

**METHUEN CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
GREAT HALL, SEARLES BUILDING
May 17, 2010 - 7:00 p.m.**

Chairman Cronin called the Regular meeting of the Methuen City Council, scheduled for May 17, 2010 to order with all members present

ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

MOTION BY: Councilor Zanni seconded by Councilor Campagnone to accept the agenda as posted.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Rev. Dan Trepanier of Fellowship Bible Church gave the Invocation.

Chairman Cronin asked for a moment of silence for Donna Hebert a former school department employee who passed away.

Everyone remained standing for the Pledge of Allegiance

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

MOTION BY: Councilor Zanni seconded by Councilor Campagnone to waive the reading and accept the minutes of previous meetings: May 3,2010

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

CORRESPONDENCE/PROCLAMATIONS: Clerk read correspondence into the record from Commander Frank Shimko and Quartermaster Henry Dube of the V.F.W Post 8439 Veterans of Foreign Wars thanking the City for the help in solving a sewer problem at the post home.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Karen Hayden Director of MCTV spoke on in favor of resolution TR-10-31 calling for the support of the City Council to approve passage of the Community Access Preservation Act. This will amend the Cable Act to ensure that PEG fees can be used for PEG purposes and permit schools, governments, individuals to provide and receive information about local events, emergencies and local issues. PEG encourages creation of local programming by civic groups and non-profits, cover government and school meetings and promotes informational programming. She is asking for support of this resolution in order to continue to serve the residents of Methuen.

Julie O'Neil, Jamie Atkinson, George Scione, Ralph Prolman, Lynne Kumn, Lucille Donegan all spoke in support of the new renovation of Methuen High School. They all commented on the current high school being outdated, unsafe and not a good environment for learning. They called for unity among the Council and the Mayor to accomplish this goal and not fail the generations of youth in Methuen. Loosing accreditation will force residents to move out of Methuen, loosing growth and revenue. The Council and the Mayor were elected to do what is best for Methuen. Our students should be afforded the same quality education for learning as a private school. It is wrong for the teachers to use the students as blackmail; they should step up and do their fair share. The high school as it is, does not provide the 21st century education that our students deserve. The new high school will benefit the children now and in the future and will be what is good for the community. City Council was elected to make decisions for the good of the community. A top-notch school system will benefit everyone who owns a home in Methuen. The shortfall in the current budget that may result in layoffs to city employees should be treated as a separate issue. It is the hope that concessions can be made to save jobs. They called for Council to be united with the Mayor, provide infrastructure for the future, do the right thing for Methuen and support the high school renovation project.

Guy D'Ambrosio: Stated that with the current economy and the deficit of 6.5 million dollars this is not a good time to talk new high school. He agrees Methuen needs a new high school but he believes the city is putting the cart before the horse. Is there a back-up plan? There are questions to ask before we can consider a new high school. Is there a true assessment of the situation Methuen is facing? The teachers and administrators do not want to make concessions. How can the public sector make concessions? This is not the time to rush to judgment on this. To layoff police and fire is not a wise move. Layoffs should start at City Hall at the top. Have we looked at going lean as a city? Does a thirty-year loan go to the voter? Is there a plan to upgrade the Central school and is that rolled into the cost of the new high school or is it separate? He agrees we need a new school but at what cost do we need this new high school? Council should consider the word veto (at this time) on behalf of future generations. Be smart and do not make a serious mistake at this time.

School Committeeman Kenneth Willette said that he realizes this is a difficult decision and Council is entitled to have the answers to their questions but the 69% reimbursement may not be there in another year and we should not penalize the students because of the previous administration's blunder of not acting on this project when we could have gotten a 90% reimbursement. Mr. Willette realizes that the City side did step up last year with massive concessions, a 10% cut to balance the budget and he commended them for that. The school department unions are not doing the same. The end goal should be to approve this project because we may lose accreditation, property values will collapse, businesses will not move into Methuen. Mr. Willette asked that Council vote the six votes needed for the new high school so we do not lose accreditation.

