

The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Wednesday, September 9, 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
At-Large Councilor John Simonds

Also present were:

Guy Santagate, City Manager
Jane Taylor, City Solicitor

MAYOR'S NOTES

Mayor Neilsen said John Lambert posted pictures of the Amtrak station work on Facebook. The Planning and Development Department is requesting people apply to be on the Master Plan Steering Committee. He said Jim Feleen has already applied. Cumberland Farms on Pleasant Street had a ribbon cutting.

Ms. Messier welcomed "A Thyme to Cook" on Tremont Street. She talked about the \$4 million dollar site cleanup on the Sugar River across from the Common Man. She said her husband, David Messier, Historic District Commission Chair, is involved with the cleanup. There is a special piece of equipment there that was used for gas production which is available for the City to have.

Mr. Santagate noted that that project would never have happened without Ms. Taylor's work. The City didn't pay any money toward the cleanup and there is a \$75,000 reserve for future work there, if needed. He congratulated Ms. Taylor and the administration for the work on this.

Ms. Lovett said on behalf of the Amtrak Ad Hoc Committee that White River Junction, Vermont will have its glory days this weekend and will have train excursions. She commended the Fire Department for taking advantage of training at no cost to Claremont. She noted in the Parks and Recreation report that they conducted Camp Soar and for the entire nine weeks, it was at full capacity.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

A motion was made by Mr. Koloski and seconded by Mr. Bergeron to accept the minutes of the August 12, 2015, City Council meeting.

Voice vote: motion carried 8-0 and 1 abstain (Ms. Lovett was not at the meeting).

A motion was made by Mr. Koloski and seconded by Mr. Raymond to accept the minutes of the August 26, 2015, City Council meeting as corrected.

Ms. Lovett submitted the following changes:

Page 2, New Business, Amtrak Ad Hoc Committee Update, after first sentence: Add “She also presented this PowerPoint presentation to the Vermont Transportation Rail Advisory Council earlier this afternoon.

Page 3, 3rd paragraph from bottom: Change last sentence to read, “By May, there were about 10 people who used the bus to/from the train stop.”

Page 3, 2nd paragraph from bottom: Delete last three sentences and replace with: After the bike tour event, the Committee will be working on a marketing plan to promote train travel. The Committee’s goal is to grow the ridership to 4,000 or more, making the Claremont stop a medium-sized station. Currently, the Claremont stop is classified as a small station and is the third smallest in the Vermont region of the Vermonter line.

Voice vote: motion carried 8-0 with 1 abstain (Mr. Simonds as he was not at the meeting).

APPOINTMENT TO BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Council was notified by the City Manager that he would like Scott Sweet, Interim Public Works Director, to replace former Public Works Director, Tom Woodley, on the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, Transportation Advisory Committee.

A motion was made by Mr. Koloski and seconded by Ms. Towle to appoint Scott Sweet to the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, Transportation Advisory Committee.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

Mayor Neilsen said James Feleen had submitted a letter of interest to be on the Master Plan Steering Committee. Mayor Neilsen said he will contact the Planning and Development Department to appoint Mr. Feleen. Ms. Taylor recommended Mr. Feleen fill out an official application. Mayor Neilsen agreed.

CITIZEN'S FORUM

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, questioned by what authority the Mayor appoints someone to the Master Plan Steering Committee. Ms. Taylor said in 2006 Mayor Pope appointed the Committee. Mr. Folta said the Eagle Times has a new Publisher, Kevin A. Downey.

OLD BUSINESS

TwinState MakerSpaces Update

Mr. Santagate introduced Jeremy Katz, one of the three founders of TwinState MakerSpaces, which is a 501(c)3. Jeremy Katz introduced Assistant Director Josh Busheueff. Mr. Katz said that TwinState MakerSpaces has received a \$250,000 grant from Northern Borders Commission, which will take care of all the metal, wood and art equipment needed. He recognized the support the group has received from Nancy Merrill and Zach Williams from the Planning and Development Department, Mr. Santagate and Congresswoman Kuster. The subdivision surveying is moving forward. Finalization of Department of Environmental Services use agreements is being done. Completion of the purchase and sale agreement is being worked on. They will apply for grants for construction. Mr. Busheueff said they have been holding programs throughout the area. They are working on getting Claremonters on the board of directors. They are starting the process for the membership drive and they are starting the fundraising drive. The Northern Borders grant has to be deployed within one year, so they need to be done by spring. They should know specifics for membership in about a week and a half. The website is: claremontmakerspace.org.

