

The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Thursday, June 26, 2014, 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
At-Large Councilor John Simonds

Also present were:

Guy Santagate, City Manager

Mr. Koloski requested a moment of silence for Erwin Caplan, former member of the Historic District Commission and the Claremont Planning Board (for 24 years), who passed away yesterday.

At 6:32 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Bergeron and seconded by Mr. Reed to recess to go into Consultation with Legal Counsel.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

At 7:09 p.m., the Council meeting resumed.

CITIZEN'S FORUM

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, said that he didn't understand whether tonight was about discussing goals for the Council, goals for the City Manager or goals for the City.

Chuck Allen, Ward 3 resident and Arrowhead Recreation Club (ARC) member, thanked Councilors for touring Arrowhead. He talked about the Arrowhead Discussion that is on the July 9th Council agenda. He said that ARC is working on a PowerPoint presentation and when it is ready, they would like to do a 10-15 minute presentation.

NEW BUSINESS

CDBG Public Facility Grant Application

The City proposes to submit an application for funding titled Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Public Facility Grant for up to \$500,000 from its application authority for 2014 to the NH Community Development Finance Authority for the water distribution improvements at Pleasant Valley Estates Cooperative on Paddy Hollow Road.

- 1) Application for – Public Hearing
- 2) Review and Adopt or Re-adopt City’s Housing and Community Development Plan – Public Hearing
- 3) Review and Adopt or Re-adopt City’s Residential Anti-Displacement Plan – Public Hearing

Withdrawn

Mayor Neilsen stated that Council is instructing/directing Mr. Santagate to contact the appropriate people within the City to do a life safety and building code check of the JSL (Junior Sports League) building and to report the findings to the Council. If necessary, the premises are to be secured until determined to be otherwise. Action shall be taken as quickly as possible.

Strategic Plan and City’s Goals & Objectives

Police Chief Alex Scott presented the following Strategic Plan to the Council:

STRATEGIC PLANNING – June 26, 2014

MISSION STATEMENT

The City of Claremont will protect and promote the public health, welfare and safety of the community and its citizens, while protecting and preserving their rights and interests.

The City of Claremont will continue to take all actions within its power, as authorized by the State of New Hampshire, to protect the health and safety of its citizens and will enforce, to the fullest extent permitted, all laws and regulations over which it has jurisdiction on an equal basis, without exception.

(See Part II, Chpt. 2, Art. I, Sec. 2-1 –Policy Statement of the City Code)

City of Claremont

Core Values

Competence:

We believe in the power of knowledge which enables us to perform our duties in an accurate manner. We strive to provide our employees, volunteers, and commission members with proper training and information to give them the required knowledge and information to effectively and accurately perform their respective duties.

Integrity:

We believe that the only acceptable way to treat one another is in an ethical and honest fashion: when faced with tough decisions, we will endeavor to do what is right.

Environment:

We are concerned about our natural, historic, economic, and aesthetic resources and work to preserve and enhance them for future generations.

The Golden Rule:

We strive to treat our employees, volunteers and commission members as they want to be treated, in return, we expect them to treat others as they would want to be treated. We expect honesty, kindness, respect to others, and trustworthiness.

Roles and Responsibilities

City Council:

The entire administration of all fiscal, prudential and municipal affairs of the City of Claremont shall be vested in the City Council. (see Part I – Charter – Article III. – Sec. 16. – The Council.) This specifically includes:

1. The Mayor shall preside at meetings of the council and may speak and vote in such meetings. The Mayor shall be recognized as the head of the city for all ceremonial purposes. (Part I, Art. III, Sec. 17);
2. The council shall establish its own rules. (Part I, Art. III, Sec. 21);
3. The council is responsible for passing all municipal ordinances. (Part I, Art. III, Sec. 22);
4. The council is responsible for fixing a scale of salaries to be paid to all officials and agents of the city. (Part I., Art. III., Sec. 24);
5. The council is responsible for appointing the City Manager. (Part I, Art. III, Sec. 26);

The City Council shall not do the following:

1. Neither the council nor any of its members shall direct or request the appointment of any person to office or employment, or his removal therefrom.
2. Neither the council nor any member thereof shall give orders to any of the administrative officers either publicly or privately. (Part I, Art. III, Sec. 29).

