

State of Rhode Island

County of Washington

In Hopkinton on the first day of September 2020 A.D. the said meeting was called to order by Town Council President Frank Landolfi at 7:00 P.M. in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 1 Town House Road, Hopkinton, RI 02833.

PRESENT: Frank Landolfi, Scott Bill Hirst, Sylvia Thompson & Barbara Capalbo were present in the Meeting Room; Sharon Davis; Town Solicitor Kevin McAllister and Town Clerk Elizabeth Cook-Martin attended remotely. Absent: Town Manager William McGarry.

The Meeting was held remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The agenda included instructions for participating in the meeting.

The meeting was called to Order with a moment of silent meditation and a salute to the Flag.

CONSENT AGENDA

The July 20, 2020 transcript was removed from the Consent Agenda.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR CAPALBO AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR HIRST TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS

FOLLOWS: Approve Town Council Meeting Minutes of August 3, 2020; Town Council Meeting Minutes of August 17, 2020; Approve refund resulting from an overpayment by a taxpayer of 2019 tangible tax submitted by the Tax Collector; Approve abatements resulting from adjustments and corrections to 2020 real property and tangible taxes submitted by the Tax Assessor; Ratify and approve the Ninth Local Declaration of Emergency from September 1st to October 4th, 2020.

IN FAVOR: Landolfi, Hirst, Capalbo, Thompson, Davis

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

Councilor Capalbo noted that the transcript of July 20, 2020 had a typographical error on page 6, line 14, the word “only” should be “own” and on page 11, line 7, what she did on 0 Main Street was I added 15%. The word “added” needed to be included between the I and 15%.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR CAPALBO AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR THOMPSON TO ACCEPT THE TRANSCRIPT OF JULY 20, 2020 AS THE RECORD OF THE HEARING RE: AMENDMENTS TO CHAPTERS 272 AND 273 WITH CORRECTIONS NOTED.

IN FAVOR: Landolfi, Hirst, Capalbo, Thompson, Davis

OPPOSED: None

SO VOTED

NEW BUSINESS

CHIEF OF POLICE REPORT:

Chief of Police David Palmer noted that the Department’s newest recruit was Brittany Carpenter who was currently in her sixth week at the academy. He stated that Brittany is 25 years old and a 2013 Chariho graduate who went to URI for two years. She has worked at the Richmond Department of Public Works and volunteered at the Carolina Fire Department for seven years. Ms. Carpenter will graduate in December and they look forward to having a new officer in the Department.

Chief Palmer also noted that he had issued three commendations. In August of 2019 he issued a commendation to Sergeant Eastwood who had stopped a vehicle for speeding in Ashaway. At that stop, Sgt. Eastwood noticed the odor of marijuana, searched the vehicle, and found approximately 10 grams of fentanyl, or 14 bags. He noted that there were signs that the suspect was selling, which included narcotic logs and scales and therefore this person was charged with possession of fentanyl with intent to deliver. The second commendation went to a group of officers, Captain Carrier, Patrolmen Gaccione, Nutting and Williams. In September of 2019 they received a 911 hang up from a distraught female who was intoxicated and had a handgun threatening to commit suicide. These officers, along with other officers from the area, went to the house where the female was.

The female was agitated and in and out of the house waving the gun around and pointing it at herself and officers. A plan was developed to arrest her without injuries in order to get her the help that she needed, which was accomplished. The third commendation went to Detective Forbes regarding an investigation which occurred from August 2019 to January 2020. Back in August a mother and her child came into the station distraught. The daughter, a Chariho High School student, had been lured to send an explicit photograph of herself, to someone she thought was a 17 year old male at Chariho; however, it went to a 24 year old predator out of New Jersey. Detective Forbes did a great job of gaining a rapport with the family members and convincing them to prosecute. There have been many search warrants issued and Detective Forbes has been a liaison to several different departments because it was found that this had happened to another Chariho female student which was being investigated by the Hope Valley Barracks. Based on Detective Forbes information and warrant, the New Jersey State Police obtained a search warrant and arrest warrant and found child pornography and other items at the suspect's home. The suspect was extradited to Rhode Island, gave a full confession, and is facing 15 years minimum mandatory. The U.S. Attorney's Office issued a press release applauding Detective Forbes for his tenacity when the suspect was arrested.