NEW BUSINESS

Ordinance 545 Maple Avenue School Parking Changes – First Reading

The purpose of this proposal is to prohibit vehicle parking on portions of Beacon, Kenyon and Spaulding Streets in the vicinity of the Maple Avenue School. The proposal is the result of safety concerns raised by area residents and the School Administration. The Traffic Advisory Committee has approved the suggested changes.

Enactment of this proposed Ordinance will improve public safety on certain streets in the vicinity of Maple Avenue School.

Police Chief Alex Scott said parking around Maple Avenue School is a challenge and is generally associated with assembly-type events. The Traffic Advisory Committee and the school resource officer have reviewed this request. Parking restrictions were tested and it was felt that this would work. The school has been cooperative.

A motion was made by Mr. Koloski and seconded by Mr. Simonds to adopt Ordinance 545 Maple Avenue School Parking Changes on first reading.

Mr. Koloski read the explanation of proposed action.

Chief Scott said the restriction for Kenyon Street would be between Maple Avenue and the northerly entrance to the school parking lot and parking beyond that would continue to be allowed. With respect to Beacon and Spaulding Streets, it would be limited to one side of the road. Beacon will be No Parking on the easterly side and Spaulding will be No Parking on the westerly side.

Chief Scott said the school will add parking spaces on its own lot. These are the closest streets to the school.

Ms. Taylor said at the next Planning Board meeting, the school will explain the expansion of its parking area.

Chief Scott said residents would be notified of the public hearing for this ordinance.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

Motion to Accept Donation for Veterans Park Infield

Mary Walter, Finance Director, said Council approval is needed to accept the donation for renovations to the infield at the Bill Baril Memorial Field at Veterans Park.

A motion was made by Ms. Messier and seconded by Mr. Reed to accept with sincere appreciation donations from Richard and Tara Stevens and Jim and Lara Judd in the amount of \$6,010.53 for renovations and improvements to the infield at the Bill Baril Memorial Field at Veterans Park.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

Resolution 2016-16 Purchase Line Striping Machine for Public Works – Public Hearing

The Department of Public Works has determined that the public safety will be better served if certain line striping of such areas as crosswalks, parking spaces and certain other pavement markings are undertaken by DPW employees. To perform this function, Public Works needs to purchase equipment and materials to replace outdated and inadequate equipment currently owned by the City. This resolution is to raise and appropriate the sum of up to \$17,173.21 to be taken from fund balance (to have no impact on the tax rate), for the purpose of purchasing line painting equipment and materials for the Department of Public Works.

Ms. Walter said last year the money was placed in the budget and the contract was awarded for line striping. Public Works had a problem with the company, so Public Works took over the line striping with a 25-year old machine. Public Works is not paying the \$17,000 to the contractor, so it will fall into fund balance. A new machine is expected to cost about \$17,000.

A motion was made by Ms. Messier and seconded by Mr. Simonds to adopt Resolution 2016-16 Purchase Line Striping Machine for Public Works.

Ms. Messier read the resolution into the record.

Mayor Neilsen opened the public hearing. No one spoke. He closed it.

Mayor Neilsen reopened the public hearing.

AJ Maranville, Ward 2, questioned when this was noticed as a public hearing. It was determined adequate notice had been given.

Mayor Neilsen closed the public hearing.

Roll call vote: motion carried 9-0.

Resolution 2016-17 Funding Bond Interest Costs – Public Hearing

Withdrawn

Ms. Walter said she talked to the Bond Counsel and was told the City can borrow from the water/sewer funds instead, which will save the City money. However, because of improved cash flow, there may not be any need to borrow.

