

The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Wednesday, March 28, 2007, in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

Members of the Council present were:

Michael Prozzo, Jr.
Deborah Cutts
Heather Bopp
Mayor Scott Pope
Andrew Austin
William Regan, III
Ralph Swift

Members absent were:

Assistant Mayor Christopher Irish
James Neilsen, IV

Also present were:

Guy Santagate, City Manager

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

CITIZEN'S FORUM

No one appeared.

NEW BUSINESS

Council Goals

Mayor Pope said this meeting was to discuss what the Council wants to focus on for the next few months.

- 1) Support the Master Plan process already in place.
 - a) Suggested by Mayor Pope and supported by Ms. Bopp, Mr. Austin and Mr. Swift.
 - b) Ms. Cutts would like an annual review of the Master Plan to make sure it reflects the goals of the city.
 - c) Mr. Regan concurred.
 - d) Mr. Swift said the rationale and input from people are key and shouldn't change much year to year. The most important part is the detail that was used to develop the plan.

- e) Mayor Pope noted this is a living document. He had been asked by both Governor Lynch and Senator Sununu what the Master Plan said. It refers to major employers that are no longer here and therefore he felt it was important to move forward with the process.
 - f) Ms. Cutts suggested outcome measures be used.
 - g) Mr. Santagate said this is the first time in 5 ½ years that the city has the luxury to plan for the future instead of solving problems of the past. What the citizens want is key and the Master Plan is a road map to follow. It will take time to do it right.
- 2) Communicating and educating citizens using public television, editorials, and a report similar to what Senator Bob Odell does for the State.
- a) Suggested by Mr. Swift and supported by Ms. Cutts, Mr. Austin and Mayor Pope.
 - b) Ms. Bopp suggested a bi-monthly newsletter. Claremont Community Television, Channel 8, is not seen by all residents.
 - c) Mr. Regan said communication is what you make of it; if you pay attention, people get it. It is not his responsibility to teach people to tune into Channel 8; it is the community's responsibility to pay attention.
 - d) Mr. Prozzo said if they don't want to hear it, they won't listen anyway.
 - e) Mr. Swift said he learned in the military to teach people by "tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them and then tell them what you told them." After telling citizens in Council chambers, the word has to go out again by television or newspaper and then tell them again.
 - f) Mayor Pope would be willing to do a newspaper column for the Eagle Times. He would like help writing it.
 - g) Mr. Swift asked if it would be appropriate for Councilors to write letters to the editor. Mayor Pope saw no reason not to.
 - h) Mr. Prozzo commented that during the Mayor's Notes portion of the Council meeting, Mayor Pope shares a lot of positive things with the community.
 - i) Ms. Cutts said she would like to pursue with the Eagle Times a section dedicated to the voice of the customer (citizens) and each Councilor could write about something.
 - j) Mr. Austin cautioned about putting articles in the paper because people interpret things differently.
 - k) Mr. Prozzo also suggested caution so as to not indicate that a Councilor had already made up his or her mind on specific items before coming for a vote.
- 3) Strategy/tactics bullet sheet (talking document for the public that lists and summarizes the City's strategy).
- a) Suggested by Mr. Swift.
- 4) Integration of the educational community into the City planning.
- a) Suggested by Mr. Austin and supported by Mr. Swift.
 - b) Clarified by Ms. Cutts: To continue the recently founded formal collaborative efforts of the City and school. She supports.
 - c) Ms. Bopp sees where interaction with the schools can be done at the Planning Board level. She said the schools and the City have two different forms of government (town

meeting and city) and there is nothing we can do to help them. She noted that when we do better economically, we lose state funding.

- d) Ms. Cutts said the City has helped the schools with Resource Officer support. Because we impact each other, we should collaborate. She asked when the next annual school/Council meeting is scheduled (no response was given).
 - e) Mr. Austin said the school is the soul of the community and if we don't help them, we will go backward, not forward. This is the biggest piece of the puzzle for economic development.
 - f) Mr. Regan said the value of the Council is to fully explain the logic behind the promotional support of the school department. He said we need a new high school, bottom line. That is the direction we need to go to improve the school system; we need to bond for a new building. He was dismayed that only 998 people cast ballots, out of about 7,364 registered voters, for what amounts to two-thirds of the City's budget. He is going to support the school concept.
 - g) Mayor Pope said he has tried to avoid the school issue, because of the appearance of conflict of interest. He said Mr. Santagate had said to embrace the Claremont Lawsuit as the right thing to do. Mayor Pope considers it a benchmark turning point. Another turning event in the community in education is the Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center. Comparing the old shop and new facility: the NEAS & C report gave the school several commendations. The idea of getting the school and City to look at capital plans together underlies some of these ideas. He would like regular reports from the Facility Investment Committee. Mr. Santagate and Mr. Swift are two members on that committee.
 - h) Mr. Regan said of the Claremont lawsuit, that people have thanked Claremont for doing it and he has changed his opinion from negative to positive.
 - i) Ms. Bopp said of the school issue that Mr. Santagate has been very influential in getting a college in the city which has helped a great deal with economic development in the downtown area. She has no problem sharing knowledge that the city has with the school and if we can do more, she would like to see it move forward.
 - j) Ms. Cutts agreed with Ms. Bopp.
- 5) Capital Asset Planning (buildings – Conference Center, land, how much they are used, divestiture plan, future plan).
- a) Suggested by Mr. Swift.
 - b) Ms. Cutts would like a list of the properties we own and she is aware that the Planning and Development Department takes care of helping out developers as they come into the City. She would like a tour of the City's facilities and properties again.
- 6) "How To" process sheets (contest assessment, license dog, etc.).
- a) Suggested by Mr. Swift and supported by Ms. Cutts and Ms. Bopp.
- 7) Skate Park up and running by this summer.
- a) Suggested by Mr. Regan.
 - b) Mr. Regan said that is only \$20,000 - \$25,000 on a \$15 million budget.
 - c) Ms. Cutts thinks the skate park is a good idea.

