



Town Council

Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 10, 2022 6:00 p.m. via Zoom

The public is invited to attend this meeting remotely only, via phone or computer. In order to maintain safe social distancing guidelines, no physical presence will be allowed at this time. The Town website will be updated on the day of the meeting with the phone and computer access instructions.

Call to Order – Roll Call – Pledge of Allegiance: President W. Alexopoulos called the meeting to order

Roll Call - Members Present: Christos Alexopoulos, William Alexopoulos, James Burgess, Richard Brewer, Natacha Clerger, Kenrick Clifton, Ryan Egan, Jesse Gordon and Katrina Huff-Larmond

Pledge of Allegiance: Councillor Clerger led the pledge of allegiance.

Moment of Silent Prayer: In memory of former Registrar, Lallie Falls and resident Don Watts.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: President Alexopoulos asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2021 Town Council Meeting. Councillor Burgess asked that the minutes be placed on the next agenda, and President Alexopoulos agreed.

Announcements from the President:

1. President Alexopoulos appointed Councillor Gordon to the Master Plan Implementation Committee.
2. Town Manager Howard emailed the council wishing to extend his contract. President Alexopoulos appointed Councillor Clifton, Councillor Brewer and himself to the committee formed to negotiate the Town Manager's contract.
3. The Fire Chief has officially retired, but agreed to stay until a replacement is found. There will be a "Fire Chief Assessment Process," and a committee will be created so the council will be part of the review process of the resumes before they are sent to the Assessment Center. President Alexopoulos asked that interested councillors let him know by text or email.
4. Discussion re: joint meeting between Council and Stetson Trustees to appoint a new member of the Stetson Trustees, and a joint meeting on the Town Council and School Committee to appoint a new member of the Blue Hills Regional Technical School Committee. President Alexopoulos asked those interested to send a letter of intent and resume to him, no later than Friday, January 21st at 4:30. Town Manager Howard stated that there would be an email blast and advertising on social media with regard to both vacancies and how to apply. Candidates will be brought forward at the meeting so the Council can ask questions. The process will be determined when resumes and letters of intent are received, and a list of candidates will be provided to the Council prior to the meeting.

Public Comments:

Cheryle Totten: Driver's speed down Cross Street. Ms. Totten asked if the town will look into adding a sidewalk for pedestrian safety on Cross Street. President Alexopoulos stated that the council would take a look at it.

Sandi Cohen: Asked if the Town Council and the Town Manager would consider a short-term mask mandate. President Alexopoulos stated that the Town Manager and Gerry Cody would make that determination.

Michelle Efendi: Asked that a declaration be made by the Council, the Town Manager, and the Public Health Commissioner that vaccine passports will never be allowed in the Town of Randolph. In addition, she filed a complaint with the Town Manager and Public Health Commissioner with regard to Board of Health Member Dov Yoffe 6 days ago, and has not received a response.

David Mulligan: Asked if there a realistic goal for PFAS, other than trying to get below the state minimum by putting a filter on the treatment plant, especially in the older pipes where more PFAS has accumulated. President Alexopoulos stated that the charcoal filters in the new treatment plant will take care of all those issues. Mr. Howard stated that he has not seen anything from Mass DEP that indicates that part of the PFAS issue for any community is residual from the pipes it is the water source.

Appointments:

President Alexopoulos asked Councillor Burgess and Councillor Clerger which subcommittees they are interested in serving on. Councillor Huff-Larmond asked President Alexopoulos why the Economic Development and Small Business Support is not one committee. President Alexopoulos stated that he plans on making the Small Business Support, Economic Development and Real Estate one committee. President Alexopoulos asked that Attorney Griffin send a list of the subcommittee assignments from last year to the council. Councillor Clerger stated that she was on the Library Trustees and Human Services subcommittees, and would be willing to serve on the same committees again or wherever there is a need.

Town Manager's Report

1. There is a vacancy on the Disabilities Commission. Keith Wortzman (Chair) asked that I bring forward Kathleen Camara as a member. Councillor Burgess made a motion to appoint Kathleen Camara to the Disabilities Commission, seconded by Councillor C. Alexopoulos.

Roll Call Vote: 7-0-1 (Councillor Clifton absent; Councillor Gordon recused himself)

Town Manager Howard stated that due to the extreme cold, the Covid Testing site will be closed on January 11. More than 13,000 at home rapid test kits were handed out. The next distribution will be Saturday, January 15. Residents can sign up on the town's website or call the Turner Free Library or the RICC. The vaccine site has moved to Shaw's Plaza. Walk-ins are welcome, however signing up on the town's web site is recommended.

