



Randolph Town Council

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Monday, November 21, 2022 at 6:00 p.m., Remote Meeting via Zoom

Call to Order: Council President W. Alexopoulos called the meeting to order.

Roll Call – Council Members Present: Christos Alexopoulos, William Alexopoulos, Richard Brewer, Natacha Clerger, Jesse Gordon, Katrina Huff-Larmond, Kevin O’Connell (Absent: Burgess and Egan)

Pledge of Allegiance: Pledge of Allegiance led by Councillor O’Connell.

Moment of Silent Prayer: Moment of Silent Prayer held.

Announcements from the President:

1. Council President Alexopoulos will appoint two Randolph Residents to serve on the Plan Review Authority (PRA) for a project on 16 Fencourt Avenue

Council President Alexopoulos appointed Ms. Christine Holmes and is waiting for a response from a second resident as we speak.

2. There was a meeting of the Tri-Town Board held in Braintree at 10 AM. We approved the minutes from the previous meeting, had an update from Walsh Construction (the contractor who will be constructing the new Water Treatment Plant) who presented the board with a sixty day schedule. They went through the different areas that will bring us to the end of December until 12/30/2022. In that time frame they are looking to do a groundbreaking ceremony which will happen sometime within the first two weeks of December. As soon as there are confirmed details they will be relayed to the Council. Things are progressing. The area is being laid out right now and doing all necessary preliminary filings. We’ll see some work progressing on the Braintree side very soon.

Councillor Gordon requested to be on the meeting invite list. Council President stated meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month at 10 AM. The next one is December 14, 2022 at 10 AM.

Correspondence:

1. The Town Council Clerk read correspondence from Comcast regarding fee increases effective December 20, 2022. Contact katherine_maloney@comcast.com if you have any questions, or if you need further assistance.
2. The Town Council Clerk read correspondence from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts - Department of Public Utilities regarding a Notice of Filing and Request for Comments for a Petition of National Grid for Approval to Exclude Mystic Cost-Of-Service Agreement costs. Written comments must be filed

with the Department by 5:00 PM on November 30, 2022 by emailing DPU.efiling@mass.gov, Patrick.m.houghton@mass.gov, and Meabh.purcell@nationalgrid.com.

3. The Town Council Clerk read correspondence from Attorney Carl W. Gehring, on behalf of Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless into the record, regarding their Condition of Approval for the proposed project at 15 Memorial Parkway for a New Wireless Communications Facility on the roof. The applicant conferred with its Landlord (owner of the premises) and Verizon agreed that “some work could be performed to improve the visual appearance of the site, and accordingly, they have decided to: scrape and repaint areas of peeling paint on window trim and on the entry railings, clean-up and prune the existing landscape planter areas, and make repairs to the existing asphalt parking surfaces.”

Councillor Egan entered the meeting at 6:14 PM.

Public Hearings:

1. 6:15 PM: FY2023 Tax Classification Hearing

Council President Alexopoulos opened the public hearing on this matter. The Town Council Clerk read the legal notice that was published in the Patriot Ledger on November 16, 2022.

Council President Alexopoulos: With us this evening, we have Finance Director Janine Smith, Principal Assessor Janet Teal, and our Consultant Nate Cramer for this Tax Classification hearing.

Town Assessor Janet Teal provided the Town Council with a visual presentation regarding the Tax Classification Rates.

The purpose of the presentation is for the Town Council to decide on the following:

1. Select a single or split tax rate,
2. Whether to adopt an open space discount,
3. Whether to adopt a residential exemption, and
4. Whether to adopt a small commercial exemption.

The Presentation covered prior year tax rates, prior year shifts in the residential factor, and the projected average increases in tax bills depending on which shift is adopted by the Council this year.

Council President Alexopoulos opened the public comments portion of the hearing.

Mr. Joe Burke, of Hills Street: Are we going to stay at 1.74? Things are tough. I don't care about what other towns are doing, and it's tough enough for the elderly people.

