



Randolph Town Council

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Monday, November 13, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

This is a hybrid meeting. The Public is invited to attend this meeting in person or remotely, by telephone or computer access.

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

Roll Call – Council Members Present: William Alexopoulos (In-Person), Richard Brewer (In-Person), Jesse Gordon (In-Person), Katrina Huff-Larmond (In-Person), Kevin O’Connell (In-Person).

Pledge of Allegiance: Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Vice President Brewer.

Moment of Silent Prayer: A moment of Silent Prayer was held.

Councillor Clerger entered the meeting room, in-person.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

1. Meeting Minutes of Town Council Meeting October 30, 2023

Motion to approve the Minutes of Town Council Meeting on October 30, 2023, made by Councillor O’Connell, seconded by Councillor Clerger.

Roll Call Vote: 6-0-0 (Absent: C. Alexopoulos, Burgess, Egan)

Motion passes.

Councillors Burgess and C. Alexopoulos entered the meeting room, in-person.

Announcements of the President:

1. Congratulations to newly elected Town Councillor, Brandon Thompson, representing District Two.
2. At the request of the Town Manager, I’d like to reconstitute the Town Manager’s Contract Subcommittee which will consist of Councillors Clerger, Council Vice President Brewer, and myself (W. Alexopoulos).

Presentations:

1. FY2024 Tax Classification Presentation

Council President Alexopoulos introduced Town Assessor Janet Teal to present the 2024 Tax Classification.

Principal Assessor Janet Teal and consultant Nate Cramer presented options regarding the tax rates. The purpose of this presentation is for the Town Council to decide on a single or split tax rate, whether to

adopt open space discount, whether to adopt residential exemption, and whether to adopt small commercial exemption. The presentation further covered prior year tax rates, prior year tax shifts in the residential factor, and the projected average increases in tax bills depending on which shift is adopted by the Council this year.

A discussion was held concerning the effects of the tax shifts on residents and businesses in the Town of Randolph.

Council President Alexopoulos: This will be continued to the Town Council meeting of Monday, November 20, 2023 at 6:15 for a public hearing.

Public Comments/Discussions

Council President Alexopoulos: Based on the series of events held during public comments at the last Town Council Meeting, we will only be allowing public comments in-person this evening.

1. Joe Burke, 54 Hills Street: This has to be one of the worst elections I've ever seen. People were walking up to voters passing out papers, there was so much yelling and signs on top of people. It was crazy.
2. Guerlince Semezler, 60 Mills Street - Congratulations to all for your campaigning and winning the election. I want to know what infrastructure is in place to get more residents involved and participating in the voting process.

Councillor Huff-Larmond: I want to encourage people to come and vote. There has been so much effort in making sure people have the right to vote and it's not being exercised.

Council President Alexopoulos: During Presidential and Governors elections, we have so much more of a turn out. 80% and 50% but local elections affect you so much more on a day to day basis, It affects your tax rates. I mailed over 3000 notices and we didn't have 3000 people that came so it's not from a lack of effort on the candidate's part. The Town also put out several notices. I think it's the lack of apathy of residents who don't see the value of voting in local elections.

Town Managers Report:

1. I attended the recent Veterans Day event hosted by the Randolph Veterans Council. Thank you to Kevin Cooke, Al Williams, the Elk's for opening their home to us. Randolph Public Schools also provided two students to read an essay, fifth grade chorus sang, and the Randolph High School band played. It's great to have the youth involved in these events.
2. I have two appointments I'd like to bring forward to the Town Council for the Disabilities Commission. They are recommended by Al Williams, Chairman of the Veterans Council. The two individuals are Hersinia Fidalgo and Clifton Singletary.

Motion to approve the two appointments to the Disabilities Commission made by Councillor Burgess, seconded by Councillor C. Alexopoulos.

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

Motion passes.

3. I want to recognize two significant achievements of two Town Employees. Town Planner Michelle Tyler recently received the Theodore Man Leadership Award and Town Clerk Cheryl Sass earned the Certified Massachusetts Municipal Clerks Certification. We appreciate all you both do for the Town and congratulations.

4. One of our nine Town Councillors is celebrating a birthday today! Happy Birthday to Council Vice President Brewer.
5. As previously mentioned by the Town Council Clerk, there are so many events happening in Town that have been exceptionally well-attended with fun activities to do for the whole family. You can check-out the recent Harvest Hoopla on Randolph Community Television. Please join us for the Trunk-or-Treat and Winter Wonderland later this season.

