

MINUTES

City Council Members Present: Mayor Scott Pope, Andrew Austin, Heather Bopp, Deborah Cutts, Christopher Irish, James Neilsen, Michael Prozzo, William Regan and Ralph Swift

Claremont School Board Members Present: Chair David Putnam, Vice Chair John Napsey, Colby Casey, Jeff Coburn, Mark Dakin, Christopher Shaban, and Christine Terrell

Also Attending from the City: City Manager Guy Santagate

Also Attending from the Claremont School Board: Superintendent Jacqueline Guillette

Mayor Scott Pope welcomed everyone to the joint meeting of the Claremont City Council and the Claremont School Board and asked everyone to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance led by the members of the Stevens High School Varsity Soccer Team.

Mayor Pope began the meeting with welcoming remarks. He highlighted events that have transpired since these two bodies met jointly four years ago. He noted that both bodies have become stable over this period of time; long term vision has occurred and the “revolving door” that both the school and city administration was known for is now a distant memory.

The city and its schools are now viewed in a positive light by regional officials, state legislators, the governor’s office and by federal elected officials and government agencies. “*Claremont matters as they see a VIABLE city on the rise willing to look ahead to new opportunity and challenges, rather than looking back at losses and failures.*” He also noted the willingness to “embrace” the Claremont Lawsuit rather than continuing to apologize, and hide from it.

The Mayor also highlighted the infrastructure work that is occurring in the city streets and at the water and sewer treatment plant. He referred to the one million dollar challenge grant to help fund a new Claremont Community Center, an investment for people of all ages in the community.

The Mayor reminded those present of past traditions honored in the city and the new traditions that we relish.

He ended by paraphrasing George Bald from a speech he gave to City Council in 2002. ‘Streets, water and facilities are secondary, but important when it comes to building a community. The most important key is **Attitude, attitude, attitude.** A good city government attitude, a school attitude, and a citizen attitude will develop economic development and will build and reflect a true community. All things move forward from there.’

After thanking everyone for taking part in this meeting he turned the meeting over to School Board Chair David Putnam.

Mr. Putnam agreed that our houses are in order and the next step is a Shared Vision – the work is done and now it is maintenance and developing a vision for the future. This is a hard job, but one that needs to be done. Visionary thing requires cooperative work between boards. On the School Board level this is done by forming committees and focusing on the fine points.

Introduction of the Bernard Cup Winners

Mayor Pope asked to introduce the soccer coach Nick Marro and the Stevens High School Varsity Soccer Team, winners of the Bernard Cup.

Mr. Marro took the opportunity to give the history of the Bernard Cup which was initiated many years ago to honor Charlie Bernard who coached soccer at St. Mary High School until it closed. He then went to Stevens High School as a JV coach and passed away the following winter. Many of the student coach by Mr. Bernard during his tenure at St. Mary were from Charlestown and Claremont. It seemed a fitting way to honor this outstanding coach to establish the Bernard Cup which is awarded annually to the winner of the Fall Mtn. vs.Stevens soccer match. For the first time in several years, Stevens High School regained the title and the cup.

Mr. Marro thanked both boards and the citizens of Claremont for their support but reminded everyone that there are still four more games till the season end and a possible tournament bid.

Citizen's Comments – There were none

Comments from the City Manager and Superintendent of Schools noting three initiatives they have worked during the 2005-2006 year

City Manager Guy Santagate – Mr. Santagate referenced the following:

- The infrastructure around the city and the major investments being made to prepare for the expected growth
- The early work on an Open Space Ordinance needed to encourage housing in the area and the continuing work on this project which has been taken over by the Mayor and an ad hoc group charged with studying the best plan.
- The upgrade of the image of the city. Mr. Santagate is appearing in many venues to highlight the growth and improvements in the city. Also noted was the demeanor and conduct of the City Council. You cannot sell a city without leadership that conducts itself honorably.

Superintendent of Schools Jacqueline Guillette – Mrs. Guillette stated that the work done during this period has been the foundation of the work to be done this year. It is an ongoing process of building blocks. She highlighted the following:

- Looking at the facilities – do they have the ability to deliver the type of education we want for our children? Citing the recent accreditation visit by a team from the NEACS, the Superintendent noted their high praise for the programs and curriculum offered but they also expressed concern about the facilities. It is evident in every step along the way that the facilities are an important piece to delivering the education mandated.

