

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 17, 2024

President Letterie calls Town Council Meeting to order at 6:30 PM at the DeLeo Sr. Center

ROLL CALL

Present: Councilor Tassinari, Councilor Costigan, Councilor Munson, Councilor DeMarco, Councilor Aiello, Councilor Swope, Councilor DaRos, Vice President Belcher, President Letterie

MINUTES

Motion by Councilor DeMarco to Approve the Approval of Minutes of December 3, 2024 as circulated.
2nd by Vice President Belcher
Councilor DeMarco abstains.
Motion Passed

GENERAL INFORMATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Firefighter, Kevin Gorman, also President of the Firefighters Union. He speaks on behalf of all the Firefighters and how badly a new fire station is needed. **Captain Steve Calandra** speaks on behalf of how the Fire Station has been next for the last several years, it is time! He asks for an election. Let the citizens decide....there is now a new location that the residents believe in. Firefighter Higgenbotham speaks on behalf of the Town Councilors not voting on the motion for the Fire Station and explains certain situations that are unhealthy that the Fire Fighters must endure. We need a new home!

Council President thanks all the Fire Fighters that attended and promises that a Fire Station will be put on a ballot. These Fire Fighters will continue their job with or without a new Fire Station, the residents should do theirs.

Councilor Tassinari speaks on renovations of Fire Houses. He is afraid that the vote will not be approved, but he will vote yes for an election. If it does not pass, renovations should be discussed.

Councilor Costigan personally apologizes for not voting on the motion and stands by the importance of the town needing a new Fire House.

Councilor Aiello thinks taking a little bit of time and make sure no surprises on day of election, make sure all facts are right. Make sure the estimates are correct, and the election reflects all the important information is needed. I want to make sure we have a Yes vote on this debt exclusion.

Councilor Swope discusses that she worked to have the Fire Station election pass at the last election. She will now vote to approve a new Fire Station location.

Councilor DaRos asks never receive any hesitation is that we do not want a new Fire House, just that we need to make sure this vote goes through.

Motion by Councilor DeMarco to suspend Town Council Rules and take agenda item out of order
2nd by Vice President Belcher
Passed Unanimously

Motion by Vice President Belcher that a new Fire Station be placed on a ballot for the Walden St. location

2nd by Councilor DeMarco

ROLL CALL

YES: Councilor Tassinari, Councilor Costigan, Councilor Munson, Councilor DeMarco, Councilor Aiello, Councilor Swope, Councilor DaRos, Vice President Belcher, President Letterie
Motion Passes

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bill Schmidt P5-Thanks the Fire Fighters and discusses his support of this new Fire House being needed.

Karin Chavis P2-Was very upset with the Town Council at the last meeting when councilors did not vote for a Fire House. This current Fire House is deplorable and obviously has no idea just how bad this Fire Station is and what our Fire Fighters live with.

Cassie Withaus P6-Discusses the many issues that the Town has to determine and the many impacts these have on our town. We need to plan for the future of our community cannot pick and choose, we need to address all.

Caleb Dwyer P3-Thanks the Fire Fighters for their support. She discusses the original election of the School Override and why it lost. She is looking forward for a new ballot question.

Julia Wallerice P2-Discusses the School Override and how badly this community needs to put this back on the ballot for the full \$4.5 Million. There is no perfect time to raise taxes.

Steve Calandra P3-As a Fire Fighter, thanks the council. He comments on the question of rehabbing the current Fire Stations. We do not have the Sq. Footage to do this, it is required. We do not have it and cannot re-hab.

Todd Sacco P2-Discusses why the School Committee would need a separate ballot? The Town should have one election and not split the ballot, both the School Committee override and Fire Station Debt exclusion should be on one ballot.

Marci Hamilton P2-Discusses how we can get the word out to Winthrop Voters...let's use the signage the DPW has and notify our voters.

Carissa Youngst P5-Is in support of the School Override, it is greatly needed. Should be on a separate ballot.

Kathleen Cappuccio P2-We must educate our voters on the need for the Fire House and the School need for an override.

Ken Woodward P3-Supports the School Override but need more information given to the voters to understand just how much this town needs this.

