

The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Wednesday, August 1, 2007, in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

Members of the Council present were:

Michael Prozzo, Jr.
Deborah Cutts
Heather Bopp
Assistant Mayor Christopher Irish
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 6:36 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS

Interview and Selection of Candidate to Fill Vacant Ward I City Council Seat

Candidates:

Mr. William J. Corey
Mr. David T. Roark
Mr. Bradley Ferland

Mayor Pope said there are some questions about one candidate's eligibility. Ms. Taylor explained the qualifications. The vacancy is for Ward 1 and Mr. Ferland is a resident of Ward 1, but according to section 18 of the City Charter, a candidate must be a registered voter in that ward. Mr. Ferland is registered in Ward 3. According to the City Clerk, technically to become a registered voter the Supervisors of the Checklist need to meet to formally add a voter to the roll. Section 16 of the Charter discusses how to fill a vacancy on the Council. It states it shall be filled by a qualified person who receives the vote of the majority of the Council. She believes this is a form of an election because the Council votes for, not appoints a new Councilor. Because Mr. Ferland is a registered voter in Ward 3, he doesn't qualify to be a candidate in Ward 1. She said the Council should discuss it and make the decision of qualifications. She suggested after the November election that certain provisions of the Charter may need review.

Mr. Austin asked Joe Osgood his opinion since he was on the Charter Committee. Mr. Osgood's opinion was that if there were no election since Mr. Ferland registered in Ward 3 and he

currently resides in Ward 1, his name should not be erased from the list. Mr. Prozzo asked if there had been any discussion by the members of the Charter Committee about this requirement. Mr. Osgood said the purpose of being a registered voter in that ward would indicate that they legally live in that ward. He stands by his opinion.

Mr. Irish stated we have same day registration in New Hampshire and he believes the Charter doesn't apply because the Charter doesn't say how to fill this seat. His opinion is that this is an appointment. He thinks we should accept Mr. Ferland as an applicant.

Ms. Cutts asked and Mr. Ferland stated that he had been in Ward 1 for a month. He said the ad in the paper didn't say the candidate had to be registered in Ward 1 just a resident or else he would have taken care of it before applying. He was registered in Ward 3 because he was living there with his parents.

Mr. Swift agreed with Mr. Irish that this is an appointment process. The Council has been looking for people to be involved and Mr. Ferland is one. He doesn't see an issue.

Ms. Bopp agreed we should move forward on the application.

A motion was made by Ms. Bopp and seconded by Mr. Irish to allow the process to move forward with all three candidates.

Mr. Regan agreed that we should move forward with the three candidates.

Ms. Cutts said the minimum requirements should have been put into the newspaper.

Motion carried 8-0.

Candidates:

Mr. William J. Corey
Mr. David T. Roark
Mr. Bradley Ferland

Mayor Pope explained the process and thanked the candidates for their desire to serve our community.

Interview Process and Questions

The order will be determined by a "draw from the hat" done by the candidate and administered by the Council Clerk. (Mr. Roark-1; Mr. Corey-2; Mr. Ferland-3)

Procedure

- Two minute opening statement for each candidate

- Candidates will be asked six questions on a rotating basis
- Two minute closing statement from each candidate

Mr. Irish read the voting process.

Voting Process

- Each councilor will have the opportunity to vote on a candidate. After the interview process there will be time allotted for discussion by the council, then a councilor may “move the question” to vote on the candidates, followed by a second and a vote to move the question.
- The vote will be done by roll call where each councilor names the person they are voting for.
- The person receiving a majority (5 votes) is the person chosen to fill the Ward 1 seat.
- In the event of a “no majority” vote during the first ballot, there will be a “run-off” election between the two candidates receiving the most votes.
- The run-off will be decided by a majority vote of the council. A majority is 5 votes.

Opening Statements

Mr. Roark said he has been an aerospace machinist for 21 years which gives him ample hours to dedicate to being a Councilor. He’s been married 21 years tomorrow. He agreed with the Code of Conduct for the Council. He wishes to serve Claremont’s citizens. Self sufficiency is what we need to come back to including employment for all in the City. We should seek to use the Sugar River as an asset. We should simplify traffic patterns and include a future truck route. The Master Plan will help to set the course.