City Manager:

The City Manager is the chief executive and administrative officer of the city government, and shall carry out the policies laid down by the city council. (See Part I, Art. III, Sec. 30)

The City Manager shall keep the council informed of the conditions and needs of the city. (See Part I, Art. III, Sec. 30)

The City Manager shall have the right to take part in the discussion of all matters coming before the council but not the right to vote. (See Part I, Art. III, Sec. 30)

The City Manager shall have the power to appoint and remove all officers and employees in the administrative service of the city. (See Part I, Art. III, Sec. 31)

**City of Claremont
Strategic Priorities**

I. Fiscal Responsibility:

1. Continue establishing clear operating procedures regarding economic development which will position the City to expand its tax base and increase job opportunities with particularly emphasis on those that increase the city's total valuation and median household income.
2. Continue to collaborate with SAU6, Granit State College and River Valley Community College as effective economic development partners.
3. Continue to implement strategies that will strengthen the financial condition of the City of Claremont. This includes:
 - a. Ensure that the budget as approved by the City Council is properly managed and not overspent.
 - b. Continue to strive for favorable yearly independent audits made by certified public accountants experienced in municipal accounting. (See Part I, Art. III, Sec. 47)

- c. Ensure future budget proposals focus on fiscal responsibility while maintaining a focus on sufficient funding to meet policies established by the City Council.
4. Maintain a citywide Capital Improvement Plan that focuses on improving the infrastructure and protecting the capital assets of the City of Claremont.
5. Continually strive to improve communication and coordination between City Departments and other government and community agencies to provide efficient and cost effective services.
6. Continually strive to establish and/or refine operating procedures for each department that will improve efficiencies.

II. Customer Service:

1. Our councilors, commissioners, volunteers and employees truly communicate the spirit of the City of Claremont. As a result, we will strive to ensure that we serve the public and one another by being respectful, patient, courteous, and understanding.
2. A key to effective customer service is good communication. As a result, we will work to improve communication with one another and the public through the use of available communication techniques as well as exploring the use of new technology to expand available communication techniques.
3. First impressions count, especially from an economic development perspective. As a result we will endeavor to maintain a high level of professionalism and an inviting presence. This includes ensuring that our municipal buildings and facilities are welcoming and that our volunteers and employees are courteous, respectful and helpful.
4. Deliver the best possible City Services to include waste service/recycling to all residents and businesses at the lowest possible costs and highest possible customer satisfaction.

III. Employee Development:

1. Our employees are our most valuable asset. As a result we aim to provide a supportive, healthy and fair work environment that encourages the professional growth of our employees through training, advancement opportunities and a team approach to overall success.

2. Prolonged collective bargaining is counterproductive to the above goal so we continue to work to be prepared for the challenges to come, especially as they relate to grappling with the costs associated with the provisions of the Affordable Care Act and overall health care costs. Additionally, cost downshifting from the State and Federal governments continues to add to our fiscal challenges. As a result of our commitment to our employees, as well as our commitment to the tax payers, we will continually focus on preparations for the next round of collective bargaining scheduled to begin in 2016.
3. Effective organizational stability and growth includes succession development. Employees should be provided with opportunities for professional growth and advancement within the organization to allow for effective and efficient replacement of positions vacated by advancing employees. **This includes a focus on retaining and/or hiring key personnel to maintain a professional management team.**

IV. Public Health, Safety and Welfare:

The primary responsibility of the City of Claremont is to protect and promote the public health, welfare and safety of the community and its citizens, and to protect and preserve their rights and interests. As a result, for 2014 the following specific goals and objectives have been identified as being important for the City Manger and/or the requisite City Department:

1. Continued successful operation and growth of the Claremont Savings Bank Community Center. This specifically includes maintaining and/or increasing the current cost recovery of sixty cents per dollar.
2. Continued review of city owned property to assist in putting it to its best use and/or marketing it for sale.
3. Continue to use available resources to tackle needed road and infrastructure improvements.
4. Continue to apply for grant opportunities to enhance police and fire protection capabilities in the city as well as improving emergency communications.
5. Continue with successful planning and development studies such as Washington Street Corridor Study, City Center Project, and zoning review efforts to encourage safe and effective future economic development in the city.
6. Continue to increase volunteerism to fully and effectively staff various city commissions and boards with a focus on greater public participation in City of Claremont governance.

The overriding objective is to improve the image of the City by achieving documented accomplishments which will be recognized as professional and sustainable.

Councilors were discussing the Mission Statement and Chief Scott explained it came directly from the City Code. He envisions Council will look at this document every January. The Mission Statement is who we are. Core Values are important for identifying what we stand for and that is driven by the Council. Roles & Responsibilities are from the City Code. Strategic Priorities are what Council is working on. The intent is for this to be a guide to fall back on during decision processes.

A motion was made by Mr. Raymond and seconded by Mr. Simonds to adopt the STRATEGIC PLANNING – June 26, 2014 document presented by Chief Scott.

Chief Scott encouraged Council to review this document every January so it retains its value.

Mr. Raymond asked to add to the motion: that it will be annually reviewed by the City Council. Mr. Simonds seconded the addition.

