

Winthrop Town Council
Regular Meeting
Monday, December 4, 2006 at 7 p.m.
Winthrop Town Office

Attendance: *Chairman Jim Norris, Members: Linda Caprara, Jayne Despres, William MacDonald, Kevin Cookson, Patrice Putman, Ken Buck, and Lee Bragg. Town Manager Cornell Knight and Secretary Julie Winberg.*

Motion by Despres and seconded by Putman to approve the minutes of November 6, 2006. Vote: 7-0.

Town Council Chairman, Jim Norris, recognized outgoing Winthrop Town Councilor Jayne Despres for her service as a Town Councilor for the past three years. Jayne has played a key role in council activities during her tenure as a councilor and is currently the council liaison to the Winthrop Chamber of Commerce

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

Item #127 - Update from John Dean, Chair of the Public Safety Building Committee.

John Dean, Chairman of the Public Safety Building Committee, reported on the committee's activity.

The committee has held meetings at the Chamber of Commerce, joint meetings at the at the Lions and Rotary Clubs, St. Francis Men's Club, the American Legion, as well as holding smaller more informal discussions with people around town. The feedback has been excellent and the American Legion will be buying the flags and flagpoles for the new building.

Councilor Buck asked for an update on the Department of Agriculture's wetlands concern since their position was that they would not fund anything in a wetlands area and therefore the grant, initially sought after, would not be available.

Chief Young responded that the Water District would mitigate this issue. If the Department of Agriculture would not finance this project, we would finance it for thirty years instead of twenty. That is the only differential issue. He also informed the group that he has applied for a \$360,000 Department of Homeland Security grant to fund the department's equipment needs. He also confirmed a resident's concern that there will not be any storing of diesel fuel as well as no plans for a fueling station on the site. Fueling is done offsite.

Councilor Despres inquired on the process: after we have the informational sessions, a public hearing will be held.

Councilor Cookson, who is also a member on this committee, informed the group that public hearing are scheduled for Tuesday, December 12th at 6:00 p.m., and on December 18th at 7:00 p.m. at the Town Office for the purpose of hearing comments on the proposed Public Safety Complex building. After these meetings, the committee hopes to move forward.

Councilor Buck inquired what the rush was to hold the public meetings. More people will attend in the spring with warmer weather. He also noted that he wants to see this go to a referendum.

Chairman Norris agreed. He stated that he would want to go to a public hearing with a position. Having the informational sessions first, then go to public hearings is an effective way to get people there.

Councilor Cookson did not see what difference it would make as he felt weather would not be such an issue. The hearings would be held on different nights and at different times giving the public ample opportunity to attend at their convenience.

Councilor MacDonald commented that he did not see what the rush was either. He would like to attend the public hearings to see for him what the public has to say.

Councilor Despres reminded the group that the public hearings were scheduled after the two public informational sessions and numerous informational group meetings. The council had decided to put it out for referendum 45 days after the public hearings. Delaying this process needlessly would be making it more difficult.

Councilor MacDonald commented that he did not have a discussion on going to a public referendum. He felt that it is bad policy to set a public hearing date before an informational session, as constructive dialogue with the community is essential in this process. Holding public hearings is just to hear different sides. Then, the community decides what direction it wants to go.

Councilor Caprara noted that even if a public hearing were held, the town council would still have to decide on this project. A public hearing would be beneficial to see what the town's feedback is. She continued by saying that she would prefer to take a position only after she hears what the public's position is very much like the school complex and the informational meetings, and then the referendum that was held.

Councilor Putman commented that this is a busy time of year and putting this off until the first of the year may be more beneficial.

Councilor Cookson noted in response to the comment on 'haste' and 'rushing to do this', that this has been a three year project with numerous informational meetings being held all along the

way.

Councilor MacDonald commented that he plans on going to the informational meetings, as he has not heard what the public has to say and reiterated that he does not see what the rush is.

Motion by Despres and seconded by Cookson to hold the two public hearings and that the town manager confirm the times, and place the notice in the Advertiser for both dates. The motion passed with a vote of 5-2 (MacDonald and Buck opposed).

Item #128 - Update from Patrice Putman, Chair of the Winthrop Unites Advisory Committee:

A report from the Winthrop Unites Advisory Committee was enclosed for the councilors review.

Councilor Putman reminded the council that in their September meeting, asked WUA to come up with a new structure. The WUA has held several meetings on this issue with the thought of combining the advisory council and Winthrop Unites by December. To date, the group does not have a recommended structure. Instead, the group is asking for the council to be patient, as it needs several more months to consolidate. The groups would like to 'test drive' a proposal before they endorse it fully. She went on to say that there continues to be a fair amount of resistance to change the structure and there was more discussion to keep it the way it is versus to changing it. However, the groups know that they must take the Council seriously and they want to try to make a change towards a different kind of structure.

Councilor Cookson stated that he read the report a few times and to has determined that it is not quite ready to make a formal structure change such as merging the advisory and unites as one and the chairs of both groups be advisors to the subcommittee.

