

The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Wednesday, January 5, 2011, in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Cutts at 6:30 p.m.

Members of the Council present were:

Ward II Councilor Keith Raymond
Ward I Councilor Victor Bergeron
Ward III Councilor Nicholas Koloski
Assistant Mayor Andrew Austin
Mayor Deborah Cutts
At-Large Councilor Adam Burke
At-Large Councilor Christopher Lewis
At-Large Councilor Kyle Messier
At-Large Seat is Vacant

Also present were:

Guy Santagate, City Manager
Jane Taylor, City Solicitor

NEW BUSINESS

Interview and Selection of Candidate to Fill Vacant At-Large Councilor Seat

Mayor Cutts read the process:

Randomly selected Councilor will choose the name, from a blind drawing, of the first person chosen to answer the first question.

Assistant Mayor Austin will serve as the moderator.

The moderator will rotate the order of the first person chosen to answer each question.

Prior to interview questions being initiated, candidates will be given 5 minutes to share information about themselves.

Each candidate will be given up to 5 minutes respond to each interview question.

After all candidates have completed all formal interview questions, each candidate will be given an additional 2 minutes to offer closing remarks – discretionary, not required.

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After the opportunity to offer closing remarks has been completed, the Mayor will solicit nominations; no second for a nomination is required. Once nominations are recorded, the Mayor will close nominations. The Mayor will request one roll call vote at which time each seated Councilor will have the opportunity to announce the name of the candidate of their choice. A successful appointment must receive a minimum of 5 affirmative votes (majority).

If necessary, the runoff process will be exercised. If no one receives 5 votes, there will be a runoff between the top 2 candidates. If the 2nd and 3rd place candidates are tied and no one receives the 5 votes, there will be a roll call with 3 candidates. If no one receives 5 votes, the Mayor will call a five-minute recess. When the Council reconvenes, the Mayor will call for a new roll call. If no one receives the required 5 votes, the Council can continue roll calls, call for a recess or adjourn to a date certain.

Mr. Koloski asked where this process came from. Mayor Cutts said this previously has been used several times and was developed by former Mayor Pope.

At-Large Candidates: Thomas Burnham, Richard Madigan, Scott Pope and Linda Wooddell

Mr. Madigan said he has been in Claremont since 1981. He has a banking background and has been in banking for 40 years. He has done business consulting for 20 years. He has worked for the state welfare program.

Mr. Burnham said he lives in ward 3; served 10 years in the U.S. Army; served in Vietnam and has worked in automotive for 10-15 years. He has a bachelor's degree in business administration and an associate's degree in personnel management. He worked at the City's water treatment plant. He enjoyed going out to answer customer complaints and that is where he learned to deal with people. He retired from the water treatment plant about 1 ½ years ago and now he has time to work with the Council.

Mr. Pope said he lives in ward 2; has lived in Claremont for 23 years; is married to Tracy; has 2 daughters and 2 grandchildren. He is a teacher. In 2001 he ran for Council and promised to represent Claremont positively. However, in 2006 he challenged that and challenged the belief that people had that he still meant that. He learned a big lesson and he learned that a lot of people in the community still valued him. He has learned that an elected office is a trust given by the citizens. With the community support he would like to try to become an elected official again to earn the trust of the citizens and serve in a dignified manner. He has been a teacher for 23 years. He has a unique view; he is 50 years old, he works with youth and he knows a lot of senior citizens. He understands economic challenges. He believes Claremont is a great city; he is proud of Claremont. People in this community value quality of life. People don't want higher taxes, but they want improvements and they don't want them done with shortcuts.

Ms. Wooddell said she was born and raised in New York City. She lived in Charlestown 12-13 years. Her husband passed away in Charlestown. Her stepfather also passed away and now she and her mother live in Claremont. There have been a lot of improvements in Claremont and she

would like to see these continue. She has raised four sons and one stepson. One lives in Charlestown, one lives in Massachusetts and the rest live in New York. She would like to see the health of the community improve (i.e. tobacco cessation). She would like to see this focused in the middle school. She is a registered nurse with a bachelor's degree and she wants to continue onto a master's degree in public health. She said she has no experience in politics, but knows right from wrong.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did you choose to live in Claremont and why have you chosen to make Claremont your home?

Candidates answered this question in their opening statements.

2. Identify one difficult issue, in your opinion, the citizens of Claremont face today and briefly explain what steps you, as a Claremont City Councilor would take to address and/or resolve the issue. Please be specific when describing your proposed actions.

Mr. Burnham talked about making an 18-month budget so that the fiscal year could change to July and would be in line with the state. He feels the City is going in a direction that he wants to see it go in. Wheelabrator is owned by Waste Management and they are based in Texas. His son is in multi-media and says they are very generous in Texas. He suggested asking them what we can do to help them expand their help to the community.

Mr. Pope talked about lower Main Street and how we will pay for repairs. He thinks it is the major issue that should be addressed. We are losing economic development opportunities because people bypass it due to the road condition. Lower Main Street is a city gateway from Vermont and is a transport route. He said \$3 million is needed to fix that stretch of road. In 2013, two bonds will be finished, so that will be \$265,000 less in bonding payments. He thinks 15% of that should be given back to taxpayers and the rest should be used to get a new bond to fix the street.

Ms. Wooddell said her biggest concern is the health of our population. She would like to establish health, nutrition and tobacco treatment classes in schools. She would like to see smoking banned in vehicles with minor children in them. Health care reform is a good start and maybe it can be started here. We need to start in school with our kids.

Mr. Madigan has a concern about the bond rating. We need to look at the bonds, when they mature, what they are for and plan for the future. Bonds should be used for capital improvements. He would like people to be educated in the function of our government, not only at the local level. He talked about the Right of Recall. Citizens have the right to bring people back for re-election. He wants people to know they have rights. He is passionate about education and said that civics is not taught anymore. He thinks civics needs to be taught in school. He talked about looking further than Claremont.

3. What do you believe is Claremont's greatest asset?

Mr. Pope said that when he was on the Council, he would drive each street and walk about downtown. People are very neighborly and people make the community. We have wonderful parks, festivals (i.e. chili cook-off) and great views in our community. He believes in our community. The river has good fishing. People, parks and hidden gems are our greatest asset.

Ms. Wooddell said the downtown improvements on Pleasant Street are unbelievable. With more improvements we can bring more businesses here. The parks (Monadnock Park, skateboard park) and trails are wonderful. She suggested we can advertise them more. People are friendly and that is why she wants to help the City.

Mr. Madigan said Claremont is its own greatest asset, in particular the Mill District. When completed, perhaps more technical companies will come. He compared it to a similar area in Keene which is attractive and functional and said that is something we can do. He mentioned that bonds could be used for this type of project. Council needs to look at the big picture.

Mr. Burnham said the City has so many volunteers. They are so important to the community. Arrowhead is run by volunteers. Volunteerism brings the community together. He likes the charm of the City, the buildings, the parks and recreation facilities. Volunteerism is the top of the list.

4. Please explain what skills or qualities you will specifically bring to the table as a City Councilor.

Ms. Wooddell brings her passion. If she believes in something, she does all she can for it. She has great communication skills. She brings a new perspective as a nurse; she is open-minded and willing to listen to what others have to say. She has a positive attitude.

Mr. Madigan said he brings a deep financial background (i.e. budgeting and bonds). Sometimes even in this economy, it makes sense to spend money. He referenced previous years of non-spending and how it adversely affected the infrastructure. He brings passion and is an efficiency "freak."

Mr. Burnham said has taken three courses in zero-based budgeting which is how the City budget is. If you don't need the money in that line item, don't put it in. He talked about his experience in management and how he could use that information to understand what the City Manager has to do. He was able to get some projects done at Arrowhead (electrical which is 99% completed, cable television and change two wires from one building to another which involved the phone company). When he believes in things, he gets them done.

Mr. Pope said he brings knowledge of how the Council works and knowledge of the history of the City. He has stayed proactive on issues and what is happening in the state. He has knowledge of the state RSAs (Revised Statutes Annotated) and laws. On the personal side, he is

very detailed and he tries to listen to people. He seeks out people with more knowledge than he so he can learn. He seeks different views.

5. Please give a specific example, or examples, of what you would do to continue the progress made in moving Claremont forward?

Mr. Madigan said to consider pushing the Mill District. He would work with the Council and Mr. Santagate to attract business. He would work with the IDA and Chamber of Commerce to draw businesses to our area. The selling business is not foreign to him and this would be “selling” Claremont. He is a reading mentor at Bluff School. In the spring he will do a junior achievement series for kindergarten through seventh or eighth grade. He plans to audit classes in Stevens High School, Claremont Middle School and one of the elementary schools and then share with the schools what he finds.