Council President Alexopoulos closed the public comment portion of the public hearing.

Councillor Huff-Larmond: Randolph gave out over 600 turkeys on Saturday and I was able to have quick conversations with some residents and it reminded me of the needs of some individuals. Secondly, I had the pleasure of meeting and having a quick conversation with the Secretary of HUD, Marcia Fudge, who spoke about homelessness. The largest population of homelessness right now are the elderly. We know this is an issue but it made a huge impact on me so I will not be voting for an increase beyond 1.74. Last year I voted for a slight increase, but that's because right in the middle of the pandemic I knew businesses were struggling.

Councillor Gordon: What is the meaning of the charts on page nine of the presentation when there is a difference between FY22 and FY23? Is that the difference between the average Single Family Residential (SFR) bill had we had the shift rates in question for the previous year?

Council President: What that means is that if the Council chooses to do a shift of 1.70, the rate will be \$12.16 per thousand, the average tax bill for a single family will be \$58.47, and an increase of \$318 from the current bill.

Councillor Gordon: Compared to what? What does \$318 mean?

Ms. Teal: That's the difference from 2022, if we would have had the same shift from last year.

Councillor Gordon: I guess people just care about how much more their bills will be compared to last year. The difference for the average single family residence is going to be a difference of \$31 based on the two choices. On the business side- using that same difference, would be \$311.

Janet Teal: Correct, if you choose the 1.71 tax shift versus the 1.74 tax shift.

Councillor Gordon: I will propose 1.71 because it makes a substantial difference for business to move to Randolph and a small difference to our residents. In other words, we're making a small investment in our future so we can have a lower rate in the future.

Councillor O'Connell: On page 9, the average tax bill is based on a single family house that's \$480,000. So, a house that's worth more would pay more than what is highlighted there. I agree with what Mr. Joe Burke shared- I don't care what other Towns are doing, this is about Randolph.

Council Vice President Clerger advised she does not have the heart to raise taxes on my constituents and it will not change today.

Councillor Burgess entered the meeting at 6:30 PM.

Councillor Burgess: I reviewed last week's meeting and feel prepared to comment and vote tonight. The only way for us to reduce residential or commercial taxes, is to reduce our spending. If we did not spend up to our limit, then we would have excess capacity and we would not have to raise as much revenue. But we always spend up to our limit because that's what the Council and Town Administration believe we need to fund our community.

Councillor Gordon: I hear the sentiment of the Council and I think 1.71 is out of the question so I will propose 1.72 or 1.73. If we raise the residential taxes a little bit, the benefit would be that next year we have a larger business base so we can make a better residential rate for the future.

Motion made by Councillor Gordon for a tax rate shift of 1.72, seconded by Councillor Brewer. Discussion was held.

Motion made by Councillor O'Connell to amend Councillor Gordon's motion for a tax rate shift of 1.72 to instead provide for a tax rate shift of 1.73, seconded by Councillor Burgess. Discussion was held. Roll Call Vote: 3-6-0 (Nays: C. Alexopoulos, W. Alexopoulos, Brewer, Burgess, Clerger. Huff-Larmond)
Motion Fails.

Original Motion restated by Councillor Gordon for a tax rate shift of 1.72, seconded by Councillor Brewer.

Roll Call Vote: 4-5-0 (Nays: Burgess, Clerger, Egan, Huff-Larmond, O'Connell)

Motion fails.

Motion made by Councillor Burgess for a tax rate shift of 1.74, seconded by Councillor Huff-Larmond. Discussion was held.

Roll Call Vote: 8-1-0 (Nays: Clerger)

Motion Passes.

Council President Alexopoulos: The new tax rate shift for 2023 is 1.74, giving us a residential factor of 0.8997.

Council President Alexopoulos requested a motion on the open space exemption.

Motion made by Councillor Burgess not to grant an open space exemption, seconded by Councillor O'Connell. Discussion was held regarding what the open space exemption entails.

Roll Call Vote: 7-1-1 (Nays: Burgess; Abstention: Clerger)

Motion Passes.