Motion to Accept Donation for Fountain Project

Ernest Montenegro talked about his Fountain Project for the parking area in Opera House Square known as the “bullpen.” He said it has been designed to retain the 11 parking spaces in the bullpen. He said Cumberland Farms donated \$5,000 toward a fountain project. He said Sherwood Moody, Claremont Savings Bank CEO, is enthusiastic about the project and CanAm may help build it, but CanAm recommended he consult with a structural engineer. It is a gravity fountain and will recycle the water. The structure would be steel.

Mr. Santagate said he met with Robert Richard, Canam and told him it would be up to the Council to approve the project.

Mr. Montenegro said he is convinced that if the center of the City is made more beautiful, it will encourage business and bring back the downtown. There are built-in symbols (i.e. bowstring bridge and water (mills were water powered)). LED lights will be used so it will still be attractive without water in winter. The Claremont logo will be incorporated. The water curtain will be used to hide the cars in the parking lot. The fountain will not affect the Bricks for Friends of Claremont. The bullpen may be widened for the trough to capture the water. Mr. Bergeron said he was concerned if the bullpen were to be widened, because of truck traffic.

Ms. Taylor said there are ongoing discussions regarding infrastructure requirements, plowing, sidewalk replacement, fountain maintenance, where to put the pumps, etc.

Mr. Montenegro said the opening of the proposed fountain is 15 feet and the peak is 18 feet. It is 84 feet long. He thinks the view will be dynamic.

Ms. Messier loves the idea of modern mixed in with City center architecture. She and other Councilors questioned the proportion of the sculpture and whether or not it would block the view of historic structures.

Mr. Montenegro suggested the curved shapes could be green space over the parking lot. He said the Moody building is pretty big, so the Fountain won't totally block it. He could only guess at the estimated cost of \$200,000 and he expects to do fundraising for it.

Mr. Bergeron requested Public Works come back with the cost to maintain it after it is built. Mr. Montenegro said it would depend on the materials used. He suggested the arches could be built out of stainless steel. He envisions a sidewalk on the inside.

Mr. Santagate said this was brought to Council first to see if the concept would be approved, and then we can look at the cost.

Mr. Montenegro said a public meeting can be held to get feedback. With Council approval he can go forward with fundraising.

There were questions about the donations and Ms. Taylor said the law allows that if the project dies and Council votes to abandon the project, if we have a list of donors, the City can go through the process to return the funds to the donors.

A motion was made by Ms. Lovett and seconded by Mr. Koloski to authorize a Fountain Project, to be led by Ernest Montenegro and accept with sincere appreciation a donation from Cumberland Farms in the amount of \$5,000.00 for said Fountain Project. All funds received for this project, as well as a listing of all donors and donations, whether cash, material or in kind, shall be forwarded to the City's Treasurer on a periodic basis as established by the City's Finance Director. It is anticipated that this project shall have no impact on the tax rate. Location of the Fountain Project on City-owned property shall require final approval by the City Council prior to the beginning of any construction activities. Upon conclusion of the fundraising and completion of the Fountain Project, a summary of the donations and the value of the project shall be presented to the Council for final acceptance and further authorizes the City Manager or his designees to coordinate with Ernest Montenegro, as may be required for completion of the Project.

Mr. Bergeron said if it is built, the City will have to take care of it. Mr. Koloski said people may donate funds for the care of the fountain. Mr. Bergeron said he wants to know how much it will cost to maintain.

Voice vote: motion carried 7-2 with Ms. Towle and Mr. Bergeron voting no.

City Health Insurance Plan

Ms. Walter said the City is looking at other options for health insurance. The City is trying to make sure that by 2017 we are not in a “Cadillac tax” situation. Union contracts allow a change. A request for proposal is due by the end of the month. We are looking for the same coverage that will save money.

Wireless Broadband for County Facilities

Ms. Walter said Sullivan County would like to put up a tower on City Hall to increase wireless broadband to the county facilities.

