



TOWN OF EAST LONGMEADOW
60 CENTER SQUARE
EAST LONGMEADOW, MA 01028

TOWN COUNCIL

(413) 525-5400 ext. 1001

Michael J. Kane, President,
Thomas C. O'Connor, Vice President
Donald J. Anderson, R. Patrick Henry, Kathleen G. Hill
Ralph E. Page, Marilyn M. Richards

Approved 4-13-2021

MINUTES
Town Council Meeting
March 30, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.
East Longmeadow, Massachusetts 01028

Present: President Michael Kane, Vice President Tom O'Connor, Pat Henry, Ralph Page, Marilyn Richards, Don Anderson and Kathleen Hill

Council President Kane opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. followed by a Moment of Silence. The meeting was conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020. Announcements were made in accordance with Mass General Law, and it was noted that the meeting was being audio taped as well as in a virtual remote format.

President Kane noted that all votes taken would be roll call votes.

Public Comments: None

Council Comments: None

Town Manager's Report: Town Manager Mary McNally gave her report as shown in Attachment A.

Ms. McNally also reported that much of this month the work in her office has been developing the draft budget package in anticipation of tonight's meeting and also the comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan and meeting with the Capital Committee that put the plan together. Ms. McNally stated there was a lot of effort that had to be coordinated to get this done.

Ms. McNally reported that today she had the privilege of taking a stroll through the northwest quadrant of town with Don Maki, Bethany Yeo, John Torcia, George Kingston and representatives of the Pioneer Valley Planning Committee. Bethany Yeo has received another grant called Technical Assistance from Pioneer Valley to administer the local rapid recovery for businesses once they try to emerge from Covid. Ms. Yeo has designated that northeast quadrant, where there are 37 commercial entities in East Longmeadow. They stopped at a few places and got a bird's eye view as to what was going on and were

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able to develop some interesting theories about the future. It is very walkable and there are a lot of restaurants; there will soon be more if everything goes according to plan. There was a lot of optimism because of the walk.

Communications, Correspondence and Announcements:

A. Annual Town Election Update - Town Clerk Jeanne Quaglietti-

Town Clerk/Clerk of The Council Jeanne Quaglietti updated the Council on the Annual Town Election.

Ms. Quaglietti stated the following: “In my last report to you regarding the annual town election I stated there were three candidates who had taken out nomination papers and returned them for Town Council, and two candidates had done the same for the School Committee.

Those three candidates for Town Council are present councilor Tom O’Connor, Connor O’Shea and Cassandra Cerasuolo. The two School Committee candidates are present school committee member Sarah Truoiolo and Aimee Dalenta.

Those names will be appearing on the ballot on June 8. Per the Charter, a drawing will be used to determine the order of names, as they will appear on the ballot. This drawing will be on April 8 at 2 pm and open to the public via Zoom.

There will also be a ballot question to vote on the Charter revisions that you approved in your last meeting.

Absentee voting is allowed for all local elections that take place before June 30 of this year, as well as early mail in voting. Early in person, voting is also permissible, if recommended and requested by the election official, which is me. I expect that I will not request this. Given the opportunities of absentee and mail in voting, I can’t justify the expense of early in person voting, and the logistics of finding an appropriate site.”

B. Proclamation of April 11-17, 2021 as National Public Safety Tele-communicators Week-

Mary McNally explained that she received an email this morning from the Deputy Director at Westcomm asking that the town of East Longmeadow participate in the declaration of this proclamation. The proclamation calls for the Town Manager’s signature but the last paragraph states that the Town Council of East Longmeadow declare the week to be National Public Safety Tele-communicators week. Ms. McNally did not feel as though she should sign it without putting it before the Council.

*Councilor Page made a motion to authorize Town Manager Mary McNally to sign a Proclamation that the Town of East Longmeadow declares the week of April 11, 2021 through April 17, 2021, to be National Public Safety Tele-communicators week. Councilor Henry seconded the motion. **Roll Call Vote- Councilor Richards- Yes, Councilor Anderson- Yes, Councilor Page- Yes, Councilor Hill- Yes, Councilor Henry – Yes, Councilor O’Connor- Yes and President Kane- Yes.***

Orders of the Day:

Financial Matters:

1. Amend April 23, 2019 Loan Order motion for the replacement of the Meadow Brook Elementary School roof -

Councilor Anderson made the following motion:

MOTION/VOTE: That the Loan Order adopted by this Council on April 23, 2019 which appropriated \$3,188,859 for the purpose of paying costs of replacing the roof at Meadow Brook Elementary School is hereby amended to read as follows:

"That the Town of East Longmeadow appropriate the amount of \$1,706,115 dollars for the purpose of paying costs of replacing the roof at Meadow Brook Elementary School at 607 Parker Street, East Longmeadow, MA, including the payment of all costs incidental or related thereto, which proposed repair project would materially extend the useful life of the school and preserve an asset that otherwise is capable of supporting the required educational program, and for which the Town of East Longmeadow may be eligible for a grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority ("MSBA"), said amount to be expended under the direction of East Longmeadow School Committee.