Council President Alexopoulos requested a motion not to adopt a residential exemption.

Motion made by Councillor Brewer not to adopt the residential exemption, seconded by Councillor Clerger. Discussion was held regarding what a residential exemption entails, and eligibility requirements.

Roll Call Vote: 9-0-0

Motion Passes.

Council President Alexopoulos requested a motion not to adopt a small commercial exemption.

Motion made by Councillor O'Connell to adopt the small commercial exemption. Motion dies for lack of a second.

Motion made by Councillor Egan not to adopt the residential exemption, seconded by Councillor C. Alexopoulos. Discussion was held regarding what a residential exemption entails.

Roll Call Vote: 8-1-0 (Nays: O'Connell)

Motion Passes.

2. 6:15 PM: Special Permit Application and Site Plan and Design Review for a Proposed Remote Drive-Up Teller Unit located at 7-31 Warren Street

Council President Alexopoulos opened the public hearing on this matter. This is a joint public hearing on a request for a Special Permit and a Request for Site Plan and Design Review. Council Clerk read the legal notice published in the Patriot Ledger on 11/5/2022 and 11/12/2022.

Civil Engineer, Mr. Phil Cordeiro, Vice President for Corporate Services David Tidwell, and Property Owner, JP Fine are present for the applicant. Mr. Cordeiro gave a presentation on the relief sought by the application.

Mr. Cordeiro gave a refresher on what currently exists on the property at 7-31 Warren St. It is a multi-tenant building in an existing plaza. The applicant, HarborOne Bank, is seeking to lease out the former space of Cafe Bella, who was a tenant of JP Fine. As we understand it under the Zoning, automatic teller machines are allowed by right, banks and financial institutions are allowed by right, however, drive-throughs are only allowed by action of this Town Council. As part of what the application seeks to do is

to take over approximately 13 of the existing spaces at the rear of the site and construct a remote teller unit that would effectively serve as a drive-through for the bank. The rear space would be utilized to form a drive through queue lane bounded by landscape and curved islands, but will also allow for snow maintenance and snow plow removal. Mr. Cordeiro displayed an example of what the remote teller's tube would look like. You would put your transaction into the tube, and it's brought into the facility for processing. All of this occurs underground- so the tubing is located underneath the pavement. At the northeast corner of the site, we would remove approximately 13 of the existing parking spaces. In its place, we would create an area for the remote teller unit, and each car would then drive up through the queue lane and then come out and continue on their path of travel either returning onto North Main Street or traveling towards Depot or Warren Street. As part of this application, there are no alterations to any of the existing curb cuts and stormwater patterns that are on site. We wanted to make sure that we included some statements on anticipated traffic. As coming to us from Mr. Tidwell, they anticipate approximately 160 transactions per day which translates to about 95 customers per day, of which 60% of those tend to be drive-through transactions. We've weighed in context with the surrounding streets, with approximately 10,000 cars per day. We anticipate that this use is not a generator of traffic but that users will likely take advantage of the passer by traffic.

Apart from alteration of this area to support the drive through unit placement and queue of the cars, interior modifications will be permitted through the building department with the appropriate applications sought through them.

Council President Alexopoulos opened the public comments portion of the public hearing.

Mr. Joe Burke, of Hills Street: Will there not be a person at the window, just a tube for the money? I'm concerned that this will be a slower process and the bank will not be able to tend to as many people because of the lack of a window. Mr. Tidwell: There will not be a window and all the drive through activity will be done through the new VAT system. It's been very successful in all the newer HarborOne Banks so far. There are several people who would be able to work the tubes instead of it being one single person so that if someone is busy then someone else can help take over the transaction for the customer.