Ms. Taylor said the “tower” is something that is equivalent to what we have on the building now and it will have a small dish on it. Ms. Walter said it is almost like a lightning rod.

Mr. Santagate said there are some concerns about it interfering with our reception, so we’ll follow-up with our Network Administrator, Chris Burgess, and will meet with the county, and then update the Council.

Ms. Taylor said if Council approves this and it is viable, a license agreement would be made with the county to attach a “tower/lightning rod” to our facility. She said there are issues at the county facilities as they don’t have adequate broadband. They would be required to pay for it and maintain it at no cost to the City.

Mr. Simonds said one issue that affects the Sheriff’s office and Department of Corrections is the video arraignment system and the lack of bandwidth which is creating problems. Because this affects his office, he offered to abstain from voting. Mayor Neilsen said there is no monetary benefit, so there is no need to abstain.

A motion was made by Ms. Lovett and seconded by Ms. Towle to authorize the City Manager to enter into a License Agreement with Sullivan County for non-exclusive use of a designated portion of City Hall for installation of fiber optic cabling and electronic infrastructure for broadband internet connections and related services, subject to such requirements as may be indicated by the City’s Information Technology Director to prevent radio interference or other impact on the City’s wired or wireless computer and Internet systems. The City Council further authorizes the City Manager, or his designees, to undertake all actions and to execute all documents as may be required to implement this motion.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

Resolution 2016-18 To Raise and Appropriate \$3,500 for Scholarships from the Claremont Parks and Recreation Special Revenue Scholarship Fund – Public Hearing

The City of Claremont has established a Claremont Parks and Recreation Special Revenue Scholarship Fund by Resolution 2014-1 to provide scholarships to help offset costs for individuals and families requiring financial assistance in order to participate in these programs and activities. The Parks & Recreation Department has identified certain individuals and families who are in need of such financial assistance in order to participate in the Department's programs and activities. This is to raise and appropriate the sum of \$3,500.00 for the purpose of providing scholarship assistance to certain individuals and families to help offset their cost of participation in the Department's programs and activities, said sum to be taken from the Claremont Parks and Recreation Special Revenue Scholarship Fund (to have no impact on the tax rate).

Ms. Walter said last year \$2,500 was used and after this \$3,500, there will be almost \$6,000 left. She said Parks and Recreation Director Mark Brislin suggested adding a box to the membership renewal form for people to make donations to help raise funds for this.

A motion was made by Ms. Messier and seconded by Mr. Simonds to adopt Resolution 2016-18 To Raise and Appropriate \$3,500 for Scholarships from the Claremont Parks and Recreation Special Revenue Scholarship Fund.

Ms. Messier read the resolution into the record.

Mayor Neilsen opened the public hearing. No one spoke. He closed it.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Santagate said that the Parks and Recreation Department was busy in August with the Lollipop Carnival (500 people); All Out Trail Run (95 runners, lots of great comments on the trails); NFL Punt Pass Kick Contest (25 kids participated); Adult Softball League (22 teams); 3rd Movie on the Green; Reach the Peak (120 participants); Claremont Mini Cardinals, Barnes Park (9 teams); upcoming Kiwanis Brewfest, September 19, Visitors Center Green; Fall Festival/Chili Cookoff, October 3, Visitors Center Green.

Mr. Santagate said that the Synergy cleanup is about \$4 million; cleanup at Lowes was about \$3 million; Sawtooth cleanup was \$1 million; with the cleanup at the old Goddard Bakery, that is almost \$9 million in cleanup in Claremont. Essentially, those are grants coming in in another form. He talked about the \$250,000 TwinState MakerSpaces grant and said that Claremont is outpacing a lot of communities in grants.

Mr. Santagate talked about new businesses opening in downtown, Jozach Jewelers, A Thyme to Cook, Urgent Care Unit opening at Valley Regional Hospital. Mikros is about to double in size. The Industrial Park has pavement, lights and utilities and Jewell Trucking and North Country Smokehouse are expanding in there. He said Mr. Montenegro had heard in New London that a lot of interesting things are happening in Claremont. When he attended an event in Sunapee, people were asking for more information about Claremont. A lot of good things are happening in the City.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND DIRECTIVES

Mr. Raymond said he has been approached by people asking about the elderly exemption for property taxes; he suggested Council review the income levels. Most, if not all, of the Councilors had been approached about reviewing the elderly exemption.

