

Minutes
Town Council Steering Committee Special Meeting
September 26, 2016
Town Hall Conference Room B

1. The meeting was called to order at 5:35 PM.
Present: Thomas Pope, Lisa Thomas, Richard Williams
Also present: Beth Bauer, Acting Town Manager
Absent: Julie Blanchard

2. **Acceptance of Minutes:**
Richard Williams moved to accept the minutes of the Steering Committee meeting on August 22, 2016. The motion was seconded by Lisa Thomas and carried on unanimous vote.

3. **Reports:**
 - A. **Chairman:** Thomas Pope: No report.
 - 1) **Consolidation of Committees/Boards & Commissions:** Thomas Pope said we have a tremendous number of openings and some commissions have seven to nine members. Do we really need that many? Can we slice the number to five? Lisa Thomas said the challenge then becomes potential quorum issues. She thinks seven might be the most we could reduce it to. Thomas said if there are so many uncommitted people that they can't show up to form a quorum then perhaps they should not be on the committee. Lisa said perhaps. We deal with it all the time. The procedure has been for the committee chair to manage it and then make the Council aware if there are issues. She doesn't think there are that many commissions that have issues. Thomas said there are some that are on the cusp. Cable Advisory has no one on it. Lisa said they are our liaison with Charter Communications if people have any issues. Because it is vacant now doesn't mean we couldn't fill it in the future. Richard Williams said he would be interested in serving on that committee in the future. Thomas said John Elsesser was going to look through some old records to see if we can tighten these groups up if possible. Lisa asked if there is a certain problem. Thomas said the number of vacancies. Lisa asked if reducing the number that serve would solve the problem. Thomas noted the Insurance Advisory Committee – they have five seats and four of them are empty. Richard asked what Thomas thinks we should do. Thomas said ideally we would come up with people to serve. But volunteers aren't what they used to be. In the 50s and 60s there were a great number of volunteers but it keeps diminishing. He is not sure whether some of these boards couldn't be abolished or combined. Lisa said it is worth looking at. Richard asked what Thomas would like to do. Thomas replied there are a couple committees that have to do with energy. Lisa said that one has always been filled and active. We could reduce conservation corps, but that is an ad-hoc group. It could get wrapped up into Parks and Recreation. Thomas said these are just some things to think about. Richard asked how we would go about reducing committee size. Lisa said we would have to change the charge. Sometimes they are created by ordinance. Richard said then we should change them because it has been an ongoing problem for years. Committees haven't been able to meet because they haven't had a quorum. Thomas said we put the call out in the Town newsletter, Facebook, etc., but we are just not getting

volunteers. It's a problem.

4. **Resignations:**

Resignations were noted for Robert McMahon from the Board of Assessment Appeals and Susan Palmer from the Cemetery Commission. A letter of acknowledgement with thanks for their service will be sent.

5. **Reappointments:**

A. Cemetery Commission, Vieten: Lisa Thomas moved to recommend the reappointment of Anne Vieten to the Cemetery Commission, term to expire 10/17/19. The motion was seconded by Richard Williams and carried on unanimous vote.

B. Planning & Zoning Commission, Pollansky: Richard Williams moved to recommend the reappointment of Darby Pollansky to the Planning & Zoning Commission, term to expire 11/1/19. The motion was seconded by Thomas Pope. Lisa Thomas expressed concern about recommending this reappointment because she feels the way Ms. Pollansky has been conducting herself for almost two years now is in total conflict with her role on P&Z. As members of boards and commissions we need to be held to higher standard and she doesn't feel Ms. Pollansky has done that. Thomas said he doesn't think you lose your rights as a citizen when you serve on a Board or Commission, and if Ms. Pollansky wants to have an appeal or dispute she should be able to do that. Lisa replied she feels Ms. Pollansky has blatantly disregarded all the steps she has said she would follow. Thomas said this is an individual applicant's issue and has nothing to do with her role on P&Z. Lisa disagreed. The motion to recommend the reappointment of Darby Pollansky to the Planning & Zoning Commission carried with Thomas Pope and Richard Williams in favor and Lisa Thomas opposed.