- 8) Coordinate Rails to Trails project with the Riverside Park.
 - a) Suggested by Mr. Regan.

- 9) Blacktop the Trail from Lavalley's to Reeds for more pedestrian traffic.
 - a) Suggested by Mr. Regan.

- 10) Continue to take care of our infrastructure.
 - a) Suggested by Mr. Prozzo.
 - b) Mayor Pope talked about taking care of infrastructure and the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that ends in 2007. He encouraged writing a plan for the next five years. It's a road map.
 - c) Mr. Santagate said this is an important document and it is time to update it. If we wrote a CIP in 2008, the first year is typically a budget and then the next four years are a plan. As that year ends, you add a fifth year and then 2009 becomes the budget and you revise it based on funding availability; it forces us to think about priorities. We will work on it this year. Some of the quiet assets of Claremont are the sewage and water plants that are in great condition.

- 11) Move ahead and implement an environmentally responsible, health conscious, solid waste reduction/solid waste management plan.
 - a) Suggested by Ms. Cutts and supported by Ms. Bopp.

- 12) Continue to Support the Implementation, Funding, Building and Implementation of a Community Recreation Facility.
 - a) Suggested by Ms. Cutts.

Ms. Cutts believes goals #2 – 5 are covered in a referenced document that was put together using the Baldrige Planning criteria. She likes the City's website, but agrees some people need something else.

Mr. Austin believes goal #2, 3 and 6 are related.

Mr. Regan's goal while on the Council is to continue to move forward. There is a "tsunami of success" coming into town.

Mr. Prozzo asked for a list of the goals with them split into short-term and long-term planning to be brought back to the Council. He understands the Council adopted (many years ago) the following three goals: Economic Development, Tax Stabilization and Infrastructure and if the Council will change the direction, he would like the Council to agree on where it wants to go. Mayor Pope would like the list boiled down to three or four workable goals and long-term goals.

Mr. Regan suggested putting the goals into the newspaper. Ms. Bopp was concerned about putting them in the paper as some people would assume that all the goals would all go forward.

Mr. Austin said things couldn't have happened the way they have without Mr. Santagate. He gave credit to Mr. Santagate for his knowledge of managing cities.

Mr. Santagate said the following goals have been worked on since they were unanimously approved at the October 15, 2001, Council meeting.

1. Implement strategies that will strengthen the financial condition of the City of Claremont (host of steps that have been taken; we will never be a "fat" city; we are a tight-margin city; we are in much better shape today than years ago).
2. Establish clear operating procedures regarding economic development which will position the City to expand its tax base and increase job opportunities (we're inching in that direction).
3. Complete hiring process for key personnel and develop a professional management team (he is proud of the team we have; it is always an evolving team).
4. Improve coordination between City departments and other government and community agencies (he noted that Fire Chief Peter Chase has been with the City for over 30 years and has never seen City departments cooperate like they do now).
5. Establish standard operating procedures for each department that will improve efficiencies (never completed, but always evolving and we've made progress on it).
6. Develop Citywide capital improvement program that will improve the infrastructure and protect the capital assets of the City of Claremont (this spring maybe the Council can tour the capital assets that the City has).
7. Deliver the best possible City services to all residents and businesses at the lowest possible costs (costs always an issue especially in a state that doesn't have a broadbased tax and relies on the property tax).
8. Improve the image of our City by achieving documented accomplishments which will be recognized as professional and sustainable (recently met with the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and they see a lot of positives happening and they want to work with us which is a big change).

Mayor Pope asked for the goals to be put into a list and be given to the Council

Mr. Prozzo asked that the absent Councilors be given an opportunity to submit their input. Mayor Pope suggested getting the list down to 3-4 goals for a later April meeting.

Mr. Prozzo said it would be beneficial to do a short night (6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.) to talk about this list. He suggested a special meeting in May.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:15 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Prozzo and seconded by Ms. Bopp to adjourn.

Motion carried 7-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council