

The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Wednesday, October 3, 2012, in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

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

Members of the Council present were:

At-Large Councilor Keith Raymond
Ward I Councilor Victor Bergeron
Ward III Councilor Nicholas Koloski
Assistant Mayor Andrew Austin
Mayor James Neilsen, IV
At-Large Councilor Christopher Irish
Ward II Councilor Roger Formidoni
At-Large Councilor Kyle Messier
At-Large Councilor Thomas Burnham

Also present were:

Guy Santagate, City Manager
Jane Taylor, City Solicitor

NEW BUSINESS

Discuss CIP and Its Financial Implications

Mary Walter, Finance Director, showed a PowerPoint presentation about the impact the CIP (Capital Improvements Program) will have on the budget. She highlighted new items in the CIP. The directors submitted project requests to the Capital Improvements Planning Committee (CIPC) which was made up of Planning and Development Director Nancy Merrill, Ms. Walter, City Planner Tracey Hutton and Chairman of the Planning Board Peter Guillette.

- CIP Items Currently Funded Each Year in the Budget as “Pay as You Go” Capital (not cumulative)
- Impact on City Tax Rate of New CIP Debt (these are new items not currently funded on “Pay as You Go”)
- Total CIP Debt Each Year Estimated on Tax Rate (not cumulative)
- Percentage of Tax Dollars to be Spent by Function not Including Bond Payments
- Where the Money Will be Spent in the CIP Being Presented (includes bonds – present & future)
 - Bonds take up the largest percentage because we recently took out a large bond
- What Percentage of Your Property Tax Bill Goes Where - 2012 estimated, based on average assessed home value of \$150,000
- Amount of tax dollars per thousand going toward debt payments

We've reduced the City's tax rate burden going toward debt repayment 28% from 2000 levels.

Mayor Neilsen asked if the non-cumulative tax rate includes lease payments. Ms. Walter said the leases are included in the CIP and whatever is approved in 2013 will be included in the budget. The CIP is used when we go for grants and by businesses when they are considering locating in Claremont. Ms. Walter said the new items in the CIP is projected to add 28 cents on the tax rate.

Mr. Austin asked for a comparison to last year. Ms. Walter said every year is different and last year she believed it was 37 cents on the tax rate. Mr. Austin asked how the amount is set. Ms. Walter said the CIPC came up with the priorities based on the rating system and then she balances the needs with the priorities in order to flatten out the increases.

Mr. Bergeron asked about the total cost this year. Ms. Walter said the total for 2013 is \$2.243 million and the total for all six years is \$12,684,395.

Mayor Neilsen appreciated the CIP as it shows what is coming in the future. He noted the last couple of times there have been major paving, we have taken out bonds, but we are paying down debt and paying less interest on the debt now than 10 years ago.

Ms. Walter noted some items are requests without funding plans (i.e. we know the Library needs more space, but we can't connect to the conference center next door because it is not handicap accessible).

Mr. Santagate said the purpose for tonight is information only. Council doesn't have role in the CIP as such, but will see it in the budget and then Council will decide what it wants to fund. He gave credit to the committee and department heads for doing all the detailed work for this. His objective is to pay down debt, build fund balance, invest in infrastructure and keep the tax rate at an acceptable level. In general, we have met those goals. Most of the bonds in the general fund area will be paid off in 10 years. This is only one piece of the financial plan and provides an outline of goals over 5 years.

Mr. Raymond said the key to keeping taxes down is economic development and this plan is a great tool to work on the City's infrastructure. Ms. Walter said there are businesses that look at this before locating their business here.

Mayor Neilsen talked about the success that was achieved at the Sullivan County Complex when they put a CIP in place. He said he, Mr. Santagate, School Board Chair Richard Seaman and School Superintendent Middleton McGoodwin met recently and that the school wants to have a CIP.

Ms. Messier talked about the difference between the department ranking and the CIPC ranking. Ms. Walter said the Planning Board changed some of the CIPC rankings. Mayor Neilsen said the Planning Board changed the rankings of some that fit in with others, although none were

lowered. Ms. Merrill said from the Tumble Inn to the bridge was in the CIP and there was a section down below, so the Planning Board put in the corner (between Esersky's and Tractor Supply. The CIPC criteria was first based on public safety and health

Councilors agreed the City made a great plan.

Police Chief Alex Scott pointed out that some items on the 2012 list may come off because grant funding was received by the City.

Council Goal Setting for 2013

Mr. Austin

- Create a positive message for Claremont such as Main Street's bumper sticker "Yes! Claremont!"

Mr. Koloski

- Increase the tax base and attract business
- Improve customer service
- Improve the Downtown TIFD (Tax Incremental Finance District)
- Improve the housing stock we currently have through proper code enforcement (he understands staffing issues).
- Form subcommittee to look into the "seven steps" of the City departments, City entrances, review website, study customer service and review permitting processes
 - Ask businesses/merchants what their experience was
- Image
 - Banner "Welcome to our Community, Claremontnh.com"
- Planning is doing a lot with economic development, Council could probably help

Mr. Burnham

- Get rid of City properties that we don't need
 - Offer them for sale to abutters
- The City should not pay the utility expenses for non-profits that occupy City buildings
- Make Claremont a friendly place for people to come in and build
- Market the City to those outside the state.

Ms. Messier

- Agreed with Mr. Koloski
- Call the downtown, the City Center.
- Meet with state Representatives and Senator to work on legislation that will help us
- Have a separate meeting at the beginning of each two-year term to establish protocol and training for Councilors to include rules and responsibilities, going over the Charter, Council Rules, and roles of Mayor and Assistant Mayor, etc.

Mr. Formidoni

- More economic development
- More businesses in town

Mr. Bergeron

- Continue to move the City forward
 - Maintain existing infrastructure
 - Must take into consideration our property tax
 - Communicate with and educate our citizens about what is good about Claremont using City's website, public television, newspaper and e-Ticker
 - Continue to implement strategies that strengthen the financial condition of the City
 - Complete an efficiency audit of all departments by an outside company.

Mr. Raymond

- Work closer with the school board on their CIP. Mayor Neilsen said he and Mr. Santagate are working on that.

Mayor Neilsen

- Retailers are always changing displays, maybe we could do something citywide (i.e. banners)
- Check the viability of using the armory for Police and Fire versus making the costly upgrades to each department that is currently on the CIP

Mr. Burnham agreed with Mr. Bergeron's request for an efficiency audit to evaluate departments. Mayor Neilsen said it is a costly endeavor.

Ms. Messier would like to meet with the State Reps and Senator to work on legislation.

Mayor Neilsen will try to meet with Mr. Santagate to discuss these goals and timeframe.

Discuss City Manager's Evaluation Form

Councilors discussed the evaluation form. They agreed to hold a separate non-public meeting to go over the City Manager's evaluation on Tuesday, October 23, 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Burnham noted he would not be at the October 10th Council meeting.

Mayor Neilsen said he and Mr. Santagate will talk to the school about meeting on Wednesday, October 24. Mayor Neilsen said after the Council is done with the evaluation, it will be presented to Mr. Santagate and if he wants to meet with the Council, he can.

Mr. Austin noted that in the past it was up to Councilors whether or not they wanted to submit their personal notes to the City Manager. Mayor Neilsen said then it would be up to Mr. Santagate to decide whether to seal or unseal his evaluation.

CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL

None

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

None

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:40 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Raymond and seconded by Mr. Burnham to adjourn.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council