

The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Wednesday, September 24, 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 (Late)
At-Large Councilor Kyle Messier
At-Large Councilor John Simonds

Also present were:

Guy Santagate, City Manager

CITIZEN'S FORUM

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, said at Saturday's event that he saw people smoking in the designated area at the Visitors Center Green and that it is savvy and smart for the City to allow smoking in a particular area instead of banning it completely. He said the school posts its union contracts on its website. He asked if the City could post its union contracts on the City's website.

Ms. Messier congratulated the Claremont 250th Anniversary Committee (Birthday in the Bricks) and the Kiwanians (beerfest) for two great events. It was a good community event put on by all volunteers.

Mayor Neilsen said he went to the installation of the River Valley Community College President, Dr. Alicia Harvey-Smith, and when he spoke with Valley Regional Hospital CEO Peter Wright, he heard comments about a sense of community and he heard questions about making the downtown event a yearly event.

Mr. Santagate read off the names of the members of the Claremont 250th Anniversary Committee: Cindy Landry, William Carpenter, Denise Liveston, William Binder, Melissa Richmond, Allison Zito and Nicholas Koloski. They did a tremendous job.

Mr. Koloski pointed out that without Parks and Recreation Director Mark Brislin's assistance, there was no way they could have done this. Mr. Koloski thanked Sunapee and Hanover Police Departments for use of their message boards.

Mr. Bergeron said the Kiwanis Club also thanked Mr. Brislin for all the work he did.

Mayor Neilsen thanked all the Police Officers that picked up extra detail duties for these events and he thanked the City officials who helped make it a success.

NEW BUSINESS

Motion to Apply for and Accept NH Dept. of Transportation-Transportation Alternative Program Grant

Kurt Beek, Project Manager, gave an overview of the NH Dept. of Transportation-Transportation Alternative Program Grant. The purpose is to promote non-motorized means of transportation (walking, biking, etc.). The minimum amount to request is \$200,000 and the maximum is \$800,000. There is an 80/20 match (Federal Highway Administration reimbursement is 80%). The project will include new sidewalk on East Street from Pleasant Street to Broad Street and also improvements to the Rail Trail that runs parallel to that stretch. Improvements to the Rail Trail will include replacing some culverts, improving some ditching, a new hardpack surface, improvements to parking area just off Pleasant Street, and will include some lighting at the parking lot, also improvements at the crossings at the Rail Trail on Broad Street and Chestnut Street. There will be a manually activated signal to stop motorized traffic. The estimate for the project is about \$600,000 and the City's share will be about \$120,000. The Conservation Commission supports this. The application is due this Friday.

Ms. Messier asked if the \$120,000 can be in-kind. Mr. Beek said it can be in-kind, but it is discouraged.

Mr. Bergeron asked if this will affect the ATV waiver. Mr. Beek said this falls outside the affected section.

Ms. Messier asked about the timeline. Mr. Beek said start to finish would be about three years.

A motion was made by Mr. Raymond and seconded by Ms. Towle to authorize the City Manager or his designees to undertake all actions and execute all documents as may be required to apply for New Hampshire DOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding for the purpose of the "Neighborhood Connectivity and Rail Trail Improvement Project" (the Project) for trail and safety improvements to the City's Rail Trail. Upon notice that the Project has been selected, the Council will entertain a resolution to raise and appropriate funds for the Project, of which 80 percent shall be reimbursed to the City from TAP funding.

Roll call vote: motion carried 8-0.

Movie Group Discussion

Mr. Koloski introduced Matt Newton, Director of the NH Film & Television Office. Mr. Newton showed a PowerPoint presentation describing what his office does. His office serves as an economic generator for New Hampshire by attracting and supporting film, television and related media industry projects, and coordinating government and business offices in support of a production. His office also supports New Hampshire's own filmmakers and industry, craftspeople and broadens the cultural impact of film, television, and media production in the state. Films that have been made in NH include On Golden Pond, In Your Eyes and Live Free or Die. Television shows that have been made in NH include Ghost Hunters, Extreme Makeover Home Edition and House Hunters. Advertisers use NH for their commercials and photos. The media production economy: no demands on the environment; no additional impact on infrastructure; and strengthens tourism industry.

