



MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL

59 COURT STREET

MUNICIPAL BUILDING, CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

SEPTEMBER 21, 2023 AT 7:00 PM

The meeting was called to order in the City Council Chamber, Municipal Building, 59 Court Street, Westfield, MA at 7:00 PM by President Beltrandi.

The Clerk called the roll. All thirteen Councilors were present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Beltrandi.

Upon motion of Councilor Bean, it was

VOTED: That the reading of the record of the meeting of September 7, 2023 and special meeting of September 14, 2023 be ACCEPTED.

Under "PUBLIC PARTICIPATION" the Councilors were addressed by Bridget Matthews-Kane, 81 Court Street. She informed the Council that the national organization, Blue Star Families, recently organized a New England chapter and that she has been encouraging them to come to Western, Mass. They will be hosting a coffee hour on September 27th from 9-11:30AM at the Starbucks on Southampton Road. She encouraged anyone with a military affiliation to come, not only to celebrate military families but also so the Blue Star Families organization can hear the specific needs of the military families within the community.

Under "PUBLIC PARTICIPATION" the Councilors were addressed by Kristen Mello, 27 Moseley Avenue. As a member of the Barnes Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) she informed the Council that the board is currently accepting new membership applications through October 5th. The applications can be found on the RAB website. The next scheduled meeting is October 26th at 5:00PM. A hydrogeologist from UMass will give a presentation on the PFAS plume and the data that has been collected.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR

Upon motion of Councilor Onyski, it was

VOTED: That item 1. under "Communications from the Mayor" be read by the Clerk and be REFERRED TO THE LEGISLATIVE ORDINANCE COMMITTEE.

The Clerk read the agenda as follows:

1. Requesting approval of a temporary staff increase for the Police Department from sixty-six (66) Patrol Officers to seventy-one (71) Patrol Officers to allow an additional five new hires to attend the upcoming Police Academy in November, in preparation of anticipated retirements from the Department.

REPORTS OF CITY OFFICERS

2. Upon motion of Councilor Bean, it was

VOTED: That a list of athletic fields and grounds maintained by the Westfield Public School Department, submitted by the Director of Operations and Safety, Chris Rogers, be REFERRED TO CITY PROPERTIES.

All in favor, voice vote.

Prior to the vote, Councilor Bean stated that they were waiting for additional information from DPW and Parks & Rec.

PETITIONS, REMONSTRANCES, AND OTHER PAPERS

3. Upon motion of Councilor Figy, it was

VOTED: That the CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING on a Special Permit application submitted by A.J. Virgilio Construction, Inc. pursuant to Zoning Ordinance Sec.130.3(1) to allow the continued use of over the road trailer parking/storage on property be CONTINUED to the October 19, 2023 City Council Meeting.

All in favor, voice vote.

Prior to the vote Councilor Figy informed the Council that the applicant had just received the information from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection but needed time to review it.

4. A continued public hearing on a Zone Change Petition submitted by R Levesque Associates Inc. for RSP Realty, LLC c/o Mr. Ronald E. Schortmann, for 3 Fowler Street Extension (parcel 255-17) and 81 Union Street (parcel 223-59) from Residential C to Industrial A for a proposed parking lot expansion from abutting property. John Masuck from R Levesque Associates was present to represent RSP Realty. He stated that they were requesting a change from Residential C to Industrial A to eliminate some spot zoning. Councilor Mello shared with the Councilors that she walked the neighborhood to speak to abutters. Most residents were not concerned about the property being brought together. They were concerned about the inconsistent screening around the entire property. They would like arborvitae on Union Street and would like to have light shielded if possible. She stated that everyone has noticed it has been silent in the early morning since the last Public Hearing. President Beltrandi opened the public hearing for members of the audience to speak in favor. There was no-one to speak in favor. President Beltrandi opened the public hearing for members of the audience to speak in opposition. There was no-one to speak in opposition.

With no others appearing to be heard and upon motion of Councilor Figy, it was VOTED: That the Public Hearing be CLOSED, and the item be REFERRED TO THE ZONING, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Legislative and Ordinance Committee

5. Upon motion of Councilor Onyski for the Legislative and Ordinance Committee, it was VOTED: That review City Ordinance, Chapter 18 - Department of Public Works be REMOVED

FROM COMMITTEE WITHOUT ACTION.

All in favor, voice vote.

Prior to the vote, Councilor Burns informed the Council that President Beltrandi formed a Water & DPW Ad-Hoc Committee at the September 7th meeting.

6. Upon motion of Councilor Figy for the Legislative and Ordinance Committee, it was VOTED: That Terry W. Beauregard, owner of 170 Loomis Street offering the City right of first refusal to convert part of the property out of the 61-A program be REMOVED FROM COMMITTEE WITHOUT ACTION.

All in favor, voice vote.

Prior to the vote, Councilor Figy informed the Council that the application was incomplete, and Mr. Beauregard could reapply when he had a complete application. Councilor Sullivan asked if the Law Department stated that it didn't meet the right of first refusal notice. Councilor Onyski stated that he worked with First Assistant City Solicitor Reed. The applicant was informed of the corrections needed in order for the City to be offered first right of refusal.

