

# ~ PLYMOUTH BOARD OF SELECTMEN ~

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2014**

TOWN HALL, MAYFLOWER ROOM

The Selectmen held a meeting on Tuesday, December 16, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. at Town Hall in the Mayflower Room.

Present:                    Kenneth A. Tavares, Chairman  
                                 Anthony F. Provenzano Jr., Vice Chairman  
                                 John T. Mahoney, Jr.  
                                 Mathew J. Muratore  
                                 Sean P. Page

                                 Melissa Arrighi, Town Manager  
                                 Michael Galla, Assistant Town Manager

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Tavares called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

On a motion by Vice Chairman Provenzano, seconded by Selectman Page, the Board voted to enter an executive session pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21, Paragraph 3, to discuss strategy with respect to litigation and collective bargaining, as an open meeting on these matters may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the body. By roll call: Muratore – yes, Mahoney – yes, Provenzano – yes, Page – yes, and Tavares – yes.

Chairman Tavares noted that, following executive session, the Board would reconvene in open session.

## **RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

Chairman Tavares reconvened the meeting in open session at 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Prior to commencing the evening's agenda, Chairman Tavares invited Selectman Page to talk about the Toys for Tots program. Selectman Page spoke from the podium about the Fire Department's annual participation in the Toys for Tots program, whereby new toys are collected during the holidays and distributed to families in need. The Toys for Tots program, he explained, was initiated by the Marine Corps Reserve in 1947 (and later adopted by the Marine Corps in 1958) to ensure that no child goes without a gift during the holidays. Selectman Page indicated that he has served as the Fire Department's liaison to

the Toys for Tots program for the past 8 years. Those who wish to donate to the program, he said, may drop off new, unwrapped toys at the Fire Department's Headquarters on Sandwich Street or at the Cedarville Fire Station.

Chairman Tavares thanked Selectman Page and Plymouth's firefighters for their efforts to help those in need during the holidays. The Town's Harbormaster Division, Chairman Tavares noted, is also collecting new toys and children's clothing for the Salvation Army.

## **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**

**Girls Varsity Hockey Team** – Town Manager Melissa Arrighi was pleased to report that the Plymouth Public School System now has a Girls Varsity Hockey Team. The team, she reported, achieved victory at its very first game on Saturday, December 13, 2014. Ms. Arrighi noted that a resident contacted the Town Manager / Board of Selectmen's office to thank the Town for making this opportunity available to the students.

**Tree Work on Route 3** – Ms. Arrighi informed the public that, on Monday, December 15, 2014, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation ("MassDOT") will cut a number of diseased pines in the median on Route 3, near Exit 3. For those who have questions about the work, Ms. Arrighi referred residents to Scott Semple at MassDOT, (781) 443-3497.

**Anaerobic Digestion** – Ms. Arrighi indicated that Plymouth is being considered by the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center for a grant to bring in a consultant to assist the Town in developing a work plan and strategy relative to public outreach and education for siting and building an Anaerobic Digestion facility. The Town, she said, should have some final news on this grant opportunity in January.

**Town of Duxbury 400th Anniversary Committee** – Ms. Arrighi noted that the Town of Duxbury has formed its own committee to investigate participation in Plymouth's 400th Anniversary Celebration. The committee, she said, will augment the work being done by Plymouth 400, Inc., with a focus on Duxbury's historical connections to the Colonists' arrival on the Mayflower and the early colonial settlement.

## **LICENSES**

### **VEHICLE FOR HIRE (RENEWAL)**

On a motion by Selectman Page, seconded by Vice Chairman Provenzano, the Board voted to approve a Vehicle for Hire License for the following individual. Voted 5-0-0, approved.

- ❖ **Pilgrim Taxi** (109 Sandwich Street., Jeffery Peterson, Owner):
  - Applying for one vehicle – Livery; this makes four total vehicles in Pilgrim Taxi's fleet. The vehicle has been inspected.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES**

**Meeting Minutes** – On a motion by Selectman Muratore, seconded by Selectman Mahoney, the Board voted to approve the minutes of the September 30, 2014 Selectmen's meeting. Voted 5-0-0, approved.

**Retirement Benefits Document** – The Board approved the *Retirement Benefits, Eligibility Standards and Contribution Percentages for Health and Dental Insurance* document, as amended.

**Addition of Weston Street to Snow Plow List** – The Board authorized the addition of Weston Street to the Department of Public Works' Snow Plow List, as recommended by the Department of Public Works and the Roads Advisory Committee.

