

REGULAR MEETING OF THE AGAWAM CITY COUNCIL

Minutes dated April 1, 2019

Meeting was called to order by Council President Johnson at 7:01pm in the Auditorium at the Agawam Junior High School, 1305 Springfield Street, Feeding Hills.

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, Robert Magovern, Dino Mercadante, Joseph Mineo, Robert Rossi, Rosemary Sandlin and Anthony Suffriti. Councilor Gina Letellier was absent. Council President Johnson sent prayers along to Gina for a speedy recovery. 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. Citizen's Speak Time

None

Item D. Minutes

1. Regular Council Meeting – March 18, 2019

Motion to approve the minutes was moved by Councilor Mercadante and seconded by Councilor Sandlin. Voice vote approved.

Item E. Declaration from Council President

None

Item F. Presentation of Resolutions

1. TR-2019-21 - A Resolution confirming the appointment of William Clark, 26 High Meadow Road, Feeding Hills, MA to the Energy Commission to a term expiring on April 1, 2022 (Mayor Sapelli)

Motion to approve made by Councilor Sandlin and seconded by Councilors Mineo and Mercadante. There was no discussion.

The vote was **10 YES, 0 NO, 1 ABSENT** (Councilor Letellier) approving the item.

2. TR-2019-22 - A Resolution to appropriate and authorize the borrowing of \$1,279,000.00 to pay for the costs of covering the existing streetlights throughout the town to LED lights (Mayor Sapelli) (Referred to Finance Committee)

Motion to approve made by Councilor Cavallo and seconded by Councilor Bitzas. As a member of the Finance Committee, Council Vice President Calabrese gave the report stating that this item would need to be amended to include a ten percent contingency which she would do after discussion. Most of the poles would remain with Eversource. There are 2197 poles in town. This resolution is to convert existing lights to LED which will result in

extreme savings to the town. The completion date is June 30, 2020 to be eligible for the grant. Motion to send a positive recommendation to the Full Council was moved by Councilor Cavallo and seconded by Councilor Mercadante. The vote of the committee was 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Letellier).

Motion to amend to add the ten percent contingency was made by Council Vice President Calabrese amending the amount to \$1,406,900.00 which was seconded by Councilor Sandlin. The vote was **10 YES, 0 NO, 1 ABSENT** (Councilor Letellier) approving the amendment.

Main Motion as amended was now discussed. Councilor Bitzas began by thanking Marc Strange for getting this grant of \$300,000.00 which will save the town over \$200,000 per year once they are all replaced. Councilor Suffriti noted this was initiated by the Energy Commission and said this is more than just above cost savings but that we are actually changing the carbon footprint of our town and providing brighter lighting. He is proud that Agawam is moving in the right direction. Councilor Sandlin stated this bond will have a huge payback period of five years and the town is “putting money where our mouth is”.

The vote was **10 YES, 0 NO, 1 ABSENT** (Councilor Letellier) approving the item *as amended*.

Item G. Report of Council Committees

None.

Item H. Elections

None.

Item I. Public Hearings

None.

Item J. Old Business

- 1. TOR-2019-3 - An Ordinance to amend Section 49-7(A)(2) of the Code of the Town of Agawam to increase the salary of the Mayor (Councilor Christopher Johnson) (1 of Two Readings) (Referred to Legislative Committee)**

Motion to approve the first reading made by Councilor Bitzas and seconded by Councilor Suffriti. As Chair of the Legislative Committee, Councilor Magovern provided the report stating that it has been over ten years since the Mayor’s salary was adjusted. In the past thirty years the Mayor’s salary has only been adjusted twice. West Springfield pays their mayor \$40,000 more per year. In 2018, the Mayor’s salary wasn’t even in the top 100 salaries in town. Even Deputy Department Heads’ salaries are higher than the current mayoral salary. Councilor Rossi would like to see across the board 20% raises for all elected officials. Councilor Mercadante noted the problem is the high salaries of the Department Heads along with the recent tax increases and upcoming storm water fees. He feels a possible solution would be to reorganize the departments and rewrite job descriptions and lower the salaries. Councilor Rossi agreed. Councilor Bitzas believed this was the wrong time to give any increases in salaries. Councilor Sandlin was against this noting it was not the right time with the budget coming up. It was also mentioned that union contracts are up for negotiations this year and if everyone received a 2% raise that that too is a huge financial impact on the budget. Motion to send a positive recommendation to the Full Council made by Council Vice President Calabrese and seconded by Councilor Rossi. The vote was 1 YES (Councilor Calabrese), 4 NO.