C. Planning & Zoning Alternate, Hall: Lisa Thomas moved to recommend the reappointment of Steven Hall as an alternate to the Planning & Zoning Commission, term to expire 11/1/19. The motion was seconded by Richard Williams and carried on unanimous vote.

D. WPCA, Murphy: Richard Williams moved to recommend the reappointment of Daniel Murphy to the WPCA, term to expire 11/7/18. The motion was seconded by Lisa Thomas and carried on unanimous vote.

E. WPCA, Wilmot: Lisa Thomas moved to recommend the reappointment of Lyndon Wilmot to the WPCA, term to expire 11/7/18. The motion was seconded by Richard Williams and carried on unanimous vote.

6. **Appointments:**

A. Cemetery Commission, Sabino: Beth Bauer noted she doesn't think there is an opening on the Commission at the present time. The Council recently appointed Michael Chapman, so there are three Democrats serving on the Commission now and Ms. Sabino is a Democrat. Tabled for further investigation.

B. Housing Rehab/Fair Housing, Pinkston: Concern over a possible conflict of interest was discussed. Tabled for more information.

C. Board of Assessment Appeals, Lewis: Lisa Thomas moved to recommend the appointment of Joan Lewis to the Board of Assessment Appeals to fill the McMahon vacancy, new term to expire 11/1/19. The motion was seconded by Richard Williams and carried on unanimous vote.

7. Condition of Roads, Waterfront Manor Association:

The committee discussed residents' complaints which indicate the Town accepted these roads and allowed them to deteriorate. The Town has responded that although we accepted the roads they were not in greatest shape. (DPW Director) Mark Kiefer says these roads should never have been taken in the first place. Lisa Thomas expressed concern for how the Council will know what action to take - P&Z had recommended these be accepted, as had the Town Engineer. We need to know who to rely on when making decisions to accept roads. Thomas Pope said we can look back at the recommendations to see if the Town was remiss. Perhaps we can request the Town Manager to get some of the backup information so this doesn't happen again.

8. Acceptance of Avery Shores as a Town road:

Thomas Pope noted there is a letter in the agenda packet from John Elsesser to Sam Norman, the neighborhood association representative in this matter. We have not received a response yet. The letter outlines the Town's position. There is not much we can do until we hear back from them. Richard Williams said based upon the last agenda item, we better be careful about accepting this road. Lisa Thomas said she thinks that is why Mark Kiefer put together a detailed list of steps that need to be taken. Thomas said he doesn't want to make the same mistake twice. Sometimes people jump to approve something without looking into it.

9. Tax abatement for seniors:

The committee reviewed a draft ordinance. Thomas Pope asked about Sec. 91-104 in the first paragraph, and whether that is a new section put in by the Town Attorney. He doesn't remember having a conversation at any time that would have lowered the age requirement from age 65 to 60 for the surviving spouse. Is that existing legislation? Beth Bauer replied she believes that is existing language. Thomas said if it is existing language then he understands. If it is new language he doesn't understand how it got in there. Richard Williams asked whether we have gotten the financial ramifications of doing this. Thomas replied no. Thomas asked what the financial impact would be if we adopted this. Beth said she thinks you were talking about taking the current benefit and making the local option 50% of the current benefit. She remembers that the current benefit is in the neighborhood of \$75,000 so we would be adding on approximately \$37,000 per year. Thomas said that uses the logic that everyone currently with the lien would swap over. Beth replied that is a general ballpark. It shows the potential scope.

10. Development of policy governing authority to make inter-fund allocations: Beth Bauer distributed a draft policy for discussion purposes (*attached to these minutes*) that frames the issue as she understands it. Thomas said he thinks the last bullet was the one that was the real question. He is not sure it's whether the Town Council should be informed or whether they should approve the reasons for the transfer. The question came up and it was not necessarily what was done was bad, but what might stop a future Town Manager with less scruples from moving ten people over to lower the budget. He doesn't think this draft addresses that. Being informed is one thing, approving the action is another. The Town voted to approve the budget with those numbers in place. Just transferring at will is perhaps not the way it should be done. He