Ms. Sandy Cohen, of Bittersweet Lane: I live nearby and with the activity between the traffic light, Walgreens, and Dunkin Donuts in the same plaza, traffic gets hectic. Can you elaborate further on the traffic pattern for this drive-through? I like drive-throughs and use them all the time, but the traffic pattern in that area seems chaotic sometimes. Mr. Tidwell: My understanding is that the primary means of access will be from North Main Street. Mr. Cordeiro: There is unrestricted access to the plaza from all the existing curb cuts so we're not necessarily funneling people to a particular location. The bank is a business opened approximately 9-5, after the morning rush and peak hour ranges for traffic generators, and so the bank will draw their patrons likely after that. Similarly, the bank will close before the afternoon rush of 5-7 PM.

Council President Alexopoulos closed the public comments portion of the public hearing.

Council President Alexopoulos: So, you anticipate traffic coming in from North Main Street, making a right hand turn, going through the drive-through teller section, and going off. I visited the site around 1:30 PM in the afternoon and there was plenty of parking in the front and back. There seems to be more than enough parking available so I don't see any issues. When do you anticipate doing the project?

Mr. Tidwell: It depends on when we receive approval from the Town Council but we would hopefully like to begin construction in January/February.

Councillor Brewer: I think it's a great proposal. HarborOne has been a good corporation here in town and we'd be keeping another corporation here in Randolph.

Councillor Gordon: There was a little sidewalk that you could walk through, is that going to survive? Mr. Fine: Yes, it will. Councillor Gordon: Where people are coming in and out of Depot Street at the Dunkin Donuts, I thought it was a real traffic jam, however, I guess you're right that the traffic jam caused by that rush is not going to be from people going to the bank. Are you suggesting that people should drive onto Depot Street? Mr. Fine: I think people could go onto Depot Street, or take a left onto Warren potentially. Councillor Gordon: I've been a HarborOne customer for more than 20 years now. HarborOne used to do Saturday morning Coffee and it was a lovely service which closed due to the pandemic. Is it possible to do that here? Mr. Tidwell: I appreciate your comments and we'll pass that along. It was a nice gesture and people really enjoyed it.

Council Vice President Clerger: I think it's a great idea, especially as a customer who uses that facility sometimes after hours, it is sometimes scary at night time. I am very happy with my bank and the services they provide. Secondly, if you enter from North Main Street, there's no way someone could do a 180 to go back out that way. It would be easier to go out through the other two exits so I don't see an issue. Mr. Tidwell: Thank you very much for your support.

Councillor Huff-Larmond: I also like the idea. I drove by there just to envision what you're trying to do. I do think it's a little tight but I was reminded today that there are banks and businesses in tighter spaces. There is an electrical box in that area and what's going to happen with that? Mr. Tidwell: We would very much like to obscure that box. The problem is that there are electrical codes which require there is a certain amount of space in order for electricians to get access to the electrical panels. Our goal, with our architect, is to come up with a way that will meet the electrical codes but also hides the boxes.

Council President Alexopoulos: Is there an overhang, or some type of shelter going over the teller? Mr. Tidwell: We have not yet designed an overhang for this particular teller. We have something similar at another location with an overhang and it is our intention to also have one at this location to keep people protected from the weather.

Councillor Burgess: Mr. Fine has been a great corporate neighbor here in the Town of Randolph. He maintains all his properties very well, so thank you. I think HarborOne is a good fit. Is it a 24 hour teller machine or is it going to operate during the normal business hours of the bank? Mr. Tidwell: There will be a 24 hour teller-machine that is accessible within the bank itself. Councillor Burgess: Town Attorney Griffin - Is this application amenable that Mr. Fine is asking for a 24 hour permit as well as a drive through permit at this public hearing? If it's 24 hour access, then you need a 24 hour permit. Mr. Tidwell: The ATM machine is walk-up access so they wouldn't be looking to keep the branch open. Councillor Burgess: What are the hours of operation for the bank? Mr. Tidwell: I believe the hours are 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, and 6:00 PM close time on Thursdays. Councillor Burgess: Are you expecting a sign on the back of the building and on the Pylon sign? Mr. Tidwell: I was told that the signage review is totally separate from this. We do have a signage application currently with the Town Planner. Mr. Fine: Yes, the Planning Director has advised that signage is a separate issue that needs to go before the Planning Board and that the drive through needed a special permit through the Town Council.