Mr. Corey said his family considers him “old school.” For the past 40 years he has been in business for himself and he considers himself open for suggestion and open minded. Before coming to Claremont, he was a self-serving business man. Claremont changed that. He appreciates this city. He is a self-employed landlord. He’s very interested in the growth of the city. He will give 100% to be the best Councilperson. He will put forth his resources and background to be the best Councilperson he can be.

Mr. Ferland has worked in the safety industry and he feels he can apply that knowledge here. Things are not always black and white and you need to be open-minded and objective about what is going on. He lived in Claremont until graduating from high school then he went to test the waters elsewhere. He is excited to be back and would like to serve the community he grew up in.

Questions

1. In your opinion, what is one significant thing done in the city in the last 12 months?

Mr. Roark said continued support for economic development, maintaining and attaining new jobs and industries within the city. Jobs with decent incomes within the city will greatly improve family life and reduce travel. Crown Point Cabinet expansion is very good. The purchase of Eastern Bridge will secure many more jobs. Small business is very important; they assist with several additional jobs.

Mr. Corey said the most important thing is attitude. Give a person a job and a goal, but if they don't have an interest or are not committed, you will not end up with a good end product. He has been here for 5 ½ years and he likes the progressiveness he sees. He picked Claremont to come to because it was on cusp of blooming with tremendous opportunities. The Water Street project is the single largest spark in the last 12 months. The people in this city are doers and that is what he wants to be a part of.

Mr. Ferland moved back here three months ago. He can't pinpoint a specific thing, but he chose to live in Claremont over Keene. Having been gone for 10 years, he noticed a lot of improvements when he came back. He attributes that to what the community is trying to do.

2. What are your top three priorities to address if you are selected to the Council?

Mr. Corey said with no previous political experience, number one it is best for him to sit back and listen. Number two is not to shrink back from taking calculated risk and opportunity. All his life he has been self-employed or a 100% commissioned salesman, so he always had to produce what he said he was going to in order to make a living. He would bring that mentality to the City Council. He doesn't expect anything; he expects to work for what is there; he wants to listen to what is going on, take a calculated risk and is willing to be a part of that process. He bought the Reliable Paper building and when asked what he will do with it, he said he wasn't sure, but he said it will serve Claremont to the best possible use he has control over, because he wants to see the Water Street projects be successful and if that property is part of the success, then that's how he'll direct the building.

Mr. Ferland agrees somewhat with Mr. Corey about continuing to move the community forward. If elected, he would like to see what the Council has for priorities and what direction it's going in. He said he's not in the position to pinpoint three priorities at this time. Personally he values his family, job and the community he lives in.

Mr. Roark said he would like to have affordable homes for residents which will bring back pride of neighborhoods. Second, he would like to focus on roads and sidewalks that will help maintain the assessments in front of each home. Third, he would like to have a quality assortment of recreation for all ages. Recreation brings in folks from outside our community.

3. What one item, if any, would you like to see the city complete by the end of the year?

Mr. Ferland is in the process of getting his home renovated and hasn't had an opportunity to see all the projects that are going on. He knows it is nice to have construction projects done by the end of the year. He knows the Mill Street project is moving along. He said he couldn't answer the question. He believes any project that is scheduled to be done should be done.

Mr. Roark would like to continue with the roads and sidewalk. A part of that is communication of a long range (5-7 year) plan sent out to the residents.

Mr. Corey said without a doubt it would be the Water Street project. It is a huge opportunity. He would love to see that project stay on schedule. It is the second largest mill renovation in the State of New Hampshire's history (outside of Manchester).

4. What attributes would you bring to the city and the Council to address your priorities?

Mr. Roark said the experience of knowing Claremont history. He grew up in Plainfield and visited Claremont quite often. His first house was on East Mountain Road. He met his wife here in high school. He has attended City Council as well as other city meetings since 1991.

Mr. Corey said he will be 62 years old this year and has been in the business world for 40 years. He brings enthusiasm, energy, a can do attitude and victory. He has been through a lot in his life and he has had a lot of experiences. As each opportunity presents itself, he will be a listener, then think about what would be best for Claremont and then try to apply himself to see that those methods and ways were followed through in order to best facilitate what we're trying to accomplish on the Council.