Discussion began with Councilor Mercadante who was present at the sub-committee meeting stating that he was not in favor of this proposal. He received a call from a senior citizen who was complaining about how much their taxes went up. He has so much respect for the new Mayor and this has nothing to do with him personally but we have to draw the line somewhere. Unfortunately so many others make more than the mayor does but now is not the time to adjust this. Our house evaluations went up. Our taxes went up. People only look at the amount of money being taken out of their

pockets. He said we need to stop the hemorrhaging in town and the City Council needs to have the will to do the right thing. Councilor Mineo has nothing against our Mayor but he agreed the timing for this is not right and our taxes went up an extreme amount. The budgets are going up – we have union contracts to deal with. He believes everyone deserves a raise and he was in favor of this two years ago but a lot has changed in two years and he is not in favor of this at this point in time. Councilor Rossi noted that it is during budget time that we should be making these arguments. He believes it should include *all* elected officials and not just the Mayor. There hasn't been a raise for any elected officials in over ten years. He suggests not defeating this but rather to go back to the drawing board and look at the overall picture to create another ordinance. It is unfair to deny this because someone cannot pay their taxes. Council President Johnson stepped from the Chair to say he is looking forward to the next few months of budget review since he learned that it is the will of the Council that no one should be getting raises. He hopes the Council carries through on that when the budget is presented by the Mayor. He hopes there is unanimous consensus when they see a salary reserve item and cuts it. Council President Johnson also learned in the sub-committee that the School Budget is going up and is optimistic that the School Budget Sub-Committee will come to the Council and say they are not recommending the School Budget which has had an increase each year since he's been back. The reality is that taxes go up because the Council voted to pass the budget as submitted by the Mayor which has an increase in taxes spelled out in black and white. The tax increase is not based on property values going up but because the Council voted to pass a budget that contained a tax increase. He hears the will of the Council and looks forward to seeing if the Council will carry that out over the next few months. He also mentioned that it is the same people that argue about not wanting tax increases that are the first ones to step in line to say increase the budget. As Councilor Mineo aptly pointed out, the Mayor will be negotiating all eight unions and all the School Department's contracts are also up so hopefully the City Council will carry forth its mandate and say if we want to draw the line on taxes, then we cannot increase employee salaries – those are far and away the number one item in the town budget.. Council President Johnson went on to say he applauds the Council for wanting to draw the line but hopes they remain consistent over the next few months when reviewing the budget. As Councilor Perry always said when you get to the point of setting the tax rate, it's too late – you have to pay the piper. The time to do that is at budget time and when Council President Johnson listened to the Councilors at the sub-committee, he is extremely hopeful that they will all maintain the same rhetoric when passing the budget. Councilor Magovern felt the hardship of the increase in taxes. He believes that the Mayor deserved an increase but maybe not so high but it should be competitive. Council Vice President Calabrese agrees with what Council President Johnson said about budget cuts and applauds being fiscal conservative. Councilor Mercadante is concerned as it pertains to the citizens. Other cities' mayors make the same as our mayor. He believes as Department Heads retire then we can adjust them at that time. Councilor Cavallo talked about the School Budget and that 85% of that budget is salaries.

The vote was **2 YES** (Councilors Calabrese and Johnson), **8 NO** (Councilors Bitzas, Cavallo, Magovern, Mercadante, Mineo, Rossi, Sandlin and Suffriti), and **1 ABSENT** (Councilor Letellier) defeating the item.

