

Town of Plymouth
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Plymouth Town Council
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Minutes

October 7, 2014

Call to Order: Mayor David V. Merchant called the scheduled October 7, 2014, Plymouth Town Council Regular Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., in the Community Room, Town Hall.

Roll Call: Present were Town Councilman William Heering, Mayor David Merchant, Town Councilwoman Susan Murawski, Town Councilman John Pajeski, Town Councilman Gary Wyszynski, and Town Councilman Tom Zagurski. Also in attendance were Building Inspector Clarence Atkinson, Director of Finance David Bertnagel, Fire Marshal Charles Doback, Town Attorney William Hamzy, Zoning Enforcement Officer/Chairman Code Enforcement Committee David Perkins and Interim Public Works Director Charles Wiegert.

Fire Exits Notification

Mayor Merchant noted the Fire Exits for the record.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Merchant led the Plymouth Town Council and the Public Audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Invocation

Mayor Merchant stated "May God Bless America" and May God Bless the Town of Plymouth" for the record.

Council Rules and Procedures

Reading from the Council Rules and Procedures, Mayor Merchant stated when the Council got to specific line items the Public would speak and when they had finished with their input the item would then go to the Town Council members and the item would not be visited again.

Pattie DeHuff, 20 Lynn Avenue, Terryville, called for Point of Order and stated that the Mayor could not do that.

Mayor Merchant stated that it was exactly what the Council Rules and Procedures called for and that would be what the Council would be following; a brief discussion followed.

After a brief discussion, Town Councilwoman Murawski made a motion, seconded by Town Councilman Wyszynski, to add the following names to the Property Tax Refunds: Gregory R. Showers in the amount of \$56.81; Brian A. Volz in the amount of \$144.98; Mark S. Bordeau in the amount of \$9.38; Corelogic in the amounts of \$3,165.88 and \$211.83; and Jensen's Inc. in the amount of \$468.04. This motion was approved unanimously.

Town Councilman Wyszynski made a motion, seconded by Town Councilman Zagurski, to add the appointment of Town Councilwoman Murawski, Town Councilman Pajeski and Michael Ganem to the Real Estate Committee. This motion was approved unanimously.

Acceptance of the Town Council Regular Minutes 9-2-14 and Special Town Council Meeting 9-23-14

Town Councilwoman Murawski made a motion, seconded by Town Councilman Zagurski, to approve the Town Council Regular Minutes of 9-2-14. This motion was approved unanimously.

Town Councilman Zagurski made a motion, seconded by Town Councilwoman Murawski, to approve the Town Council Special Minutes of 9-23-14. This motion was approved unanimously.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Merchant gave his Mayor's Report.

Public Comments on non-agenda items

Robert Ives, 282 Main Street, Terryville, stated that we need to support our local businesses. Robert Ives stated that the ongoing beautification help the Town to compete with towns like Cheshire and bring more cash flow, job opportunities and businesses into Town.

Diane Reed, 5 Chidsey Terrace, Terryville, stated that the containers of flowers near Thomaston Savings Bank, Main Street, looked very welcoming and the duck by the monument looked really inviting. Diane Reed questioned who paid for the legal opinion (private or Town Attorney) regarding vehicle taxes as referenced in the newspaper. Diane Reed questioned the Director of Finance sending internal memos and briefly detailed her question. Diane Reed stated that at a past Council Meeting Town Councilwoman Murawski had noted the chain of command for Public Works problems and briefly elaborated. Diane Reed stated that the Tax Collector's collection was outstanding. Diane Reed briefly discussed 10 Charles Street and the demolition of the property. Diane Reed stated that the Town should repair the front driveway and briefly detailed the problems with it.

Pattie DeHuff, 20 Lynn Avenue, Terryville, distributed copies of the Tax Collectors report and briefly reviewed it and gave him kudos for it. Pattie DeHuff stated the previous Mayor had verbatim minutes.