Councillor Huff-Larmond expressed her concerns over the fact that the at-home test kits are not reported or traceable, especially with the tests given to students. Town Manager Howard said that the State has made it clear - they don't want communities taking at home kits and entering the data into Maven. Councillor Huff-Larmond reminded the public to check the expiration date on the at-home test kits. Town Manager Howard said that the kits the town has given out all expire late in May, as they have a 6-month shelf-life. The kits being distributed on January 15 expire in June or July.

Councillor Gordon asked Town Manager Howard about the “Mask Up” Program. Town Manager Howard stated that masks are required in all municipal buildings, employees of businesses are expected to wear masks. He stated that it is not a mandate as the Town does not have the ability to enforce it. The Board of Health has been doing spot checks since we started the program, and businesses have been 90%-100% in compliance.

Lastly, Town Manager Howard informed the public that the Martin Luther King event will be held virtually on Monday, January 17th at 4:00. The information will be posted on the website, and RCTV will replay it. If possible, it will also be streamed on the Town’s Facebook Page.

Councillor Burgess informed Town Manager Howard that there is graffiti on the side of the Public Storage Building and the Building on the corner of Short Street and North Street. In addition, he asked that the Town Manager look into the items being stored 16 Fencourt Ave since the property was sold. Town Manager Howard said was unaware of these issues but will look into them and have them addressed. Councillor Clifton stated that he brought this to the attention of the Building Inspector and understood that the items were being moved.

Councillor Burgess stated that North Randolph only had a Christmas Tree this year, but wreaths were not hung. Town Manager Howard stated that he would order more wreaths for next year. Councillor Burgess also mentioned that, as the decorative lights on North Main Street are replaced, they are being replaced without outlets. Each pole should have an outlet. Town Manager Howard agreed that more holiday lights are needed in North Randolph and that he would look into the outlet issue.

Councillor Burgess stated that residents are charged a 12% penalty on an overdue water bill. He believes that amount is exorbitant. Finance Director Janine Smith responded by saying that she will look into it, but she believes the fee is set by law. She will report back to the Council.

Councillor Burgess stated that the Council received an email last week. He asked that the Town Manager facilitate the ability to get the Finance Director on the appropriate books. Town Manager Howard stated that he was told that it was done, and if it is not done, he will ensure that it is. Councillor Clifton commended the Finance Director for her email, and stated that he would like to see these issues come on a timelier basis. Councillor Huff-Larmond stated that it is a team and didn’t want it to seem like it was just one department. Councillor Burgess agreed that it is not one department, but that it is a department under the umbrella of the Finance Director.

Councillor Burgess asked how many Assessors we have had. Town Manager Howard stated there was an individual who retired in October of 2021 and there have been 2 other individuals in that role since. Councillor Burgess suggested hiring an individual who already works for the town in a different role, but teaching that individual how to be an Assessor. Councillor Gordon recommended implementing a “hiring bonus” to give potential candidates an incentive to apply. Councillor Clerger suggested someone in the Assessor’s Office may be qualified for the job. Town Manager Howard stated that finding qualified candidates is a problem across the state. The job has not been posted yet, since he has not decided whether to hire an Assistant Assessor, and hire a firm to be the signatory authority. The firm would train the Assistant and once the Assistant is certified as an Assessor, they would become the Principal Assessor. Councillor Huff-Larmond added that a top priority should be making sure the pool is diverse.

Councillor Burgess asked Attorney Griffin to draft an order making January 6th a day when we hang flags as we do on Memorial Day and the Fourth of July.

Old Business:

Council Order 2021-043 Designation of Special Municipal Employee Positions. Councillor Burgess made a motion to approve, as amended at the last Council Meeting. Seconded by Councillor C. Alexopoulos.

Roll Call Vote: 9-0-0.

New Business:

1. 2022 Council Meeting Schedule. Councillor C. Alexopoulos made a motion to approve. Seconded by Councillor Brewer. Councillor Clerger inquired as to when the Council will be meeting in person again. President Alexopoulos stated that it would be a couple more months. Councillor Gordon proposed scheduling a "Strategic Planning Meeting." It was agreed Councillor Gordon would email President Alexopoulos with a date and time to hold such a meeting.

Roll Call Vote: 8-1-0 (Burgess)

2. Council Order 2022-01: Council Order to Amend Plastic Bag Ordinance was introduced. After discussion, it was agreed that it would be taken up at the next meeting.
3. Council Order 2022-02-Transfer of Free Cash for Pool Heater Replacement. After discussion, Councillor Brewer made a motion to approve. Seconded by Councillor Burgess.

Roll Call Vote: 9-0-0.

