

The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Wednesday, April 22, 2015, 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 Carolyn Towle
Ward III Councilor Nicholas Koloski
Assistant Mayor Victor Bergeron
Mayor James Neilsen, IV
At-Large Councilor James Reed
Ward II Councilor Charlene Lovett
At-Large Councilor Kyle Messier

Absent:

At-Large Councilor John Simonds (excused)

Also present were:

Guy Santagate, City Manager
Jane Taylor, City Solicitor

CITIZEN'S FORUM

Ray Gagnon, Scott Magnuson, members of the Amtrak Ad Hoc Committee (AAHC), introduced themselves. Mr. Gagnon said the goal of the Committee is to get Claremont chosen as a stop on the Boston to Montreal high speed rail. Amtrak is piloting a program using the Vermonter line to transport bicycles. There will be a Rail/Bike Tour event on July 25 with three separate tours. Each tour will have a maximum of 50 participants.

Mr. Magnuson said this will help promote Claremont as an outdoor recreation destination site and will help provide Amtrak a venue to highlight itself as a transportation choice and to showcase its ability to transport bicycles and riders; this will help generate commercial opportunities for local businesses. Funds raised will be divided by the Amtrak Ad Hoc Committee and the Parks and Recreation Department. The AAHC will use the funds to enhance the Amtrak junction area and the train stop platform. He said Parks and Recreation will use the funds to help refurbish the mountain bike trails in Moody Park. AAHC is reaching out to cyclists in New England and the Mid-Atlantic States. Partners are City of Claremont, Claremont Cycle Depot, Amtrak, Wheelock Travel and Common Man Inn. City costs will be reimbursed from the proceeds.

Scott Magnuson, Ward 1, said to celebrate its 30th anniversary, the Off Broad Street Players will perform a 30-Year Revue on May 8 and 9, 7 p.m. in the Claremont Opera House.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, talked about an e-mail he received from the NH Center for Public Policy Studies. He talked about Claremont's tax burden and a new report they released about NH's finances. NH is aging which will produce additional burdens on NH's finances.

John Cloutier, Ward 1, strongly urged the Council to endorse having a pumpkin festival in Claremont. He said it will bring visitors to downtown.

Michael Charest, Ward 1, urged Claremont to bring a pumpkin festival here. He said Laconia will take over the Annual Pumpkin Festival and Let It Shine! will partner with them. Let It Shine! will work with Claremont if the City chooses to host a pumpkin festival. He hopes to get this on the next Council agenda.

Joe Osgood, Ward 2 resident and member of the Transfer Station Ad Hoc Committee (TSAHC), said that the TSAHC was confused about the Transfer Station budget, so the Committee made a motion:

“Motion made by Joe second by Charlene to have the Transfer Station Ad Hoc Committee recommend to the Council that they require the City Manager and a representative from DPW attend Transfer Station Ad Hoc committee meetings until finances pertaining to the transfer station are clearly defined for all concerned parties and to have a DPW representative available to the Transfer Station Ad Hoc committee to provide information as required.”

Ms. Messier read the City's Earth Day clean up notice that was in the newspaper. Public Works will pick up bags on April 27th.

On behalf of the Council, Mayor Neilsen presented Council Clerk Dorée Russell with flowers for Administrative Professionals Day.

OLD BUSINESS

Department Update - Fire

This will be rescheduled to another time.

A motion was made by Ms. Lovett and seconded by Mr. Bergeron to suspend the Council Rules to discuss the Transfer Station Ad Hoc Committee's motion as read by Mr. Osgood during Citizen's Forum.

Roll call vote: motion carried 7-1 with Ms. Messier voting no.

There was discussion about the motion and who can be required to attend. Ms. Taylor said according to the City Charter, Council can require the City Manager to meet with the TSAHC, but cannot require a City employee to do anything. Council can recommend an employee attend, but can't require. The motion is not enforceable as written.

A motion was made by Mr. Bergeron and seconded by Mr. Reed to require the City Manager and recommend a representative from Public Works attend the Transfer Station Ad Hoc Committee meetings until finances pertaining to the Transfer Station are clearly defined for all concerned parties and to recommend to have a Public Works representative available to the Transfer Station Ad Hoc Committee to provide information as required.