Councillor O'Connell: Is the speed bump going to be moved somewhere else? Mr. Fine: I'm not sure the speed bump is actually there or if it's just in these plans. We'd be happy to look into that.

Town Attorney Griffin: The language regarding a 24 hour permit describes the hours that the business is open but it does not describe the nature of the business. It doesn't differentiate between whether you have an atm or vending machine, or some sort of passive operation where people can visit on their own versus a McDonalds drive-through which requires someone to operate the window. I don't recall us

giving 24 hours permits to those types of businesses although Mr. Burgess recalls it may have been done in the past with the Bank of Canton.

Councillor Burgess: It's always been my interpretation that signage and pertinent site details would be traffic flow, directional signage, a canopy, and so we would permit anything to do with the drive-through. I don't think you have everything in front of us that you need. Mr. Fine: I appreciate your sentiments. The most important thing for the bank is to know that they are going to be able to have a remote teller. The signage is important to them as well, but more importantly, our deal is contingent on them being able to have the drive-up teller. That is the key to keeping our lease and deal in place in moving forward.

Mr. Tidwell: A visual was displayed regarding what the proposed canopy would look like. Mr. Fine: If that is not satisfactory, they can come back with a different design for the canopy as long as the drive-up teller is approved. Mr. Cordeiro: The teller machine is on the second sheet (Sheet No. C-501) on the bottom right hand corner which contains the schematics. Because of the size of the machine relative to the size of the pad on the site plan, you wouldn't be able to see any relevant detail.

Councillor Burgess: There is nothing on the plan that says there is a drive-through teller machine. We're being asked to vote on this special permit for this particular drive-through system, and it's not even on the plan. Mr. Fine: I would move to propose that where it says "Remote Teller Concrete Pad" to state "Remote Teller Concrete Pad and Remote Teller." It's just missing two words. That's where it would go.

Council President Alexopoulos: I think, for the benefit of the applicant and for the benefit of the Council, we have a scheduled Special Council Meeting for next Monday that I would like to continue this meeting for that date. Would one week give you enough time to get the information together that the Council is requesting? Mr. Tidwell: We would have enough time. If we could receive a list in writing containing what is being asked for, that would be great. We know you want us to copy you on the signage application, we can change the wording as Mr. Fine indicated to show "and remote-teller" equipment." I believe the landscaping is noted on the drawing. We can note the canopy.

Planning Director, Michelle Tyler: The sign package has been submitted and the signs that are permitted under zoning have been approved. There are notes in the permitting system of what needs to be approved by the Town Council as part of the special permit, and that's a sign that says "drive through" that would be put on North Main street in a landscaped island. That would just need to be approved with the special permit. And then the canopy with the logo that in my estimation, exceeds the threshold and needs ZBA approval.

Council President Alexopoulos: This hearing will be continued to the meeting on November 28, 2022 at 6:20 PM.

Public Comments:

There were no public comments.

New Business:

1. Council Order 2022-054: Amendment of Section 12-1(C)(1) of the General Ordinances of the Town of Randolph Concerning Redemption of Tax Title Real Estate

Council President Alexopoulos read Council Order 2022-054 into the record.

Town Manager Howard introduced Council Order 2022-054 to the Town Council. This is the first introduction and will be available for a vote after it has been advertised. The Finance Director and Treasurer/Collector will be present at that meeting to answer any questions. The purpose of this Order is to provide additional flexibility for residents who are far behind in their property taxes.

Councillor Burgess: Town Attorney Griffin- can you give us a definition of redemption. Town Attorney Griffin: The way a tax title works is when a person falls significantly behind on their taxes, the town files a tax taking deed at the registry of deeds. When the town files the tax taking deed, the Town starts to have a general ownership right to the property. The Town's ownership and right to the property is subject to the taxpayers right to redeem their ownership of the property. This means that the resident can pay off the outstanding amount that's owed, and the Town will remove that tax title taking and their ownership will be redeemed. If the property remains in a status where the taxes are unpaid for long enough, then that means the Town can go to the land court. The land court can then decide to foreclose the property owner's right of redemption, and that is the moment that the Town can take full ownership of the property through a tax title taking.

