

The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Wednesday, July 23, 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:

Mary Walter, Acting City Manager
Jane Taylor, City Solicitor

NON-PUBLIC PURSUANT TO RSA 91-A:3 II(d) – REAL ESTATE

A motion was made by Mr. Raymond and seconded by Ms. Towle to go into Non-Public Session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II(d) – Real Estate and to invite Planning and Development Director Nancy Merrill, Ms. Taylor, Ms. Walter and Council Clerk Dorée Russell into the session.

Roll call vote: motion carried 9-0.

A motion was made by Ms. Messier and seconded by Mr. Raymond to seal the minutes until the purpose for which the non-public meeting was held no longer exists.

Roll call vote: motion carried 9-0.

A motion was made by Mr. Bergeron and seconded by Mr. Simonds to exit the non-public session.

Roll call vote: motion carried 9-0.

At 7:06 p.m. Council returned to the public session.

CITIZEN'S FORUM

Neil Ward, Ward 1, State Representative candidate for Ward 1, talked about his candidacy and said that he had been a dentist for 40 years and this is his first foray into politics. He said he wants to provide a conservative voice for the public.

Chuck Allen, Ward 3 resident and Arrowhead Recreation Club (ARC) member, said ARC's presentation will be ready for August.

Mayor Neilsen talked about the Hunter property issue. He said he, Assistant Mayor Bergeron and City Manager Guy Santagate met with an investigator from the NH Municipal Investigators Association. There have been no commitments made yet.

NEW BUSINESS

Sale of City-Owned Property, Map 119-348

Nancy Merrill, Planning and Development Director, said TwinState MakerSpaces, Inc. (TM) was the only bidder for the Sawtooth Building Request for Proposal (RFP) that went out in May. They propose to make it a combination of artist studios, educational space, technical workshop space and entrepreneurial incubator. They are collaborating with River Valley Community College to use the space for workforce readiness programs, training and classes. TM will invest \$250,000 to \$350,000 for fit up. It is effectively a \$1 sale.

A motion was made by Ms. Messier and seconded by Ms. Towle to authorize the City Manager or his designees to take all such actions as may be required to negotiate and enter into a purchase and sale and redevelopment agreement with TwinState MakerSpaces, Inc. for redevelopment of a portion of City-owned land and improvements thereon, located at 44 Main Street and identified as Tax Map 119-348, commonly referred to as the "Sawtooth Building." Said Agreement to include provisions related to subdivision of the parcel, renovation of the existing building, including but not limited to installation of concrete floor and sub-slab venting system, if necessary, sale of such personal property previously acquired by the City for completion of NHDES approved Remedial Action Plan, other site improvements, and establishment of an agreement for Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT), as well as such additional provisions as may be appropriate.

Ms. Merrill said there will be 4-6 full-time employees.

Ms. Lovett asked about the sale process. Ms. Merrill stated the issue would come back to Council for final authorization of a sale of the building.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, is concerned that it cost over \$1 million to clean up that area and it is being sold for \$1. He thinks there should be a City Council committee involved in the negotiation for oversight.

Mayor Neilsen said TwinState MakerSpaces will do remediation to the property with an estimated retrofit of \$250,000-\$350,000.

Roll call vote: motion carried 9-0.

Amtrak Update

Ray Gagnon, Ward 3, said he serves as the Mayor's representative to the NH Rail Passenger Authority. Claremont is the only NH Amtrak stop in western NH and every community that has a stop has a seat on the Authority. He is a holdover from the prior mayor. He suggested the City may want to consider replacing him with professional staff because this winter one staff member, Zach Williams, Business and Development Coordinator, was in on a conference call where he heard about a public hearing where they would discuss the next high speed rail stop from Boston to Montreal. Amtrak has spent \$300 million upgrading the rail bed from White River Junction, Vermont, to the Connecticut border. Speeds will be 76 mph. The City attended the public hearing and we have contacted the Rail Authority who has written a letter stating that NH should be considered for a stop for the high speed train. NH Department of Transportation has also sent its recommendation that we be considered for a stop. If this is approved, it will be a boom to Claremont.

Mr. Williams said stakeholders ran modeling that included Claremont as a stop. Every model with local stops increases ridership. Mayor Neilsen asked about government grant money. Mr. Williams said rail is a transportation alternative and there may be grant money available for improvements such as parking, lighting and a kiosk.

It was noted that there are no amenities at the station and when people get off the train there, they seek assistance from nearby businesses. Mr. Williams said we work with Community Alliance Transportation Services for transport from the station.

Ms. Lovett suggested a taskforce be established to develop improvements for the station.

Mayor Neilsen set up an ad hoc committee (consisting of Ms. Lovett, Ms. Towle and Mr. Reed) to look into the Amtrak platform situation. Ms. Taylor reminded the committee it would have to post its meetings as public meetings and would be subject to RSA 91-A.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, was concerned about non-interference from Councilors to Staff members, so he suggested the Committee deliver its recommendation to the Council and the Council would direct Staff.

Building Code Discussion

Planning and Development Director Nancy Merrill showed a PowerPoint presentation giving general information on building codes which are followed by Claremont; why building codes are used (insurance companies will check to see if building codes were followed before they pay a claim); pictures showing signs and decks that had fallen over and/or caused damage; Building Codes are an integral part of economic development.

Ms. Merrill said they have advertised for another Code Enforcement Officer and hope to have a second person on board soon. There is a link to all building codes on the City's website.

Ms. Towle asked about the process for making a complaint. Ms. Merrill said it can be done online, at the City Manager's office and at the Planning and Development office.