**Constable Appointment** – The Board re-appointed Gregory S. Kamon of 11 Briarwood Lane, Rochester as Constable for the Town of Plymouth, for a term effective December 17, 2014 through December 8, 2017. *[Note: This appointment is subject to the submittal of all necessary paperwork and a background check performed by the Police Department.]*

**License Agreement with White Cliffs Association** – The Board approved and executed a License Agreement with White Cliffs Community Association, Inc. for the installation of erosion control measures that span onto a portion of Town-owned coastal bank and coastal beach property identified as Lot 6-20 on Map 54.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Robert Spencer, Town Meeting Member from Precinct 1, thanked the staff of the Department of Public Works for doing a great job of decorating the downtown for the holidays.

## **UPDATE FROM MANOMET YOUTH CENTER WORKING GROUP**

Betty Cavacco and Jim Nihan of the Manomet Youth Center Working Group provided the Board with a PowerPoint presentation on the group's efforts to raise funds for, and increase membership at, the Manomet Youth Center ("MYC").

Jim Nihan began the presentation with a history as to why and how the group was formed, explaining how declining enrollment in the MYC's after-school drop-in program had caused the Recreation Department to make significant changes to the hours of the program.

Betty Cavacco resumed the presentation with an explanation as to how the community rallied to reinstate the hours of the drop-in program, following the changes made by the Recreation Department in late August. Through the collection of signatures via an online petition, she said, a group of citizens came forth with a plea to the Board of Selectmen for

the preservation of the program. It was at that point, Ms. Cavacco indicated, that the Town formed the MYC Working Group, to work out a solution through which the drop-in program could be reinstated and improved.

Ms. Cavacco listed the members of the MYC Working Group: Mathew Muratore (Board of Selectmen's Liaison), Barry DeBlasio (Recreation Director), Amy Howell (Recreation Program Assistant), and residents James Nihan, Liz Cavacco, Carrie Belle Isle, Shandi Coleman Bell, and Megan Collins Dempster. The group, she said, has raised \$17,500 since its formation through fundraisers, large donations from entities such as the Plymouth Rotary Club and Entergy, and outreach via social media. Ms. Cavacco was pleased to report that the members of the working group have enlisted the assistance of a local attorney and an accountant, who have filed an application with the Internal Revenue Service to establish the group as a non-profit organization. Information on the organization, she said, can be found at [www.friendsofmyc.com](http://www.friendsofmyc.com).

Ms. Cavacco informed the Board that, with some of the funds raised for the MYC, the group has purchased new board games and a Wii game system for the Center. A volunteer group recently repainted the entire inside of the Center in bright colors, she noted, and a family donated a 60-inch television, sound bar, and wifi system. The Town's Energy Officer, Patrick Farah, brought in the MassSave program to conduct an energy audit on the Center, to determine where efficiencies could be implemented. Ms. Cavacco reported that membership in the drop-in program has increased to approximately 100 children, and daily average attendance has doubled. The School Department, she noted, now provides after-school bus transportation to the MYC from Manomet and Indian Brook Elementary Schools.

At the close of the presentation, Ms. Cavacco offered her estimation that the MYC Working Group has exceeded the charge given to the group. The group, she explained, will now continue its work as the Friends of the Manomet Youth Center non-profit organization. Ms. Cavacco and Mr. Nihan thanked the Board for the opportunity to assist with the reinstatement and improvement of the drop-in program at the MYC.

Upon an invitation from Chairman Tavares, the Town's Recreation Director, Barry DeBlasio, offered his thoughts on the achievements made by the MYC Working Group. Mr. DeBlasio spoke highly of the group's fundraising achievements and creative approach to improving and promoting the Center. Annual memberships in the MYC's drop-in program have increased from 75 to 105, he noted, even after the Selectmen authorized an increase to the membership fee. The average weekday attendance in the drop-in program has doubled, he said, and attendance on Fridays has reached as high as 70 children. Mr. DeBlasio stated that it has been very encouraging to see the community rally around the Center, and it will be extremely helpful, he said, to have this group's continued support as the Friends of the Manomet Youth Center.

Selectman Muratore, who served as the Board's liaison to the MYC Working Group (along with Assistant Town Manager Michael Galla), thanked the members of the community who donated their time and money to the cause. Acknowledging that the MYC Working Group has completed its charge, Selectman Muratore made a motion to dissolve the

Manomet Youth Center Working Group. Vice Chairman Provenzano seconded the motion, and the Board voted 5-0-0 in favor.