Town Managers Report:

1. I would like to bring forward Jennifer Sinclair to serve on the Disability Commission. Ms. Sinclair lives at 5 Hillsdale Road and is very active at the AMVETs auxiliary. Jen and her mother Pat have run young adult dances for those with disabilities for 30+ years. I think Jen would make an excellent member of the Disability Commission.

Motion to ratify the appointment of Jenson Claire to serve on the Disability Commission made by Councillor C. Alexopoulos, seconded by Councillor Burgess.

Roll Call Vote: 8-0-0 (Absent: Egan)

Motion Passes.

2. A friendly reminder to the general public: the last leaf pick up of fall season is December 3, 2022. Please make sure that you get your materials out by 7:00 AM.
3. I want to thank United Way, Liz Larosee, and all the volunteers for the turkey giveaway at the RICC on Saturday. And on Sunday, the Randolph residents were tremendously generous at the Toy drive which was quite successful. In addition, the police department is doing their Toys for Tots. Councillor O'Connell will be Santa at the police station from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM. If you bring an unwrapped toy, you'll get a free picture with Santa.

Committee Reports:

1. Councillor O'Connell provided an update on the Plan Review Authority for the 16 Fencourt Ave project. We referred the applicant to go to the Conservation Commission to get approval for a 25 foot buffer before they come back before the Plan Review Authority.
2. Councillor Gordon provided an update on the Small Business Subcommittee: I attended a session at SMAC (Stoughton Video Service) and I would like to do a comparison with RCTV and SMAC which is modern and open to the public.

Council Comments:

1. Councillor Brewer: Happy Thanksgiving to the Residents and Councillors! Enjoy your Day!
2. Councillor Gordon: First, on the Jablonsky properties which are between Warren Street and West St.- I did a little tour and made a website so everyone could see what the properties look like. It's on JesseGordon.com. There is a video on YouTube with lots of pictures as well. Second, the petition that

was filed with the town council regarding a mobility hub is now in abeyance. There were a lot of legal issues regarding setting up a shuttle bus service. We'd like to explore that, do our research, gather examples from other towns and then bring it back before the Council for a proper vote. Lastly, there will be an order going before the Council which explains to recipients of CPC grants how they can accomplish their awards. All of this information will be available on my website as well.

3. Councillor Clerger: I just want to thank the middle school organizations for allowing her to participate in tomorrow's event by bringing some food for the kids.
4. Councillor Huff-Larmond: 1. Turkey Day was great. Randolph Youth Council participated by giving out over 600 turkeys to the public. The Randolph Youth Council will also be putting together a drive for baby items for families who have migrated from Venezuela and Haiti. Happy Thanksgiving to all and I also want to acknowledge that for some people it's a day of mourning. I am thankful to have colleagues with me here this week but it's not a day of thanks for everyone. Lastly, I met with Marcia Fudge at an ABDC Gala in Boston. They have wonderful services and I spoke to Liz about hopefully getting them to service Randolph to continue doing the work for our community, but on a larger level.
5. Councillor O'Connell: Toys for Tots - Bring toy donations to the Randolph Police Department starting now until 12/19/22. The toys should be new, unwrapped and in original packaging. December 3, 2022 from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Happy Thanksgiving everyone! I want to publicly thank the businesses in Randolph who are providing meals to those in need. I appreciate you all and keep up the great work.
6. Council President Alexopoulos: I want to wish everyone a happy and safe Thanksgiving.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn made by Councillor Clerger, seconded by Councillor O'Connell.

Roll Call Vote: 8-0-0 (Absent: Egan)

Motion Passes.

Meeting adjourned at 8:44 PM.