; provide the Council and Winthrop Board of Education with monthly reports; provide elected bodies recommendations for approvals; and establish criteria for hiring a professional assistant.

The wellness program will proceed. From the reading and compiled information from both the focus groups, Council Members thanked the two committees and Council Member Putman for a job extremely well done. Councilors went on to say that this was a difficult task which required a lot of work, dedication, and commitment to the children and to the citizens of Winthrop and that everyone on these committees need to be recognized for just that.

Councilor Putman thanked the group for their kind words. She went on to say that after the last Council meeting in July, the two groups met and the consensus of these two groups was that the Advisory Committee should continue its work because it had been effective and there were still things to be done. The charge was to hire a coordinator – which has been done; do something for the graduates; the porch light program had not been funded and something needs to be implemented in its place; the advisory committee is studying underage drinking; and the wellness center will be implemented in the fall.

Councilor Putman continued that the group's perceptions were unanimous in the sense that they did not feel their work was completed. It was premature to end the work of the Advisory Committee but move to build the structure of the Advisory Committee and Winthrop Unites involving the community more. Councilor Putman went on to say that she was surprised to hear that the Council was recommending dissolving it.

Chairman Norris summarized several options as he saw them from the discussion at hand. The different possibilities could be to have Winthrop Unites continue to meet as a committee but keep the Advisory Committee in tact as the official voting body. If people feel it is too much time taken from their personal lives, the Council could look at a different structure with the end result being what is the best way to build on the goals of the community.

Councilor Cookson expressed his opinion that the charge as a chairperson on these committees had been completed. Member Putman interjected that of great concern for both committees was that there is still no structure in place for the postgraduates. That was a huge component that the community had asked the groups to do and the committees were working on proposals for that to happen.

Councilor Buck asked what would be so different if the Advisory Council joined the larger community committee and to have just one committee that would report to the Town Council?

Councilor Putman answered that that could be a workable solution and that in the future Winthrop Unites would dissolve and left would be the Advisory Council. But that for right now it would be wise to keep them both in place.

Councilor MacDonald commented that he did not see this being the end of the process at all. He strongly felt that our youth were still at high risk and communication is key to keep on top of it. He felt that there is a lack of communication and if the Council took an action that gave the appearance that it did not want to offer assistance that would almost negate the work that has been done up to date. He sees a community that has significant problems and open discussion is key.

Councilor Buck felt that the Council was just looking at joining the two into one, which in no way would negate the task at hand, which was to help our children. If the Advisory Committee dissolves, we could still meet. He felt that it would be stronger, more empowered, and offer more support.

Councilor Despres agreed. "We just want to streamline". "It's not going to cut down communication. I personally think it is going to improve communication". She went on to say that her thought was that the Advisory Council had done its job and another phase is starting now.

Councilor Caprara felt that the committee can still continue meeting, but now is the action phase.

Councilor MacDonald commented that he did not see the need to do this. He did not see it coming. The coordinator, Megan Karges, was just hired as a Winthrop Community Study Coordinator. Ms. Kargas, who was not present, is charged with coordinating the goals of the Advisory Committee with town officials and residents. She was just hired. He would vote not to disband.

Chairman Norris commented that he sees no urgency to disband and that this has clearly caught Council Members by surprise. And that taking action tonight may be done in haste and prevent the committees from continuing the much needed communication that the Council is talking about. He asked if anyone from the public wanted to comment.

Terry Despres, former school superintendent, stated, "The authority of the Advisory Committee ended with the recommendations". He went on to say that he appreciates the fact that this has awoken the community but that it is now no longer advisory but action. And sometimes the process gets in the way of the remedy". He went on to say "the authority of the advisory committee ended with the recommendations".

Councilor MacDonald asked Mr. Despres if the School Board had adopted the Crisis Team Plan and Policy. Mr. Despres said yes.

Next, Sue O'Halloran, a Centers for Disease Control grant project coordinator for the Main Youth Suicide Prevention Program, and one of Maine's leading youth suicide expert, commented that in one year they just scratched the surface and felt that disbanding the committee was the wrong thing to do and the wrong message to send. The thought was more to streamline the two groups eventually and consolidating the meetings. When that does happen, their focus will be dealing with long-term solutions on a nationwide level. What was being said tonight is giving a clear message that people were wearing out and that is not the case.

Chairman Norris reiterated that to disband would be done in haste.

Councilor Putman stated that she has not received a proposal from any councilor for action. And went on to say that she does not believe that their work is done at all, even in the form of recommendations. She believes that this group will bring forward more recommendations. And if she knew the committee was going to be dissolved after a few months of work, she would have structured it differently. "This is the last thing in our community we needed further division on", she said.

Councilor Cookson noted that the coordinator had been hired and that this person will be here instituting the mental health portion of the tasks and blending the committee's recommendations into the school board was the logical step to take now. Again, he reiterated that approximately 90% of the original charge had been completed. It was pretty clear, he went on to say, that the council was looking at disbanding the first group and taking on the second part. The charge of the committee has been done. He did not see where the Advisory Committee needed to continue.

Councilor MacDonald said the council should be on notice that it is disbanding the committee in contradiction to recommendations of Sue O'Halleran, one of Maine's top suicide prevention experts.

Councilor Cookson made a motion that the Winthrop Advisory Committee be disbanded, seconded by Councilor Despres. The motion carried by a vote of 4-3: Buck, Despres, Caprara and Cookson in favor; MacDonald, Putman, Norris opposed.

Item #87 – Consider an easement from the Winthrop Commerce Center to redirect traffic on Mechanic Street.

Motion made by Caprara and seconded by Cookson to table this until next month's meeting. Vote was unanimous.

Item #88 - Consider a request from Robert and Wendy Buck for the town to address a safety issue on the North Wayne Road.

