

At a meeting of the Town Council holden in and for the Town of Gloucester on February 15, 2024

I. Call to Order

The meeting was Called to Order at 7:30 P.M. by Councilor W. Worthy, Town Council President.

II. Roll Call

Members present: Cheryl A. Greathouse; Jonathan E. Burlingame; Walter M. O. Steere, III; Stephen W. Arnold, Vice President; William A. Worthy, Jr., President

Also Present: Jean Fecteau, Town Clerk; David Iglizzi, Town Solicitor; Christine Mathieu, Deputy Town Clerk; Jane Steere, Interim Finance Director and Tax Collector; Joseph Delprete, Chief of Police; Gary Treml, Director DPW; Gerry Mosca, Director EMA; Ken Johnson, Building and Zoning Official

III. Pledge of Allegiance

Councilor W. Worthy asked for everyone to please stand and join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. Open Forum - For Agenda Items

Councilor W. Worthy asked if anyone wishes to speak on an agenda item to please step to the microphone and state your name when called on.

None

Discussion:

Councilor W. Worthy stated that representatives from the League of Cities and Towns have been invited to the March 7, 2024 Town Council meeting.

V. Public Hearing- Discussion and/or Action

- A. Proposed Amendments to the Code of Ordinance:
  - Chapter 350 – Article III – District Dimensional Regulations
  - Chapter 350 – Article VIII – Nonconforming Uses

Councilor W. Worthy stated that this Public Hearing was advertised in the Valley Breeze Observer the weeks of January 25<sup>th</sup>, February 1<sup>st</sup>, and February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Councilor W. Worthy DECLARED the Public Hearing OPEN

Councilor W. Worthy stated that K. Scott, Town Planner , gave the Clerk the following description of this amendment which he read as follows :

The Town of Gloucester, along with all Rhode Island municipalities, is required to amend their local land use regulations in response to enabling legislation that has recently been passed by the General Assembly, which provided a very short time frame for implementation. Most of the regulations took effect on January 1, 2024.

One of the new regulations that took effect on January 1, 2024 relates to substandard lots of record. The law requires that setbacks are decreased and lot coverage is increased by the same proportion by which the lot is undersized. For example, if a lot is 2 acres in the A-4 zone, which requires 4 acres, the lot is undersized by 50%; therefore the setbacks must be decreased by 50% and the lot coverage increased by 50% of what the zoning ordinance requires. The Town already had decreased setback and increased lot coverages for undersized lots. This amendment repeals the decreased setbacks and increased lot sizes the Town provided and replaces it with the formula mandated by the new state law.

(End of explanation)

Councilor W. Worthy asked if anyone wishes to speak, to please state your name for the record when invited to the podium.

Discussion: None

Councilor W. Worthy DECLARED the Public Hearing CLOSED

MOTION was made by Councilor J. Burlingame to AMEND the Gloucester Code of Ordinance, Chapter 350, Article III, Section 350-13, Attachment 2, Table of Dimensional Regulations and Chapter 350 – Article VIII, Section 350-66 Substandard lots of record, as proposed; effective upon passage; seconded by Councilor W. Steere

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, J. Burlingame, W. Steere, S. Arnold , W. Worthy  
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

VI. Consent Items- Discussion and/or Action

- A. Approval of Town Council Minutes: Regular meeting of February 1, 2024
- B. Tax Assessor's Additions and Abatements - January 2024
- C. Interim Finance Director's Report - January 2024

MOTION was made by Councilor S. Arnold to APPROVE the Town Council minutes of February 1, 2024; to APPROVE the Tax Assessor's Additions and Abatements: no additions for the 2023 Tax Roll; Abatements to the 2023 Tax Roll in the amount of \$90.74; and to ACCEPT the Interim Finance Director's Report for January 2024; seconded by Councilor C. Greathouse

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, J. Burlingame, W. Steere, S. Arnold , W. Worthy  
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

VII. Unfinished Business

A. Boards & Commissions

1. Appointments - Discussion and/or Action

a. Economic Development Commission -

Position #7, Unexpired term to expire 12/31/2024

Councilor W. Worthy stated that the Chair has made a recommendation from the talent bank listing of Laura Davis for this appointment. Councilor W. Worthy stated that Council can chose that candidate; vote on a person of their choice from the talent bank listing; or table the appointment.

