

TOWN OF WINTHROP FALL FORUM

October 18, 2011

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TOWN CLERK
WINTHROP, MASS

The Town Council held a public forum on the delivery of Town's services in accordance with Section 9-12 of the Town of Winthrop's Home Rule Charter. The Fall Public Forum was called to order at 7:20 PM at the Winthrop Senior Center, 35 Harvard Street, Winthrop, Massachusetts on Tuesday October 18, 2011.

It was agreed to allow Mr. Gerry DeFranza of the Handicap Access Commission to do a presentation on International White Cane Day.

INTERNATIONAL WHITE CANE DAY PRESENTATION

Presentation by Mr. Gerry DeFranza of the Handicap Access Commission

Mr. DeFranza did a presentation, which included a hand out which explained International White Cane Day. The white cane is a symbol of independence and blindness, **Massachusetts White Cane Law: General Law Chapter 90 Section 14A Yield to White Cane and Dog Guide Users at Street Crossings.** There was an "International White Cane Day" at the State House on October 14, 2011 to raise public awareness of the White Cane Law. Mr. DeFranza offered his services and resources to the Town.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Presentation by Finance Director Michael Bertino

Summary of Topics Discussed

- Consolidation of Finance Offices (Town /School)
- Conversion of financial system
- Expanded training for employees and other officials

Mr. Bertino also spoke on new software Invoice Cloud being 100% complete The Software will enable citizens go online and look at water/sewer bills, print bills and pay their bill. Mr. Bertino stated the real estate bills are online for the 2nd quarter and to access Invoice Cloud go to the Treasurer Collector link on the Town Website.

Public Comment

Ms. Charvis had questions about estimated water bills. Mr. Bertino stated that the bills would alternate on being an estimated bill and an actual bill because it is more cost effective to send estimated bills due to manpower and equipment.

BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Presentation by Building Commissioner James Soper

Summary of Topics Discussed

- Complete the Vacant Building Ordinance
- Participate in the process and enforcement of the Zoning By-Law changes
- Produce flow chart to guide applicant through permitting process for new businesses

Mr. Soper also spoke on their new location at 100 Kennedy Road, permits, zoning, receiving complaints, working with Police, Fire and Health Departments, foreclosed properties, keeping in compliance, and safety inspections. Mr. Soper also intends to develop an easy to follow flow chart to assist new businesses and of the zoning changes.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Presentation by Steve Calla Interim Director

Summary of Topics Discussed

- Water main and roadway project/Concrete sidewalk contract
- Hurricane Irene/Winter prep
- Equipment needs
- Important dates

Mr. Calla also stated it's been a busy year and projects are on schedule. ERA Construction was awarded sidewalk contract. Mr. Calla spoke on replacing equipment including an old sewer truck that is 12 to 15 years old and needs to be ready 24/7 and a trash compactor which is showing significant wear and tear. The Water Department has a new backhoe. Curbside pickup by Capital Waste will be on November 19 and December 3 for leaves. The compost also closes on December 3, 2011 and street sweeping ending for this year.

Public Comment

Mr. Peabody spoke regarding Town barrels and regulating trash that people throw into them. Guy Brandenstein concerned about Marshall and Walden Streets. Dotti Donofrio stated dogs running around at Cemetery at Belle Isle. Betty Peabody inquired if street sweeping could be done in March and December and Mr. Calla stated it is a budgetary item but he will speak to the Town Manager.

GRANTS DEPARTMENT

Presentation by Grants Writer Peter Lombardi

Summary of Topics Discussed

- Energy efficient systems
- Investment in infrastructure
- Walk Winthrop

Mr. Lombardi spoke on rising utility funding and the conversion to gas at town hall and working with national grid to replace Steam Trap Systems

Mr. Lombard is also looking into Solar Projects and Green Community Designation.

The Grants Department has been awarded funding from Mass Historic, Funding from MEMA for Point Shirley Drainage and state funding for Ingleside Park Drainage Problems. Mr. Lombardi is looking into a grant for the School Department for a football field/track. He also is working with the Harbormaster and Harbor Management on the new Town Pier Harborwalk Project, Walk Winthrop and Bike Share Program.

Public Comment

Mr. DeFranza asked Mr. Lombardi if he has identified citizens who are disabled and Mr. Lombard will take his now advice. Mr. Brandenstein wanted to if the Town is looking into Energy Efficiency and Mr. Lombardi stated the Town is looking into addressing these issues. Mr. Dimes ex-chairman of the Planning Department thinks the Town should seriously consider hiring an Engineer and a full time Grants Director.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Presentation by IT Director Vincent Ruocco

Summary of Topics Discussed

- Information Technology Consolidation
- Fiber Optic Infrastructure
- VoIP Phone System

Director Vincent Ruocco spoke on goals to create and implement a true consolidation, create a help desk for town employees. He also wants to share resources between the buildings, update the phone systems that will run off of fiber optics and connect all schools and town offices.

TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

Presentation by Town Clerk Carla Vitale

Summary of Topics Discussed

- Manage all aspects of elections, local census and voter registration
- Manage Licensing, Vital Records and Board of Appeals
- Research and respond to requests for information from residents and employees

The Town Clerk Carla Vitale also stated that she performs web maintenance, assists local boards and committees, provides council support as needed, performs swearing in of new committee members and boards. There was a discussion between Councilor DeVento and President Turco about long-term storage and what percentage of records could be stored. Chief Delehanty questioned the cost. There were questions on what records could be digitized.