To meet this appropriation the Treasurer, with the approval of the Town Manager, is authorized to borrow \$913,534 under M.G.L. Chapter 44, or pursuant to any other enabling authority. The Town of East Longmeadow acknowledges that the MSBA's grant program is a non-entitlement, discretionary program based on need, as determined by the MSBA, and any project costs the Town of East Longmeadow incurs in excess of any grant approved by and received from the MSBA shall be the sole responsibility of the Town of East Longmeadow; provided further that any grant that the Town of East Longmeadow may receive from the MSBA for the Project shall not exceed the lesser of (1) 55% (percent) of eligible, approved project costs, as determined by the MSBA, or (2) the total maximum grant amount determined by the MSBA; and that the amount of borrowing authorized pursuant to this vote shall be reduced by any grant amount set forth in the Project Funding Agreement that may be executed between the Town of East Longmeadow and the MSBA. Any premium received upon the sale of any bonds or notes approved by this vote, less any such premium applied to the payment of the costs of issuance of such bonds or notes, may be applied to the payment of costs approved by this vote in accordance with Chapter 44, Section 20 of the General Laws, thereby reducing the amount authorized to be borrowed to pay such costs by a like amount." Councilor Hill seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Councilor Page stated that originally in 2019 they did an agreement, does that mean at that particular time they were not invited into the MSBA Program and is that why the roof was not done then, because now it is two years later and we are looking at the project.

Councilor Hill stated that she could not say with certainty because she does not have firsthand information, but her guess is that the numbers for the project originally estimated probably came in a lot lower.

Councilor Page was curious as to why we did not go forward with it two years ago.

Finance Director Steve Lonergan explained that we received money from the MSBA and we did not go out to bond to pay for our portion of it which caused one of the big deficits last year. Mr. Lonergan was told that there is a formula that the MSBA uses. They got a better deal and they came in less than what the formula created. They don't go by estimates; they have to use the formula.

Councilor O'Connor was looking back at his notes from that time and the projected numbers coming from the MSBA was \$1,285,400.00 and asked if that was the number they received. Mr. Lonergan stated that they received \$670,581.00 from the MSBA. The total grant they were authorizing was about \$707,000.00 and there are still a couple things under discussion but the majority has come in.

Roll Call Vote- Councilor Anderson- Yes, Councilor Page – Yes, Councilor Henry – Yes, Councilor O'Connor – Yes, Councilor Hill Yes, Councilor Richards – Yes and President Kane- Yes.

2. Presentation of the Town Manager's proposed operating budget for FY22, per Article 6, Section 2 of the Home Rule Charter-

President Kane explained that this is a presentation and after they have had a chance to digest the budget there will be a Public Hearing and Council members and the public will be able to weigh in at the Public Hearing.

Town Manager Mary McNally explained that the Draft Budget is in five parts.

- The Budget Message
- Organizational Chart
- Summary of revenues and us
- Department Detail
- The Comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan

The Draft Budget is shown in attachment B.

Ms. McNally highlighted some parts that she feels is important. Ms. McNally stated we have been through a rough year and we survived it through the great effort of so many of the people that work for East Longmeadow, particularly the Department Heads. Ms. McNally thanked the Department Heads because this budget that the Council is getting from her tonight comes to you almost down to the penny exactly the way the Department Heads submitted it to her. Ms. McNally asked for level services and asked them to be restrictive, cautious and careful and they all were with a couple of very minor important exceptions. Those being the Town Manager's office, the Finance office, Police Department and the Fire Department.

Ms. McNally thanked the Capital Committee who met a half dozen times within a ten day period and reviewed Twenty-three million dollars' worth of potential submissions in a very short period of time. Ms. McNally feels it is important to express appreciation to people who work as hard as they do and feels that is the most important part of her budget message.

They are basing the Draft Budget, as they do every year, on the Governor's proposed figures based on the cherry sheets. These are figures that are old, and the Governor presented his proposed budget in January of this year. The legislature has not acted on it yet. There has been in a slight increase in Chapter 70 aide. They are cautiously optimistic that they may get a bump in State revenue but for now it is based on what the Governor has submitted.

With respect to the local receipts Ms. McNally stated that Covid is still prevalent among us so we have tried to be very careful about local receipts. We reduced meals tax significantly last year and we are keeping it low this year. The motor vehicle excise is also low and new growth is down a bit from what we estimated last year but this may change. With 2 ½ we were able to increase the General revenue.

Most of the departments have either reduced expenses where possible or they have submitted level funded budgets. There are two labor unions in town whose contracts have expired or will expire on June 30, 2021 and when those are settled there will be some potential for retroactive payment. There is nothing included in the budget, we are bargaining in good faith and do not want to put in a percentage and either not live up to it or anticipate the conclusion before we negotiate so there is zero in the budget for those increases. The other contractual increases are step increases or things that are already guaranteed by prior contracts.

