

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Minutes of the Meeting

December 2, 2019

1. Vice-President Logan called the meeting to Order at 8:00 pm.
2. Vice-President Logan requested that a roll call be taken to record the attendance for the meeting. The Clerk called the roll – President Brasco and Councillors Darcy, Harris, D. LeBlanc, R. LeBlanc, Mackin, McMenimen, Nabulime, Romard, Stanley and Vice-President Logan were present. Councillors Fowler, LaCava, McLaughlin and Vidal were absent.
3. A motion by President Brasco to approve the minutes of the COW meeting held on November 18, 2019 was adopted on a voice vote and the minutes of November 18, 2019 were approved.
4. A resolution was submitted by Councillors Mackin and Darcy concerning the inclusion of representatives of all faith groups at the upcoming inauguration of the City of Waltham elected officials in January 2020. Councillor Mackin moved to hear from the City Clerk, Robert Waddick. Councillor Mackin asked Mr. Waddick to provide a status of the inauguration event. Mr. Waddick stated that Kara Wilson is the primary responsible individual for organizing the event. Mr. Waddick also stated the event would take place at the Kennedy Middle School auditorium and Judge Flynn, Rabbi Finklestein, the caterer, the Police and Fire Honor Guard, the Boy Scouts, WCAC, the florist and an individual to do signing for the hearing impaired have been contacted and confirmed their attendance. Mr. Waddick also contacted the Mayor and School Committee for any requests as they also were being inaugurated. Councillor Mackin inquired if any of the other individuals of faith based organizations listed in the resolution had been contacted. Mr. Waddick stated that he was waiting for direction from the City Council for their wish of “equal participation”. Mr. Waddick spoke about past inaugurations and how it allowed two members of faith based organizations to give a brief blessing. Councillor Mackin asked if that was a violation of the U.S. Constitution. Mr. Waddick stated his personal opinion it is not since the inauguration is not an ecumenical ceremony. Councillor Romard stated the resolution is well intended but could be a slippery slope to allow other charitable or non-profit groups to be included. Councillor Romard suggested a rotation for attendees to speak. Councillor Nabulime stated her support of the resolution and spoke about her personal religious upbringing and choice of faith. Councillor D. LeBlanc stated her experience with organizing past events that included interfaith involvement. Councillor Harris stated the intent of the resolution is good but it should be action based and less rhetoric based. Mr. Waddick stated the intent is to invite representatives from all Waltham based faith groups and the wishes of the Mayor should also be honored as the inauguration event is also for the Mayor. Mr.

Waddick repeatedly stated the Mayor had a position but he would not speak for the Mayor. Mr. Waddick repeatedly stated the Mayor was in her office and available to speak before the Committee. Councillor Nabulime stated all who accept the invitation to attend be given a chance to offer a short blessing. Councillor Stanley stated we are straying from the how the event is to be organized and it is up to the City Clerk to decide. Councillor Mackin reiterated her wish to more inclusive and the City has to make up lost ground. President Brasco objected to Councillor Mackin's statement and stated that all faith based groups should be invited similar to the Mayor's prayer breakfasts that were held in the past at Bentley and Brandeis. Councillor D. LeBlanc stated the invitation should be only to those Waltham based faith groups. Councillor McMenimen stated this can be a divisive issue and that not all Waltham based faith groups are on the list. Councillor McMenimen spoke about the logistics and time management of the event and its impact on the Clerk's Office. Councillor McMenimen stated the representatives could be seated up front and be recognized. Councillor Mackin gave an emotional statement about a personal family issue, the impact it had on her and how she did not feel comfortable at the last inauguration with only a Catholic priest on stage. Councillor Mackin moved to request to set aside a visible area for representatives of Waltham's faith leaders for the 2020 inauguration ceremony, and ask that one of our speakers recognize all of the leaders in attendance. That the Clerk reach out to all Waltham-based faith groups with a request as to whether they are available to participate. Then, forward that list to the council to review. The motion was adopted on a voice vote. Councillor Mackin moved to place the matter on the table. The motion was adopted on a voice vote and the matter was tabled.

5. A communication was received from the Mayor concerning the action of the Traffic Commission on an agenda item (Item 1D on 11/21/2019) of the Traffic Commission on the property located at 220-226 Moody Street. Councillor Harris moved to hear from the developer, Michael Colomba and his representative Paul Finger. The motion was adopted on a voice vote. Councillor McMenimen moved to hear from the Mayor and the Law Department. The motion was adopted on a voice vote. It was learned the Mayor was not available and Assistant City Solicitor Azadi was in attendance for a different matter. In addressing Mr. Colomba and Mr. Finger, Councillor Harris stated there was very little detail provided, what action is the City Council being asked to take and to give some additional background. Councillor Harris asked several questions to establish a timeline of the Traffic Commission approval, including specifics on the exact location of the property that was voted as surplus and the dimensions, metes/bounds of the property. Mr. Colomba and Mr. Finger presented a map of the location and offered an explanation to the Councillor Harris' questions. Mr. Colomba stated the "air rights" being sought would enable him to construct the necessary additional parking for the hotel project. Councillor Harris continued to ask specific questions about the differences between what the Traffic Commission had previously voted as surplus and what was most recently voted as surplus. Councillor Harris asked the time frame the

survey and metes/bounds would be known. Mr. Finger stated it would take about 4–6 weeks. Councillor R. LeBlanc asked several questions about the area being sought. Councillor Romard asked if any of the proposed improvements will be a cost to the City. Mr. Colomba stated the municipal lot would be restored at his cost. Councillor Nabulime asked Mr. Colomba to provide his vision and the benefit to the City with the development of the hotel. Councillor Stanley spoke favorably of Mr. Colomba and several of the projects he has successfully built in the City. Councillor Stanley also stated it was important that this downtown property be developed to create jobs and tax revenue while removing a blight in the heart of the downtown. In the interest of complete disclosure, Councillor D. LeBlanc stated that her campaign had accepted a contribution from Mr. Colomba but it was reported legally and correctly. Councillor D. LeBlanc questioned the lack of a request and if there was an additional communication. Councillor Harris asked the action can the Committee take to move the project forward. From the Chair, Vice-President Logan stated a request could be sent to the Mayor to proceed with the lease. Councillor Harris moved to send a request to the Mayor to continue negotiations with the “air rights” lease and keep the project moving forward. The motion was adopted on a roll call vote of 8 in favor (Brasco, Harris, D. LeBlanc, R. LeBlanc, Nabulime, Romard, Stanley and Logan), 3 opposed (Darcy, Mackin and McMenimen) and 4 absent from the meeting (Fowler, LaCava, McLaughlin and Vidal). Councillor Harris moved to table the matter. The motion was adopted on a voice vote and the matter was tabled.

6. A motion by President Brasco to adjourn was adopted on a voice vote, and the Chair declared the Committee adjourned at 9:50pm.

Paul G. Centofanti – Clerk to the Committee of the Whole