Questions for the Town Manager:

1. Councillor Burgess requested a copy of the job posting for the Department of Public Works Superintendent position.

New Business:

1. Council Order 2023-059: Establishment and Funding of FY2024 Reserve Fund

Council President Alexopoulos read Council Order 2023-059. Town Manager Howard introduced Council Order 2023-059 and provided a brief explanation of the purpose of this Council Order.

Town Accountant/Finance Director Janine Smith: The Reserve Fund was introduced a few years ago, and has become a practice here in Randolph. If this is voted, \$200,000 is only used for extraordinary and unforeseen circumstances which require a vote of the Council to be approved when presented. If it is not used, then it closes out like a departmental budget and returns to the general fund use for next year.

Councillor Clerger: How often do we use these funds? Town Manager Howard: It depends. Last year, we didn't tap into this fund as we used the loss revenue category of ARPA. The year before we only touched it briefly, but we can get you those statistics for the next meeting. Councillor Clerger: This is a good safety net for the town.

Council President Alexopoulos: This will be continued to the Town Council meeting of November 20, 2023 at 6:15 PM for a public hearing.

2. Council Order 2023-060: Prior Years Unpaid Bills

Council President Alexopoulos read Council Order 2023-060. Town Manager Howard introduced Council Order 2023-056 and provided a brief explanation of the purpose of this Council Order.

Council President Alexopoulos opened the floor for questions or comments of the Council.

Councillor Burgess requested a copy of the Cabot Risk Strategies, Inc.

Motion to approve Council Order 2022-060 as presented made by Councillor C. Alexopoulos, seconded by Council Vice President Brewer.

Roll Call Vote: 7-0-1 (Abstention: Burgess; Absent: Egan)

Motion passes.

3. Council Order 2023-061: Proposed Amendments To Town Council Rules Pertaining to Public Comments

Council President Alexopoulos read Council Order 2023-061.

Town Attorney Christine Griffin provided additional information regarding the purpose of this Council Order. Last week we had some unfortunate Zoom bombing during the Public Comments portion of the meeting and I was tasked with reviewing some of the policies that some other towns have adopted regarding this subject. Many cities and towns are also struggling with this. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court finds it very important that the public is able to bring forth their thoughts and their grievances to their public officials, and so most cities and towns have been adopting a cluster of time, place and manner restrictions that relate to how long people can speak, whether they can speak in person or virtually, whether they have to sign up ahead of time to be able to speak, whether they must limit themselves to only to topics on the agenda, or whether they may speak on any topic. The legislature continues to work on open meeting law and whether or not to require cities and towns to meet in a hybrid form and so we expect to receive more information on that in the spring.

Town Attorney Griffin described the amendments that were made to the Section 27 of the Town Council Rules pertaining to public comments.

Council President Alexopoulos: I know that other communities are also struggling with this in the same way. Councillor Gordon has emailed information regarding this subject as well so we will be sure to take a look at that.

Council President Alexopoulos opened the floor for questions or comments of the Council.

Councillor Burgess: This does not include comments being made for public hearings, is that correct?

Town Attorney Griffin: Correct, public hearings are separate. We will let individuals speak virtually or in-person although they will still be limited to three minutes, unless the Council decides to change that.

Councillor Gordon: The document I sent by email is titled "A Toolkit for responding to extremist disruptions at public meetings written by the Anti-defamation League, the most public group fighting anti-semitism. I spoke with their representative about this issue who said this is extremely common all over the country and they are a white-supremacy group. In the second paragraph, I'd like to make it more permissive and make it in the beginning of the meeting and it's a little bit of a challenge. I'd like to move it to the beginning, not the end. I'd like to suggest that hearing comments can be hybrid, but public comments could be subject to change. I have two suggestions on the amendments to this section of the Town Council rules and regulations. The first suggestion is for public comments to be moved to the beginning of an agenda. The second suggestion is that the public comments for public hearings be allowed virtually, and in person whereas public comments can be limited to in-person only.

Town Attorney Griffin: That is correct. There are sorts of state statutes we have to comply with for public hearings. The comments only being provided in-person only relates to public comments. For a public hearing, we cannot limit the number of speakers and we would also let individuals provide comments virtually, or in-person. We can still limit them for three minutes, and we can still ask them for their name and address.

Councillor Gordon: And public comments made for a public hearing may only be made if they relate to the topic of the public hearing. Council President Alexopoulos: That is correct.

Councillor Huff-Larmond: I like that it's not so strict because sometimes as a council we agree, and sometimes we don't. It allows us the flexibility we need.