Jack Dowd P2-Concerned we are not getting enough support from Massport and MWRA, we need consultants to help us with these contracts.

Chuck Kubick – Supports the School Override. We as adults are here to help support our students. We must invest in our future. The Fire Fighters matter , the students matter and asks the leaders to take accountability and make a difference. Would like separate ballots for these questions.

CORRESPONDENCE

Cassie Withause sent a letter with signatures asking the Town Council for a reconsideration of their 3A vote. He explains the process. A motion from a councilor on the prevailing side (voted No), could reconsidered their original vote.

We've received several letter and emails on the disappointment of the council not voting for the new Fire Station at their last meeting, in favor of the School Override.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None

SCHOOL DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Town Council President reports that the School Override Question will continue to be reviewed.

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Town Manager report is now issued electronically and posted on the website for any questions or comments.

Councilor Aiello asks that a comprehensive list of flooding locations.

Councilor Munson requests the engineering design work on the flooding issues. Is there any update on state money for demolition of the old middle school

Town Manager replies, it is tied to a housing project. We need a housing project to consider any of this funding.

Asks about the Planning Board voting on the Short Term Lodging.

It has been discussed that the demo of the middle school is still being reviewed on different aspects.

Councilor Munson would like to request an RFP on the Middle School for residential.

Councilor Aiello believes Councilor Munson's attitude is admirable. But, we need to get more information on this project. Residential, Green Space, Public Employee Affordable Housing, Boutique Hotel....a more in depth discussion is needing with a Master Plan.

Council President would like to schedule a "round table" meeting for a discussion on the Middle School Site, including the public, but just the Middle School on the agenda.

Obviously, no project can start without a rink and gym...Parks and Rec is needed and needs a home.

Councilor Costigan asks about the new state ADU zoning law, he knows Town Attorney is drafting something but wonders about restrictions on vehicles.

Councilor Swope...shout out to Scott Mahoney Wright who sent her info on the Climate Solutions... She requests anyone to give her information.

Councilor DaRos, thank you for adding in the TM Report that though budgets were sent out to Dept. Heads for FY26, each dept. has been informed that if the School Override does not get passed it will affect everyone's budget.

Councilor Tassinari asks about an update on Impact Study?

Town Manager states that we did receive one from RKG, but it needs to be finetuned and will deliver to Town Council for review.

CDICR

No Meeting

UPDATE POLICY MAKING COMMITTEES

No Meetings

OLD BUSINESS

Middle School Discussion-Demolition-Council President reports there will be a Special Meeting within the first two weeks of January.

Abandonment-Town Council Abandonment was amended with the last charter committee.

The Charter Committee updated policy from ½ the meetings over calendar year to missing either three consecutive regular scheduled Council meetings or 50% of the meetings (3 meetings) over a 3-month period.

This became effective July 29, 2024.

As Council President reviews attendance of Town Councilors, there were two councilors that have fallen into this category.

Another item includes that an exclusion can be done if 6 Town Councilor vote to exclude these councilors.

The Town Council President will entertain a motion to exclude these two councilors, Councilor DeMarco and Councilor DaRos and reinstate as of Jan. 2025 to be excluded. After this, all will be aware of the abandonment policy and will have to follow.

Motion by Councilor Munson to allow the abandonment exclusion for Councilor DeMarco and Councilor DaRos
2nd by Councilor Costigan

ROLL CALL

YES: Councilor Tassinari, Councilor Costigan, Councilor Munson, Councilor Aiello, Councilor Swope, Vice President Belcher, President Letterie
Abstain: Councilor DeMarco, Councilor DaRos
Motion Passes

NEW BUSINESS

Town Council President refers to the Finance Committee that the Town Council appropriate \$30,000 from Retained Earnings in the Rink Enterprise Fund/Extraordinary Repairs & Maintenance

Advisory Committee on Affordable Housing-Will continue at the Jan. 2025 Town Council Meeting to enact this committee. I would like to have 5 members on this committee; Councilor, TM Manager or Rep and 3 citizens.

SCHOOL OVERRIDE INFORMATION-

Sent from the School Committee.....