4. Council Order 2022-03-Transfer of Free Cash to Stabilization Fund. After discussion, Councillor C. Alexopoulos made a motion to approve. Seconded by President Alexopoulos.

Roll Call Vote: 9-0-0.

5. Council Order 2022-04: Payment of FY21 Unpaid Bills – General Fund. After discussion, Councillor Clifton made a motion to approve. Seconded by Councillor Clerger.

Roll Call Vote: 9-0-0.

6. Council Order 2022-05: Transfers into OPEB Stabilization Account. After discussion, Councillor Clifton made a motion to approve. Seconded by Councillor C. Alexopoulos.

Roll Call Vote: 9-0-0.

President Alexopoulos asked Finance Director Janine Smith the balance of the Water/Sewer Retained Earnings Account. Ms. Smith stated that after this vote, the balance is \$2,665,014.00. He then asked the balance of the Stabilization Fund. Ms. Smith informed the President that the balance is \$8,052,000.00

7. Council Order 2022-06: Transfer to General Fund Free Cash to Law Department-Expenses. After discussion, a motion to approve was made by Councillor Clifton. Seconded by Councillor Egan.

Roll Call Vote: 8-1-0. (Burgess)

Councillor Huff-Larmond asked if a traffic light could be placed at the intersection of Oak and North Streets. A discussion followed about engineering firms, traffic studies and costs involved. Town Manager Howard will get the information requested from Beta Engineering. He also suggested the possibility of adding this project to the Capital Plan.

Councillor Clifton stated that Phase One and Phase Two of the Traffic Study have been done. He asked the Town Manager to look into completing Phase Three and expediting the implementation of Phases One and Two. With regard to the Oak and North Streets intersection, Councillor Brewer recommended looking into cutting down the grade and adding turning lanes. Councillor Burgess recalled appropriating approximately \$500,000 to implement some traffic enhancements. He believes there is about \$300,000 left in the account. Town Manager Howard said that he would look at the account and get the balance. President Alexopoulos asked that the information be provided within 4 weeks.

Councillor Comments:

Councillor Burgess: Encouraged residents to get their flu shot at the Vaccination Site in Shaw's Plaza.

Councillor Clerger: No Comments.

Councillor Gordon: Spoke with the Chair of the Gateway City Caucus with regard to the Census Question Review. To get our census count increased from 16 fewer than 35,000 to over the limit of 35,000 which qualifies us as a gateway city, which qualifies the Town for state grants. He proposed door knocking to get residents to sign affidavits as to how many people were residing in the home since April of 2020.

Councillor Gordon informed the public the Caucus for the democratic Convention will be held on February 5 at 11am or virtually. The purpose of the Caucus is to get elected as a delegate in order to attend the convention, which determines who will be on the democratic primary ballot. There will also be a Republican Caucus. Any registered voter is eligible to attend a Caucus.

Councillor Huff-Larmond wanted to ensure that information about the covid test kits is available in different languages. The MLK event will be held virtually due to the uptick in Covid. Performances will be live on RCTV. She wished everyone a Happy New Year and informed the public of a raffle being run by Autism Sprinter for students who have gotten their Covid vaccination.

Councillor C. Alexopoulos: No Comments.

Councillor Egan: Confirmed meeting dates to fill Stetson Trustees Vacancy and Blue Hills Vacancy. President Alexopoulos stated that the meeting with Stetson Trustees will be held on 1/24, and the meeting with the School Committee will be held on 1/27. He asked where the council stands on hiring a Town Council Clerk. President Alexopoulos stated that has several applications that he is in the process of reviewing. Councillor Egan wished everyone a Happy Martin Luther King Day, and stated that he hopes that everyone will commemorate a day that is a very important part of our history.

Councillor Brewer: Thanked Gerry Cody, Liz LaRosee, Police and Fire Departments for all of their hard work being done at the Covid Testing Site. Thanked the DPW for their work in clearing 12 inches of snow from roads and sidewalks, especially since they are short-handed.

Councillor Ken Clifton: Thanked the health workers, the police, fire, and volunteers in continuing to ensure our safety and health. He believes the positivity rate is close to 7, which is a dramatic increase from the summer. Implored residents to continue their efforts to be safe and secure. Wished the residents a happy MLK day. He extended his condolences to the family of actor Sidney Poitier, of Bahamian decent, who died at the age of 94. He thanked Mr. Poitier for the inspiration he has been to so many citizens of all colors and creeds. Councillor Clifton wished all of his constituents and all residents a Happy New Year.

Adjournment:

Motion to Adjourn made by Councillor Clerger. Seconded by Councillor Clifton.

Roll Call Vote: 9-0-0.