- The response to the No Child Left Behind mandate by the federal government. It is a good philosophy but has implication at every level as to what an education should be. NCLB has caused change at a faster pace than schools usually have to meet. There are new assessment tools, new curriculum requirement, Highly Qualified Teacher regulation, technology mandates and special education rules. Also the designation of schools that have or have not achieved Adequate Yearly Progress. Each step along the way has work for the Board.
- The Claremont School Board is also working hard to improve the perception and knowledge of the Claremont School District by others. This effort is spearheaded by The Communications Committee, headed by Ms. Terrell. To that end this week is the filming of the first CCTV show highlighting every grade and the teachers who work with these students. Representatives from many other districts have come to observe our reading program and the standard and commitment to all students has been raised.

Comments from the City Manager and Superintendent on three initiatives they will be working on for 2006-2007

City Manager Guy Santagate –

- The top of the list is the historic redevelopment of the mill buildings along the Sugar River. He is confident that the city is moving in the right direction. He thanked former City Manager Bob Porter and Ray Gagnon for their work to secure funding for the bridge over the Sugar River which will be constructed in the coming year.
- Successful funding to reconstruct the Brown Block the anchor of the downtown area. We must continue to grow the city “smart.”
- Discussion of what a “wealthy” community means – it means a community where the youth stay because they want to be here. It denotes pride in a community and the accomplishment of things that seem difficult. He is a strong supporter of the Claremont Schools and has agreed to join the School Investment Committee.

Superintendent Jacqueline Guillette –

- The Facilities Committee Report which charges the SAU to look at its facilities. What the district was told 3 ½ years ago by the NESDEC report was confirmed by this report. A huge piece of this will be overseen by the newly formed School Investment Committee.
- NCLB and State Mandates – these are coming at us fast and furious. At every level from Board Policy, budgets, and classroom plans there are changes.
- The work needed to continue to build on the true successes we have and to continue to work on the things that are not working as well.

The Superintendent announced that she has agreed to serve on the City Master Plan Committee.

There were several questions from City Council members regarding the implications and the funding of the federal mandates. The Superintendent confirmed that in the 1200 pages of law of the NCLB Act the funding does not follow. This is similar to the 1973 act assuring all students

with disabilities an education. The funding has not followed at the level it was promised, and in fact has decreased. It is difficult when the mandates go up and the money goes down.

Councilman Swift asked if this is like other mandates where if you accept the funding you must meet the criteria.

Mrs. Guillette explained that the majority of the funding comes through the State and they accept one dollar of the funding the entire state is required to adhere. If NH accepts any money at all it commits the entire state to meet the mandates. She gave several examples where these standards limit the flexibility is a school system, and again cited the Federal law covering education of students with different abilities. By that law students are given accommodations but under the NCLB all children must learn to the same standards.

Councilman Austin asked if we are in danger of losing accreditation because of the facilities, and the response was that we are NOT in danger of losing accreditation because of the facilities but we will be required to come up with a plan to address the facilities and a time line in which to do it. If we do not address the plan in good faith they will get more serious with us.

Council member Ms. Cutts said she would like to think that there are some good things in the NCLB and that there are things that have challenged us in a good way.

Mrs. Guillette agreed but due to all the changes at one time, teachers are not getting time to do the thing they love to do – teach.

In response to a question if the facilities have changed drastically since the NESDEC report, the Superintendent said that this report was the beginning point of the research of the Facilities Committee. We have increased standards but the buildings have not changed. You cannot deliver the required technology in the buildings as they are.

Councilman Neilsen said he would hope to see consideration given to sites already available. He feels it would be a disservice to create numerous facilities to meet academic and athletic needs. He looks for existing facilities to be considered to avoid duplication.

Councilman Prozzo said he would like to see the numbers of the student body and will the trend in school population over the past five years.

Councilman Irish said he like the visionary aspect of all the presentations. It appears to him that he has attended every school in Claremont and the only one that has changed is the Way School, which is now a condominium development. He feels we should begin to look outside the box – year round schools are being implemented all over the world today.

Councilman Swift said it is a mistake to just consider this a growth issue. The purpose of the School Investment Committee is to fit the needs of the facilities – it is not a predetermined outcome.

Council member Bopp asked if there was a recommendation date for the committee to report out and was told this would be determined after the committee has met and has been given their charge.

Common Areas on which both groups are working – can others be added?

Ms. Terrell said she thought this was a pretty hefty list and questioned how much either body wanted to take on.

Mr. Putnam asked Ms. Terrell to explain the work of the Communications Committee which she chairs.

Ms. Terrell explained that the Communications Committee has a big umbrella and outlined just a few of their efforts.

