

The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Wednesday, April 8, 2009, 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:

At-Large Councilor Thomas (Toby) Batchelder, III
At-Large Councilor Robert Picard
At-Large Councilor Keith Raymond
Assistant Mayor Andrew Austin
Mayor Deborah Cutts
Ward II Councilor Paul LaCasse
At-Large Councilor Kyle Messier
Ward I Councilor Christopher Lewis

Absent:

Ward III Councilor Jeffrey Goff

Also present were:

Mary Walter, Acting City Manager

MAYOR'S NOTES

Stevens High School Student Council Update

Ellissa Coburn, Student Council President, said Spirit week was successful. This week is Theme Week, *How Big is Your Carbon Footprint?* They are encouraging carpooling, biking and riding scooters to school to reduce the numbers of cars. Thursday they will collect reusable bags. Friday is bring in eco-friendly water bottle day. Wednesday, April 15, is Theme Day with a day of workshops. Peace One Day is on April 28, 2009. Also on April 28, 5-6:30 p.m., Mac & Cheese Cook-off in Monadnock Park as well as track meet. Public is invited to attend.

Silver Star Banner Day Claremont Proclamation

Mayor Cutts read the Silver Star Banner Day Proclamation.

Mayor Cutts presented Week of the Young Child Proclamation, April 19-25. Cathy Paradis, Child Care Resource and Referral Specialist for Sullivan and Lower Grafton County, said Family School Connections has been working with Every Child Matters. They are bringing a national display (Presidents Helping Children) to the Claremont Opera House atrium for that week.

Mary Walter said NH has increased WIC (Women, Infant & Children) income guidelines (family of 4 = \$40,793 per year to qualify). Southwest Community Services is the source for WIC.

Mayor Cutts read student winners from the Best of the Upper Valley School Show Winners at the AVA Gallery. She noted the UVLSRPC (Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission) will have its Annual Conference June 10, 2009.

Mayor Cutts said she got a message from Jason Farrell saying Clean-Green-Claremont Day is April 18. Contact Claremont Chamber of Commerce 543-1296 for information. Participation will count toward Stevens High School community service requirements.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

A motion was made by Mr. Raymond and seconded by Mr. Picard to accept the minutes of the March 11, 2009, City Council meeting.

Roll Call Vote: Motion carried 8-0.

APPOINTMENT TO BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Claremont Planning Board

There were applications in the Council packets for the Claremont Planning Board for Dennis Dube, Anthony Ferraro and John Robert Marini. Mayor Cutts said those applications were for information only. She will bring the appointments to Council when she completes them.

Conservation Commission

Mr. Austin nominated Dianne Raymond for re-appointment to seat #1 of the Conservation Commission.

Roll Call Vote: Motion carried 8-0.

CITIZEN'S FORUM

Jack O'Sullivan, Ward 1, Greater Claremont Board of Realtors, wanted to clear up rumors about the real estate market in Claremont. There are 3,200 single family properties in the city; 102 are for sale; 13 are under contract; 3.6% of all properties in the city are for sale. He didn't know how many were for sale by owner. Of the 115 on MLS (Multiple Listing Service), only 12 were foreclosures (10 active, 1 contingent and 1 pending). Assuming a 95% mortgage rate on the 3,200 properties, the foreclosure rate is .4%. Claremont is not on the road to disaster; houses are being sold and purchased. Real estate is in good shape. He thanked the Mayor for the acknowledgement of the Silver Star Families. Mr. Raymond asked about a comparison to surrounding communities. Mr. O'Sullivan said Sullivan County has a foreclosure rate of only 1%.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, responded to Mr. O'Sullivan's comments saying the MLS website is www.nneren.com. Zoning Ordinance 504 Inclusionary and Infill Development was discussed by the Council in February. It has now been referred to the Housing Subcommittee of the Master Plan Advisory Committee (he is a member). Eventually, the Planning Board and Council will vote on it, so he suggested the Council understand what this means for the future of Claremont.

Jeffrey Coburn, President of Claremont Youth Baseball and Softball, announced May 2nd Opening Day festivities. Approximately 380 kids will participate in baseball and softball this summer. July 17 and 18 Claremont will host the Regionals for softball Youth 16 (10 teams).

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution 2009-9 \$200,750 Grant for Aeronautical Study and Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan – Public Hearing

Ms. Walter said this grant went before the Council last month for acceptance. This resolution will allow the City to spend the money. Part of the money will come from the Airport Capital Reserve.

Mr. Picard wanted it known there would be no cost to tax payers.

Mayor Cutts opened the public hearing. No one spoke. She closed it.

A motion was made by Mr. Raymond and seconded by Mr. Picard to adopt Resolution 2009-9 \$200,750 Grant for Aeronautical Study and Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan.

Mr. Raymond read the resolution into the record. Ms. Walter said the \$200,750 should have a comma, not a period.

Roll Call Vote: Motion carried 8-0 with Mr. Austin and Mayor Cutts thanking Fire Chief Peter Chase and all who are involved in this grant.

