

## **SPECIAL MEETING OF THE AGAWAM CITY COUNCIL**

***Minutes dated February 10, 2020***

Meeting was called to order by Council President Johnson at 7:00pm in the Community Room at the Agawam Public Library, 750 Cooper Street, Agawam.

### **Item A. Roll Call**

#### **ROLL CALL – 10 PRESENT, 1 ABSENT**

Roll Call was taken with the following councilors present: George Bitzas, Council Vice President Cecilia Calabrese, Paul Cavallo, Council President Christopher Johnson, Dino Mercadante, Robert Rossi, Rosemary Sandlin, Gerald Smith, Anthony Suffriti and Mario Tedeschi. Councilor Gina Letellier was absent. With ten present, there was a quorum.

### **Item B. Moment of Silence and the Pledge of Allegiance.**

Council President Johnson asked for a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Item C. Public Hearing on TR-2019-82**

Council President Johnson explained the purpose the Special Meeting and how he was going to conduct the Public Hearing. Council President Johnson declared the Public Hearing opened at 7:03pm. He was going to read the names of people that signed up to speak in order. The following people spoke:

Susan Grossberg, 137 Moore Street, Agawam (opposed)  
Cynthia Clemens, Safe Harbor Day Care (opposed)  
Marcia Haas, 170 Adams Street, Agawam (opposed)  
Nancy Bobskill, 13 Columbia Drive, Feeding Hills (opposed)  
Wendy Hollis, 42 Edgewater Road, Agawam (opposed)  
Abbey Massaro, 76 Horsham Place, Feeding Hills (opposed)  
Corinne Wingard, 194 Elm Street, Agawam (opposed)  
Henry Kozloski, 102 Meadow Street, Agawam (in favor)  
Vin Ronghi, 55 Avalon Place, Feeding Hills (in favor)  
Diane Arventos, 579 Cooper Street (opposed)  
William Bobskill, 13 Columbia Drive, Feeding Hills (opposed)  
Edward Cecchi, 1342 Suffield Street, Agawam (opposed)  
Catherine McDougal, 22 Vadnais Street, Feeding Hills (opposed)

No one spoke in name only in favor. The following spoke in opposition name only:

Eileen Ratkiewicz, 28 Wright, Street, Agawam  
Susasn Avondo, 248 High Street, Agawam  
Kathleen Breuninger, 348 North Street, Feeding Hills  
Leonard Scott, 70 Cleveland Street, Feeding Hills  
Lucille Gionfriddo, 110 Clover Hill, Feeding Hills  
Dick Hass, 170 Adams Street, Agawam

Council President declared the Public Hearing closed at 7:48pm.

**Item D.**

***TR-2019-82 - A Resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into consent for shared occupancy of Right of Way Easement Agreements between the Town of Agawam and Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company, LLC regarding the upgrade to the pipeline (Mayor Sapelli)***

Council President Johnson asked for a Motion to remove the item from the table. Motion to remove the item from the table made by Council Vice President Calabrese and seconded by Councilor Cavallo. Motion to approve made by Council Vice President Calabrese and seconded by Councilor Cavallo.

Council President Johnson stated that this project has already been federally approved and it is not the job of the City Council to approve or disapprove this project. The City Council is only here to vote on the easements and most of the issues raised this evening were beyond the purview of the City Council. He stated that most of Susan Grossberg's questions could be addressed through the FERC decision which is found online. If the City Council chose to say no to this then the FERC decision granted Tennessee Gas the right to take these by eminent domain which would mean less money for the town.

Council President Johnson stated that the FERC decision went into great detail about using an electric compressor as opposed to a gas compressor. The main goal of this project is to improve distribution. There was a map that one of the previous speakers referred to however that shows Columbia Gas leaks and not those of Tennessee Gas. Electricity is only considered renewable if it is generated by wind, solar, etc and can reduce our carbon footprint. Council President again went over the streets included in the looping project noting that the majority of this project crosses four streets and only one (Gold Street) will be cut – the others are going under the street and shouldn't affect the streets. A person asked for an implementation plan however Tennessee Gas must demonstrate that plan to FERC in order to be approved. Council President Johnson explained that need for this project noting that Tennessee Gas must demonstrate forty percent additional capacity to FERC. The cost of this project cannot be placed solely on residents so it is not a stranded asset of the taxpayers of Agawam. Again, FERC is a decision making body and in the scope of things, this is a relatively small project and in the end of their decision, FERC was unanimous. Hearing the complaints of several residents, the Administration worked with Tennessee Gas to revise the agreement for damages which would give the town \$150,000. Tennessee Gas is required by the terms of the easements to restore the properties to their original state and if anything goes wrong, they would have to fix it. The previous language was confusing at best but now is abundantly clear.

Council President Johnson again clarified that the City Council is being asked only to allow the expansion of the easements that already exist – not to approve the project – and do what's best for the Town of Agawam. Tennessee Gas will have to monitor this and do periodic inspections whereas the local distribution companies like Columbia Gas do not have to do that. If however, Tennessee Gas does not demonstrate the need for this increase, then that is the only way it would not go through.

Councilor Tedeschi thanked Council President Johnson for the summation and read the FERC decision as well. He appreciated everyone that came out and agreed with Council President Johnson. Council Vice President Calabrese liked what Mr. Kozloski had to say and feels confident that our Conservation Commission is on top of things. Councilor Bitzas thanked everyone for attending this evening and stated he learned a lot. He sympathized but noted it is not up to the City Council. Instead of receiving \$50,000 for the easements, we are now going to receive \$150,000.00 By principle he feels he should vote no but his job is to look at the money to the town which can be put to good use for the taxpayers. Councilor Suffriti echoes Councilor Bitzas' comments appreciating all who came out and all of the information that

was presented. Council President Johnson did a great job explaining everything. Councilor Smith also thanked everyone but feels the town is in good hands and as councilors, we need to do what is best for the town. Councilor Mercadante also thanked everyone stating they certainly got their points across. He thanked Council President Johnson for clearing up so much of the information. He also stated that we are in good hands with Henry Kozloski as nothing gets by him and his commission. Councilor Cavallo appreciated everyone's opinions and commended them. He also stated that we are between a rock and a hard place with our vote. Councilor Rossi also thanked everyone and said after reading all of the information in the FERC decision and the information at hand; this truly is something beyond our control. One of his questions was what would happen if Columbia Gas backed out. Council President Johnson answered that that issue was also addressed in the FERC decision. Councilor Sandlin stated that she would be voting with the people noting they made their case. Council President Johnson wrapped it up with one additional comment – Tennessee Gas shall file a written statement with the signed precedence agreements. He also noted that this was one of the toughest decisions the Council has had to make and although we agree with a lot of what has been said, we are not voting on whether or not the project goes through.

The vote was **9 YES, 1 NO** (Councilor Sandlin), **1 ABSENT** (Councilor Letellier) approving the item.

**Item E. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn moved and seconded around the house. Meeting was adjourned at 8:20pm.