Item K. New Business

- 1. TR-2019-23 - A Resolution accepting a grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 53A in relation to the Sustainable Materials Recovery Program (Mayor Sapelli)**

Next Agenda.

- 2. TR-2019-24 - A Resolution to name the large conference room located at the Agawam Public Library the “Judith Clini Conference Room” (Mayor Sapelli)**

Next Agenda.

- 3. TR-2019-25 - A Resolution appropriating from the Community Preservation Fund and authorizing the expenditure of Community Preservation Funds for design and engineering services for the Learning Tree Conservation Park (CPA)**

Referred to Community Relations Committee, next Agenda.

Item L. Any other matter that may legally come before the City Council.

Councilor Cavallo reminded everyone that on April 4th there is the final School Budget joint meeting. He also mentioned witnessing a good deed by two local Police Officers helping an elderly man. Councilors Suffriti congratulated Will Clark on his appointment. He is thrilled to have healthy debates that are done with professionalism. He added that he too witnessed a good deed in Feeding Hills center when a blind man was attempting to cross the street. A police officer swung into the middle to stop traffic in the intersection while a Pride worker lent a hand to help the gentleman across the road. Proud to be here and see so many acts of kindness in our town. Councilor Sandlin thanked the Mayor for fixing the sidewalk on Springfield Street towards Feeding Hills center. Councilor Mineo told the councilors to “sharpen their pencils” for the upcoming budget. Council President Johnson mentioned the Mayor’s Water Challenge encouraging Agawam to become the most water wise community. Councilor Sandlin challenged all of the councilors at the meeting to do this and hoped by the next meeting everyone had done it.

Item M. Adjournment.

The Motion to adjourn was moved and seconded around the house. Meeting was adjourned at 7:34pm.

As Amended

Approved

TR-2019-21

A RESOLUTION CONFIRMING THE APPOINTMENT OF WILLIAM CLARK, 26 HIGH MEADOW ROAD, FEEDINGS HILLS, MA TO THE ENERGY COMMISSION TO A TERM EXPIRING ON APRIL 1, 2022

WHEREAS, a vacancy currently exists on the Energy Commission; and WHEREAS, the Mayor has appointed William Clark, 26 High Meadow Road, Feeding Hills, MA to the Agawam Energy Commission to a term expiring on April 1, 2022; and NOW THEREFORE, THE AGAWAM CITY COUNCIL hereby resolves to confirm the appointment of William Clark, 26 High Meadow Road, Feeding Hills, MA to the Energy Commission effective April 1, 2019 to a term expiring on April 1, 2022.

DATED THIS 1st DAY OF April, 2019

PER ORDER OF THE AGAWAM CITY COUNCIL Christopher C. Johnson, President, Agawam City Council

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY Stephen J. Buoniconti, City Solicitor

Org - Tnck cc - Council cc - Energy Com. cc - Mayor

A RESOLUTION TO APPROPRIATE AND AUTHORIZE THE BORROWING OF ONE MILLION FOUR HUNDRED AND SIX THOUSAND AND NINE HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$1,406,900.00) TO PAY FOR THE COSTS OF CONVERTING THE EXISTING STREETLIGHTS THROUGHOUT TOWN TO LED LIGHTS

(Sponsored by Mayor William P. Sapelli)