Mr. Buck was present and explained to the Council that he is asking the town to fix a dip in the road that he lives on as the poor visibility has made it a blind driveway. He went on to say that after the town, in their attempt to improve the visibility, moved some of the knoll down in the dip with a road grader, the base area became soft so the town dug out the area and placed new gravel before paving it over. Now, Mr. Buck noted that it was nine inches more was added and the condition is worse than it was before.

The Town Manager stated that he got a call from Mr. Buck and both he and Matt Burnham from public works went out to see the road and that it did not look higher than proclaimed by Mr. Buck.

The Chairman stated that it seemed that there was a conflict with the town and our contractor that did the job. It seems that they did exactly what we hired them to do. Councilor Cookson thanked Mr. Buck for bringing this matter to the Council's attention and that it was important for the Council to be aware of issues of this type. Not having gone out there, Councilor Cookson was curious whether the tar surface was going to hold up anyway but that in the mean time the town's highway crew should put some signs up to slow people down and make them aware of this area, and in the spring have the town's engineering department take a look at it and take care of it then. He asked the Town Manager to do the proper signage. The Council Members agreed that the signage was appropriate.

Mr. Buck stated that his primary purpose was to come before the Council and to document with the town this dangerous situation just in case something serious happens and someone gets killed.

Councilor MacDonald commented that given what Mr. Buck's last remark was that the Council needed to check with the town's attorney before any action was taken. The Chairman agreed that that was due diligence and prior to putting up the signs – whether it would be blind driveway or children at play....and the cost not being a determining factor, discussing the matter prior to putting up the signs was covering the town's legal responsibilities in this matter.

Item #89- Consider putting tax acquired properties out for public bid.

A list of five properties was given to the Council Members. Motion made by Cookson and seconded by Caprara that the five properties should be sent out for bid. Vote 6-0. (Putman excused).

Item #90 – Consider submitting a grant for a new sidewalk on Highland Avenue under the Safe Routes to School program.

The Town Manager explained that the town would apply for a grant to build a new sidewalk on Highland Avenue with new drainage, a bike lane and parking. The application is still in process and more information will be available as the application is due August 11th. Motion by Caprara and seconded by Despres approving the application process to proceed. Vote 6-0. Putman excused.

Item #92 - Hear an update on the road paving project.

The Town Manager updated the members on the reclaiming and paving costs and what projects still remained undone.

Item #93 - Consider Order #126 for a Tax Anticipation Note bid.

Motion by Caprara and seconded by Cookson to Approve Order #126 and accept the Gardiner Savings Bank bid of 3.5% interest. Vote 6-0. Putman excused.

Item # 94 – Hear an update on the dam reconstruction project and the Heiss property easement.

Mr. Tom Heiss was present to discuss his property that abuts the dam. He had been trying to negotiate with Carleton Woolen Mill for an easement at the time of their bankruptcy. His property is experiencing some erosion near his home but it is not clear that it is caused by the dam. His proposal is for the towns to place rip rap around his property in exchange for an easement over his property to the dam. Deeded access to the dam is from the other side of the dam. He is suggesting that the towns apply for non point source pollution mediation grants from the Department of Environmental Protection to cover the cost. And he would agree to a three year temporary easement while the towns explored funding.

Motion by Cookson and seconded by Caprara to accept the three year temporary easement Vote 6-0, Putman abstained.

Item #95 – Consider an Interlocal Agreement with the Town of Readfield for maintenance of the Maranacook Lake Outlet Dam.

The Town Manager distributed the proposed agreement for the Councilors to review. Motion by Caprara Seconded by Buck to approve the Interlocal agreement with the Town of Readfield to share ownership and maintenance responsibilities. Vote 7-0.

Item #96 - Consider a Town Council goals session.

The Town Manager distributed a proposal from a consultant. Several of the places that he contacted to hold the goal sessions were booked up on Saturday's right through the end of September.

A few councilors stated that they were just as comfortable to have the session in their own facility but what was important was to have this goal session to help clarify what the goals were as a council.

Councilor Cookson stated that he was fine with the proposal as were other members as well.

Motion by Cookson and seconded by Despres to authorize the Town Manager to move forward with Frank O'Hara's proposal. Councilor MacDonald at this point noted that he would vote against it and stated that he would not attend the session as there is a general lack of communications among the members noting that he had previously expressed his feeling this evening on a subject matter and was totally ignored by the majority of members as he was not being heard at all. He stated that if this meeting was just a touchy feely thing, that it was not worth the time. Vote 5-1, Buck opposed, MacDonald abstained.

Item #97 - Discuss the Public Works Director's position.

The Town Manager informed the group that Dave Smith was not returning in this position and that the town would be readvertising. Councilor Cookson inquired if the town needed someone in that slot at all. The Town Manager stated that he was going to advertise and see what kind of applicants will respond. Councilor Cookson felt that merging the two with public works and have those in charge of the cemetery would be a better idea and a real cost savings noting that the same was done with the transfer station position. After discussion it remained that the town manager would advertise this position.

Item #98 Consider recommendations from the Appointments Committee

Motion by Caprara and seconded by Despres to appoint Michael Goodenough to the Tree Board . Vote 7-0.

Mark LaRoach, the new superintendent of schools, introduced himself to the group and expressed his gratitude and how privileged he feels that he is describing himself as a public servant between the town and the students, forging a strong and meaningful partnership. He summarized for the group the experience he brings to this position. The councilors were unanimous in expressing their thanks to him and look forward to a good working relationship with Superintendent LaRoach.

The next meeting of the Town Council will be on September 5th.

Motion by Cookson and seconded by Caprara, the meeting adjourned at 10:30 p.m. Vote was 7-0..