MOTION was made by Councilor J. Burlingame to APPOINT Laura Davis to the Economic Development Commission, Position #7, for a term to expire 12/31/2024; seconded by Councilor C. Greathouse

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, J. Burlingame, W. Steere, S. Arnold , W. Worthy  
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

b. Land Trust -

One Member at Large - Planning Board Term to expire 1/31/2025

Councilor W. Worthy stated that the Chair of the Land Trust has informed the Clerk that the Planning Board has voted to forward member, Michael DeGrange's , name for the Member at Large position. Councilor W. Worthy stated that Council can choose that candidate; vote on a different Planning Board member; or table the appointment.

MOTION was made by Councilor J. Burlingame to APPOINT Michael DeGrange to the Land Trust , member at large from Planning Board, for a term to expire 1/31/2025; seconded by Councilor C. Greathouse

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, J. Burlingame, W. Steere, S. Arnold , W. Worthy  
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

VIII. New Business

A. Police Station Renovation/Replacement Updates - Discussion and/or Action

Discussion: Chief Delprete stated that the architect is working on renderings for a new police

complex at Adelaide Road which should be ready in time for the first Council meeting in March. Chief Delprete stated that the cost per square foot has increased from a few months ago when it was at \$450 per square foot to \$ 700 per square foot, as of today, for either a new building or renovations to the existing building. Chief Delprete stated that the proposed addition to the existing building is 9300 square feet and the proposed new building is 12,500 square feet. Chief Delprete stated that the difference between an addition and a new building is 1.5 million dollars.

Chief Delprete stated that there is a grant of \$490,000 that must be used by the end of 2024 and a \$1,000,000. FEMA grant that has a two year window to use once the Council accepts the grant based on a plan of action.

Chief Delprete is requesting that the Council hold a special meeting for the Chief to present both options to the public on March 6<sup>th</sup> . Chief Delprete stated that the presentation on March 6<sup>th</sup> would help with any decision Council may make moving forward.

Councilor S. Arnold agreed with the idea of a special meeting to be able to have the time to make the presentation.

No action taken by Town Council

B. Charging of Usage Fees for use of Town owned property - Discussion and/or Action

Discussion: Councilor W. Steere stated that he requested this item to look into the cost of maintenance of town recreation locations used by others, including the schools, and the possibility of charging usage fees. Councilor S. Arnold stated his agreement with looking into the possible fees and would encourage the school to look at the charging of fees to the town.

Councilor W. Steere stated that he would like to have G. Treml, Director of Public Works, and R. Shields, Recreation Director, provide the Council with the cost of maintenance for the town fields. Councilor W. Steere stated the reason for the request was that the school uses Leja Field without charge and yet the school is charging the town for the use of the school.

Councilor W. Steere stated he was disappointed that the Council did not receive a written response from the School Committee as to the Council's letter regarding the charging of fees by the school for use by the town.

Councilor W. Worthy stated he would like hard numbers first. Councilor J. Burlingame stated he questioned that this was nothing more than a tit for tat situation. Councilor S. Arnold stated that the same taxpayers are being served so he would not want to get into this type of situation as we are all one team; one town. Councilor S. Arnold stated he would also like the numbers.

Councilor W. Steere asked G. Treml if he could get the numbers for the maintenance of the fields and bring back to Council at the next meeting. G. Treml answered in the affirmative.

No Action Taken by Council

C. Gloucester Code of Ordinance- Discussion and/or Action

1. Chapter 63 Canvassing Authority - Bi-Partisan

1<sup>st</sup> Reading of proposed Code amendment

To add the appt. of Alternate members to the Board of Canvassers

Councilor W. Worthy stated that the Clerk and the Solicitor have put together a draft document which, if passed, would allow the appointment of two alternate members to serve, as needed, on the Board of Canvassers. Councilor W. Worthy stated that the Alternate terms would be concurrent with the Town Council terms. Councilor W. Worthy stated that these are the only changes proposed to Chapter 63.

MOTION was made by Councilor C. Greathouse to DECLARE the 1<sup>st</sup> reading complete with the proposed amendment to the Gloucester Code of Ordinance, Chapter 63 Canvassing Authority - Bi-Partisan, and to SET a Public Hearing to consider the amendment for March 21, 2024; seconded by Councilor J. Burlingame

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, J. Burlingame, W. Steere, S. Arnold , W. Worthy  
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

D. Creation of a charge for a “Gloucester 250<sup>th</sup>” Commission- Discussion and/or Action

Councilor W. Worthy stated that resident and Board Member Roy Najecki has volunteered to create a basic charge for a potential Gloucester 250<sup>th</sup> Commission for Council to work with.