Lastly, he noted that there has been a rash of stolen motor vehicles and vehicle break-ins. He believes this is a group, or several groups, some of which may be gang members, who are looking for keys left in cars. He believes their goal is to steal these vehicles; however, if they do not find a key then they will still rummage through the vehicle stealing whatever they can find. He cautioned people from leaving keys in their vehicles or any items of value in sight. He also noted that people may have garage door openers in their vehicles which would give someone access to their garage and possibly even their house.

Councilor Davis asked how many female officers were in the police department. Chief Palmer noted that this will be the first female officer under his command and it was noted that there was one female officer in the Department approximately 18 years ago. Councilor Hirst thanked the Chief for his

Department's work regarding the issue of people running the stop sign at the end of Chase Hill Road and Route 216. He also noted that there is a leash law in town; however, has heard many complaints of roaming dogs and wished the police and Animal Control Officer to look into this. Councilor Capalbo thanked the Chief and felt it was very important to hear what the police were doing and for people to know that the police are truly here to serve and protect. Councilor Thompson wished to commend the Police Department and told a story about a homeless resident who had a long history of drug abuse. This person had a meltdown in Westerly due to the drug use and was arrested for trespassing and violating a restraining order. After the arrest, within hours, the Westerly Police let her go. Another time, this same woman was in Hopkinton wandering a neighborhood having a serious event where she couldn't deal with reality and the police were called. Clearly she had severe problems with whatever drug she was taking and the Hopkinton Police picked her up and rather than just arrest her, they took her to Butler Hospital for help. Chief Palmer noted that they have a program through Codac for substance abuse issues where they can get people the help they need if they wish help.

PUBLIC FORUM

Joe Moreau of Old Depot Road wished to point out that a lot of good information has been placed on the town's website. He noted that he has been quick to criticize in the past but wished to note that he has seen a big improvement of the sharing of information with the town's residents. Mr. Moreau was also happy to see the Chief's report on the agenda and would not have thought about garage door openers being taken from vehicles. He hoped to see this as a regular agenda item every month just before the public forum so that residents could discuss any issues they may have. Mr. Moreau noted that they recently had an issue of speeding and reckless driving on Old Depot Road and the Chief and his staff did a great job of correcting this by having police presence, radar and setting up a sign showing the speed of vehicles. Mr. Moreau also wished to see the town's website include other information regarding the police and fire departments and felt that this may help more residents to become involved. Mr. Moreau also noted that he had seen on a recent post where two leashed dogs were attacked on the Tomaquag

Road trail by a dog which was running loose and this information possibly could have been shared on the website. Lastly, he wished to thank Council President Landolfi for adding the Chief of Police's report to the agenda noting that it was his opinion that the Police Chief and the Chief of the Fire Department should have a report each month as an agenda item, followed by a public forum.

Councilor Hirst noted that the two fire districts are independent entities which hold their own meetings and the town is not involved in fire protection.

Councilor Capalbo brought up a matter of personal privilege, wishing to clarify and address the record concerning the Council vote taken on January 22, 2019 establishing the amendment to Chapter 246, Non-Residential Photovoltaic Solar Energy System (PSES). She advised that this vote was not unanimous and that she had voted against the amendment. Councilor Capalbo noted that she understood the confusion for after the aye vote to approve the ordinance amendment, yelling, clapping and other noises thoroughly covered the question of the vote. She indicated that she had asked the Council President for anyone voting nay, which she then did; however, this was understandably not heard. During the entire meeting she spoke against the ordinance amendment, specifically calling the 3% or three acre maximum proposition as simply allowing these arrays to spring up around town like warts on a toad. Her vote was against small solar arrays for anyone except legitimate farmers. She voted against the motion to amend and the Council vote should read approved four to one.

ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILOR HIRST AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR CAPALBO TO ADJOURN IN MEMORY OF MARY LOU FISKE AND IN RECOGNITION OF PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR TIMOTHY TEFFT.

SO VOTED

Elizabeth J. Cook-Martin

Town Clerk

Marita D. Murray

Deputy Town Clerk