

City Council Minutes
Tuesday, September 8, 2015
City Hall Auditorium
7:00 p.m.

1. **Call to Order @ 7:00 PM**

2. **Pledge of Allegiance** was led by Councilor Sherwood

3. **Roll Call** – Members present were Councilors Bezanson, Ferguson, Sickorez, McMilleon, McClure, Lavoie, Bartley and Sherwood.
Councilor Moavenzadeh had an excused absence.

4. **Act on minutes** – June 29, 2015, July 14, 2015, July 22, 2015, July 28, 2015 and August 6, 2015

Councilor Sherwood moved to approve the minutes from June 29, 2015, July 14, 2015, July 22, 2015, July 28, 2015 and August 6, 2015 as submitted. Councilor Sickorez seconded and it was voted Unanimous.

5. **Correspondence**

a. President/Vice President Communications

Councilor McMilleon stated that in the packets in front of each Councilor there was a letter addressed to Mayor Gray from Melanson Heath regarding the City Audit Contract and he stated although they don't formally need to approve this he would like a motion to refer this to the Finance Committee meeting on September 22, 2015 which would give everyone time to look it over and then maybe deal with any questions or concerns and then have a final vote at the October 13, 2015 Council meeting.

Councilor Sickorez moved to refer the letter from Melanson Heath dated May 14, 2015 to Mayor Gray to the Finance Committee meeting on September 22, 2015. Councilor Bartley seconded and it was voted Unanimous.

Councilor McMilleon read an e-mail from Stanley Schwartz which thanked all the Councilors for their service to the city and his privilege of working with all of them. He wished the candidates for election well and thanked them for stepping up to serve the community.

Councilor McMilleon thanked Stan for the kind words and reciprocated his kind words back for his services as well.

Councilor Ferguson thanked Mr. Schwartz for his service.

b. Communication from Elected Officials, Boards and Commissions

Councilor Sherwood questioned the memo from Conservation Commission regarding the quit claim which looks like it requires action but there was no measure before us so he was wondering if that was something that they will take up at a later date.

City Clerk, Bonnijo Kitchin stated that it came to us early on but found out after until it has gone through Planning and gone its full course, at that time when it is done it will come back to you. That letter is an FYI to keep in the back of your mind that it will be coming up at some point.

c. Council Communications, Announcements and Committee Reports

6. Mayoral Appointments

7. Licenses & Permits – FYI-attached list

Councilor Ferguson asked if the list can be flagged for New Businesses.

8 Public Comment

Paul Fortier stated that a group of citizens has formed the Freedom Trail Committee to explore ways to get some off leash time for the dogs at Battis and Woodsom Farm. They look forward to working with the Mayor, the Council and the Board of Health as well as the citizens of the city to try and find compromise on this issue. There will be a petition circulating around town to support the off leash time as well as a Facebook page for anyone interest in being a part of this process.

Jim Thivierge commented on the August 6, 2015 Special meeting which was about Tax Increment Financing. He feels that this financing is a jobs bill. It gives the federal and state government their income tax, their sales tax and so forth so in the third position is the Municipality. In that third position the Municipality is tax exempt. At the end of the meeting one of the Council members said to Mr. Scott the Director, how much is this going to cost us in terms of the three five year exemptions? Mr. Scott replied \$200,000. Mr. Thivierge stated that figure is lower than he configured. He wants to make sure that when we do tax increment financing projects that the Tax Collector is here and the Assessor is here so we know the right figure and the definition and explanation of cost depreciation and he hopes there are no more votes for commercial subsidies.

Bill Moren of 8 Woodwell Circle spoke in regards to the Freedom Trail Committee efforts to bring off leash capabilities to our farms. He stated that he is here as a representative of the responsible dog owners of the community who license their dogs, vaccinate them and keep them up to date, socialize them with people and with other dogs and train them. He stated he has an electric fence in his yard to make sure they stay in his property as they need to be and we clean up after them whether in our yard or around town. They have taken advantage of the defunct levels of enforcement out at Woodsom in the past for off leash and they are a little disappointed in what they have come to understand is an increased level of enforcement of the leash laws out there, especially if it is because of irresponsible behavior of dog owners out there. He stated that he has lived here for 11 years and has used Woodsom all 12 months each year and has never seen an issue with people or dogs. He stated that this Committee is being formed to help address whatever issues have caused the increased enforcement.

9. Council Response to Public Comment

Councilor Lavoie stated that the North Side of Woodsom Farm is part of his district and even though he is not a dog owner does walk there occasionally and would be willing to talk to Mr. Moren as it would take some legislative action here and he would be glad to work with him on it.