Chairman Tavares encouraged Ms. Cavacco and Mr. Nihan to return with a future update from the Friends of the MYC.

## **PUBLIC HEARING: PROPERTY TAX CLASSIFICATION**

Chairman Tavares opened a public hearing to consider the allocation of the local property tax levy among the property classes for Fiscal Year 2015.

Anne Dunn, Director of Assessing, provided the presentation on the Property Tax allocation for FY2015. Ms. Dunn introduced three of the five-members of the Board of Assessors ("BOA") who were able to attend the meeting: Richard Finnegan, Donna Randles, and Katherine Rebell. BOA members Jim Sullivan and George Moody, she indicated, were unable to attend the meeting. Prior to beginning her presentation, Ms. Dunn informed residents that she would make her report available on the Town's website.

Ms. Dunn explained that the purpose of the annual classification hearing is to adopt the Town's tax policy by allocating or classifying the tax levy among property types. In order for the Town to discuss and set the FY2015 tax rate, she said, the Board of Selectmen must first decide whether the Town will continue to maintain a single/unified tax rate or change to a multiple/split tax rate. A split tax rate, she explained, would set different rates between the property classes—essentially between residential and commercial properties—while the Town's current unified tax rate implements the same rate for all of the property classes.

In addition, the Board may also consider the adoption of certain tax exemptions and discounts—such as open space discounts, residential exemptions, and small commercial exemptions—during the annual classification hearing. Ms. Dunn noted that, at this time, the Finance Department does not recommend that the Board adopt any of these potential exemptions and discounts.

Ms. Dunn covered the following topics within her presentation:

- An overview of key changes to the Town's tax rate and valuations between FY2014 and FY2015
- A comparison of tax rates and average assessed values between Plymouth and ten other nearby, similar communities
- Photographic examples of varying property valuations and the associated change in value for each example from FY2014 to FY2015
- Data on property valuation based on the different property classes in Plymouth, covering fiscal years 2011 through 2015

- The percentages by which each class makes up the Town's total property valuations
- Residential and commercial data spanning back to FY2011, including average tax bills, average valuations, and the number of parcels (commercial and residential)
- Graphs and charts illustrating the trends in average tax bills and a comparison of Plymouth's residential home values and commercial property values
- Classification considerations, including the diversity of the tax base; the ability of the commercial base to absorb a shift to a split tax rate; and the long-term perspective on whether to maintain a split rate or fluctuate between single and split rates

Ms. Dunn displayed several tables which illustrated the impact of shifting the tax burden from the average residential tax bill to the average commercial tax bill, noting that, in order to maintain the same average residential tax bill (i.e. no increase from 2014 to 2015), the Town would need to shift 10% of the tax burden to the commercial sector. As an example, Ms. Dunn explained, the Town would have to increase the average commercial bill by \$1,512.74, in order to prevent a \$248.68 increase to the tax bill on an average single family home.

At the close of the presentation, Ms. Dunn offered the Finance Department's recommendation that the Board maintain a single/unified tax rate. It is unlikely that the Town's commercial tax base could—in the midst of the current economic downturn—absorb a tax shift/increase of such magnitude required to provide any substantial relief to residential taxpayers.

At the close of Ms. Dunn's presentation, Chairman Tavares opened the hearing to questions and/or comments. Seeing none, he closed the hearing and awaited a motion of the Board.

On a motion by Selectman Muratore, seconded by Vice Chairman Provenzano, the Board voted to maintain a unified tax rate, as recommended by the Department of Finance.

Lynne Barrett, Finance Director, explained that, as part of the Tax Classification Hearing, the board must vote to certify the Town's excess levy capacity. The excess levy capacity, she indicated, has been calculated at \$7,394,250.29.

On a motion by Vice Chairman Provenzano, seconded by Selectman Muratore, the Board voted to certify the Town's excess levy capacity at \$7,394,250.29. Voted 5-0-0, approved.

## **TOWN MANAGER'S FY2016 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS**

Town Manager Melissa Arrighi introduced a presentation on her recommendations for the Town's Fiscal Year 2016 Budget. Ms. Arrighi thanked Chairman Tavares, Advisory & Finance Committee chairman John Moody, Finance Director Lynne Barrett, the School Committee, and the Town's Department Heads for their assistance, guidance, and cooperation with the development of the budget.

