

REGULAR MEETING OF THE AGAWAM CITY COUNCIL

Minutes dated April 19, 2022

Meeting was called to order by Council President Johnson at 7:00pm at the Agawam Junior High School.

Item A. Roll Call

ROLL CALL – 11 PRESENT, 0 ABSENT

Roll Call was taken with the following Councilors present: George Bitzas, Cecilia Calabrese, Paul Cavallo, Christopher Johnson, Gina Letellier (remote), Dino Mercadante, Anthony Russo, Robert Rossi, Rosemary Sandlin, Gerald Smith, and Anthony Suffriti. With eleven present, there was a quorum.

Item B. Moment of Silence and the Pledge of Allegiance.

There was a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item C. Citizen's Speak Time

Item D. Minutes

1. Regular Council Meeting – April 4, 2022

Motion to approve moved and seconded around the house. The minutes were voice vote unanimously approved with Council President Johnson.

Item E. Declaration of Council President

None.

Item F. Presentation of Resolutions

1. TR-2022-24 - A Resolution to appropriate and authorize borrowing in the amount of Two Million Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$2,500,000.00) to pay costs for the Westfield River Intercept Sewer Relocation Project and the Reed Street Embankment Project (Sponsored by Mayor Sapelli) (Referred to Finance Committee) (Tabled 4/4/22)

Motion to leave this item on the table made by Councilor Sandlin and seconded by Councilor Mercadante. Voice vote approved. Council President Johnson stated the item will remain on the table while the administration looks for an alternate relocation route.

2. TR-2022-25 - A Resolution asking the Mayor to reinstate the original hours of operation at the Agawam Senior Center (Sponsored by Councilors Bitzas and Rossi) (Referred to Community Relations Committee)

Motion to approve made by Councilor Rossi and seconded by Councilors Cavallo and Bitzas. Councilor Bitzas thanked his co-sponsor Councilor Rossi noting that ten years ago Agawam built the best senior center in the state. The center should be open after 5pm for our seniors as was done when it first opened. Many seniors are asking that we reopen the Senior Center to 8:00 or 9:00 to allow for participation in extracurricular activities. He said the extra cost is minimal and the library is currently there so why wouldn't we do this. Councilor Bitzas stated he had asked a few months ago but nothing has happened. This is for the benefit of our residents. Councilor Rossi stated he thought it was important to return to the normal hours and that is why he signed on as a sponsor. The Senior Center is an