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Councilor Lavoie stated that on the matter of Mr. Thivierge, who is no longer in the room but he will still address it on TIF's, he has two observations; 1 is that any projection of foregone taxes is just that, a projection. Nobody knows what the tax rate is going to be two years from now let alone ten years from now and there is no way to tell today what the value of a particular piece of property is going to be or even real property is going to be unless we enter into something like a pilot program which is what we did on solar. The second observation is that the central concept is that a city is never foregoing any of the base taxation on the land or the existing real estate or the existing personal property; we tax that as we are entitled to. It is only the difference in value which is where the increment comes from that as an incentive to get that production. We entice entrepreneurs to risk their capital so that we can tax it. They create the value and we share it with them as an incentive to get them to do that. He hopes his explanation clears it up for the public and understands that it is in our best interest for a number of reasons.

Councilor McMilleon stated that primarily a TIF is an incentive for a business to stay in our community and our last one we just did there was a high probability that business would have left the community and would have resulted in a significant loss on income of a period of time. It is to help the community and is endorsed by the state and is good thing for the community.

Councilor McClure stated that the only reason we have the new hotel is because of the TIF. This is a wonderful thing for this community. Mr. Kille has been in Amesbury for 23 years, providing jobs and growing his business and she can't think of anyone more deserving of a bit of a break to bring more jobs and stay in the community and as his property improves he is taxed accordingly. As far as the dogs, it will have to be a long thought out process but something should be able to be accomplished.

Councilor Sickorez commented that if you look at the building that Mr. Kille is moving into it is in terrible disrepair and on the road to being condemned. He is going to revitalize the area and this TIF is an incentive to do just that; to take a property that is an eyesore and make it a productive part of the fabric of Amesbury.

Councilor Ferguson stated that she walks her dog at Woodsom frequently and would be glad to help work on this.

Councilor Bezanson stated that he would be happy to work on the dog issue as well. Regarding the TIF, it is a great thing for Amesbury. The property where the hotel is has never had movement of anyone wanting to build there for many years. We need to move Amesbury forward and make sure we grow our economic and industrial base. These things are there to help us and we need to take advantage of them. He is all in favor of the TIF.

Councilor Bartley stated that to be eligible for a TIF you have to bring in employees from the district first before you go outside so it will also provide jobs for folks in our community.

10. Public Hearings:

11. First Readings

2015-056 An Order to authorize a transfer from Salary Reserve to various Non Union Salaries.

Summary: Transfer \$21,765 from Salary Reserve to Non Union Salaries to cover FY2016 increases.

Councilor Lavoie asked if they could have copies of the union contracts.

Councilor Sherwood asked for a balance of each account.

Councilor Ferguson asked if the contracts could be put into the Drop Box.

Councilor McMilleon stated he would also ask for a summary of the changes from the previous contracts and would inquire about copies of the contracts.

Councilor Sickorez moved to send 2015-056 to the September 22, 2015 Finance Committee meeting for a recommendation and to hold the public hearing at the October 13, 2015 City Council meeting. Councilor McClure seconded and it was voted Unanimous.

2015-057 An Order to authorize a transfer from Salary Reserve to DPW salaries.

Summary: Transfer \$5602 from Salary Reserve to DPW Salaries to cover FY2016 DPW Contract increases.

Councilor McClure moved to send 2015-057 to the September 22, 2015 Finance Committee meeting for a recommendation and to hold the public hearing at the October 13, 2015 City Council meeting. Councilor Sickorez seconded and it was voted Unanimous.

2015-058 An Order to authorize a transfer from Salary Reserve to Fire salaries.

Summary: Transfer \$22,028 from Salary Reserve to Fire Salaries to cover FY2016 IAFF Contract increases.

Councilor McClure moved to send 2015-058 to the September 22, 2015 Finance Committee meeting for a recommendation and to hold the public hearing at the October 13, 2015 City Council meeting. Councilor Sickorez seconded and it was voted Unanimous.

2015-059 An Order to authorize a transfer from Salary Reserve to Police salaries.

Summary: Transfer \$20,838 from Salary Reserve to Police Salaries to cover FY2016 IBPO Contract increases.

Councilor McClure moved to send 2015-059 to the September 22, 2015 Finance Committee meeting for a recommendation and to hold the public hearing at the October 13, 2015 City Council meeting. Councilor Sickorez seconded and it was voted Unanimous.

Ian MacGregor of the Fire Department asked the Council about their registration for the Chili Cook-off which he has not received yet. It will be held on Saturday, October 3, from noon to 4 PM in the Barking Dog parking lot.

12. Adjourn – Councilor Sickorez moved to adjourn at 7:35 pm. Councilor McClure seconded and it was voted unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Dunning
Assistant City Clerk

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