Bill Laverriere 5 Celia Circle said he is a fisherman and was asking if the boat ramp would be ready for this year?

Chairman Cronin stated the Mayor is not at this meeting and he would be the one to answer questions regarding the boat ramp. He will forward the question to the Mayor.

PUBLIC SERVICE

LICENSES:

Anthony Ngethe-Nursecare Transportation-Livery-75 Swan Street Methuen – Renewal

MOTION BY: Councilor Zanni seconded by Councilor Hajjar to table.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

OTHER OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilor Pappalardo asked City Auditor Thomas Kelley what the amount of deficit for the city is?

Mr. Kelley stated at this time it is 6.5 million

Councilor Pappalardo asked if the city has come to a solution regarding the health insurance?

Mr. Kelley said he met with the unions (today) another proposal was presented to them. They want to analyze it to determine what the costs will be. They will meet again next week and figure out what they need to budget for those line items.

Councilor Pappalardo asked if everything fails and there is no compromise, what will that do to the budget?

Mr. Kelley said the Mayor would be at a total impasse and we may end up in court in front of an arbitrator to decide. We are not at that point, we are still negotiating, they understand the impact but we have to continue to wait.

Councilor Pappalardo asked if that would bring the deficit up higher?

Mr. Kelley said if the plan were renewed as is, the city would have to come up with an additional 3.2 million versus the 1.5 the Mayor is offering. It would be another 1.7 million.

Councilor Pappalardo said that would bring the deficit up from 6.5 to another 1.7 on top of that.

Councilor Giordano asked if there is a budget yet.

Mr. Kelley said he has a budget he submitted to the Mayor with the salaries established to where they were prior to taking the 10% cut. The Mayor has asked department heads to submit a 22% cut (and they have). The Mayor has two budgets in front of him and he is working with the unions to negotiate before he can put any solid numbers down.

Chairman Cronin asked if there are any numbers from the State?

Mr. Kelley stated the last one he received was from the House Ways and Means where they reduced the chapter 70 amounts from 41 million down to 38 million. They have not changed the net school-spending requirement that the cities must give the school department. What normally happens in this situation is to put the net school spending out and they put the cherry sheet amount out, if any changes were made to chapter 70 (they have not made any changes yet) they would reduce the obligations the city has to pay the school department.

Chairman Cronin stated as it stands right now that could add another 3 million dollars to the net school spending which could put the deficit up over 11 million dollars.

Mr. Kelley stated it could get that high if things do not change. Historically we have seen that when they change the chapter 70 amount they will decrease the net school spending down but that has not been done yet.

Chairman Cronin stated that is why he is saying this is a very difficult decision for Councilors to make. We could be going from 6.5 million (in one sentence) up to 11.2 or 11.7. The City Council does not know where they stand. They have no numbers at all before them and it is much too early for (him) to consider this right now. There is no information and that is the problem. Chairman Cronin thinks Councilors wants to vote for the new high school (he is on the school building committee) but we cannot pull the money out of thin air.

Councilor Zanni stated this is pre mature. We are talking about deficits but we do not know what the deficit is. We do not have the actual numbers from the State. We cannot talk deficit without those numbers. We have no numbers regarding the health options. Instead of escalating numbers, lets get those numbers before Council and then we can articulate what the points are. We do not have the figures and it is important to wait. Talking deficits is not an answer to anything.

Councilor Campagnone stated that it is time we get the budget and the figures to work and make a decision for the good of the community to move ahead.

Councilor Hajjar asked the auditor if the plan presented to Council shows \$500,000 dollars a year going to the high school. The impact (high school project) is \$500,000 dollars in 2011 (correct?). Regardless of every other number you have thrown out what is the cost to us every year? What does this show?