Ledgewood Drainage

Bruce Temple, Public Works Director, talked about the July 4th storms and the culverts and drainage in the Ledgewood area. That development was built in the 1970s and 1980s. The drainage that was designed back then is not sufficient to handle the storms we are having now. After an intense storm last year, he asked McFarland Johnson to do a pre-engineering study on the Foisy Hill/Cat Hole drainage area and they found some culverts were undersized. After this year's storm, he asked McFarland Johnson to do a preliminary study of the Ledgewood development and in the Bible Hill area. Another location is Airport Hill whose drainage ends up in yards on Pawtucket, but he hasn't asked anyone to get involved in that one yet. He talked about problems with East Street and Tyler Brook and about the Tyler Street drainage study in 2007 that will cost about \$1.6 million to fix. We are expecting \$210,000 from FEMA and we will use that for part of Tyler Brook. Old Newport Road has issues. East Green Mountain Road – one side of the culvert was fixed by the State, but not the other side. Ledgewood drainage comes through Howe Motors to Charlestown Road. Charlestown Road is a \$5-6 million on-shelf project. He will encourage McFarland Johnson to make a presentation to Council when their report is done. There are a lot of deficiencies in the culverts and a lot of that has to do with funding. Claremont operates under a State of NH permit for storm water management and in his opinion it is only a matter of time before Claremont will have its own permit to discharge into the Sugar River. Last year Public Works started storm water catch basin cleaning and pipe cleaning programs. He talked about a future storm water enterprise fund for cleaning and testing the storm water system.

There was a discussion about the infrastructure in these areas. Mr. Temple said the history of repairs can indicate the risks. He talked about Tyler Brook going under a building and that needs to be fixed.

Mr. Koloski hopes the momentum for business keeps coming in and he talked about a Charlestown Road TIFD(Tax Increment Finance District).

Mr. Temple said if all the pipes were fixed in Ledgewood, it wouldn't solve the drainage problem because it would end up on Charlestown Road. He said the Charlestown Road infrastructure is not healthy and neither is Buena Vista. As you develop on Charlestown Road, there needs to be discussions about drainage and turning lanes (so as to not recreate traffic problems such as on Washington Street).

Ms. Lovett asked about unplugging the culverts on Ledgewood in the mean time. Mr. Temple said a workorder has been created for that.

Mr. Temple said Phase 1 paving would be done by next week. Phase 2 will be streets, storm water, curbs and sidewalks and he hopes to have a plan for that done before he leaves on August 8th. Public Works is trying to do pavement markings that will give more room on the other side of the fog line for bikes.

Energy Audit – 2011 Discussion

Mayor Neilsen said this came about because Ms. Lovett had asked for a copy of the energy audit. Councilors were sent a copy of the energy audit by email. He invited discussion.

Ms. Lovett said she had asked for the energy audit because she was doing work for the Opera House. For the future, she would like to know what recommendations have/haven't been done.

Ms. Towle noted some of the suggested changes for the Opera House were low cost and would yield big returns. The Opera House windows are single pane. She asked about funds for the Opera House. She would like an update on the changes.

Mayor Neilsen will communicate with Mr. Santagate to get updates from individual departments of what has been done.

Ms. Towle noted Arrowhead is not part of the energy audit.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, wanted to know how to get a copy of the energy audit and how does the public know what Council gets in between meetings.

Mayor Neilsen said maybe Council can discuss with the City Manager what documents should be posted on the City's website.

General Topics for Discussion

Ms. Walter said the roof repairs for the church will be done in a couple of weeks.

Mr. Raymond asked about clearing brush around the church. Ms. Walter said Peter Fennessy, Maintenance, is doing that.

Ms. Lovett talked about nuisance codes and some issues at Broad Street Parks during Farmers Market that is having a negative impact on vendors and customers. According to the Code, profanity is not permitted in the parks, but it is being used quite frequently during Farmers Market. She said we need to figure out how to educate the public and to enforce the Code. She stated this is not in the Code, but people in the Park during Farmers Market being half clothed is not appreciated by some vendors and customers. She also talked about what shouldn't be done to monuments or other objects in the Parks (according to the Code) such as not climbing on the Civil War Memorial. She asked how to enforce Codes that are on the books.

Ms. Towle invited Ms. Lovett to talk to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board about this issue. She complimented the Police Department for walking through the Farmers Market. She thinks that's important.

Mr. Koloski agreed with Ms. Lovett about this affecting community image. He talked about the Curfew that is in the Code and that we should either remove language for the whistle to be blown at 10:00 p.m. or educate the public about the curfew and enforce the ordinance.

Mr. Simonds said that profanity at the Farmers Market is considered disorderly conduct and should be brought to the attention of the police officer at the Market. Ms. Lovett said she had brought it up, but the officer(s) are not sure of the Code. She said her concern is to make the Market a financial success.

Mayor Neilsen asked to have a hard copy of the Code in Council Chambers for Councilors to use in Chambers and to sign out to take home.

Mayor Neilsen talked about having a meeting with the City Manager and the new Public Works Director to bring forth what Council wants to share. He talked about focusing on visual aspects of City gateways because that is what people see. Two and a half feet tall grass and weeds in front of the entrance signs sends the wrong message. Mr. Bergeron asked who is to keep the area around the signs clear. Ms. Walter believes they are in the City's right-of-way and are the City's responsibility.

Mr. Bergeron said in reference to the issues at Farmers Market that the City is changing demographically and that if you don't address it, it will be a problem.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND DIRECTIVES

Mayor Neilsen asked to add Amtrak update to the August 27th Council meeting to go along with Economic Development and Airport discussions.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:19 p.m., a motion was made by Ms. Messier and seconded by Mr. Simonds to adjourn.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council