Following tonight's School Committee meeting, I am writing on behalf of the Committee to request that an override proposal be brought before the full Town Council for a vote at tomorrow night's meeting. During tonight's session, we voted to place two related override questions on the ballot for the upcoming election. Below is a draft of the 2 questions to be included on the ballot and includes the voting instructions to also be included on the ballot. The Voting Instructions recommended to be included on the ballot is the exact language that is advised by the Elections Division of the Secretary of State's Office and included in the Division of Local Services(DLS), MA Department of Revenue's- Proposition 2 ½ Ballot Questions Requirements and Procedures August 2017 (page 6 paragraph 1&2):

Voter Instructions

****Question 1a. and 1b. are separate questions. You may vote for or against each question independently. Each question requires a majority of those voting on that question to pass. If more than one question passes, the question with the highest dollar amount will prevail.***

Question #1a, - Shall the Town of Winthrop be allowed to assess an additional \$4,950,000 in real estate taxes and personal property taxes for the funding of the FY26 Winthrop Public School's Operational Budget (\$3,500,000) and the funding of a School Stabilization Fund (\$1,450,000) to support the Winthrop Public School's future operational budgets?

YES _____ NO _____

Question 1b - Shall the Town of Winthrop be allowed to assess an additional \$3,500,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the funding of FY26 Winthrop Public School's Operational Budget?

YES _____ NO _____

We are adopting a "Pyramid" approach for these questions, which allows for flexibility in how voters respond and acknowledges those who voted for the \$4,950,000 Override in the November election and also acknowledges those who voted No by offering the option to vote for a lesser amount (\$3,500,000) and the continued option to vote no for either amount.

Upon the completion of the voting process, if both questions result in a favorable vote (both render more YES than NO votes), the one with the question with the highest dollar amount will prevail (see above voter instructions).

Additionally, the School Committee has voted to place these override questions on a separate ballot, distinct from other town questions.

We are requesting the Town Council's approval of both the Pyramid approach and the proposed amounts, as well as the separate approval for a singular, dedicated ballot for these questions. While we understand that the approval for the separate ballot may take place at a later meeting, we feel it is important to address this as soon as possible.

Town Council President reiterates that they are asking for a Pyramid type question
\$4.9 Million
\$3.5 Million
A Citizen can choose to vote on either..

The Town Council President requests the Town Council to vote on this request so we can proceed with action.

Councilor DeMarco talks as a father of two students. The schools need the \$4.9 Million but also understand it was voted against in the last election. He supports the schools that are offering the \$4.9 and the \$3.5, but the schools need the \$4.9. He will be voting in favor of this school's request.

Vice President Belcher will accept the school's recommendation but a much more explanation will be needed for this vote. The public must know exactly what will happen with which one is voted, and which one might be accepted. More education is needed for this ballot question.

Councilor Swope wants to make sure the voters understand that they voters should make sure they vote for both amounts. This will need a complete explanation to the voters for full understanding.

Councilor Aiello is very concerned that this pyramid vote could be very confusing. The parents have spoken of what the schools need, but more information will be needed for this ballot question to be totally understood, he asks that people come to the Town Council and discuss.

Councilor Swope encourages all residents to discuss, discuss with each other, the Council, the School Committee....

Councilor DaRos believes that this being a local election that we will now be able to write up an impact statement on this ballot question and election that will give a complete. Let's look at the impact of voting NO...this will change peoples lives and our community.

Councilor Munson priority is that this is on a separate ballot and done in a timely manner. The last election did not give this this School Override question the depth of information needed for this important matter.

Councilor Costigan comments on the eroding quality of the schools. We need this \$4.9 to strengthen our schools.

Council President believes the school needs more funding but must be cognizant of the fact that the last override failed. He must value and respect this decision. He does applaud the School Committee for giving an option. A stabilization fund will be started that will help future school budget. There is zero doubt this is needed for the school. This is not a desired budget, this is a needed budget.

Superintendent Howard speaks on behalf of this override question and the desperate need for it for our schools. She thanks the School Committee for their hard work and support. This is not just a number thought up, it has been analyzed and identified as what the schools are in need of. The ballot will now have a complete description and information on this question and the outcome of each. A survey will help with how this land can be used.