The draft includes some plans that are Ms. McNally's major goals that she would like to see improve the town's efficiency. Ms. McNally feels the Finance Department needs to improve; in our Management letter, we have had audit findings. Every second Tuesday they cannot accomplish anything other than payroll and we need to improve this. As Mr. Lonergan mentioned earlier the deficiency on a free cash because of the work at Meadowbrook that was not bonded timely, this was an audit finding and that results in a free cash deficit, those things should never happen. Ms. McNally stated that in her opinion they desperately need an internal auditor at least for the short term to try to institute some policies and procedures. This need was further highlighted in focus group sessions conducted by our Master Plan Consultant.

Additionally, the draft budget includes a request for two new management positions in the Police and Fire Departments; they both desire to hire a mid-level manager. The Police Department management staff has been requested for several years and in Ms. McNally's opinion, it is necessary to the overall improvement to Police operations. The town recently hired a new Police Chief, Mark Williams, and approval of this new position will provide him with the management staff to proceed with the development of policies and procedure, which are necessary in modern policing and will assist in obtaining certification and accreditation of the Department by the Mass State Police Association Commission.

The Fire Department's request for a Deputy Chief position is intended to assist in the Department in its long term planning and operations obligations as well as to address the lack of a true succession plan. The new Deputy would be a non-union position. The growth of the Department and its municipal ambulance service over the last several years and the improvement of public

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safety services to the community prompts and supports the need for this additional management position.

Ms. McNally also discussed the need for a grant writer/grant administrator or a special projects coordinator quasi Deputy Town Manager on a pilot basis for one year on a part time basis. The budget amount that she is contemplating is only for 20 hours.

This budget is less than a 1% increase and that is testament to the diligence and cooperation of the Department Heads. Our Health Insurance is the budget buster again and the retirement assessment has increased a bit.

President Kane commented that he had the privilege of being able to work with Ms. McNally a little bit on the budget and the message sent to the Department Heads was level funding and they all pretty much adhered to that. The draft budget is due per the Charter by April 1 so we complied with that. President Kane thanked the department heads and Mary McNally for all their work.

Old Business:

1. Update of Charter Review Process – Town Clerk Jeanne Quaglietti-

Jeanne Quaglietti updated the Council as to what happens next with the Charter amendments.

Ms Quaglietti stated the following:

“After the Town Council’s approval of the Charter revisions as recommended by the Charter Review Committee, as well as other changes made by the Council, I talked with Assistant Attorney General Kelli Gunagan. Kelli is the one that will review our Charter revisions, and has been in previous conversations with both me and Town Attorney Jesse Belcher-Timme regarding this. There are forms I need to complete and submit to her along with an annotated copy of the Charter showing all the approved revisions as approved last week.

Jesse does not need to review this again before it goes to the AG’s office. Kelli said if she has any questions during her review, she would direct them to Jesse at that time. Given that she has already previewed most of the Charter’s revisions and has had conversations with Jesse, I doubt there will be many, if any, considerable issues during her review.

The Charter amendments will go on the ballot in June, and assuming they are voted upon, we can have the final document go to print. An annotated version of the Charter with those amendments should be available to the voter on our website for review before voting. There is no statute that requires amendments to be outlined in the final document, but I would suggest that those amendments are reflected either as a supplement, footnotes, or otherwise when the final copy goes to print.

I expect, with the Town Manager’s permission, to touch base with Jesse during this process to make sure we are following the correct procedures as we move along”.

Executive Session

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Councilor Richards made a motion to move into Executive Session to discuss litigation strategy in the matter of Sara Menard versus the Town of East Longmeadow only to return to Open Session for the purpose of adjournment. Councilor O'Connor seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote- Councilor Anderson, Councilor Page – Yes, Councilor Henry – Yes, Councilor O'Connor – Yes, Councilor Hill Yes, Councilor Richards – Yes and President Kane- Yes.

The Open Session meeting adjourned at 6:46 pm.

Open Session reconvened at 7:04 pm.

Councilor Hill made a motion to adjourn the Open Session Meeting. Councilor Anderson seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote- Councilor Anderson, Councilor Page – Yes, Councilor Henry – Yes, Councilor O'Connor – Yes, Councilor Hill Yes, Councilor Richards – Yes and President Kane- Yes.

Open Session adjourned at 7:06 pm. The next Town Council Meeting will be April 13, 2021 at 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jackie Sullivan

Assistant Town Clerk

Documents: Agenda, Election and Charter Review comments, Town of East Longmeadow FY2022 Annual Budget Draft, East Longmeadow Proclamation, Historical tax rates 2010- 2021, Town Manager Report, FY2022 Operational Budget, Town of East Longmeadow Comprehensive Capital Plan Fiscal Year 2022, 3-30-2021 FY22 Capital Requests Comprehensive Cap Plan, FY22 Budget Departmental Detail, Amended Loan Order Motion,