important asset in our community where our seniors can access a multitude of resources and stay socially engaged. Senior Centers can be a community revitalizer and provides programs and community activities. He also stated that the center cannot be properly operated with ridged business hours of operation and that was not its intended purpose. Hours should be flexible and no community activity should be closed out or shut off which is currently happening. Councilor Suffriti agreed with both sponsors however feels the City Council is meddling into the administration that runs our town and because of this he would not support the item. He said this should be the executive branch not the legislative branch. Councilor Mercadante said this is just to let the Mayor know how the Council feels and also suggested that in the best weather maybe summer hours could be adjusted. Councilor Sandlin agreed with Councilor Suffriti in that we are meddling in the executive branch and this item should not be before the legislative branch. This is the Mayor's responsibility and she has only heard wonderful things about our Senior Center. Councilor Smith agreed that our Senior Center is one of the best in Massachusetts but feels strongly that it is the Mayor's job to handle this. Council Vice President Calabrese said while it is indeed the Mayor's job, seniors elected us to be their voice. She has received some complaints as well about the limited hours and by voting on this, we are sending a message of support to the Administration. This is not a demand but merely a request to support our seniors by staying open later. Councilor Cavallo wanted to know if the Senior Center Director was contacted to come to the meeting. Councilor Bitzas stated that he had contacted the Senior Center Director three months ago and he had no problem with opening up and found money to do so however nothing has been done. He respectfully disagreed and believes by supporting this we show support to request that the Mayor changes the hours to remain open a little later. He said the City Council has to do its job and do what the people of Agawam ask us to do noting this is a simple request and not a demand. Councilor Cavallo said his only concern was that the Director was not present to ask questions. Councilor Rossi said he did not sign on to this Resolution to micromanage the Mayor or meddle in his affairs. His intent was to bring attention to the seniors' requests to stay open longer. Now that things have opened up a bit after Covid, it is time to fully reopen the Senior Center. He said this is certainly not an indictment or placing blame on anyone but is just for consideration and please do not read more into it. Councilor Russo agreed that it is the Mayor's decision to make and also feels that this Resolution is only a recommendation. It is the Mayor's responsibility but supports this trusting our Mayor to do whatever he thinks is best. Councilor Bitzas disagreed with Councilor Cavallo and said we did not need to bring the Senior Center Director in – the Mayor is his boss and he will do whatever the Mayor decides. Councilor Bitzas said he is 100% sure the Mayor will do the right thing. Councilor Sandlin stated she has spoken with the Senior Center Director and believes the best thing to do is table this item. She also pointed out that this item was referred to the Community Relations Committee and they did not hold a meeting. Councilor Sandlin moved to table the item until they have a sub-committee meeting. Councilor Cavallo is not against the Senior Center but agreed with Councilor Sandlin in that they should have a sub-committee meeting noting this is how we do things. Councilor Bitzas was against tabling this item and began explaining why he did not call a sub-committee meeting and while he was talking, Council President Johnson called Councilor Bitzas out of order at this time. Councilor Bitzas continued to talk about why he did not call the sub-committee meeting and why he was against the tabling motion. Council President Johnson again called him out of order. Councilor Bitzas said this is a democracy and unethical and Council President did not have the right to shut him off. Council President Johnson said he would shut his microphone off if he continued to interrupt.

Motion to table made by Councilor Sandlin and seconded by Councilor Suffriti. The vote was **9 YES, 2 NO** (Councilors Bitzas and Calabrese) tabling the item.

3. TR-2022-26 - A Resolution confirming the reappointment of David Cecchi, 29 Albert Street, Agawam, MA to the Community Preservation Act Committee to a term expiring April 30, 2025 (City Council)

Motion to approve made by Councilor Sandlin and seconded by Councilors Smith and Russo. Councilor Sandlin expressed pleasure at Mr. Cecchi's nomination and said it was a privilege to have him on this committee.

The vote was **11 YES, 0 NO** approving the reappointment.

4. TR-2022-27 - A Resolution confirming the reappointment of Vincenzo Ronghi, 55 Avalon Place, Feeding Hills, MA to the Community Preservation Act Committee to a term expiring April 30, 2025 (City Council)

Council President Johnson explained that the Housing Authority had not had their meeting at which they would appoint their representative to the CPA and suggesting tabling this item until confirmation was received. Motion to table made by Councilor Sandlin and seconded by Councilor Suffriti. Voice vote approved.

Item G. Elections

1. **TE-2022-4 - Election of an at large member of the Community Preservation Act Committee to a term expiring April 30, 2025**

Council Vice President Calabrese placed the name of Vi Baldwin into nomination and Councilor Sandlin seconded it. Motion to close nominations made by Councilor Mercadante and seconded by Councilor Suffriti.

The vote was **11 YES, 0 NO** for Vi Baldwin.

Item H. Public Hearings

1. **TO-2022-8 (PH-2022-2) - An Order amending a LICENSE for gasoline/petroleum storage tanks, Gulf Express Mart, 18 Springfield Street, Agawam, MA (Clerk) – Public Hearing Date set for **May 2, 2022** (Referred to Administrative Committee)**

This item remained on the table until the Public Hearing at our next meeting.

2. **TO-2022-9 (PH-2022-3) - An Order amending a LICENSE for gasoline/petroleum storage tanks, One Stop Mart, 373 Rowley Street, Agawam, MA (Clerk) – Public Hearing Date set for **May 2, 2022** (Referred to Administrative Committee)**

This item remained on the table until the Public Hearing at our next meeting.