Robert Ives stated it was his understanding that the amount collected by the Tax Collector was \$787,000 which fell short of the budget. Robert Ives stated that the Mayor had appointed Ted Smith, however it was the Republican or the Democratic Town Committee who selects the person for the Tax Collector position and passes the name onto the Mayor for approval. Robert Ives stated that Ana, the previous Tax Collector had done a great job collecting over \$1.2 million dollars.

Melanie Church, 328 Main Street, Terryville, stated that the \$775,000 was budgeted for delinquent taxes and what was collected was over \$1 million and complimented the Tax Collector. Melanie Church stated that the Republican Town Committee brings the name forward and briefly discussed the appointment. Melanie Church stated the Town Council had the authority to abate taxes to residents under hardship cases.

Diane Reed stated that the past Tax Collector Ana had collected over a million dollar and Ted Scheidel had worked on selling the Jasper Company and got it sold and he collected over \$800,000 in taxes. Diane Reed stated that Ted Smith was recommended by the Republican Town Committee and briefly elaborated.

Ted Smith, 25 Williams Way, Terryville, stated that he appreciated the comments and that he was a very humble person who wanted to be thanked and then go on his merry way. Ted Smith stated that Mr. Scheidel and Ana were cutting many deals with many of the taxpayers in Town. Ted Smith stated that he was interviewed by the Mayor, Councilwoman Murawski, and David Mischke.

Cathy Kosak, 201 Harwinton Avenue, stated that while she was a Town Secretary the Council has abated taxes for residents in Town but it had to be a real hardship and proven. Cathy Kosak stated that the Town was moving forward. Cathy Kosak stated that it irritated her that there were delinquent taxpayers on the list for over 17 years.

Rich Lyga, Curtis Road Terryville, stated that in the past the Town had hired Town Contractors and his company had done plowing for the Town and at that time the Highway Garage and had water leaking through the walls, puddles on the floor deep enough to wet shoes, and that if it weren't for an act of God it would be the same, today.

Rich Lyga stated that very few Public residents have ever gone through the Town Garage, that there would an Open House and encouraged everyone to go in and see it.

Appointments/Resignations: To appoint Joe Carey as an Alternate Member to the Town Hall Annex Building Committee; to reappoint Michael Milan to the Economic Development Commission

Town Councilwoman Murawski made a motion, seconded by Town Councilman Zagurski, to appoint Joe Carey as an Alternate Member to the Town Hall Annex Building Committee. This motion was approved unanimously.

Town Councilwoman Murawski made a motion, seconded by Town Councilman Zagurski, to reappoint Michael Milan to the Economic Development Commission. This motion was approved unanimously.

To discuss and take action, as may be necessary, to refund the following Property Taxes: Vault Trust \$356.80, \$91.90, \$61.41; Daniel C. Thorne, Jr. \$35.19; Gregory R. Showers \$56.81; Brian A. Volz \$144.98; Mark S. Bordeau \$9.38; Corelogic \$3,165.88 and \$211.83; Jensen's Inc. \$468.04

Town Councilman Wyszynski made a motion, seconded by Town Councilman Zagurski, to refund the following Property Taxes: Vault Trust \$356.80, \$91.90, \$61.41; Daniel C. Thorne, Jr. \$35.19; Gregory R. Showers \$56.81; Brian A. Volz \$144.98; Mark S. Bordeau \$9.38; Corelogic \$3,165.88 and \$211.83; and Jensen's Inc. \$468.04. This motion was approved unanimously.

To approve the Economic Development Grants as recommended by the Tax Incentive Committee for Nutmeg Spice Company, Automation Development and Frank J. Cocina Associates

Mayor Merchant noted that Frank J. Cosina Associates had not come before the Economic Development Commission, as yet, and would not be discussed this evening. Discussion.