A motion was made by Mr. Raymond and seconded by Mr. Simonds to adopt the STRATEGIC PLANNING – June 26, 2014 document presented by Chief Scott and that it will be annually reviewed by the City Council.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0

Future Workshop Meeting Agenda Items

Ms. Messier asked instead of calling them workshops, if Council would call them second meetings. She said Allen Damren wrote a Letter to the Editor requesting, economic development and where the community is, to be placed on the Council agenda. She would like second meetings to include informational discussions so citizens understand what's going on.

In addition to economic development, Mayor Neilsen would like an update of infrastructure improvements (i.e. North and Main and other projects).

Ms. Lovett talked about engaging our Delegation and Legislative representatives to improve or change our current situation.

Ms. Towle would like to invite downtown business people to be involved in a second meeting to tell the Council what is important to them.

Mr. Bergeron would like to enhance the airport to make it more viable.

Mr. Raymond would like to have a different department head each month give a report instead of just the Community Center. Councilors would like to have an infrastructure update from Public

Works Director Bruce Temple and they would like it to occur at a second meeting, so there will be more time for back and forth conversation.

Ms. Lovett said after the fiscal year close-out, she would like to review the final numbers. She suggested using revenue in the General Fund toward roads.

Mr. Koloski would like to talk about: a Charlestown Road Tax Increment Finance District; Zotto Gym; sidewalk estimates for downtown, GCC skating rink from Kimball Union Academy status (stored on Main St.).

Ms. Lovett would like a cost analysis of the cemetery.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, talked about Council questioning whether or not economic development was being done as effectively as possible. He talked about a citizen committee on innovation, transparency and efficiency.

Mr. Koloski talked about the state giving a film development presentation to the Council. Mayor Neilsen asked Mr. Koloski to reach out to them to see when would be convenient for them to come to a meeting. Mr. Koloski asked if neighboring community selectboards could be invited to the meeting. Mayor Neilsen said that would be perfect for a second meeting.

There was a discussion about marketing the region, not just Claremont. Ms. Messier likes the idea of regionalizing. This may be an entry point for regional legislation.

Ms. Lovett talked about the benefit of meeting with the County Delegation.

Mr. Simonds would like the Delegation from Claremont to come to talk to Council about what is happening in Concord.

Ms. Messier asked Ms. Lovett to help with the timing of requests to the Delegation and with regional topics.

Mayor Neilsen talked about the new Cumberland Farms buildings and that people are investing money into Claremont.

Mr. Santagate said with the improvements at Dunkin Donuts on Washington Street, the traffic issue will be addressed.

Ms. Messier asked about having an airport presentation. She said Councilors need to know what boards and committees there are.

Ms. Lovett talked about transportation: Amtrak, airport and in-city transit and that they are not being utilized as much as they can be. When she did a search for the airport, Claremont didn't come up, but Newport did.

Mr. Santagate said 98 cents of every dollar that is spent at the airport is federal money.

Mayor Neilsen asked about hearing from different business areas (i.e. River Road, Plains Road, Washington Street, etc.) and whether they have suggestions on how to increase activity in the industrial park, or how to help the business corridor along Washington Street.

Ms. Lovett asked how often ordinances are reviewed/updated. Ms. Messier would like to review ordinances that deal with health and safety.

Mr. Koloski wanted an update on the Zotto Gym. Mr. Santagate said first there has to be an appraisal done before we can do anything.

Mayor Neilsen would like airport development and downtown merchants to be a priority.

Ms. Lovett would like a budget close-out report in October.

Ms. Messier would like an economic development discussion.

Second Meeting Schedule

July 23: Nancy Merrill will give an economic development update; discussion of what Council can do to help with the current climate and barriers for downtown merchants.

August 20: Airport development and Amtrak

September 24: Movie group discussion and invite outlying communities (use the Opera House, if more space is needed). Mr. Koloski will work with the movie group.

October 22: Budget close out

Ms. Messier asked to have the regular Council meetings be more business oriented and to end around 10 p.m. and if necessary, move some items to the next meeting in order to stay on time. Mayor Neilsen asked Councilors for their support to not open everything to public comment. He asked Councilors to help monitor each other and to not repeat.

At 8:45 p.m. Ms. Lovett was excused to close Broad Street Park (Farmers' Market).

Mr. Reed asked when the repair will be done on the church. Mr. Santagate will get it.

Mr. Koloski asked if the City can look into the ice skating rink.

Ms. Messier asked if the church update can be included into the Council packet.

Mr. Bergeron asked for an update, in writing, on the outdoor pool in the next Council packet.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND DIRECTIVES

Ms. Messier asked to place the Arrowhead presentation on the next agenda.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, talked about retail expansion in Claremont which creates jobs, but not high paying jobs. It would be nice to get in something like Red River Computer.

There was discussion about the boards and committees that are already in the City. Councilors would like to learn more about what they do.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:59 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