Item I. Old Business

1. **TOR-2022-6 - An Ordinance to amend Section 7C of Chapter 49 of the Code of the Town of Agawam (2 of 2 Readings) (Sponsored by Mayor Sapelli) (Referred to Legislative Committee)**

Motion to approve the second and final reading was made by Councilor Sandlin and seconded by Councilor Russo.

The vote was **11 YES, 0 NO** approving the second and final reading.

2. **TO-2022-6 - An Order granting or renewing a PERMIT for Weekly Amusement for Six Flags New England, 1623 Main Street, Agawam, MA (Clerk) (Referred to Administrative Committee)**

Motion to approve made by Councilor Smith and seconded by Councilors Suffriti and Cavallo. As Chair of the Administrative Committee, Councilor Rossi provided the report stating that there were no issues or concerns with this item and his committee gave a positive recommendation to the Full Council by a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Letellier)

The vote was **11 YES, 0 NO** approving the item.

3. **TO-2022-7 - An Order granting or renewing a LICENSE for Automatic Amusement Device(s) for Six Flags New England, 1623 Main Street, Agawam, MA (Clerk) (Referred to Administrative Committee)**

Motion to approve made by Councilor Smith and seconded by Councilors Rossi and Suffriti. As Chair of the Administrative Committee, Councilor Rossi provided the report stating that there were no issues or concerns with this item and his committee gave a positive recommendation to the Full Council by a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Letellier)

The vote was **11 YES, 0 NO** approving the item.

4. TO-2022-10 - An Order granting or renewing a Junk Dealer's PERMIT for John's Trucking of Agawam, Inc., 415 Silver Street, Agawam, MA 01001 (Referred to Administrative Committee)

Motion to approve made by Councilor Cavallo and seconded by Councilor Russo. As Chair of the Administrative Committee, Councilor Rossi provided the report stating that there were no issues or concerns with this item and his committee gave a positive recommendation to the Full Council by a vote of 4 Yes, 0 No, 1 Absent (Councilor Letellier)

The vote was **11 YES, 0 NO** approving the item.

5. TOR-2022-7 - An Ordinance to amend Sections 7(A)(1) and 7(A)(2) of Chapter 49 of the Code of the Town of Agawam (1 of 2 Readings) (Sponsored by Mayor Sapelli) (Referred to Legislative Committee)

Motion to approve the first reading made by Councilor Mercadante and seconded by Councilors Smith and Sandlin. As Chair of the Administrative Committee, Councilor Suffriti provided the report stating that they had a lengthy discussion noting the Mayor is attempting to restructure his office and change the Executive Assistant position to a Chief of Staff at no additional cost to the town. This would extend the Mayor's reach to the community. The Committee made a positive recommendation to the Full Council by a vote of 3 Yes (Councilors Suffriti, Sandlin and Russo), 1 No (Councilor Bitzas), 1 Absent (Councilor Letellier). Councilor Mercadante began discussion saying many of the area mayors have a Chief of Staff to whom they can delegate responsibilities. The previous Executive Assistant didn't have the qualifications that this proposed position would require. The Mayor's Office is running on fumes and this position would be a welcomed additional to the Mayor's staff and would bring new dimension to the town. Councilor Bitzas said he was the only no vote in the sub-committee recommendation. He agrees that the Mayor is doing a great job and for the last six months Nadine has been doing a fabulous job. If this Executive job is eliminated, why would be add another when Nadine is doing everything fine and already doing whatever is in the proposed job description. He feels this is a political appointment and one that works at the pleasure of the next mayor. Councilor Bitzas said we have a Council President and Vice President who can stand in for the Mayor at any time. He doesn't agree that this is needed but likes to hear the debate of the Council. Councilor Smith said we can all agreed Mayor Sapelli is doing a great job but this proposed position is to help him do his job even better. This person would reflect the Mayor's exact opinions and represent the Mayor. Councilor Rossi said this resolution is in good order and good keeping as the town needs a liaison to be the eyes and ears of the Mayor when he is unavailable. This position is in the best interest of the town to bring us into the modern era and streamline the Mayor's Office expanding his abilities to serve. Council Vice President Calabrese said she is uncomfortable with unelected bureaucratic positions that are not answerable to the voters. She said this is nothing more than a political patronage job with a sizable salary. She will not be supporting the item. Council President Johnson noted that this position had no net increase to the town and simply eliminates the Executive Assistant and replaces with a Chief of Staff. He also stated he wished he had a Chief of Staff when he was Mayor as a mayor is pulled in one thousand different directions. Council President Johnson applauded the Mayor to have the courage to move forward reiterating that this position would not increase the cost and broadens the duties and responsibilities to better meet the needs of the town. He definitely sees the benefit. Councilor Bitzas argued that when you eliminate an \$86,000 job then you save \$86,000 but this doesn't save the town any money. He said Nadine can step in for the Mayor if necessary or one of the councilors. With respect to grants, Councilor Bitzas said we have other employees that can do that. Councilor Bitzas asked who we think we are – the White House? – we are a small town and should be spending our money wisely. Councilor Mercadante agreed spending extra money is not warranted but in this instance the Mayor is eliminating one position and replacing it with another with no extra money and no stipend. The job description is for an all hands on deck person and this is good timing for the Town of Agawam. Councilor Russo agreed this does not add another mayor in the office, this is just an employee to help the Mayor to govern as he wishes and he/she would work solely for the Mayor. We trust the Mayor's judgment. He said there's a reason it is a non-union position because this person would work at the pleasure of the Mayor and to Councilor Bitzas' point, if the secretary represented the Mayor then that office would be empty which doesn't make sense. Councilor Russo said this position is an asset to the Mayor's Office. Councilor Sandlin gave kudos to Nadine who has stepped into the breach and worked herself to death coming in early and leaving late. Nadine's position is a union position and this one would be non-union. She believes it is a great idea for Agawam. Councilor Cavallo hates the idea of a political patronage job but doesn't believe that is what this is. Our Mayor is not a