David Bertnagel, Director of Finance, stated that the Tax Incentive Committee had acted on the Economic Development Commission's recommendation to approve Economic Development Grants to the Nutmeg Spice Company, as well as Automation Development, and detailed the information for the Town Council members and the Public audience.

Town Councilman Zagurski made a motion, seconded by Town Councilwoman Murawski, to approve the Economic Development Grant to the Nutmeg Spice Company in the amount of \$50,500.00 as read in the Resolution by David Bertnagel. This motion was approved unanimously.

Town Councilman Zagurski made a motion, seconded by Town Councilwoman Murawski, to approve the Economic Development Grant to Automation Development in the amount of \$96,500.00 as read in the Resolution by David Bertnagel.

Discussion: When questioned by Town Councilman Wyszynski, David Bertnagel stated that the information contained in the Council packets was correct and Automation Development had planned on hiring three to four full-time new employees. When questioned by Town Councilwoman Murawski, David Bertnagel stated that the money received from the sale of lots was given back as Economic Development Grants and briefly elaborated. David Bertnagel stated that the Mayor was being very aggressive with Economic Development.

Vote: This motion was approved unanimously.

Code Enforcement Committee Report

David Perkins, Zoning Enforcement Officer/Chairman Code Enforcement Committee (CEC), 80 Main Street, Terryville, stated that the CEC had to provide a report of properties on the Blight Listing to the Town Council every six months and noted that the Council had received the report.

Town Councilman Zagurski noted that he had heard that the CEC didn't think the Council had to certify the listing every six months. David Perkins stated that he understood and that was why the Council had the listing tonight.

Referencing the Code and the Town Council "certifying" the Blight Listing, Town Attorney William Hamzy stated that he was unsure of what the word "certify" meant; but felt it meant "approve"; a brief discussion followed.

At the request of the Mayor, David Perkins briefly explained the Blight Property process and what qualified as blight, as well as reasons why properties become blighted.

Clarence Atkinson, Building Inspector, 80 Main Street, briefly cited his authority concerning properties in Town, under State Statutes, and cited the 3 North Main Street fire as example, the process involved in demolishing it and the current situation as it stands today. Clarence Atkinson reviewed 48 Highland Avenue, noting the roof had collapsed and briefly stated the condition of the property. Clarence Atkinson stated that the Town could be proactive or wait until something happened and briefly explained his reasoning, noting that for the record he wanted the two buildings demolished; a brief discussion followed.

When questioned by town Councilman Wyszynski, Clarence Atkinson explained the Highland Avenue property owner's rights, the situation as it stood today and his reasons for feeling the house should be demolished.

When questioned by Town Councilman Zagurski, Clarence Atkinson stated that the Town was supposed to have emergency funds for demolishing buildings under State Statutes and that the town would get the money back when the property was sold.

David Bertnagel stated that Board of Finance established a fund that would assist with blighted properties and briefly explained the municipal process involved in demolishing a building.

Town Attorney Hamzy stated that the lien the Town places on a property (that has been taken down) takes the same priority as a tax lien, and explained his statement; a brief discussion followed.

John Coleman, 6 Charles Street, Terryville, stated he agreed with Clarence and applauded him for his action on the property, noting the business of running a Town was never inexpensive. John Coleman stated that the property was a public safety hazard. John Coleman questioned if 10 Charles Street was on the listing, noting that he had been lobbying to have it listed if for a number of years and briefly explained his reasoning.

Town Councilman Wyszynski stated that the 10 Charles Street property was on the blighted property listing, but that he was unsure of what the intentions were.

Peter Giancesini, 18 Kimann Drive, Terryville, stated there was a dramatic improvement to Town with the Streetscape and Main Street and that the Mayor had done an excellent job bringing new business to Town.

Peter Giancesini stated that blighted properties discourage businesses and that the Mayor in Bristol goes after properties with a vengeance and that every Community has then. Peter Giancesini stated that the Town might not get its money back, but down the road the land could be developed to recoup monies.

