

Approved: January 28, 2016

Posted: January 29, 2016



Special Town Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday January 7, 2016, at 6:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Chairman Harrington called the special meeting of the Town Council to order at 6:00 p.m. Present at the meeting were Vice Chairman Mahon, Councilor Boyd, Councilor Dwyer, Councilor Koenig, Councilor Rothhaus, Councilor Vaillancourt, Town Manager Eileen Cabanel and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Harrington led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcements

The Town Council will conduct budget meetings on Monday, January 11th, Thursday, January 21st, and Monday, January 25th at 6:00 p.m. in the Matthew Thornton Room.

Regular meetings of the Town Council will be conducted on Thursday, January 14th and January 28th at 7:00 p.m. in the Matthew Thornton Room.

Chairman Harrington thanked Senator Ayotte for her attendance at the John O'Leary Adult Community Center earlier in the day to present the American flag that had been blown over the Capital.

New Business

1. Presidential Primary Polling Place Relocation

Submitted by Town Moderator Lynn Christensen

The Town Council to consider relocating the election that's being held on Tuesday, February 9, 2016, from the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School to the Merrimack High School.

Chairman Harrington opened the floor for public comment.

No one from the public came forward to address the Council.

MOTION made by Councilor Mahon and seconded by Councilor Boyd to designate the Primary Election polling place as the Merrimack High School

ON THE QUESTION

Councilor Koenig remarked he has not heard anything regard the School Board's position on such a change.

Lynn Christensen, Town Moderator, stated during the initial discussion of single polling places it was determined the November elections would be conducted at the High School and all remaining elections would be at the James Mastricola Upper Elementary School (JMUES). The Presidential Primary was always left up in the air, and was sort of by default at JMUES. In a discussion earlier in the year

around the expectation that voter turnout will be large, Marge Chiafery, Superintendent, questioned if the High School would be needed as the polling place to which Ms. Christensen had responded possibly. The Superintendent brought the matter before the School Board. The School Board not only made arrangements to prepare for the possibility of utilizing the High School, but also that there would be no school on that day regardless of which school was utilized.

Based on the prior expectation that only November elections would be conducted at the High School, election postings identified the location as JMUES. Moderator Christensen informed the Council of discussions that have taken place with Superintendent Chiafery and Police Chief, Mark Doyle. If the polling place were to remain JMUES, it could be managed. However, the expectation is that there would be traffic issues. The School Board was asked if the Town Council wished to change the polling place to the High School, would they be supportive of such a move. The response was absolutely.

Moderator Christensen noted a change in polling location would necessitate the reposting of the election postings noting a location change and would require the Highway Department to perform the setup as opposed to the School District.

Moderator Christensen remarked typical voter turnout for a Presidential election is 14,000 - 16,000 and the polling place is set as the High School. For a Town Meeting election voter turnout is typically 3,000 - 6,000. For a Presidential Primary election voter turnout is typically 7,000 - 12,000 depending upon whether there is an incumbent. Eight years ago when there was no incumbent voter turnout was nearly 12,000. She stated her belief voter turnout for the February 9th Presidential Primary election will be at that level.

Moderator Christensen noted there are two long streets going into the high school, which assists in traffic flow. The one thing that will have to be done and will require the assistance of the Highway Department is marking for handicapped parking. Those requiring handicapped parking would come in O'Gara Drive, up to the blockade that prevents motorists from going around the circle, into the right-hand parking space and all the way down to the end, park, and walk across the access road to enter the back door.

Moderator Christensen encouraged the Council to change the polling place to the High School.

Police Chief Mark Doyle commented Moderator Christensen is right on the money when it comes to the planning and expectations of the level of voter turnout. When looking at the anticipated turnout you have to take into account the amount of parking, ingress, egress, etc. He spoke of the nearly 600 parking spots available at the High School and the ability to relegate a particular section of the school for easy handicap access. He stated the perfect scenario would be for the High School to be relegated as the polling location for this particular event.

MOTION CARRIED 7-0-0

Moderator Christensen reiterated a large turnout is expected. She is planning on 16 checklists, which means the parties who are normally responsible for providing checklist people do not have the number of people they need to man those checklists. She requested residents willing to help during the elections contact her or Diane Trippett, Town Clerk/Tax Collector.

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Adjourn

MOTION made by Councilor Boyd and seconded by Councilor Mahon to adjourn the special meeting. **MOTION CARRIED** 7-0-0

The January 7, 2016 special meeting of the Town Council was adjourned at 6:23 p.m.

Submitted by Dawn MacMillan