7. Upon motion of Councilor Onyski for the Legislative and Ordinance Committee, it was VOTED: That a Resolution entitled "A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WESTFIELD FOR ACCEPTANCE OF A GIFT PURSUANT TO M.G.L. 44 § 53A TO ANIMAL CONTROL DEPARTMENT" for the acceptance of a gift donation in the amount of \$1,000.00 from David T. Plakias to the Animal Control Department to be used for improvements be ADOPTED.

All in favor, voice vote.

Prior to the vote, Councilor Onyski thanked Mr. Plakias for the \$1,000.00 donation and read the Resolution in its entirety.

Personnel Action Committee

8. Upon motion of Councilor Harris for the Personnel Action Committee, it was VOTED: That the appointment of Trudy Knowles, 4 Noble Avenue as a member of the Council on Aging for a term to expire February, 2024, replacing the vacant position left by Kerry Ann Kielbasa be CONFIRMED.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Kristen Mello | Yes |
| Nicholas Morganelli, Jr. | Yes |
| Mary O'Connell | Yes |
| William Onyski | Yes |
| Richard Sullivan, Jr. | Yes |
| James Adams | Yes |
| Dan Allie | Yes |

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|-----------------------|-----|
| Brent Bean II | Yes |
| John Beltrandi III | Yes |
| Michael Burns | Yes |
| Ralph Figy | Yes |
| Cindy Harris | Yes |
| Bridget Matthews-Kane | Yes |

Prior to the vote, Councilor Harris informed the Council that Trudy Knowles has been actively involved in the Senior Center since it opened and would like to serve on the Council on Aging to help develop policies to continue to enhance programs and resources offered. She has served on the boards of the Westfield Children’s Museum and the Enchanted Circle Theater. Her background includes being a Professor in the Education Department at Westfield State University, also serving as the Elementary Education program coordinator. She has published education books and professional journal articles. Since retiring in 2016, she has continued to be active at the YMCA and Senior Center. She will be completing the term left vacant by Kerry Ann Kielbasa which expires in a few months. Councilor Figy, as Council on Aging liaison thanked Kerry Ann Kielbasa for her years of service on the Council on Aging board.

9. Upon motion of Councilor Harris for the Personnel Action Committee, it was VOTED: That the reappointment of Sarah Scott, 455 Falley Drive as a member of the Cultural Council for a term to expire in June, 2026 be CONFIRMED.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Kristen Mello | Yes |
| Nicholas Morganelli, Jr. | Yes |
| Mary O’Connell | Yes |
| William Onyski | Yes |
| Richard Sullivan, Jr. | Yes |
| James Adams | Yes |
| Dan Allie | Yes |
| Brent Bean II | Yes |
| John Beltrandi III | Yes |
| Michael Burns | Yes |
| Ralph Figy | Yes |
| Cindy Harris | Yes |
| Bridget Matthews-Kane | Yes |

Prior to the vote, Councilor Harris informed the Council that Sarah Scott was initially appointed in June of this year to fill a vacancy. She is the librarian at Westfield Middle School. She was previously a librarian at Westfield State University and has been a volunteer at the Springfield Museum for years. She stated that Ms. Scott is a perfect fit for the Cultural Council whose job it is to distribute state grant money to the arts and cultural endeavors. Councilor Matthews-Kane spoke in favor of her initial appointment.

10. Upon motion of Councilor Harris for the Personnel Action Committee, it was

VOTED: That the reappointment of Vicki Moro, 114 Pomeroy Meadow Road, Southampton, MA as City Auditor for a term to expire October 1, 2026.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

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|--------------------------|-----|
| Kristen Mello | Yes |
| Nicholas Morganelli, Jr. | Yes |
| Mary O'Connell | Yes |
| William Onyski | Yes |
| Richard Sullivan, Jr. | Yes |
| James Adams | Yes |
| Dan Allie | Yes |
| Brent Bean II | Yes |
| John Beltrandi III | Yes |
| Michael Burns | Yes |
| Ralph Figy | Yes |
| Cindy Harris | Yes |
| Bridget Matthews-Kane | Yes |

Prior to the vote, Councilor Harris highlighted many of Vicki Moro's accomplishments during her first three years as City Auditor which included moving the city budget closer to a gold standard budget, cleaning up old grant accounts, creating a new travel policy, streamlining payroll reports, increasing collaboration between departments, and being involved with union negotiations. She is well-versed in DOR reporting, saving the City the cost of outsourcing audit services. She also hired and trained new staff including the Assistant City Auditor. She continues to work with the Mayor and finance team regarding the City's finances and projects and looks forward to improving more processes to benefit the City. During the Personnel Action Committee meeting, Councilor Adams asked why she had cleaned up the Water and Sewer Bills. Auditor Moro replied that she tries to fix areas that have not been resolved. There were some receivables from 15 years ago that she cleaned up and sent to the Water Department for a vote of the Commission. Councilor Figy stated he was a member of the Selection Committee for the Auditor and is happy Mrs. Moro was selected. He gave her accolades for improving toward a Gold Standard Budget. Councilor Morganelli read excerpts from the Mayor's letter of recommendation, adding he was thrilled to vote in favor of the reappointment. Councilor Matthews-Kane echoed Councilor Figy. As the Chair of the Finance Committee, she works closely with Mrs. Moro and stated she is wonderful to work with. Councilor Sullivan commented that she was a true professional and always responsive to Council. He noted the importance of having somebody who was accurate and trustworthy in the role of Auditor and stated that the City was lucky to have her. Councilor Mello gave her appreciation to Mrs. Moro for always providing usable data when answering questions and making difficult concepts easier to understand by using visual formats. Councilor Burns also gave his appreciation to Mrs. Moro.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