Mr. Ferland said that by working in the safety industry, he has learned a lot about how to accomplish things. He has dealt with production and the federal government on some projects in Boston. He found he had to be creative to accomplish what the government wanted, but still accomplish the production that the company required in order to make money. Business is about making money and he learned to have balance between regulations and still be productive. He brings a lot of creativity to the table.

5. How do you view the city's current strategy on growth?

Mr. Corey said that as far as population, the city has stayed level. He would like to see growth. He believes we need a balance that includes business, industry and affordable housing. People have to see a larger picture of development and growth. He is participating in ways of making Claremont more favorably looked upon. Claremont is an opportunity.

Mr. Ferland said his opinion is the strategy is working pretty well. Since returning from being out of the area for a while, he has noticed vast improvements on signs and at the parks. He doesn't have anything negative to say about the strategy, however, there is always room for improvement.

Mr. Roark said the greatest thing we have is capacity. We have capacity for employment, several industrial parks and good transportation in that area. We have capacity for additional housing and incoming family support businesses such as White Mountain Child Care. We have great capacity for growth, more industry and local jobs.

6. Where do you see Claremont five to ten years from now?

Mr. Ferland would like Claremont to continue with growth and he would like to see construction projects that are underway completed. He would like people to look at Claremont as a place to live, raise their family and for jobs.

Mr. Roark would like to bring back self-sufficiency with more shopping, more jobs, additional housing and our roads be in better condition. He thinks we can be more complete in 5-7 years as far as keeping our citizens within our community.

Mr. Corey hopes to be fishing, knowing he made the right decision – he knew Claremont had it. He thinks Granite State College is important. It is a huge asset to the downtown community and we shouldn't underestimate that. Perception is important and he believes that once people see the growth in Claremont, the negative perception will be overcome. Once things are smoothed out, people will come.

Closing Statements

Mr. Ferland thanked the Council for the opportunity to present his case as to why he would be an asset to the community. He looks forward to being able to serve either on the Council or some other board.

Mr. Roark said he has lived in Ward 1 for nearly 16 years. Eleven of those years had been on East Mountain (now known as Case Hill) Road and for five years on South Street. Living in each of those areas has given him a good perspective of the rural part as well as the more urban area of Ward 1. He has attended many Council and other government meetings. He will continue to attend and hopes to assist in the future of the City.

Mr. Corey will continue with his enthusiasm for Claremont regardless of the vote. He believes we have accountability for the way we conduct our lives. In that accountability, you have to give as much as you take. If selected, he will do the best he can. If not selected he will continue to support Claremont and attend the meetings. He thinks Claremont is a diamond in the rough. He has invested heavily in this city. He believes whoever is selected will give 100%.

Mr. Swift said he has interviewed thousands of people in his career and seeing how the candidates answer the questions was critical. His clear candidate was Mr. Corey.

Mr. Irish thanked all three candidates and said that it was a three-way dead heat. The notes he made for the candidates were: Roark – experience with City and loyalty; Ferland – youth and

confidence; and Corey – business skills and drive. He asked for those not selected to please stay involved.

Ms. Bopp thanked all three candidates and said she agreed with Mr. Irish that the young people of this community are our future. She appreciates Mr. Roark's input at Council meetings. She thanked Mr. Corey for his dedication to the City. She agreed the City is on the cusp of a major change.

Mr. Austin thanked all three candidates. He sees qualities in all three that would benefit the City.

Ms. Cutts thanked all three candidates and noted that she was in their position not too long ago. She was impressed with Mr. Ferland and stated that he represents the young people of our community. She thanked Mr. Roark for reading and indicating that he could abide by the Code of Conduct. She noted that Mr. Corey's obvious success in the community precedes him.

Mr. Regan thanked all three candidates. He gave kudos for getting involved. He noted all three bring different attributes.

Mr. Prozzo thanked all three candidates. He said he has lived here all of his life. He likes to see new people come out with good ideas. He hopes that they will apply again in November. He scored all candidates very close, but Mr. Corey scored as the top candidate.

A motion was made by Ms. Bopp and seconded by Mr. Austin to move the question.

Roll Call Vote to Move the Question: Motion carried 8-0.