political mayor and he puts all the trust in the world in Mayor Sapelli enthusiastically supporting this one hundred percent. Councilor Rossi said the Council is overthinking this and that is not all that complicated. The Mayor needs a Chief of Staff as he cannot be everywhere at once. This person would bring back information and represent the Mayor. It is non-union simply because it is a classified position that is responsible for confidential information and would alleviate a lot of stress for the Mayor. Councilor Mercadante moved the question and Councilor Sandlin seconded it.

The vote was **9 YES, 2 NO** (Councilors Bitzas and Calabrese) approving the first reading.

Item J. New Business

- 1. TR-2022-28 - A Resolution adopting the Fiscal Year 2023- 2027 Capital Improvement Program (Sponsored by Mayor Sapelli) – Suggest a Public Hearing Date of May 16, 2022**

Next Agenda with Council President Johnson noting the Public Hearing will be held on May 16th.

- 2. TR-2022-29 - A Resolution accepting a grant in the amount of Two Thousand and Five Hundred Dollars and Zero Cents (\$2,500.00) from the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security Office of Grants and Research to the Town of Agawam Fire Department (Sponsored by Mayor Sapelli)**

Next Agenda.

- 3. TOR-2022-8 - An Ordinance to amend Section 124 of Chapter 180 of the Code of the Town of Agawam (Sponsored by Mayor Sapelli) (Two Readings Required) – Refer to Planning Board and Set a Public Hearing date**

Council President officially referred this item to the Planning Board and the Legislative Committee setting our Public Hearing tentatively for June 6th.

Item L. Any other matter that may legally come before the City Council

Council Vice President Calabrese congratulation Mikaela Calabrese on winning an outstanding achievement award for film making. Councilor Cavallo talked about three big projects in town and recently walked around Suffield and Silver Streets noting that we will get there but specifically asked for getting crosswalks repainted. Councilor Bitzas said it was nice to see Councilor Cavallo healthy and in person at the meeting. Councilor Cavallo said it was nice to be back. Councilor Bitzas asked for an update from the Cable Commission and also asked if there would be a structural study on the current police station. He said he was waiting for a tour of the Police Station. Councilor Russo talked about the water levels in town and said it is elevated but totally safe noting Springfield Water Commission is midway through a multi-million dollar upgrade. He wanted to let the residents know it is being worked on for a long term solution. Councilor Mercadante echoed comments of Councilor Russo and he knows there is a water report in the works. Council President Johnson agreed it was great to have Councilor Cavallo back and great to have Councilor Letellier with us on Zoom this evening.