Councilor Despres asked how Winthrop Unites is structured as it has no community leaders. How does it function?

Councilor Putman replied that Unites is a grassroots and that there are four standing subcommittees.... Underage drinking/education; reduce stigma, graduates, and public information.

The Porchlight Program is still very much on the forefront and the concept meeting will be held in January. The ultimate goal is to merge the two primary groups in order to make them both more efficient and effective. Many of the members attend both meeting trying to work in concert and Megan attends both as well.

Councilor Caprara inquired about the group that discusses the consequences of underage drinking and who met with that group.

Chief Young responded that he was part of that meeting and the discussion had been about our

youth and how they get alcohol. Dr. Ackerly was also in attendance and has a passion for that subject.

Councilor Putman also informed the group that there was a possibility for EAP to assist. The need for services is still very much out there. There is a stigma accessing those needed services and finances can be a real problem as well. The group did not get the grant that they applied for and are asking the council to think about creating a fund similar to others. She asked for the Council's thoughts in this area.

Councilor Cookson did not have an issue with what was being portrayed here and that he did not disagree with the concept of the porchlight program.

Councilor Despres asked for a little clarification in reference to the money that was used for Megan's position as this year Winthrop did not have to fund it but next year they will pay half along with the school.

Councilor Buck commented that he would like to see \$8,000 taken out of the \$15,500 to start the porchlight program.

Councilor Cookson also supported this concept but would like to get a commitment from the School Board, as did the Chair.

Councilor Caprara also requested some clarification on the salary.

The town manager informed the council that the money needed would be provided from funds in the surplus account.

Motion by Buck and seconded by MacDonald that \$8,000 be designated for the porchlight program. Vote was 7-0.

A five-minute recess was held at 8:25 to 8:30.

Item # 129 - Consider a credit policy and finance charges at the Transfer Station:

A policy to handle credit balances is needed at the Transfer Station. The Finance Department drafted a recommendation for handling credit balances. Also the council needs to approve the 18% interest rate charge for past due accounts. There is over \$5000 in accounts receivable.

Motion by Cookson and seconded by Despres that this recommendation from the Finance Department be approved as well as the interest rate charged for past due accounts. Vote 7-0.

Item # 130 - Consider donations to the Winthrop Ambulance Service.

Motion by Caprara and seconded by Putman to accept the donations to the Winthrop Ambulance Service. Vote 7-0.

Manager's Report

Regional meeting of the towns of Manchester, Fayette, Readfield, Mt. Vernon, Wayne, Belgrade, and Winthrop will be held on Wednesday December 6th at 7:00 p.m. at the Augusta Country Club. The specific agenda item is to discuss a regional public works department.

Other Business:

Councilor Despres informed the Council that the Chamber of Commerce would like to streamline the process and have a point person with sole intention of recruiting businesses to Winthrop. I advised the Chamber that this is something that they need to look at in more detail and come to the Council with their suggestions. What they are seriously contemplating is a full time regional economic development director and they will be requesting this for the next fiscal year. Councilor Despres, as the Council's ongoing liaison with the Chamber, suggested that they proposal should be specific and that they should present it during the budget sessions

Councilor Putman suggested that the Council hold a public discussion focusing on the 1300 people in Winthrop that voted for Tabor, tax payer bill of rights.

Councilor Caprara thought that suggestion is a fine one but one that may be premature as the reevaluations that are projected to appear in mailboxes in early spring may change the dimensions of that meeting. She went on to say that these 1,300 people might have been voting as a statement of their dismay along the 'state' lines and not the local ones.

Chairman Cookson agreed noting that the council really does not know what these people were really sending a message to...the town or to Augusta. But that it would be a good idea to find out. Councilor Putman too agreed with these fine points but does propose to have this discussion sooner rather than later. Chairman Norris agreed noting that this gives the people an informal opportunity to dispel perhaps some rumors on spending levels for Winthrop.

Councilor Despres suggested that the town manager should give an overview on the town budget and just how that is developed.

Councilor MacDonald liked this idea and suggested that this meeting be partnered with the chamber of Commerce.

Councilor Despres agreed to approach the chamber with that idea. And to come back to the council with a date.

Councilor Putman suggested January 22nd or January 29th.

Motion by Putman and seconded by Despres to hold this public discussion on January 29th ...this meeting will be advertised as a discussion on Tabor and the concerns the community may have in reference to town spending. Vote was 7-0.

Motion by Caprara Seconded by Putman to go into executive session pursuant to Title 1 MRSA Section 405 (6) (F) for a property tax abatement, and Title 1 MRSA Section 405(6)(E) to discuss pending litigation with the town attorney, at 9:00 pm. Vote 7-0.

The regular session resumed at 9:55 p.m.

Motion by Cookson and seconded by Putman to grant the abatement request made pursuant to 36 MRSA Sec 841(2) in the sum of \$1,274.37 for the 2005 tax year. Vote was 7-0.

Motion by Caprara and seconded by Buck to adjourn at 9:56 p.m. Vote was 7-0.