Councilor W. Worthy stated that R. Najecki is not present and asked if anyone had any information for Mr. Najecki.

Discussion: Councilor S. Arnold stated that S. Mitchell, resident, is part of the state’s 250<sup>th</sup> group and he will inform Mr. Najecki.

MOTION was made by Councilor W. Steere to TABLE “Creation of a charge for a “Gloucester 250<sup>th</sup>” Commission” to March 7, 2024; seconded by Councilor S. Arnold

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, J. Burlingame, W. Steere, S. Arnold , W. Worthy  
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

E. Mobile Food Establishments - Parking - Discussion and/or Action

Councilor C. Greathouse stated that she requested this item in order to open a discussion about the parking locations of food trucks in town. Councilor Greathouse stated that the food trucks parking on Main Street pose a dangerous safety issue and by ordinance, the Chief of Police can request they not be there.

Councilor C. Greathouse raised the suggestion of having the Council authorize the food trucks to use the pavilion. Councilor Greathouse pointed out that the rules for the use of the pavilion allow for Council to make this consideration.

Councilor S. Arnold stated he recognizes the issues of the food trucks parked on the street but he has concerns about the private food trucks doing business in the pavilion which is town property. In addition, Councilor S. Arnold stated that the pavilion is always shut down for the winter.

Councilor J. Burlingame stated his agreement that food trucks parked on the street do pose a safety issue for drivers.

Chief Delprete stated that his office does recognize the safety issue at the intersection of Douglas Hook Road and Main Street. Chief Delprete stated he is not sure what he can do about the matter as it is a state road. Chief Delprete stated he could contact the state traffic safety commissioner and report back to Council at the next meeting.

Councilor J. Burlingame asked if the town ordinance superseded the state as to this issue of safety. Chief Delprete stated that the food trucks are parked in lawful spots.

Councilor W. Worthy asked about insurance if the food trucks are allowed at the pavilion. D. Igliazzi, Town Solicitor, stated that the food trucks would need to provide proof of insurance that would indemnify the town if the Council allowed food trucks to use the pavilion.

Councilor J. Burlingame stated that allowing a few at the pavilion would not prevent others from parking on the street.

J. Fecteau, Town Clerk, stated that the town's ordinance states seven locations where food trucks can't be and most of those locations are all on state roads. J. Fecteau stated she believes that the Council can add locations to the ordinance if they are deemed traffic hazards no matter who the owner of the public way is.

J. Fecteau stated that the town's ordinance also has a time limit of four hours at one location.

D. Igliazzi stated that the town's ordinance is very consistent with food truck ordinances of other towns. D. Igliazzi stated that the Chief can order the trucks to move if the situation is determined to be dangerous. D. Igliazzi stated that an amendment to the ordinance would first need the Chief to determine that a location was dangerous before the Council could suggest prohibiting it by an ordinance amendment.

Councilor J. Burlingame asked if the Chief had specific spots he felt were dangerous. Chief Delprete stated he would need to look at the spots. Councilor J. Burlingame stated that he does not feel the Council can prohibit a location unless the Chief determines the location to be dangerous or unsafe.

Chief Delprete stated he wants to do his due diligence and will also contact the state traffic office and report back to the Council on March 7<sup>th</sup>.

#### No Action Taken By Council

##### F. Town Council Social Media - Discussion and/or Action

Councilor Greathouse stated her opinion that a facebook page for the Council would be a great idea to offer to the public. Councilor Greathouse stated that the facebook page would not be interactive and would have guidelines as to who and what would be posted. Councilor C. Greathouse stated that the page would be a great way for people to know what is going on as to the Council and town as well as include the posting of the agenda, minutes and monthly calendar for meetings of boards and commissions.

Councilor W. Steere stated that this idea has been discussed in the past and he has concerns as to who would maintain the site and who would approve the content. Councilor W. Steere stated that all of these materials are subject to public records requests so will need to be stored. Councilor W. Steere stated that all of the items being suggested for the facebook page can already be found on the town's website and people can also go to youtube to view the council meetings. Councilor W. Steere stated that it is not an ideal time to add an employee. Councilor W. Steere stated that this matter has been considered before and decided against.

Councilor J. Burlingame stated that his biggest concern is who would decide the content and as it is town council matters then that would mean the council would have to approve so it would not be speedy postings. Councilor J. Burlingame stated that the agenda is already posted on the town website.

Councilor C. Greathouse stated her opinion that she does not know how many people access the website on a regular basis. Councilor C. Greathouse stated that last time this was spoken about the Chief made an offer of help from his department. Chief Delprete stated that the administrative assistant may give guidance and assist in setting up but that would be all she would have time to do.