Ms. Arrighi discussed the process that she utilized in building the FY2016 Budget. As is typical with each year's budget, she explained, concerns center around increases in fixed costs, salaries, and contractual obligations. Overall, Ms. Arrighi indicated, the Town's side of the budget is expected to increase by 2.04%, while the school side is expected to increase by 2.11%. There is quite a bit of complexity to the factors that cause these increases, she noted, such as unfunded mandates, employee benefits, and insurance costs. Ms. Arrighi pointed out that she and the Finance Director were conservative in their revenue projections, to ensure that the Town does not over-budget its expenses.

Prior to turning the presentation over to Finance Director Lynne Barrett, Ms. Arrighi noted that the Board will have further opportunities to discuss the budget at its January 6 and January 13, 2015 meetings.

Ms. Barrett presided over a PowerPoint presentation, in which she provided information on the overall changes to the FY2016 Budget. Echoing earlier comments made by Ms. Arrighi, Ms. Barrett turned the Board's attention to increases in the Town's fixed costs related to member insurance, employee benefits, pension increases, the Unemployment Trust Fund, fuel & utilities, and the Town's liability insurance. Ms. Barrett provided a general overview of the key changes to the School Department's proposed budget, which was approved unanimously by the School Committee at their December 15, 2014 meeting. The Town's side of the budget is, for the most part, level-service, she said, but there are a handful of new positions that have been recommended, based on departmental need.

Ms. Barrett provided a review of the recommended increases to the Town's enterprise funds, and she displayed graphs to illustrate the way by which the General Fund will be distributed between the Town, the Schools, and each of the Town's departments within the FY2016 Budget. Shifting to the revenue side of the budget, she recommended that the Town anticipate level funding via State Aid and an overall increase in local receipts of 4%, based on economic growth factors. Ms. Barrett closed the presentation with a history of the Town's debt service, noting that the debt exclusion for Plymouth South High School will be included in the FY2016 Budget.

Ms. Barrett closed the presentation with her recommendation that the Town set its FY2016 Budget at \$185,129,112, representing an increase of \$0.81 cents on the tax rate. This increase in the tax rate, she explained, amounts to an estimated tax increase of \$250 dollars on the average single family home. Ms. Barrett reminded the Board that the tax rate is estimated; as the Director of Assessing explained in her earlier presentation, the tax rate must be estimated until it can be certified at the end of the year.

Ms. Arrighi and Ms. Barrett responded to comments and questions from the Board regarding the Town's debt service, stabilization funds, proposed new positions, and the School Department's decision to convert and condense a number of part-time positions into full-time positions.

Following some brief remaining discussion, Chairman Tavares thanked Ms. Arrighi and Ms. Barrett for their presentation, noting that this is the first in a series of meetings during which the Board will discuss the FY2016 Budget.

## **COMMITTEE LIAISON / DESIGNEE UPDATES**

**Revenue Idea Task Force** – Selectman Page reported that the Revenue Idea Task Force, which met recently on December 15, 2014, will bring forth six revenue enhancement ideas to the Selectmen by April of 2015.

**Burial Hill Tree Removal** – Selectman Mahoney indicated that he has scheduled a walkthrough of Burial Hill with the Town's Superintendent of Parks, Trees, and Cemeteries, to view which trees should be removed and/or maintained.

## **OLD BUSINESS / LETTERS / NEW BUSINESS**

**Chapter 61 / 429 Sandwich Street** – Assistant Town Manager Michael Galla provided the Board with an update on a Chapter 61 Notice of Intent to Sell that the Town received regarding property at 429 Sandwich Street. Mr. Galla indicated that the 120-day timeframe afforded within the Chapter 61 process on this particular property—during which the Town has an opportunity to exercise its right of first refusal—expires as of December 16, 2014 (this Selectmen's meeting). No Town departments or committees came forth with an interest in the lot, he said. As the 120-day timeline passes, Mr. Galla explained, the property owner may proceed with the conversion and sale of the property.

**Christ Church Anniversary** – Chairman Tavares noted that he attended a special service at Christ Church on December 14, 2014, to present the congregation with a certificate from the Selectmen in honor of the Church's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at the 149 Court Street location.

## **ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

On a motion by Vice Chairman Provenzano, seconded by Selectman Muratore, the Board voted to adjourn its meeting at approximately 8:45 p.m. Voted 5-0-0, approved.

*Recorded by Tiffany Park, Clerk to the Board of Selectmen*

*A copy of the December 16, 2014 meeting packet is on file and available for public review in the Board of Selectmen's Office.*