Mr. Newton talked about the September 18-24, 2014, edition of The Hippo magazine which covered filmmaking in NH.

Ms. Messier asked about the legislative piece. Mr. Newton said a NH Production Coalition is looking to put out a tax credit for film production.

Sanitation – Solid Waste Disposal

Mr. Santagate said this was put on the agenda at Council's request.

Mayor Neilsen said the City is looking to get a committee together that would work to resolve the Transfer Station issue; it annually runs a deficit. The City is looking for a citizens' group that will bring back constructive ideas for disposal of solid waste/recyclables.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, said recently there was a recycling solid waste forum at the Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center and in the past few years groups have gotten together about trash and recycling. He said those citizens would be prime candidates to step up for this committee.

Mr. Bergeron asked if a couple of Councilors should be on this committee. Mayor Neilsen said there should be at least one, if not more.

Mayor Neilsen said the City has a 50% recycle rate, but no more because it is not financially beneficial. The City charges the same amount per bag of trash regardless of the size and that needs to be addressed. He said that he will be Mayor until at least the end of 2015 and if citizens want to become involved, he will work to try to take action on the recommendations.

Discussion with City Center Residents and Businesses

Michael Charest, Ward 2, and John Hall, Ward 3, were there representing a group of citizens from Claremont made up of residents, business people, etc. They said the City needs help and

this group wants to focus on a list of four things: Ordinance Training & Enforcement, Clear and Direct Signage, Beautification of City Center and Communication.

Messrs. Charest and Hall showed a PowerPoint presentation titled “Citizens for Claremont. A collective for Collaboration – Improving the image and positioning for economic development.” They talked about ordinance enforcement specifically Sec. 13-6. Curfew Sec.; Sec. 16-1. Use of skateboards, rollerblades and other similar devices; Sec. 16-2. Obstruction of public ways and places and buildings; Sec. 19-98. Congregating prohibited; Sec. 19-99. Trespassing after hours; Sec. 19-100. Sitting on or standing near parked vehicles prohibited; Sec. 19-193. Riding on sidewalks. They talked about signage: route traffic from the interstate down North Street to Washington Street; and clearly mark public parking areas. Beautification of City Center: reinstall missing paving blocks in sidewalks; mulch around trees; timely snow removal; and Heart of Claremont work with business owners for seasonal lighting of downtown. Beautification: Implementation supported by Claremont Development Authority \$5,000 loan for facelift costs; \$10,000 Downtown Budget Line Item; Heart of Claremont 501(c)3 (non-profit). Beautification Plan: Flowers; Trash clean-up days; Illuminated light poles and/or trees. Communication Plan: Public Information Officer; Community Bulletin Board; this group submitted a proposed Communication Plan.

At approximately 7:35 p.m. Ms. Lovett arrived.

Mr. Charest talked about ways the City communicates: City’s website, CCTV, radio, television, and newspapers.

Mr. Charest asked why more proclamations are not given out. Mayor Neilsen said he gives them out for special events; he doesn’t want them to become common place.

Mr. Koloski said he thinks we should use the tag line for the City: “Open for Business.” We need to recruit more businesses here. He agreed with the Communication Plan. He said in the past he has been an advocate for the City to use Facebook, but because of some recent events, he would shy away from that.

Mr. Hall said tonight’s focus was on communication. They will bring forth a Beautification Plan to the Council in the spring.

There was discussion about the responsibilities of a Public Information Officer (PIO) including disseminating information for the City, school, and Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Charest suggested there could be training on how to use the City’s website on CCTV.

Mr. Bergeron said Council would have to consider where the money for the PIO would come from and/or what other position would have to be eliminated to afford the PIO.

Mr. Santagate said we can jump on what doesn’t cost money. Attitude of the community is more important than water and sewer. We do great with what we have. We are a tight margin city.

He doesn't know if this can be done with the school and Chamber. The Administration will look this over and work with the Council to see if we can do this. He is not a fan of Facebook because the law hasn't caught up with technology. He commended the group for the job they did.

Mr. Charest asked about putting rope lights on the light poles on Pleasant Street.