Item M. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was moved and seconded all around. Meeting was adjourned at 8:01pm.

***Please note that this meeting was live-streamed on Channel 15 as well as being able to view on the town's website* www.agawam.ma.us**

approved

TR-2022-26

**A RESOLUTION CONFIRMING THE REAPPOINTMENT OF
DAVID CECCHI, 29 ALBERT STREET, AGAWAM, MA.
TO THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT COMMITTEE TO A TERM
EXPIRING APRIL 30, 2025**

(Sponsored by the Agawam City Council)

WHEREAS, the appointment of David Cecchi as the Agawam Historical Commission's representative on the Agawam Community Preservation Act Committee will expire on April 30, 2022; and

WHEREAS, David Cecchi, 29 Albert Street, Agawam, MA wishes to be reappointed; and

WHEREAS, at their March 29, 2022 meeting, the Agawam Historical Commission voted on and confirmed that David Cecchi be reappointed as their representative on the Community Preservation Act Committee; and

NOW, THEREFORE, THE AGAWAM CITY COUNCIL hereby resolves to confirm the reappointment of David Cecchi, 29 Albert Street, Agawam, MA, to the Agawam Community Preservation Act Committee for a term expiring April 30, 2025.

Dated this 19th day of April, 2022

PER ORDER OF THE AGAWAM CITY COUNCIL

[Signature]
Christopher C. Johnson, City Council President

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY

[Signature]
Stephen Buoniconti, City Solicitor

*Orig: Clerks office
cc: Council
cc: Auditor
cc: CPA
cc: Law
cc: Mayor*

TOR-2022-6

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND SECTION 7C OF CHAPTER 49 OF THE CODE
OF THE TOWN OF AGAWAM**

(Sponsored by Mayor William P. Sapelli)

*First Reading 4/14/22
Second Reading 4/19/22
Approved*

WHEREAS, the Agawam Emergency Management Director (Director) and the Agawam Emergency Management Deputy Director/National Incident Management System (NIMS) Coordinator are part time positions listed in Section 7 of Chapter 49 (Personnel) of the Code of the Town of Agawam; and

WHEREAS, the Director and Deputy Director/NIMS Coordinator are not members of a union or subject to a collective bargaining agreement; and

WHEREAS, the City Council last took action on these positions in 2018 (**TOR-2018-1**) which increased the salaries of each position from \$10,000 to \$12,500 per year; and

WHEREAS, the Director and Deputy Director have reached the maximum salary permitted under the Code; and

WHEREAS, the Agawam Emergency Management Director' salary for FY2022 is \$12,250.00 and the Agawam Emergency Management Deputy Director/ NIMS Coordinator's salary for FY 2022 is \$11,750.00; and

WHEREAS, a 2% increase in salary for FY2023 would either exceed the maximum and approach the maximum permitted under the Code for each position; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the Town to establish a flexible salary structure for such positions that can be adjusted from time to time.

NOW THEREFORE, the Agawam City Council hereby amends Section 7(C) of Chapter 49 of the Code of the Town of Agawam effective July 1, 2022 by inserting the following:

- (12) Emergency Management Director: \$12,500 to \$15,000 per year.
- (13) Emergency Management Deputy Director/ NIMS Coordinator: \$12,500 to \$15,000 per year.

Dated this 19th day of April, 2022.

PER ORDER OF THE AGAWAM CITY COUNCIL

[Signature]
Christopher Johnson, President

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY

[Signature]
Stephen Buoniconti, City Solicitor

*Orig: Clerks office
cc: Council
cc: Auditor
cc: Treasurer
cc: E.M.
cc: Law
cc: Mayor*

TO-2022-6, TO-2022-7 and TO-2022-10 permits and licenses were also approved.