Diane Reed stated that North Main Street was a health and safety issue and should come down. Diane Reed stated that the Ordinance was discussed at past Town Council Meetings (February November 2012) discussed exactly what certify (approval) stands for and briefly brought up other blighted properties in Town that needed to be condemned noting that some of them had environmental issues and would be a huge undertaking (i.e. the bank on Main Street) and would be very costly.

Melanie Church stated that no one had done anything with the old Austin House should come down. Melanie Church stated that 10 Charles Street was on the Blight Listing and that the road was very narrow.

Dan Gentile, 269 Mt. Tobe Road, Plymouth, stated that if a child were to get killed in the building the Town would regret not taking care of it now. Dan Gentile stated that the Town had to make a decision and get it done.

Town Councilman Zagurski made a motion, seconded by Town Councilman Wyszynski, to accept the Code Enforcement Committee's Report as presented.

Discussion:

Town Councilwoman Murawski stated that it has always been rumored that she owns the building at 239 Main Street (which was on the Blight Listing and next door to Beacon Pharmacy) and that she wanted it to be known that she did not own the building.

Vote:

This motion was approved unanimously.

Discuss and take action on a Real Estate Committee

Mayor Merchant stated that this Real Estate Committee was very similar to what the City of Bristol does, noting that property that the Town owns or takes over by means of tax foreclosure, blight foreclosure, etc., would go to this Committee and briefly elaborated.

When questioned by Town Councilman Wyszynski, the Mayor stated that he was mimicking the City of Bristol and recommended we put two Council people (Town Councilwoman Murawski and Town Councilman Pajeski) and Michael Ganem.

Town Councilman Zagurski stated that he agrees with a Real Estate Committee and questioned if the Committee shouldn't be an Ordinance because it would be ongoing and explained his reasoning.

Town Attorney Hamzy it could start out as a Subcommittee of the Council, which it appears to be.

Town Councilman Zagurski stated that it could start as a Subcommittee and then eventually become an Ordinance.

When questioned by Town Councilman Heering, Town Councilman Wyszynski stated that 5d covered the obligation be to the Council.

Dan Gentile stated that this could be added as an Agenda Item, monthly, quarterly, etc. to keep it on the Council's agenda monthly or quarterly.

Robert Ives questioned when the Town owns a property and decides to sell it was there a guideline; does it need to be advertised, etc.

David Bernagel stated that if the Council approved a property it would go out for RFP (Request for Proposal) and then it would go to the Council for a recommendation; a brief discussion followed.

Vinnie Klimas stated that a Real Estate Committee was so boilerplate and every government body he had worked for had one. He further stated that he totally supports it, noting it was the right thing to do and urged the Council to support it, as well.

Melanie Church stated that the Facilities Committee had a compiled list and that they had looked at all of the town owned properties and briefly outlined the Committee's recommendations, noting they had done a phenomenal job, and that the minutes could be reviewed.

Town Councilman Zagurski stated that Joe Green had done a listing of the Town owned properties and would like a copy of his report to review, noting he had never seen the report.

Terry Dewell, 17 Prospect Street, Terryville, noted that in Ohio they had a Sheriff's Department that takes over properties and they usually put ads in the paper for auctions.

Cathy Kosak questioned if the Facilities Committee still existed and stated that the Committee would be considering the disposition of the properties so it doesn't matter and recommended it not being put in the Charter.

Town Councilwoman Murawski read the charge of the Real Estate Committee out loud for the Public audience.

Town Councilman Wyszynski made a motion, seconded by Town Councilman Zagurski, to approve a temporary six-month Subcommittee for the charge of a Real Estate Committee and over which time reviewed on a monthly basis and then take further steps to establish something permanent, i.e., Ordinance, or however the Council deems it appropriate with the actions of the Committee. This motion was approved unanimously.