Ms. Messier suggested citizens should get educated on how government works and to come to budget meetings to learn how that works. Regarding self-esteem, the downtown needs help. Regarding making Main Street look better, the properties are privately owned. Rezoning will allow the City to move forward. The Police enforce the ordinances and the Police Commission sets policy for the Police, and hires and fires the Police. The Council only sets the budget for the Police Department. Beautification of the City is done by volunteers and more are needed. She suggested raising money publicly for these suggestions.

Mr. Charest said people are willing to write grants. He works in Concord and some people in DRED want to come to talk to Claremont to explain the process and how to attract businesses here.

There was a discussion about some of the positive things going on in Claremont such as the Governor signing the transportation bill and this group believes a PIO can get that information out which will start to change the perception of Claremont.

Mr. Koloski believes Council should follow up with the Police Commission about new Police Officers not being familiar with ordinances.

Mr. Charest said the next meeting of this group will be Thursday, 6 p.m., in the Oddfellows meeting room.

Mr. Koloski said there are bundles of pavers behind the old Pleasant Restaurant to replace missing sidewalk pavers.

There was more discussion about how to fund a PIO.

Mayor Neilsen said there will be meetings November 12 and 19, and December 10 and 17.

Council agreed to revisit this on the November 19th Council meeting.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, said he participated in this effort. He said there is enablement in the current City Charter for a cooperative thing with the school. He urged Councilors to educate themselves about municipal accounting. He said everyone has to help to find solutions to move Claremont forward.

Patrick Adrien, Ward 1, was an active participant in the group. He suggested finding out where money is being wasted to get money for the PIO.

Steve Raymond, Ward 1, said he thinks this is a great idea, but we need to look at the tax rate. K-Mart will be closing in December. He said his home lost value; it's on the market, but he can't sell it.

Peg Hall, Ward 1, said the website is not easy to navigate, so she turned to the e-Ticker News for her news. She talked about times on the agendas and that keeping to the announced times would help with communication.

Marty Davis, Ward 2, said not to put too much emphasis on a PIO. There is a need to focus on how we communicate.

Patrick Adrien, Ward 1, the group understands the PIO was a long term issue, but we need to do simple things (i.e. on Election Day, Newport has a sign in the middle of town that says "Vote Today").

Ms. Towle suggested for the November 19th meeting that Council be prepared to list short term goals and long term goals.

Mr. Koloski said the Conservation Commission discussed starting its own website and creating a more eye-catching and informative website.

Mr. Raymond pointed out there are about 75 seats available on City boards. We need help.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND DIRECTIVES

Ms. Towle would like to revisit the Rail Trail waiver status. Mayor Neilsen will ask Ms. Taylor the status at the next meeting. Ms. Towle asked for an energy audit update.

Mr. Koloski asked for permission to work with the City Manager to come up with a date to offer a courtesy Boards and Commissions Dinner at his restaurant. Council agreed.

Mr. Bergeron said the Claremont Cable Advisory Committee will hold a public hearing within two weeks to receive public comments/complaints about Comcast. There are 4-5 small things that could be fixed right off (i.e. pavers, Parking / No Parking by Latchis building). As far as flowers being pulled out of the flower boxes, he didn't know how to stop that. Mr. Raymond suggested using cameras and Mr. Reed suggested enforcing the curfew.

Ms. Lovett would like an update on the preliminary engineering report and workorders on Ledgewood on the next Council agenda. Mr. Santagate said we expect to have the report from the engineer soon. He will bring to the Council a list of areas that have flooding conditions and will ask how to set priorities. Ms. Lovett will come back at the October 8th Council meeting with a list of ordinances that need to be looked at. Mayor Neilsen talked about the cost to codify the City Code.

Ms. Lovett asked to do an Amtrak Update on the October 22nd Council meeting.

Mr. Bergeron said Sections 11 and 12 have only two pages, so Council agreed to look at those.

Mr. Koloski said the Chili Cook-Off is October 4th and the sculpture will be installed October 6th, and he has not received an answer about the camera. If the City does not have one, they can take some of the sculpture money to buy one. He just needs to know the status. Mr. Reed talked about the graffiti in that area and Mr. Santagate said he will talk to City Attorney Taylor about addressing it.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:23 p.m., a motion was made by Ms. Lovett and seconded by Ms. Towle to adjourn.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council