- The monthly SAU page in the *Eagle Times* is coordinated by her but the work is done by the students in the schools.
- The Annual Report
- The Annual Report Card
- Informational materials that go home with the students
- The initiation of the CCTV series, “Spotlight on Your Schools”

Mr. Putnam asked if it were feasible to have both bodies work together to create the image desired. He feels that if both bodies promote the city those receiving the message will take it more seriously.

Ms. Bopp said this is already being done. When students achieve in some venue they are brought before the City Council and recognized for their work. She also referred to the efforts by the Planning Board to include the SAU administration in discussion regarding any potential large developments that would come before that board.

Mr. Austin agreed with Ms. Terrell as he has had years of experience with those who fight against the schools. Mr. Santagate has changed the way people think about the city and the challenge before us is to change the way they think about the schools. He challenged everyone to leave this meeting ready to change negative comments when they hear them.

Mayor Pope suggested that on a quarterly basis the chair of the School Board appear at a council meeting to update them on board activities and the Mayor would do the same at School Board meetings. He also suggested the each board get copies of the others minutes.

Mr. Swift said he feels when we look at the City of Claremont we need a cohesive view – a piece around the schools, a piece around the city and a piece around the citizens. These three components are not talking together. There is not the glue that forces things to come together on an ongoing basis. He sees it as a difference between inward thinking and outward thinking. It appears to him that the current thinking is inward. If we want an outward view we have to find a

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way to improve the ranking of Claremont on places like the internet where cities are ranked on many factors.

Mr. Irish said he sees those gathered at this meeting as the best cheerleaders the city has but the basic problem is that these are two separate entities with different regulations guiding them. No matter what each does they are competing due to the type of structure of the government. "How do we bring it under one umbrella?" Legally all we can do is talk and he feels it is a priority for both boards to investigate how this could change.

Mr. Neilsen suggested that each board use language in their signage that shows they believe in each other. Perhaps CCTV could do a program such as they do for Valley Regional where each month a member of each board would sit down and answer a prepared question.

Mr. Santagate referred to Mr. Irish's comments and agreed that it is an unusual setup. When the tax bills go out we are hitting the same pockets. There is no legal basis for any cooperation.

Mr. Irish said he has spent 15 years in this type of situation and it cannot be done this way. Both entities are equally valuable to the city but the funding is not equal. City Council votes on the city budget and the public votes on the school budget. He supports a single form of government where everyone works together for one outcome.

Mr. Swift asked if current statutes exclude having a Capital Steering Committee. The response was that we are bound by the City Charter and nothing can be done.

Ms. Bopp agreed that it is frustrating but her obligations are to the city's interests. She can offer verbal support and sit on committees but she was elected to represent citizens in the city government.

Mr. Shaban thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He feels that this meeting does represent that all are working to make Claremont better. The boards can portray a spirit of cooperation that will portray that the city works together. We should do what is right and fight for the citizens as a group. We have a great team and we should take that and move forward.

Mr. Casey said he would like to see both boards develop a list of their top ten priorities, shuffle them together and prioritize to develop a list of 20 things relevant to both board in order of need and priority. That way we would have a big picture.

Mr. Austin called for solutions – we know what the problems are.

Mr. Putnam suggested that he and the Mayor each pick one other person from their board and begin to study what steps need to be taken to resolve some of the issues raised tonight.

Mr. Regan noted that he has watched tonight as everyone has "danced around the 2000 lb. gorilla in the room." We need a new high school. It would be advantageous if all agree that what needs to be taken from this meeting is that we are all working toward a common goal. The tax bill is

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100%of the cost of the city. “The price of a community that gets better is that we all have to pay....we need something big in this community to make it rise. Despite “how we get elected and our responsibilities to each board – we all work for the city.”

Mr. Irish agreed with what Mr. Regan said but the reality is they are two separate bodies. There is a solution – “change the government structure.”

Mr. Napsey thanked everyone for their input and supported other suggestions that a time frame should be set for another meeting. “Both sides are climbing the same mountain and hopefully we will meet at the top.” He feels there are potential savings if ways can be found to combine certain expenses using insurance as an example. He volunteered to take his turn before the council for updates.

Mr. Prozzo said he also appreciated the invitation to attend this meeting, but he wants to be sure that future meetings have specific workable agenda. We need to consider all the things that make up our community including those in poverty, the senior citizens and others. When this is done there are actually very few left to pay the bills.

All agreed that the recommendations of the School Investment Committee will be critical to determining the next steps.

Mr. Prozzo moved the City Council meeting be adjourned. Ms. Bopp seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Mr. Coburn moved the Claremont School Board meeting be adjourned. Mrs. Dakin seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,
Anita P. Engel
Recording Secretary
Claremont School Board