Motion by Vice President Belcher that the Town Council accept the School Committee to present a Tiered Override System to the Town that will include Question 1(a) if the town is in favor of \$4.95 Million Override for the Winthrop Public Schools for FY26, which include \$1.4 Million allocated to an Education Stabilization account and Question 1 (b) would be, would the town support a \$3.5 Million override for FY26 Budget for the Winthrop Public Schools
2nd by Councilor DeMarco

ROLL CALL

YES: Councilor Tassinari, Councilor Costigan, Councilor Munson, Councilor DeMarco, Councilor Aiello, Councilor Swope, Councilor DaRos, Vice President Belcher, President Letterie
Motion Passes

Town Councilor President reports there will be continued discussion of when this election will take place and is well aware of the timing of this election and the urgency. There is also more information needed from Kessle, Boos in reference to the Fire Station that will be considered.

There is information needed on both projects. Believes it will be in the first quarter of 2025. This will be discussed at our first January meeting. Asks if the School Committee would like a joint meeting with the Town Council for further education on this question.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jack Dowd P1-Acknowledges Superintendent Howard and asks that she involves herself with asking Massport for help with School funding. He discusses past meetings, and Ingleside Park cannot be changed. Article 97 takes priority. Requests a survey of this property. He would like a survey produced if there is one. In his opinion all three buildings should be removed. He has a quote from a construction company and suggests town gets another.

Kathleen Cappuccio P2-Discusses the Old Middle School site. It has been 11 years since the town voted on the Middle School site. She thanks Council President that he continually brings this up. She thanks Superintendent Howard and how fortunate we are to have her as superintendent.

PUBLIC RELATIONS / UPCOMING EVENTS

Town Hall Closing 12-24-24 at 12:00pm / Closed 12-25-24 / Open 12-26-24 from 8:00am-4:30pm

Town Hall Closing 12-31-24 at 4:30 pm / Closed 1-1-25 / Open 1-2-25 from 8:00am-4:30pm

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Councilor DeMarco at 9:00 pm

2nd by Councilor Munson

Passed Unanimously

Public Documents used in the meeting are available at Town Managers Office.

Documents Used in this Meeting: Handwritten Notes / Committee Openings Documents Roll Call Log

Written Motions / Verbal Motion

Respectfully submitted.

Denise Quist

Town Clerk

Council Clerk



TOWN OF WINTHROP

OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

Town Hall, 1 Metcalf Square, Winthrop, MA 02152 Telephone: 617-846-1077

Anthony Marino
Town Manager

Town Manager Report **12-17-2024**

- We sent out the Department Head Budget memo for FY26 with a due date of the 1st week of January 2025. We are planning on our normal budget cycle with nominal COLA increases in line with past budgets. However, we have informed the Department Heads that if the Schools do not receive additional funding via an override, then additional cuts will be required from the Town side of the budget and to be prepared to make those cuts and highlight subsequent levels of service drop off from the reduced funding.
- We are working with Dylan Cook, our CFO, to prepare the RFP for the Fire Station floor repair. Pending funding, we plan to start the work in the spring of 2025. We will also apply for Green Communities funding in March 2025 for the new mini split heating and AC units that will be required to replace the steam boiler.
- We continue to contact the five unions to set up our first contract negotiation meeting. We hope to schedule the first meeting in January 2025 and complete the contracts before they expire on June 30, 2025, at the end of the Fiscal year.
- CDICR met on December 11, 2024, and elected a new Chair and Vice Chair. The new Chairperson is Aaron Williams, and the new Vice Chair is Scott Mahoney-Wright. Congratulations to both, and I look forward to working with this group as we head into 2025. The CDICR wanted to remind everyone of International Night, sponsored by the Winthrop Parents Network and the Department of Early Education and Care, to be held on January 16, 2025, at the old middle school gym from 6 pm – 7:30 pm. There will be music in multiple languages and tables with sample food from 15 countries. This event is always great and free for anyone who wants to attend.
- Town Attorney Jim Cipoletta is working on creating a draft Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Ordinance to comply with the new State ADU zoning law that goes into effect on February 15, 2025. This new draft ordinance will allow us to comply with the law but put into place as many protections and limitations as possible to protect Winthrop residents and property owners.