Appointment of Town Councilwoman Murawski, Town Councilman Pajeski and Michael Ganem to the Real Estate Committee

Town Councilman Wyszynski made a motion, seconded by Town Councilwoman Murawski, to appoint Town Councilwoman Murawski, Town Councilman Pajeski and Michael Ganem to the Real Estate Committee. This motion was approved unanimously.

Safe Routes to School Discussion

Charles Wiegert displayed a map illustrating the Safe Routes To School area, detailed the area (Fisher and Eli Terry Schools/North Main Street) in question and gave a brief history of the Safe Routes to School Project and where it stands today noting that Town Councilman Zagurski had brought it to his attention and that it needed to come back to the Council's attention. Charles Wiegert stated that the Town would be utilizing the existing sidewalk along the Fisher property, that bids had gone out and detailed the plan.

Town Councilman Zagurski stated that the Town had previously held a Public Hearing on the previous Safe Routes to School Project.

Fran Swierczynski, 8 Charles Street, Terryville, stated that when she approached the owner of 10 Charles Street and asked him why he wasn't fixing up the property he told her that he was waiting for an offer from the Town to go through. Fran Swierczynski stated that the Town had recently paved Charles Street, however they stopped right past her driveway all the way to 10 Charles Street and wanted to know why it wasn't happening, noting this situation would devalue her property, and questioned if it would be a bus route, or cars, and also questioned if the street was wide enough and where would it go, noting she wanted to be informed.

Charles Wiegert stated that 10 Charles Street was an island surrounded by Town owned property and that the Board of Education had come to the Mayor and Public Works to resolve a long-standing problem that had existed with the property noting anything that might happen would come before the Council first.

Mayor Merchant stated that the Board of Education had come to him and this was a serious safety issue and explained the problem with the school buses and parents picking up their children, noting that he had pictures showing the chaos and briefly elaborated. Mayor Merchant stated this was still at the discussion stage and for the project to move forward it would have to be amended and would come before the Council for an appropriation. Mayor Merchant stated that it would be no different from any other project and that it would also go the Board of Education and then a Town Meeting.

Melanie Church stated that Hillside Avenue and North Main Street and Charles Street was the narrowest, noting sidewalks would make the road narrower.

Diane Reed thanked the Mayor for the explanation noting it was very helpful.

Pattie DeHuff stated she was in favor of supporting safety for the children, but was concerned that the project had already gone out for bid and that it was just now coming before the Council.

Mayor Merchant stated if the Charles Street Project came to fruition it would have to come before the Council and briefly explaining what he had just discussed, noting it would have to be amended.

Cathy Kosak stated the sidewalk was out to bid, part of it was Hillside Avenue and there was brand new sidewalks and questioned if they had to be torn up.

Mayor Merchant stated it would have to be figured out and thanked Charles Wiegert for his report.

Financial Report-David Bertnagel

David Bertnagel gave his Financial Report

Town Council Liaison Reports

Town Councilman Wyszynski stated that he had nothing to report on at this time.

Town Councilwoman Murawski gave her Plymouth Volunteer Ambulance Corps Liaison Report, her Fire Commission Report, her Water Pollution Control Authority Liaison Report and her Planning and Zoning Commission Report.

Town Councilman Zagurski gave his Library Directors Liaison Report and his Economic Development Commission Liaison Report.

Town Councilman Pajeski gave his Plymouth Housing Board Liaison Report.

Town Councilman Heering stated that he had nothing to report on at this time.

Council Comments

Town Councilman Heering stated that he had no Council Comments at this time.

Town Councilman Pajeski stated that he had no Council Comments at this time.

Town Councilman Zagurski stated that he had no Council Comments at this time.

Town Councilwoman Murawski stated that she had no Council Comments at this time.

Town Councilman Wyszynski stated that he had no Council Comments at this time.

Adjournment

There being no further business of the Plymouth Town Council, Town Councilwoman Murawski made a motion, seconded by Town Councilman Zagurski, to adjourn at 10:00 p.m. This motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Recording Secretary