Mr. Koloski asked for clarification about TSAHC members going directly to the Department. Ms. Taylor said this is a Council committee and its members should go through the Mayor and City Manager.

Mayor Neilsen said the request should go through the City Manager.

Joe Osgood, Ward 2 resident and member of the Transfer Station Ad Hoc Committee, said after the finances are worked out, they need to have a Public Works representative at their meetings for guidance.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, suggested that the finance director might be included.

NEW BUSINESS

Citizens Group Presentation

Michael Charest, Ward 1, introduced himself and Nichole Sorenson, Claremont Citizen's Group (CCG) members, and he talked about what the group has done since July. The Group's four goals are: communication, beautification, enforcement of ordinances, and signage and parking. The Group started in July with 26 people and now has 389 members. There are offshoots of the group that are cleaning the trails and downtown. In reference to Earth Day, he asked people to get out to clean their own neighborhood. The Group has done a lot of work on Christmas decorations. People have donated decorations for next year. He said now there are permanent lights on the downtown poles.

Mr. Charest showed a PowerPoint presentation Summary, including the following issues.

- Enforcement of Ordinances and Security Patrols
- Various beautification projects, especially in the area of Pleasant Street and Opera House Square
- Citizens Group is in the process of forming a 501(c)3
- claremontcitizensgroup@outlook.com

Ms. Sorenson, Ward 3, continued with the PowerPoint presentation.

- Communication Survey Results
- 529 respondents indicating many receive information through either Facebook or e-mail
- Interest is in Council Meetings, Planning & Development Meetings, Parks & Recreation, Public Works, Department of Safety, and Claremont Public Schools
- More information is needed on City Council, Public Works, Budget, Schools, Recreation, Economic Development, and Changes in Taxes

- There is a high awareness of the City's website, but many respondents felt it was difficult to navigate
- There is support for a City Facebook page and a Public Information Officer (PIO)

The Citizen's Group is planning a clean-up day on May 3, 9 am, Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center; a pumpkin festival, and downtown holiday decorations.

Mr. Charest thinks the City and school should work together on a PIO. He is in favor of a Facebook presence. He talked about getting the pumpkin festival in Claremont.

Mayor Neilsen said the United Methodist Action Reach-out by Youth (U.M. ARMY) will be in Claremont in July. There will be a group of about 70 youths that will do projects such as painting, building handicap ramps, clean up, etc. Anyone who is interested should contact Clay Beattie at cbeattie@us.ibm.com, 1-845-464-0507, or sandramcassidy@gmail.com. He said the group has asked that the community show its support by wearing a certain color each day. The group will advertise that information. Mr. Santagate said it may be premature, but they are looking at coordinating with other nonprofit organizations and then seeing what the City can offer to help this group.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3 resident and member of the Claremont Citizen's Group, talked about sharing a PIO between the City and the school. He talked about paying for it by redirecting funds from other places in the budget.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND DIRECTIVES

Ms. Messier would like to have a discussion about the pumpkin festival. Mayor Neilsen said it will be on the May 13 agenda. Ms. Messier asked about the cars parking on the front lawn on Prospect Street. Mr. Santagate talked to Police Chief Alex Scott today. Ms. Messier said she had received calls about cars parking over the curb on Hanover and Barnes Streets.

Ms. Lovett said the Farmers Market will start May 21. Mayor Neilsen asked her to make an announcement under Mayors Notes. Ms. Lovett said the Amtrak Ad Hoc Committee is coordinating with the City Manager, Mayor Neilsen and others as a result of someone from Congresswoman Kuster's staff reaching out to Claremont about the City's plans for the train stop. She will be coming to Claremont on May 8th. There will be a tour and a roundtable discussion.

Mr. Bergeron confirmed Council meetings will be May 7, 14, 21, 28, and a regular meeting on May 13. All meetings will start at 6:30 p.m. Mayor Neilsen said there won't be a meeting on the fourth Wednesday in May. He noted that on the May 7th budget agenda, each agenda item has a public hearing.