COPS Grant Application

Police Chief Alex Scott said he lost two positions during the budget cuts and he is looking for Council support applying for this grant. He said he had gotten City Manager Guy Santagate's approval to go forward with this application. He was not sure if the application required Council support to file, but he was asking for it just in case. The COPS Grant will be funded by the federal government 100% for the first three years and the municipality will pay for and retain the positions for the fourth year. Funding will not be available until late October this year. The total cost of the project will be \$387,030 with approximately \$130,000 in the fourth year being paid by Claremont.

Mr. Picard asked how many officers the Police Department is down. Chief Scott said they are down two from the 2001 layoff and two more now for a total of four. Mr. Austin asked if this layoff was through attrition. Chief Scott said yes. One recent vacancy was from someone not successfully making it through the police academy and a younger officer will be going out due to disability. Those positions will not be refilled unless we are successful with the COPS grant application. Mr. Austin asked about layoff restrictions in the grant. Chief Scott said the rules have changed because of the Economic Recovery Act.

Mr. LaCasse asked about the retention after the third year. Chief Scott said they have to be retained for one year at a cost of \$129,010 (salaries and benefits for two officers).

A motion was made by Mr. Austin and seconded by Mr. Lewis to approve Chief Scott to pursue application of the COPS grant.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, asked how many police officers per 1,000 does Claremont have versus other communities, and how does Claremont compare.

Chief Scott said the national average is two officers per 1,000 and Claremont with 13,000 people should have 26 officers. With the COPS Grant that will bring their numbers to 24. Claremont's crime statistics are not an anomaly versus other communities.

Mr. Austin said in answer to Mr. Folta's question that in 2002 he had asked the City Manager to do that study and at that time, we were "in the ballpark."

Mr. Batchelder supported applying for the grant. He had worked in corrections for five years. He sees the additional two officers as offering the police the opportunity to be proactive versus reactive.

Mr. Picard will support applying for this grant because 22 officers is a dangerous level for the Police Department to be at.

Roll Call Vote: Motion carried 7-1 with Mr. LaCasse voting no, because he doesn't believe in voting for grants that have commitments at the end of them.

Change Council Rule #22, Order of Business – Five Minutes

Ms. Messier asked about the procedure for making a rule change. (City Solicitor Jane Taylor was not in attendance.)

A motion was made by Mr. Picard and seconded by Ms. Messier to table Change Council Rule #22, Order of Business – Five Minutes to the June Council meeting.

Roll Call Vote: Motion carried 8-0.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Ms. Walter started talking about the 2007 audit when **Mr. Picard made a motion to table this discussion until he had all the reports in front of him.** Ms. Walter said this was just her report and no action would be required from the Council. In 2006 AICPA (American Institute of Certified Public Accountants) put out new guidelines, SAS (Statements of Auditing Standards) 12, for auditors to report control weaknesses in financial reporting. The City will have ongoing changes to document those procedures. The audit firm will assess different areas each year. Council will be updated with policies and procedures going forward. She was pleased with the new auditors and audit. The Management Letter given to the Council addressed the points to tighten up or to document. She handed out the corrective action plan for those audit issues. She also handed out three policy issues that will be discussed at the May or June meeting which the Council will be asked to adopt. All but one of the policies are currently in practice now.

Ms. Walter said a film company is interested in Claremont or New York. She had no details on the movie company. She recently toured the new hospital facilities and said they are amazing.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND DIRECTIVES

Mr. Austin had an issue with people on Prospect Street parking on the left side which he understands to be No Parking. There are no signs or markings to indicate No Parking. It is a safety hazard and he asked for markings or that a sign be put up. Chief Scott asked to have it added to the agenda for the next Traffic Advisory Committee meeting.

Mr. Picard said in November/December he had asked for a meeting with Nancy Merrill about economic development in the City. Mayor Cutts asked Ms. Walter to share that request with the City Manager.

Mr. LaCasse said he had asked a couple of months ago about road signs and about the elimination of the road between Crescent and Water Streets (it is now a sidewalk). Mayor Cutts clarified that Mr. LaCasse was looking for the policy for changing direction/flow of traffic in reference to a No Thru Traffic sign that had been posted. Mayor Cutts asked Ms. Walter to share that request with the City Manager. Mr. LaCasse said of the street elimination that City Attorney Jane Taylor was looking into it. Mr. Raymond suggested it was part of the Mill Project plan. Mr. LaCasse said he could not find where that street had been eliminated; it needs to be a function of the Council. Ms. Walter said she will check with the City Solicitor.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Master Plan Committee

None

CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL

None

Mr. LaCasse asked, in reference to the Planning Board appointments, if Mayor Cutts had a resume for Mr. Ferraro. Mayor Cutts said she did and she would be asking a couple questions about the last page. As soon as she has made her decisions, she will share them with the Council. Mr. LaCasse asked to see a copy of the resume.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:30 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Raymond and seconded by Mr. Picard to adjourn.

Motion carried 8-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council