Councillor O'Connell: I agree with Councillor Huff-Larmond. I'd like to see us change the "No Demonstration of Approval or Disapproval." Town Attorney Griffin: This is written to allow the Council President to have discretion on inviting the audience to applaud something such as highschool students winning an award but if there are folks in the audience that are cheering or booing making it

impossible for you all to speak then the Council President needs to be able to maintain order so that the business of the Council can continue to be conducted.

Council President Alexopoulos: This will be continued to the Town Council meeting of November 20, 2023.

Correspondence:

1. Randolph's 2023 Winter Wonderland: Saturday, December 9, 2023 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM with various events and activities taking place at the Zapustas Ice Arena, Turner Free Library, Randolph Intergenerational Department, and ending with a tree lighting at Town Hall beginning at 4:00 PM. Please go online for a complete list of events.
2. Curbside Yard Waste Pickup Schedule: Dates Remaining - November 18th, 2023 and December 2, 2023. Please leave your yard-waste curbside by 7:00 AM.
3. A Conversation on Diabetes: Hosted by The Community Wellness Project, Mass in Motion and Randolph Board of Health on Saturday, November 18, 2023 at 3:30 PM with guest speaker: Sue-Ellen Anderson Haynes at the Randolph Intergenerational Center (RICC).
4. Lastly, the Town is hosting a Holiday Toy Drive at Town Hall on Sunday, November 1, 2024 at 12:00 PM. If you're not able to make it, you can drop off toys at the Fire Station on 10 Memorial Drive anytime.

Subcommittee Comments:

1. **Public Safety Subcommittee** - We will be scheduling a meeting to discuss Councillor Gordon's Resolution on joining the Brockton Authority Transportation (BAT) routes. We hope to invite the Police Chief to the meeting to hear his thoughts.

Council Comments:

Councillor Burgess: 1. I saw somewhere that Belcher Park was listed as 60 Allen Street and I just want to make sure it's reflected correctly because it should be 60 Pleasant Street. 2. We are doing really well with the free cash budget so we must be doing something right. Is it possible to have the Town Accountant/Finance Director come in to provide us with an update since we haven't had one in a while. 3. Someone had asked if we fund the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and I wasn't sure what they're budget is, if so? Town Attorney Griffin: No, the Town does not fund them.

Councillor O'Connell: 1. I will be working with the Randolph Police Department to host a Holiday Food Drive. The Friendly Food Pantry is in need of lots of different food items. The date has been set for December 17, 2023. Stay tuned for more information. 2. I also wanted to express thanks to everyone that went out to vote in the recent election- whether you voted for me or not, the fact that you went out to vote is appreciated.

Councillor Gordon: 1. I brought up the issue of the blasting which occurred at T.L. Edwards affecting many of our Randolph residents and I plan to bring a warrant petition to Avon Town Meeting which essentially goes to the people of Avon to be addressed instead of the Selectboard. We can get a warrant on the May 7, 2023 Town Meeting. 2. November is supposed to be the period in which we come up with policy goals for the next fiscal year budget as stated in the Town's Charter. I'd like to discuss, as policy goals, the items I brought up last June and July concerning having professional staff hired for grant writing purposes.

Council Vice President Brewer: I went to the recent Veterans Day breakfast ceremony. It was great and we had a great turnout with many of our residents attending. It was nice to see the chorus sing and the band play.

Councillor Clerger: I was grateful to also attend the beautiful Veterans Day ceremony. All of the teamwork made it come together nicely.

Councillor C. Alexopoulos: 1. The North Randolph Tree Lighting is tentatively planned for Saturday, December 2, 2024. Be on the lookout for additional details. 2. Congratulations to my friend, Clifton Singletary, for being appointed to the Disabilities Commission.

Councillor Huff-Larmond: 1. Randolph Youth Council will be reading to Youth on December 2, 2023 at 1 PM at the Turner Free Library. 2. The Veterans Day ceremony was great as always so thank you again to all who put the effort in. 3. Congratulations to Town Planner Michelle Tyler and Town Clerk Cheryl Sass on their achievements. 4. There was a wonderful event held at the Randolph Woman's Club. It was a day for women to just get together and hang out. 5. District Three will have coffee with the police. A date and time is coming soon. 6. Town Planner Michelle Tyler worked with the Friendly Food Pantry to put together information in four different languages: English, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Vietnamese. She's been working really hard with the Friendly Food Pantry on this and we are very grateful. 7. Please keep an eye out for the upcoming Holiday events: our annual Tree lighting, Menorah lighting, Kinara lighting.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn made by Councillor Clerger, seconded by Councillor .

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:07 PM.