Mr. Kelley stated that is \$500,000 dollars that is showing going into the stabilization fund, it will not come out of the tax rate; it is going to be used by using one-time revenues coming in from...(interrupted)

Councilor Hajjar said the high school project, if we vote for this, in the 2011 budget the impact with this project is \$500,000 dollars?

Mr. Kelley stated "no".

Councilor Hajjar asked what is the impact?

Mr. Kelley answered, "zero".

Chairman Cronin said that is not true, that is misleading the public, that is not true and he (Mr. Kelley) knows that.

Mr. Kelley stated he (Clr Hajjar) is asking the question...

Chairman Cronin stated Mr. Kelley you are going to take a million dollars that we are going to get from Toll Brothers, that would normally go into the operating budget to pay health care, pensions systems, pay salaries and you are going to put that money toward the school. That means that money is not going to reduce those other bills that we owe, that is an impact.

Councilor Zanni asked that we go on with the posted agenda items.

Chairman Cronin stated that Council would continue on with the agenda as posted because the High School issue is not on the agenda and it should not even be discussed.

OLD BUSINESS RESOLUTIONS

TR-10-29 Resolution Accepting a Gift of \$500.00 for the City of Methuen's Recreation Department- From the Law office of Zanni and Pesce 235 Merrimack Street Methuen Ma.

MOTION BY: Councilor Giordano seconded by Councilor Campagnone to accept.
UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

ORDINANCES None

NEW BUSINESS

TR-10-31 Resolution Calling Upon the Support of the City Council of the City of Methuen for the Passage of the Community Access Preservation Act (HR3745). (Request Clr Uliano)

MOTION BY: Councilor Giordano seconded by Councilor Campagnone to adopt
UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Councilor Kannan recognized a resident from the audience and asked that she be allowed to speak before Council.

Chairman Cronin allowed the request.

Pat Saunders, 16 Benefit Street, Methuen. A 20-year resident, five children in the school system stated this is a very important issue. How do we get this on the agenda so that Councilors can make their decision?

Chairman Cronin stated that the Mayor has to present it to Council. On the 26 (or) 27th of this month the Mayor is going to go before the Building Committee at the State where he will present a finance plan. The same finance plan presented by the Auditor. The State has to approve that plan first. The Mayor from that time has 120 days to bring back a plan before this Council.

Ms. Saunders said this year's budget has nothing to do with our children's needs twenty years down the road. Council needs to separate the two and get the information from the Mayor. Ms Saunders feels this is negative stonewalling.

Chairman Cronin stated this is not stonewalling, Council cannot vote on anything that is not before them. Councilors cannot vote on this (high school) until the Mayor presents it before Council

Ms Saunders feels that discussing the budgets and elevating the numbers was a ploy because that was not on the agenda.

Chairman Cronin stated the budget and the numbers (for the high school) are part of what was discussed.

TR-10-32 Resolution Authorizing Expenditure from Castle Fund (\$14,676)

MOTION BY: Councilor Uliano seconded by Councilor Campagnone to adopt.
UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

TR-10-33 Resolution Submitting a Home Rule Petition for the Purpose of exempting Christopher J. Lane from the maximum age Requirement as a Police Officer in the City of Methuen

MOTION BY: Councilor Campagnone seconded by Councilor Giordano to adopt

Chairman Cronin said this person has taken the exam, by the time it was certified he was over the age limit. This is not going against any rule Council has done this before. Councilor Campagnone stated this person has passed the test but Civil Service delayed sending his name forward to the community. This is so he can be placed on the Reserve List.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

ANY OTHER BUSINESS FOR THE GOOD AND WELFARE OF THE COMMUNITY

REQUEST OF COUNCIL

ADJOURN

MOTION BY: Councilor Zanni seconded by Councilor Campagnone to adjourn

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Meeting was adjourned at 7:55 PM

I do hereby certify that at a meeting of which a quorum was present the Methuen City Council approved the foregoing minutes by a unanimous vote on June 7,2010

Submitted By: Diane Lasonde/Secretary