Mr. Koloski said the Moody Park gate closed September 1st and someone asked how to change the date to later in the year.

Mr. Koloski talked about Congresswoman Kuster coming to Claremont and asking if Council can get a “heads up” when political figures are in Claremont. Mr. Santagate said sometimes these people want a big public event and sometimes they don’t.

Mr. Koloski said when the Executive Councilor came to the Claremont airport, the airport was pretty busy.

Ms. Towle talked about revisiting the nuisance ordinance for animals. Ms. Taylor said she is working on an ordinance to address agricultural.

Mr. Koloski said the whistle that used to blow for curfew was a great tool. He said Franklin is enacting a curfew.

Mr. Bergeron said he likes the way the Parks and Recreation truck looks (with the wrap).

Mr. Reed said the Exemptions Code has not been reviewed since 1999. Ms. Taylor said it has been reviewed since then, but no changes were adopted the last time. Mayor Neilsen said Council needs to review the benchmark.

Ms. Lovett said she would like to have an amendment to Ordinance 544 Charles Street put on the next meeting in September. Ms. Taylor said she wasn’t sure if there would be time for adequate notice. Mayor Neilsen said if there not enough time for notice for the September meeting, it can be placed on the first October agenda.

Ms. Lovett talked about Ms. Taylor working on an ordinance for small livestock or agricultural and if Council does research as well, at what point would Council have a workshop discussion. Ms. Taylor said if Councilors have information, she’d be happy to review it. If Council wants to see draft ordinances as opposed to first reading ordinances, it is up to Council.

Mayor Neilsen said if you have a draft ordinance, it needs to be open for public comment. Mr. Koloski asked if a draft ordinance is presented, that the City notify affected residents. Ms. Taylor said for first reading there is no public input, but a draft ordinance Council could do what it wants. Mayor Neilsen said Council needs to decide when to notify residents, either to get input for a draft ordinance or when the ordinance is complete and it is going for second reading-public hearing. They should be notified for one or the other. Ms. Taylor said if Councilors have any information, to send it to Council Clerk Dorée Russell.

Ms. Taylor noted that various tax exemptions were updated in 2007.

Ms. Lovett asked when the animal ordinance can be placed on the agenda. She is getting complaints from residents. Ms. Taylor said that staff has to be comfortable with it. This is probably part of Zoning and would need to have Planning Board input. The Interim Planner is working on this.

Mayor Neilsen asked to put this on the October 28 agenda, even if it is not ready. Ms. Taylor said it may not be ready.

Ms. Lovett said when state and federal officials visit the City, Council being notified is the correct protocol. Mr. Santagate said he can ask if they want to invite the Council or not.

Ms. Lovett said Ms. Towle previously brought up the land with 3-foot high grass at Drapers Corners. She asked who owns the property. Mr. Santagate said Mr. Stevens.

Ms. Messier asked if Council wants information on all exemptions so it can understand how they all affect the budget. Ms. Towle said the cutoff is April 1st to apply.

Ms. Messier said a resident would like to volunteer to work on the "North Street Park." Mr. Santagate said to direct the person to Planning and Development Director Nancy Merrill.

Mr. Simonds said the ordinance about animal nuisances needs to be addressed; a citizen can't open the windows in the summer because of the smell.

Mayor Neilsen talked about softball teams being concerned about the missing shields on lights leaving the lightbulbs exposed in Veterans Park.

Mr. Koloski talked about playground equipment that is damaged at the park. Ms. Taylor said any damage should be reported to Parks and Recreation Director Mark Brislin. Ms. Lovett asked if information can be put in the newsletter that if someone sees damage to report it to Mr. Brislin.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None

CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL

None

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:03 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Raymond and seconded by Ms. Messier to adjourn.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council