Public Comment

Guy Brandenstein recommend having High School Seniors help scan documents. Dottie Donofrio wanted to know if cemetery records could be scanned and the Clerk stated yes.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Presentation by Health Officer Eric Moore

Summary of Topics Discussed

- Seasonal Flu vaccinations for Town residents
- New health promotion initiatives – monthly/quarterly awareness topics
- Improve health department workforce

Mr. Moore spoke on Grant Applications with Revere, Chelsea and Boston that funded through the state. The Health Department has started a Community Health Survey and each quarter they would like to define a health issue. Mr. Moore also stated that the department's major needs are that they are short staffed.

COUNCIL ON AGING

Presentation by Council on Aging Director Nancy Williams

Summary of Topics Discussed

- Community garden
- Enhancement of programs through funding via the Friends of Council of Aging
- Pursue more grant funding

Mrs. Williams discussed that birth rates aren't up but longevity is and dementia is growing at 4% annually. The Council on Aging will be celebrating 20 years of service to the Town. Mrs. Williams also thanked the Town Manager, Peter Lombardi, Paul O' Donnell, Robert Flanagan and the members of the Police and Fire Department who helped with the Community Garden. She also stated that she would like to write more "Foundation Grants".

LIBRARY

Presentation by Library Director Alan Thiebeault

Summary of Topics Discussed

- Completed space reorganization
- Goal for FY 2012: Hire a new director
- Staffing

Mr. Thiebeault spoke on the new circulation desk that was donated by Ron Berman, library staffing concerns and also the need to hire a new Director. He also commended his excellent staff for the work they do.

President Turco thanked Mr. Thiebeault for his professionalism and wished him well in his new position with the City of Danvers.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Presentation by Police Chief Terence Delehanty

Summary of Topics Discussed

- Regional efforts
- Domestic Violence
- Dispatch
- Forensics
- Capital

Police Chief Delehanty spoke on the regional dispatch out of Revere and of meetings attended and the creating a High Risk Domestic Violence Team. The Chief also spoke on capital needed for equipment for the officers and for replacement of windows in the Police Department.

Public Comment

Dottie Donofrio had questions about the 911 lines and calling 911 from a cell phone, which is traceable as opposed to dialing the police station number.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Chief Paul Flanagan

Presentation by Police Chief Terence Delehanty

Summary of Topics Discussed

- New Fire Engine due at the end of October
- Week of Factory Training
- In process of restoring center station with new windows

President Turco commended the Fire Chief for writing a grant for the new Fire Engine.

RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Presentation by Parks and Recreation Director Sean Driscoll

Summary of Topics Discussed

- Expand on adult programming
- Expand on programming for Middle School students
- Expand on programming with outside companies

Mr. Driscoll spoke on the expansion of his program for the Middle School and the utilization of the rink and gym and the utilization their new space.

LARSEN RINK

Summary of Topics Discussed

- Finalize the Low-E ceiling installation
- Look to expand rink revenue with additional advertising, rentals, and food concessions
- Repair and revitalization of parking lot and outside grounds

Mr. Driscoll stated he is looking into new ways to bring in more revenue.

Public Comment

Mr. Peabody of Precinct 4 brought up concerns and offered pictures of Hannaford Park, Crest Avenue Park and Pond Street Park. Mr. Driscoll and Mr. Calla stated they don't have the money or manpower for weekly maintenance but were willing to look into resources and community efforts.

Dotti Donofrio commended Mr. Calla stating that although they are short staffed they are doing the best they can.

There was a discussion with the Town Manager, Councilor DeVento, President Turco about staffing issues and using summer help and the Sheriffs Office.

HARBORMASTER

Presentation by Assistant Harbormaster Joseph Montalto

Summary of Topics Discussed

- Harbormasters sworn in as Special Officers
- Parking plan for Landing complete
- Created a Landing fee for large game fish

Mr. Montalto discussed the continuation of the Ferry Service, season passes, and Spring 2012 opening of the new building.

Public Comment

Guy Brandenstein had questions about the Fishing Pier and Mr. Montalto stated there is a possibility of extending the finger piers.

SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

Presentation by Superintendent of Schools John Macero

Summary of Topics Discussed

- Winthrop Schools improved to Level 2
- Curriculum restructure
- Consolidation

Mr. Macero spoke on the consolidation, his strong relationship with the Town Manager and his desire to make sure the school and town have good communication. He also thanked the PTO from the Fort Banks School for the huge community effort in redoing the School's playground.

Public Comment

Mr. DeFranza and Mr. Macero had a conversation regarding special needs students and how the School's Special Ed Program is proactive and is rated by the state as Level 1.

TOWN MANAGER'S OFFICE

Presentation by Town Manager James McKenna

Summary of Topics Discussed

- Winthrop Beach Restoration
- Phase I – Harborwalk Project
- Human Resources Coordination

Mr. McKenna stated he was proud of all who spoke, who they represent and of positive thinking. He stated we are facing challenges but we are overcoming them.

Public Comment

Dick Dimes questioned the Town Manager on the quality of sand, the damage that will be done to the streets regarding the Winthrop Beach Restoration. There was a discussion amongst the Town Manager and the Council President as to why that sand was chosen and how the quality has improved since the Revere Beach Project.

Fall Forum Adjourned at 9:50

A CD of this meeting is available from WCAT.

Public Documents used in this meeting are available in the Town Manager's Office.

Respectfully submitted,
Town Council Clerk
Kathleen S. Hickey