emphasized this concern is no reflection on John Elsesser. Richard Williams agreed. He doesn't want to tie the Town Manager's hands; he just thinks it should come before the Council. Lisa Thomas asked what the checks and balances would be. Would it not be done if the Council disagrees? Thomas replied yes. Lisa said then she thinks it should say, "...prior to allocation... will approve." Beth said that would be perfectly fine for what happened in this case - we had a permanent reallocation. If there was a temporary reassignment it could become cumbersome to come to the Council because it lengthens the process. Thomas said there are very few funds where we would be doing that. Beth replied there are 3 or 4 that are active, including COVRRRA, sewer use, recreation and ambulance. The budget contains a structure for how we anticipate spending money. With recreation for instance - if some big event occurs in parks and you need the expertise of a public works employee and you add a layer of formal approval, then you are not able to address the needs without going through a more lengthy process. Tom said aren't they in the same budget? Beth said no. Public works is in the general fund and recreation is separate. She would suggest rather than requiring advance approval, building into your policy the Council's ability to reverse a transaction if review produces an objection. That's what we are talking about, not the work that is being performed. Thomas said the issue was transferring one position to another without approval. Beth said the issue as she understands it was the timing. It wasn't that it was unknown - it was discussed but the issue was the timing of when it was going to start. We could add something to this draft about emergency measures. Lisa said it seems like this is getting complicated - she feels the wording doesn't address the issue. The change that triggered this was already approved by the Council. Beth replied there was conversation about this through the budget process. Thomas said it impacted surplus funds from the previous budget by lowering the surplus for that six month period for COVRRRA. We were spending it in a way that was never approved. Nothing that was done was untoward but what is to say something larger couldn't happen in the future. Richard said we would notice. Beth said it is not really a transfer. It is a reallocation of expenditure. There is a monthly process where the Finance Committee reviews financial reports. The opportunity is there to notice and ask questions. Her concern would be if we are going to put a policy together, that it address whatever problem exists. Thomas said we don't want to overreach. Lisa asked whether he feels this draft policy overreaches. Beth said she thinks it speaks to the point that costs need to be associated and appropriately placed in the fund. We have a person working in public works who spends an immense amount of time working on COVRRRA issues but that time was never charged to the COVRRRA fund. What happened this year was there was increased attention to what was coming in and out of COVRRRA. This caused additional scrutiny on how the person was spending her time. Thomas said this is a regular occurrence, not a special event. Beth replied there could be a special event in the future. If we have to shift public works over to do work that is appropriately charged to COVRRRA, we don't want those types of temporary transactions to occur. She doesn't know that you stop that with a policy. Thomas said it may not stop it but if there is a policy at least it gives us the opportunity to say it shouldn't have been done. Richard asked whether we are micro-managing a bit. Thomas said he doesn't think so. When there is a temporary reallocation the Council would be informed if it was required. It was the long-term reallocation that raised the question. Richard said it should go to the Council as part of the budgetary process. Thomas replied it did but it was implemented early. It wasn't an attempt to hide funds or any type of mismanagement. He doesn't think anyone objected. Richard said he objected. It didn't make a lot of sense to him. He thinks the whole COVRRRA budget should be part of the regular budget and not separate. Thomas asked Beth to work on the 5th bullet of the draft for review at the next

committee meeting.

11. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:22 PM on a motion by Lisa Thomas, seconded by Richard Williams and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Stone
Town Council Clerk

ATTACHMENTS

9-26-16 DRAFT

Policy concerning inter-fund allocation of personnel costs

- All personnel salary costs will be charged to the functional account that accurately reflects the work being performed by the employee.
- When the functional designation of work for an employee is appropriately assigned to more than one departments or funds, personnel costs will be allocated to a multiple account codes, using either direct charges for each hour worked or by a percentage of total costs, depending on the simplicity of the tracking method.
- An annual review of these multi department/fund designations will be done by the Town Manager, generally through the budget process.
- Changes to the designation can be made at any time to reflect changes in work flow. When a change in allocation is made affecting more than one fund, the Town Council will be informed of the reasons for and the impact of the change.