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is the regional planning agency serving the people who live and work in the 101 cities and towns of Metropolitan Boston; and WHEREAS, MAPC is the chosen administrator for the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) Massachusetts Rapid LED Streetlight Conversion Program; and WHEREAS, retrofitting existing streetlights to LEDs can reduce energy usage by those streetlights by up to 70%, improve the quality of the street lighting, and reduce light pollution; and WHEREAS, any municipality that is served by Eversource, that owns or plans to own their existing streetlights, and that has or will complete a streetlight audit is eligible for grant funding under this program; and WHEREAS, the Town of Agawam has contracted with a vendor to conduct an audit of the town's existing streetlights; and WHEREAS, MAPC requires a municipality to subscribe to the program to be eligible for grant funding and to take advantage of MAPC's collective procurement; and WHEREAS, the Town of Agawam has subscribed to and been accepted into the program; and WHEREAS, MAPC estimates that the total cost of the LED streetlight retrofitting (including \$626,483 to buy back the streetlights from Eversource) will be \$1,279,000; and WHEREAS, MAPC estimates that the Town of Agawam will receive an incentive payment from Eversource in the amount of \$184,174; and WHEREAS, MAPC has awarded the Town of Agawam a grant in the amount of \$116,879; and WHEREAS, the total net cost of the project will be \$977,894 after the utility incentive and MAPC grant; and WHEREAS, MAPC estimates that retrofitting the town's streetlights with LED lights will save the town approximately \$220,000 per year in energy costs, which represents a 4.4 year payback period; and WHEREAS, the Town of Agawam must commit to funding the entire estimated cost to be eligible to receive the utility incentive and the MAPC grant; and WHEREAS, the Town of Agawam has employed a standard business practice of including an additional ten (10) percent of the projected cost of a capital project to address contingencies; and WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the Town of Agawam to appropriate and authorize the funds necessary to convert the Town streetlights to LED lights.

First Reading, DeKalb Second Reading

TOR-2019-3

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND SECTION 49-7(A)(2) OF THE CODE OF THE TOWN OF AGAWAM TO INCREASE THE SALARY OF THE MAYOR (Sponsored by Councilor Christopher Johnson)

NOW THEREFORE THE AGAWAM CITY COUNCIL HEREBY RESOLVES TO AUTHORIZE THE FOLLOWING:

One Million Four Hundred and Six Thousand and Nine Hundred Dollars (\$1,406,900) is appropriated for the conversion of streetlights to LED, and further, that to meet this appropriation, the Treasurer, with the approval of the Mayor, is authorized to borrow One Million Four Hundred and Six Thousand and Nine Hundred Dollars (\$1,406,900) to pay costs of this project, including the payment of all costs incidental and related thereto, under M.G.L. c. 44, §7 or any other enabling legislation; that the Mayor is authorized to contract for and expend any grants or aid available for the project, provided that the amount of the authorized borrowing shall be reduced by the amount of such aid received prior to the issuance of bonds or notes under this resolution; and further, that any premium received by the Town upon the sale of any bonds or notes approved by this resolution, less any such premium applied to the payment of the cost of issuance of such bonds or notes, may be applied to the payment of costs approved by this resolution 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.

DATED this 1st day of April, 2019

PER ORDER OF THE AGAWAM CITY COUNCIL Christopher C. Johnson, President

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY Stephen J. Buoniconti, City Solicitor

Org - Tnck cc - Council cc - Auditor cc - Treasurer cc - Planning cc - DPW

WHEREAS, according to the Code of the Town of Agawam, the last time the salary for the position of Mayor was adjusted was in January of 2008; WHEREAS, in 2018, the position of Mayor was not amongst the top 100 highest paid employees of the Town of Agawam, including School Department employees; WHEREAS, all employees of the Town of Agawam, including School Department employees have seen significant increases in their salaries since January of 2008; WHEREAS, most area communities with the mayoral form of government have increased the salary for the position of Mayor since January of 2008; WHEREAS, in order to attract qualified individuals to run for the position of Mayor, Agawam needs to offer a salary commensurate with the duties and responsibilities of the position; and

NOW THEREFORE, THE AGAWAM CITY COUNCIL hereby resolves, ordains and enacts the following amendment to Section 49-7(A)(2) of the Code of the Town of Agawam:

§ 49-7(A)(2) Amend the last sentence to read: "The Mayor shall receive an annual salary of \$110,000.00 (effective with the commencement of the term beginning January, 2020).

DATED THIS OF 2019.

PER ORDER OF THE AGAWAM CITY COUNCIL

Christopher C. Johnson, President

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY

Stephen J. Buoniconti, Solicitor

cc - Clerk cc - Council