Councilor W. Worthy stated that the town's website already posts all of the information Councilor C. Greathouse is describing to be posted on this proposed page.

J. Fecteau stated that her office sends the information to the webmaster for posting as do other department heads.

Councilor S. Arnold stated his opinion that the idea holds value but that the mechanics are a challenge to a municipality. Chief Delprete stated that the police facebook page can be one of real

time or speedy postings like a road closure or press releases. Chief Delprete stated that the person posting for the police always runs all items for posting by him for approval.

Councilor C. Greathouse stated that the proposed facebook page would be more informative as it would have meeting schedules, voting locations, and referenda dates. J. Fecteau stated that this would be copying everything that is already on the town website and putting it on facebook. Councilor S. Arnold stated that people are more likely to go on facebook page than a website.

Councilor W. Steere stated that we are all about transparency and want people to know what is going on. Councilor W. Steere stated that there are several town boards that have a facebook page already and that the Council would be simply recreating something that the town already has on the town website.

Councilor C. Greathouse stated that people may not know that there are some town boards that have a facebook page. J. Fecteau stated the town website has a link under those boards informing the public of the facebook page. Councilor W. Steere stated that the town's social media policy spells out what these groups can and cannot do as to social media in order to protect the town.

J. Fecteau stated that she could send the information to a person to post if we had one. J. Fecteau state that she would help if Council decided to do the page. J. Fecteau stated that the information posted on the town website is strictly facts. Councilor C. Greathouse stated the facebook page would be the same facts.

Councilor W. Worthy stated that the town already has a website that contains the same items so is this a cost that is not necessary. Councilor W. Worthy stated there is not a point person who could manage the site with the agreed upon information that is already on the town website.

Councilor S. Arnold suggested that the town webmaster be contacted to as to the possibility of doing the facebook page and the cost J. Fecteau stated that she could contact the webmaster and ask.

No Action Taken by Council

- G. Authorization for signature - R.I. Municipal Finance - Local School Dept. Deficient plan - Discussion and/or Action

Councilor W. Worthy stated that the Interim Finance Director has worked with the local school Superintendent to develop a plan, as outlined in the Town Charter, for a deficit found in the current school budget.

MOTION was made by Councilor J. Burlingame to AUTHORIZE the Town Council President and the Interim Finance Director to sign the Solicitors correspondence to the R.I. Chief of Municipal Finance that will be forwarded with a remediation plan, prepared by the Superintendent of Gloucester Schools, to correct a deficit in the current School Department budget; seconded by Councilor S. Arnold



Discussion: W. Steere, resident, stated if the plan is to use fund balance to fill the deficit, Council should know that the charter prohibits fund balance from being used without the approval of the town at the town referendum. Councilor J. Burlingame stated his opinion that the Superintendent has to come up with the plan .

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, J. Burlingame, W. Steere, S. Arnold , W. Worthy  
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

H. Personnel

1. Resignations & Replacements

a. Dept. of Public Works - Discussion and/or Action

1. Building and Grounds Supervisor

Councilor W. Worthy stated that Council has received a resignation from Gary Gras, DPW Building & Grounds Supervisor.

MOTION was made by Councilor S. Arnold to ACCEPT with great thanks, the resignation of Gary Gras, DPW Building & Grounds Supervisor, effective March 2, 2024; seconded by Councilor C. Greathouse

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, J. Burlingame, W. Steere, S. Arnold , W. Worthy  
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

Discussion: Councilor W. Worthy stated his thanks.

2. Authorization to seek replacement “Building and Grounds Supervisor” (per terms of MOA of 1/18/24 between NAGE & TOG)

MOTION was made by Councilor W. Steere to AUTHORIZE the Acting HR Director to seek a replacement candidate for the position of DPW, Building and Grounds Supervisor; seconded by Councilor J. Burlingame

Discussion: Councilor W. Steere asked if this was to hire a candidate for the original position for town properties and not the position created by the Memo of Understanding as to the schools.

Councilor J. Burlingame stated that this is to hire someone for the town and that the MOU was for the school department. Councilor Burlingame also stated that the schools would have to come back to the town.

Councilor S. Arnold stated his opinion that the intent was to go back to the original position.

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, J. Burlingame, W. Steere, S. Arnold , W. Worthy  
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

- b. Police Department - Dispatch - Discussion and/or Action
  - 1. Dispatcher - Full time

Councilor W. Worthy stated that Council has received the resignation of Jeffrey Medeiros from the position of full time Police Department Dispatcher.