Ms. Taylor said that the budget meeting on May 28th is the statutorily required public hearing for the budget.

Mr. Bergeron asked when the budget items are open for public comment, that the speakers speak only about that item. He asked about the ATV trail update. Ms. Taylor said she hopes to have it at the May meeting.

Mr. Koloski asked about reaching out to the property owner(s) of the burned out property on Pearl Street as it is not properly secured. He asked about the clean-up timeline for Joey's on the River. Mr. Santagate said he will talk to Fire Chief Bergeron about that. Mr. Koloski would like to have a discussion about the pumpkin festival. The Claremont 250th Anniversary Committee met with Lee Stevens about landscaping at the Sculpture. The Sculpture has been vandalized. The cameras are not sufficient to prevent vandalism. All the LED lights were torn out of the Sculpture. He's noticing more vandalism and graffiti at the Visitors Center Green.

Ms. Towle asked for an update on the JSL (Junior Sports League). She asked for an update on the replacement of the sign in front of City Hall. Ms. Taylor said the sign is currently being fabricated and will be installed when completed. She said Planning and Development Director Nancy Merrill is putting together a request for proposal to see if someone is willing to buy the JSL.

Mr. Raymond said the demolition has started at the property by LaValley's.

Mr. Bergeron said Mr. Hunter has been seen at his former property. Ms. Taylor said whoever sees him there should report it to the Police Department.

Mr. Koloski asked if it would be possible to allow the Claremont Citizens Group access to the pavers for repair of the downtown sidewalk. Ms. Taylor said the City will work with Parks and Recreation Director Mark Brislin.

Ms. Messier talked about the gas prices; Claremont is 20 cents higher than the surrounding area.

Mr. Reed asked about the trophies and photos in the GCC (Goodwin Community Center). Ms. Taylor thinks many may have been removed. The City will check with Mr. Brislin.

Ms. Lovett said she received a call yesterday suggesting the bleachers at the Zotto Gym could be refurbished at a low cost and then placed at the Claremont Middle School.

Mayor Neilsen said there will be a plaque dedication at Barnes Park tomorrow, 4 p.m., for Ralph Silva.

Mayor Neilsen suggested that if there was a collapsed water or sewer line in the City's right-of-way, that the repair could be contracted out and then charged to the water/sewer enterprise funds. This might be a way to accomplish the work without hiring additional staff.

Mr. Bergeron said on his street that properties on only one side are connected to the sewer line and he doesn't think that is fair. Mayor Neilsen thinks we need to look at who pays for repairs of the service line running under the road that the property owner has no control over. Mayor Neilsen said this may be on the agenda in June or July.

Mr. Koloski asked when the Zotto Gym is put up for sale to open it up so that people can tour through it and maybe spark some interest. He said he knows there is a lot of stuff still in the building.

Ms. Taylor said Ms. Merrill is putting together requests for proposals for the JSL building and the GCC (Goodwin Community Center) buildings. There is no reason Council can't take a look around. Council will make the decision on any sale.

Ms. Lovett asked if there has been an inventory done. Ms. Taylor will have to check with Mr. Brislin.

Mayor Neilsen asked to schedule a tour for the Council in June to go through the GCC buildings.

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

A motion was made by Ms. Messier and seconded by Mr. Bergeron to go into the Non-Public Session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3,II(a) – Personnel and to invite Mr. Santagate into the session.

Roll call vote: motion carried 8-0.

A motion was made by Mr. Raymond and seconded by Mr. Koloski to seal the minutes because the non-public session involves a confidential personnel matter, such minutes to remain sealed unless and until the information discussed is disclosed by the individual employee.

Roll call vote: motion carried 8-0.

A motion was made by Ms. Messier and seconded by Ms. Towle to exit the Non-Public Session.

Roll call vote: motion carried 8-0.

ADJOURNMENT

At 10:06 p.m., a motion was made by Ms. Messier and seconded by Mr. Raymond to adjourn.

Voice vote: motion carried 8-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council