11. Upon motion of Councilor Figy, it was

VOTED: That an Order entitled "AN ORDER TRANSFERRING CARE, CUSTODY, MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL OF A CERTAIN PARCEL IN THE CITY OF WESTFIELD" (the Columbia Rail Trail to the Westfield Department of Public Works) be given second reading.

The Order was given second reading and upon motion of Councilor Figy, it was VOTED: That the order be PASSED TO BE ORDAINED.

12. Upon motion of Councilor Figy, it was VOTED: That the motion of Councilors Bean, Beltrandi, Figy, Burns and Adams to request the Mayor to appropriate funds to conduct a top to bottom review of the Westfield Fire Department and its four subdivisions (Refer to Mayor) be REMOVED FROM THE TABLE. All in favor, voice vote.

Upon motion of Councilor Figy, it was VOTED: To amend the motion to add Refer to the Fire Commission. All in favor, voice vote.

Councilor O'Connell stated she didn't think this motion was going to go anywhere as the Council doesn't have the ability to fund an audit. Councilor Adams stated that he was on the Council when they voted to have an audit done on Westfield Gas and Electric. His stance remained that it would be good to look at a department every ten years. He spoke in support of having someone who has looked at other fire departments, review the Westfield Fire Department and give suggestions to the Fire Commission and Council on what is working and areas they need improvement. Councilor Mello questioned if there was an associated cost or if a limit should be put on the motion. Councilor Figy stated that the Council was unable to initiate the funding, it would be up to the Mayor to send in a request. Councilor O'Connell stated that the Westfield Gas and Electric study took 9 months and cost the City, back then, \$50,000.00. She asked if anyone had spoken to the Mayor. Councilor Figy stated that he spoke to two union personnel. Councilor O'Connell voiced her concerns about funding a review when funds were needed for schools and streets. President Beltrandi stated he spoke with the Mayor when the motion originally came in and he was in favor of doing it. He was looking into what the associated costs would be. Councilor Morganelli stated that the vote was to request the Mayor to make a proposal for appropriating funds, which would then come back to the City Council for approval and Councilors could vote yes/no depending on the dollar amount. Councilor Burns stated that it was a request for a review not an audit, and strongly spoke in support of the Fire Commission conducting one. Councilor Harris stated that she was initially going to vote no, but if the Mayor and both unions were in support, she would vote yes. Councilor Morganelli offered a motion to list specifics to clarify top to bottom review.

Upon motion of Councilor Morganelli, it was VOTED: To request the Mayor to appropriate funds to conduct a top to bottom review of the Westfield Fire Department and its four subdivisions, including personnel, structure, financials, and equipment. Refer to Mayor and Fire Commission.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Kristen Mello | Yes |
|---------------|-----|

| | |
|--------------------------|-----|
| Nicholas Morganelli, Jr. | Yes |
| Mary O'Connell | No |
| William Onyski | Yes |
| Richard Sullivan, Jr. | No |
| James Adams | Yes |
| Dan Allie | No |
| Brent Bean II | Yes |
| John Beltrandi III | No |
| Michael Burns | No |
| Ralph Figy | No |
| Cindy Harris | No |
| Bridget Matthews-Kane | No |

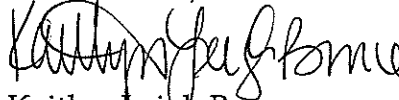
The President declared the motion lost.

Upon motion of Councilor Figy, it was
 VOTED: To request the Mayor to appropriate funds to conduct a top to bottom review of the Westfield Fire Department and it's four subdivisions and REFER TO THE MAYOR AND FIRE COMMISSION.

All in favor, voice vote. Councilor O'Connell was OPPOSED.

At 7:39PM, and upon motion of Councilor Harris, it was
 VOTED: To ADJOURN.

A true record, Attest:



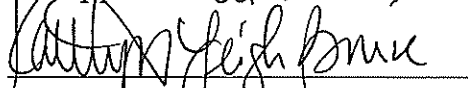
Kaitlyn Leigh Bruce
 City Clerk/Clerk of the Council


Presented to the Mayor

Approved by the Mayor

For approval October 6, 2023

10-10 2023


 Kaitlyn Leigh Bruce, City Clerk


 Michael A. McCabe, Mayor