MOTION was made by Councilor W. Steere to ACCEPT the resignation of Jeffrey Medeiros from the position of full time dispatcher, effective February 24, 2024; seconded by Councilor J. Burlingame

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, J. Burlingame, W. Steere, S. Arnold , W. Worthy  
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

- 2. Authorization to seek replacement “Dispatcher - Full Time”

MOTION was made by Councilor C. Greathouse to AUTHORIZE the Acting HR Director to seek a replacement candidate for the position of Police Department Full Time Dispatcher; seconded by Councilor J. Burlingame

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, J. Burlingame, W. Steere, S. Arnold , W. Worthy  
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

IX. Town Council Correspondence/ Discussion

- 1. Councilor W. Worthy stated that Council has received correspondence regarding tree removal and the potential for negative results.

Councilor W. Worthy asked if any Councilors have a discussion item or correspondence to share.

None

X. Department Head Reports/Discussion

Councilor W. Worthy asked if any department heads had anything to report or if any Councilor had any questions for any department heads.

None

XI. Bds. and Commissions Reports/ Discussion

Councilor W. Worthy asked if any Boards and Commissions had anything to report or if any Councilor had any questions for any Board or commission.

None

XII. Open Forum

Councilor W. Worthy asked if anyone has anything to discuss on any subject and if so, to please state your name when you come to the microphone.

A. Al Costantino, developer, read the following letter into the record commending the Harmony Fire Department in response to comments made by G. Kain at the last town council meeting:

Glocester Town Council.

February 6, 2024

Re. Town Council Meeting

Feb. 1, 2024, Agenda Item VIII. C. Citizen recommendation " dry hydrants in areas near water throughout town "

Town Council President and Council Members

Thank you for the opportunity to address the council on this matter. As the packet displayed photos and discussion of " lack of hydrants " in the district in which I plan to install a dry hydrant , I would like to state the following ;

Upon listening to Harmony Fire District Executive Board Member George J. Kain during Public Comment I realized that the Harmony Fire District is pro active when it comes to " Dry Hydrants " Mr. Kains explanation of the multiple dry hydrants in place, his process of obtaining grants and lastly that he wants to install more dry hydrants where there is a year round water supply, exemplifies that the Harmony Fire District already has a district wide dry hydrant plan of action that has been in place for years.

I support Vice President Stephen W. Arnold's recommendation to pass this presentation on to the Fire Districts in Town. It is clear that the Harmony Fire District has proven the importance of " dry hydrants " and does not need any guidance on this matter. I respectfully request that this letter be read at the next council meeting and be put into the record.

Thank You , Al Costantino  
(end of letter)

XIII. Seek to Convene to Closed Executive Session Pursuant to:

- A. R.I.G.L. 42-46-5(a)(2) Sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation, or work sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation- Discussion, consideration, vote or other action by Town Council

Councilor W. Worthy stated that Council now needs a motion to convene to Executive Session:

MOTION was made by Councilor W. Steere to CONVENE to Executive Session pursuant to R.I.G.L. 42-46-5(a)(2) Potential Litigation; seconded by Councilor J. Burlingame

Councilor W. Worthy asked the Clerk to Call the Roll

- Councilor Greathouse- Aye
- Councilor Steere- Aye
- Councilor Burlingame- Aye
- Councilor Arnold- Aye
- Councilor Worthy- Aye

Discussion: None

MOTION PASSED

After Executive Session

XIV. Reconvene Open Session - Disclosure of votes taken in Executive Session & Consideration of the Sealing of Minutes - Discussion and/or Action

MOTION was made by Councilor W. Steere to RECONVENE Open Session; DISCLOSE zero (0) votes were taken in Executive Session; and to SEAL the minutes of Closed Session pursuant to R.I.G.L. 42-46-7.c; seconded by Councilor J. Burlingame

Councilor W. Worthy asked the Clerk to Call the Roll

- Councilor Greathouse- Aye
- Councilor Steere- Aye
- Councilor Burlingame- Aye
- Councilor Arnold- Aye
- Councilor Worthy- Aye

Discussion: None

MOTION PASSED

XV. Adjourn

MOTION was made by Councilor W. Steere to ADJOURN at 9:21 PM; seconded by Councilor J. Burlingame

Discussion: None

VOTE: AYES- C. Greathouse, J. Burlingame, W. Steere, S. Arnold , W. Worthy  
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED