

The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Wednesday, November 14, 2007, in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

Members of the Council present were:

Michael Prozzo, Jr. (Absent)
Deborah Cutts
Mayor Scott Pope
Andrew Austin
William Regan, III
Ralph Swift

Also present were:

Guy Santagate, City Manager
Jane Taylor, City Solicitor

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

NON-PUBLIC SESSION PURSUANT TO RSA 91-A:3 II (d)

A motion was made by Ms. Cutts and seconded by Mr. Austin to go into the Non-Public Session Pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (d).

Roll Call Vote: Motion carried 5-0.

A motion was made by Mr. Regan and seconded by Ms. Cutts to invite Richard Dietz, Thomas Batchelder, Kyle Messier, Paul LaCasse, Robert Picard, David Roark, Dorée Russell and the presenters into the non-public session.

Roll Call Vote: Motion carried 5-0.

Mr. Santagate said he had great news related to the New Community Center. A major jump start/contribution was needed after the \$1 million pledge from the City. He introduced Clay Hawkins, President of Claremont Savings Bank (CSB). Mr. Hawkins said his bank has been in the community for over 100 years. Five and a half years ago they put \$5,000 into a feasibility study for the New Community Center. Twenty-one years ago CSB bought a lot across from Claremont Middle School. To revive downtown, facilities need to be downtown. CSB thought that lot would be a better location for the community center than others that had been brought forth. In addition, it would make a good campus arrangement for Claremont Middle School. The Trustees of CSB committed to make the New Community Center happen. They voted to give the lot to the community for use as a community center and to donate \$3 million for the community center facility. This is conditional on the community, City and businesses supporting it. This is one way for CSB to give back to the community.

Council Meeting
NON-PUBLIC
November 14, 2007
Page 217

John Napsey, Chairman of the Board for the New Community Center, showed a new concept drawing of the building. The Board has done a lot of preliminary testing work on the lot so far. It is estimated to be a \$9.5 million project. The original plan was for a 53,000 square foot facility. This plan is for a 41,000 square foot facility. Estimated costs: Site Development = over \$1 million; 8-lane pool = over \$3 million; Construction of the Building = \$4 million; Mechanical/Walls = \$1.2 million. Funding: He said Hartsook still believes \$3 million can be raised in the community; \$3 million from CSB; \$1 million from the City; and \$2 million from the state or federal government.

Mr. Santagate knows this will happen with in-kind donations (construction, etc.) and donations. He is committed to go flat out to raise funds (with Council approval). If \$7 million is raised in the next 12-18 months, he'll ask to float a bond to close the gap. His commitment is that this will be the final piece of funding. He explained this meeting is not public because land transactions are possible and that information presented during a non-public session cannot be disclosed outside this room until the Council decides to disclose it. CSB will make their announcement when they feel ready and then he'll ask the Council to open the minutes. He was looking for consensus on direction to raise money on behalf of the project with the understanding that he may be back looking for more City funds. He noted this entity will be created the same way as the track through a 501(c) (3) non-profit entity. The City will accept the land, the 501(c) (3) will be responsible for construction of the building and then the City will accept that gift. Mr. Napsey noted a 501(c) (3) has been created.

Ms. Cutts thanked Mr. Hawkins then asked for a clarification on raising money. Mr. Santagate said he would meet with business groups to solicit funds; he will not do personal solicitation. He has asked Senator John Sununu about the Post Office buying the Goodwin Community Center (GCC) and the first answer was no. Senator Sununu would like to help. Getting federal money for recreation is tough, but there are a number of ways to get it done. Mr. Santagate has met with Senator Gregg's, Senator Sununu's and Congressman Hodes' offices. He would try to raise money at the state and federal levels as well as foundation money and with this jump start, this will happen.

Mr. Austin thanked Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Santagate, and Mr. Napsey. He sees this as a no-fail thing. It will be a great thing for the City. It will be an economic tool we did not have before.

Mr. Regan thanked Mr. Hawkins. He asked Councilors-elect to make comments on this item. He asked for consideration for a little black top on the rail trail behind it.

Mr. Swift asked when it will become public. Mr. Hawkins said they are trying to negotiate to purchase a couple of properties next door, which has to happen before announcing it. The New Community Center Board will work on that. Mr. Santagate said a campus-type atmosphere can be created by closing off South Street from Broad Street to the end of the area. He noted he had spoken with both Police and Fire Chiefs and there are no safety issues with closing the road and the Council has authority to close it. Mr. Hawkins noted in the event the properties are not acquired, the buildings could be moved. Mr. Swift said this has some implications for the School Reinvestment Committee.

Council Meeting
NON-PUBLIC
November 14, 2007
Page 218

Mayor Pope noted this legacy will be passed to future Councilors and he asked for their comments.

Mr. Picard commended Mr. Hawkins, but said this puts the Council in a tough spot without getting public opinion. He said he will not commit either way tonight.

Mr. Batchelder thanked Mr. Hawkins. He said he had been on the Community Center Board and the old building is in need of replacement. He will support this and believes most of the community will support it.

Ms. Messier said she cannot think of any downside to it. She agreed with Mr. Batchelder. She thanked Mr. Hawkins and said she supports this. If money needs to be bonded to close the gap, she said she would support it.

Mr. Dietz commended Mr. Hawkins on the generous offer. He is concerned about community involvement. He believes a group outside the community is planning this. He did not like the way the skate park was handled. He does not believe it is a good site. He would reserve judgment. He thinks the whole community should be involved. This might be taken as a special project from special interests. Keeping it private concerns him. He said he cannot recommend how to handle it right now. He would love to see it go forward.

Mr. LaCasse thanked Mr. Hawkins. He asked how big the lot is and how it is tied into Monadnock Park. Mr. Napsey said it is slightly less than six acres which includes CSB's lot and three others. ATVs (all terrain vehicles) already go along the CSB lot. Mr. LaCasse would likely favor the project and thinks it is a good location. He is leery about snowmobilers going fast on the trail. Mr. Napsey said that is being worked on. Mr. Santagate said more emphasis would be placed on it. Mr. LaCasse is concerned about the taxes. Mr. Santagate said he did not blame Mr. LaCasse for not wanting to put this on the backs of the the taxpayers.

Mr. Napsey said they had looked at Barnes Park and the armory, but they do not work. Mr. Santagate noted the armory is a little out of town. He said this location and donation are perfect.

Mr. LaCasse asked about incorporating the skate park into this project. Mr. Santagate said the grant that has been received is for the previously noted site on Washington Street. The Council will act on that grant tonight. If the Council accepts it tonight, that means they have accepted the site and if the grant is turned down, that may affect future grants. Mr. Napsey said it would be hard to put a skateboard park at that location (3,000 square feet needed) because of the shape of the property.

Mayor Pope said before looking at a \$2.4 million bond, he would like to retire some bonds. He would like to look at things to slow down the ATVers. When CSB makes the public announcement, he would like to put it on as New Business on the January agenda to involve the public. He asked if the two lots are not secured, would it kill the project. Mr. Napsey said they want three adjacent properties for parking. The building can sit on the land already acquired. Negotiations are ongoing. He feels CSB has made it clear there has to be \$3 million raised to secure the bank's \$3 million.

Mr. Roark said it is good to see community participation.

Mayor Pope stated bonding has to be the last option and Mr. Santagate agreed.

Mr. LaCasse asked about the plan for maintaining the building after it is built. Mr. Napsey said a trust is being set up to maintain the building. They plan to raise \$9.5 million and sell the current building for \$1.2 million with that money being placed in trust. Mr. LaCasse asked for plan B. Mr. Napsey believes the department can fund itself.

Mr. Regan asked Mr. Santagate if Mary Walter, Finance Director, would figure out \$1, \$2 and \$3 million bonds. In reference to the skate park, there is concern about entering and exiting the area. The City already owns the property, it is downtown and that is why he will continue to support using that area. In reference to the three lots adjacent to the CSB lot, he proposed the homeowners be compensated 1.5 times the appraised value.

Mr. Swift said this has to be a focused project and cannot be linked to any other projects in the City or else it will not go anywhere.

Ms. Cutts suggested incoming Councilors review previous minutes for clarity. She asked Ms. Taylor to explain the rules of a non-public session. Ms. Taylor explained the use of non-public sessions for reasons permitted by state law. She recommended the Council entertain a motion to seal the minutes. This meeting should remain non-public until the reasons for keeping the matter confidential no longer exist and not for discussion outside the walls of the Council Chambers.

Mayor Pope thanked Mr. Hawkins.

A motion was made by Mr. Regan and seconded by Mr. Swift to seal the minutes until such time as the Council votes to unseal them.

Roll Call Vote: Motion carried 5-0.

There was consensus to continue with the project.

At 7:42 a.m., a motion was made by Ms. Cutts and seconded by Mr. Austin to return to the public session.

Roll Call Vote: Motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council