Roll Call Vote for Choice of Candidate: Mr. Prozzo, Ms. Cutts, Ms. Bopp and Mr. Swift voted for Mr. Corey; Mr. Irish voted for Mr. Ferland; and Mr. Austin, Mr. Regan and Mayor Pope voted for Mr. Roark. (Mr. Corey-4 votes; Mr. Ferland-1 vote; Mr. Roark-3 votes)

Mayor Pope said there needed to be a majority so there would be a runoff vote between Mr. Corey and Mr. Roark.

2nd Roll Call Vote for Choice of Candidate: Mr. Prozzo, Ms. Cutts, Ms. Bopp and Mr. Swift voted for Mr. Corey; and Mr. Irish, Mr. Austin, Mr. Regan and Mayor Scott Pope voted for Mr. Roark. (Mr. Corey-4 votes; Mr. Roark-4 votes)

Tie vote: Council was allowed to ask further questions.

Mr. Austin asked Mr. Corey since he is a business man, will it affect how he votes on the Council. Mr. Corey said he would be fair, objective and thoughtful. If there is a conflict of interest, he'll step aside. He thinks he can be objective and can recognize when to stop talking.

Mr. Irish's concern is that the Council's job is to set policy. Over the next few months discussions will be geared toward the mill district and Mr. Corey owns property in that area. Because of that conflict he won't be allowed to participate. That is Mr. Irish's only concern.

Mr. Swift said that everyone on the Council has conflict. Each Councilor has to make a decision. There is a clear difference between Mr. Roark and Mr. Corey. Mr. Roark has a view of things that need to be done in the short term and Mr. Corey has a broader view and we need to focus on 3, 5, 10 years out. He thanked them for participating.

Ms. Cutts asked Ms. Taylor about conflict of interest. Ms. Taylor said it is defined as personal benefit or personal detriment and can involve you or an immediate family member. If there is a conflict or a perceived conflict, she advised being open about it and surface it before the body.

Ms. Cutts said she saw in Mr. Roark some good old fashioned values and care about Claremont's well-being. She asked his thoughts about taxes. Mr. Roark said if Claremont adds additional quality jobs, people can stay in Claremont, save on cars, spend time with their family, maintain yards and houses and those savings could make their tax burden easier. Continued economic development of jobs may keep citizens in the city.

Mr. Corey said the issue with the taxes was misunderstood. Some people believe the valuations were too high, but he believes the assessments and valuations were accurate. The mill rate was the bandit. The only way out is to develop the business and commerce that brings in the mill development and manufacturers. You can't get healthy nurturing a service-oriented economy. You need to make something.

Ms. Bopp talked about conflict of interest and said Mr. Corey may have to step down, but so may everyone on the Council. She believes Mr. Corey's plans encompass years of growth. We need to have structured balance and that is what this Council is trying to achieve.

Mr. Prozzo said the conflict question doesn't really bother him. Just bring it forward. When there is a choice between two people, it comes down to experience. Mr. Corey has lots of experience which is very important and he has learned from it.

Mr. Austin agreed with Mr. Swift in that everyone has agendas at some point. The more you own, the more you will be under scrutiny. He said Mr. Corey has a bigger view for the City while Mr. Roark has a big heart and is capable of doing things for the City.

Mr. Regan said he has been a commissioned salesperson and he understands Mr. Corey's motivation. He said Mr. Corey is a more eloquent speaker and his ability to debate would add to the Council. He said he leaned toward Mr. Roark because of his work in reference to the skate park. He said Mr. Roark has shown persistence and Mr. Regan will vote for Mr. Roark.

A motion was made by Ms. Bopp and seconded by Mr. Prozzo to move the question.

Roll Call Vote to Move the Question: Motion carried 8-0.

3rd Roll Call Vote for Choice of Candidate: Mr. Prozzo, Ms. Bopp, Mr. Irish, Mr. Swift and Mayor Pope voted for Mr. Corey; Ms. Cutts, Mr. Austin and Mr. Regan voted for Mr. Roark. Mr. Corey was selected as the new Ward 1 Councilor with an expiration date of December 31, 2007. (Mr. Corey-5 votes; Mr. Roark-3 votes)

CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL

At 8:20 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Prozzo and seconded by Ms. Bopp to adjourn to consult with legal counsel.

Motion carried 8-0.

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council