Mr. Burnham said he would “sell” the City especially to those outside of Claremont. We need a building where satellite companies could start up and he suggested constructing a building by Wheelabrator and taking the steam from Wheelabrator to heat it which would make it cheap to rent. We have good people in place such as the manager. As a citizen, he feels it is his job to bring people in who want to build in Claremont. He asked the Council to consider him for the Council seat as he feels it is his time to give back to the community.

Mr. Pope talked about George Bald, Department of Resources and Economic Development Director, who said the attitude of your people, Council and city government sells your community. The Council has jurisdiction over the budget and policy. He talked about working toward goals and that the goals could be on a big sign in the front of Council chambers to let people know what direction the Council is moving. He suggested getting community input on the goals.

Ms. Wooddell said we have to ask people what they want in Claremont. She would like to spread the word about the walking trails; organize events to bring more people to Claremont; educate citizens on health issues; and ask restaurants to offer healthier foods. A lot of people at Dartmouth (where she works) come to Claremont to shop and eat. We need to spread the word about the farmers’ market; it is a great asset to get fresh produce. We need to do what we can to get people to come to Claremont. Personally, she would get more information on issues and bring it to the table. She said we need opinions from everyone.

Closing Statements

Mr. Madigan said he would look at financial things. He would look beyond the Council to the schools (they are the biggest part of our taxes). He would bring his ability to compromise, to set goals and to try to meet them.

Mr. Burnham said he likes the City and would like the opportunity to serve. His main objective is getting things done. It is time for him to help move the City along; to improve what we have and to expand the grand list through time.

Mr. Pope thanked the Council for this opportunity. He is not new, but he has a new point of view that has been refined by fire, experience and talking to people in this community. He has learned that elected office is a trust given by the people and electorate. This is a fine community with hardworking people and he is a supporter of Claremont moving forward. If selected, he will serve positively within and outside our community; work with a "can do" attitude; respect the views of people; and work toward building and improving the community infrastructure in a responsible manner.

Ms. Wooddell said we need to continue to move forward to help Claremont and its citizens. She thanked the Council for seeing her. If elected, she will serve with a passion to make Claremont keep progressing.

At 9:01 p.m., Mayor Cutts thanked the candidates and then called for a break.

Councilors thanked the applicants for applying.

Mayor Cutts asked for nominations.

Mr. Burke nominated Mr. Pope.

Mr. Austin nominated Mr. Burnham.

Mr. Bergeron nominated Mr. Madigan.

Roll Call Vote: 4-Scott Pope, 1-Richard Madigan and 3-Thomas Burnham. Mr. Raymond, Mr. Koloski, Mr. Burke and Mr. Lewis voted for Scott Pope; Mr. Bergeron voted for Richard Madigan; Mr. Austin, Ms. Messier and Mayor Cutts voted for Thomas Burnham.

Mayor Cutts asked for a roll call vote for Mr. Pope or Mr. Burnham.

Roll Call Vote: 4-Scott Pope and 4-Thomas Burnham. Mr. Raymond, Mr. Koloski, Mr. Burke and Mr. Lewis voted for Scott Pope; Mr. Bergeron, Mr. Austin, Ms. Messier and Mayor Cutts voted for Thomas Burnham.

At 9:16 p.m., Mayor Cutts asked for a recess.

Mayor Cutts asked for a roll call vote for Mr. Pope or Mr. Burnham.

Roll Call Vote: 5-Thomas Burnham and 3-Scott Pope. Mr. Raymond, Mr. Bergeron, Mr. Austin, Ms. Messier and Mayor Cutts voted for Thomas Burnham; Mr. Koloski, Mr. Burke and Mr. Lewis voted for Scott Pope.

Swearing In of At-Large Councilor

City Clerk Gwen Melcher swore in Thomas Burnham as an At-Large Councilor with an expiration date of December 31, 2011.

Mr. Burnham said this gives him a chance to give back to the City of Claremont. He really appreciated the process and thought it was excellent.

Mayor Cutts invited Mr. Burnham to sit at the Council table.

CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL

None

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:29 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Lewis and seconded by Mr. Burke to adjourn.

Roll Call Vote: Motion carried 9-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council