

The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Wednesday, January 13, 2016, in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Lovett at 6:45 p.m.

Members of the Council present were:

Ward I Councilor Carolyn Towle
Ward II Councilor Scott Pope
At-Large Councilor Keith Raymond
Assistant Mayor Victor Bergeron
Mayor Charlene Lovett
At-Large Councilor Allen Damren
At-Large Councilor Bruce Temple
Ward III Councilor Nicholas Koloski
At-Large Councilor John Simonds

Also present were:

Guy Santagate, City Manager
Jane Taylor, City Solicitor

MAYOR'S NOTES

Mayor Lovett explained that the "non-meeting" before the Council meeting ran long which caused the Council meeting to start late.

Mayor Lovett asked to suspend Council Rules tonight in order to move the City Manager's Report up to item #4 on the agenda.

A motion was made by Mr. Pope and seconded by Mr. Damren to suspend Council Rules.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

Mayor Lovett said she sent an email through Council Clerk Dorée Russell to Councilors recommending they read the Legislative Bulletins. She talked about Councilors accessing the NH Municipal Association website for training and publications. She said Council will discuss making a policy for purchasing publications.

Mayor Lovett said she will be asking the Council for support in writing a letter in favor of legislation that will benefit Claremont.

Mayor Lovett said the next public hearing on the school budget will be January 19, 6:30 p.m., and the deliberative session will be on February 3rd. She said the school budget is a majority of our tax bill and the public should be involved.

Mr. Bergeron thanked all who were involved in First Night activities. Everything went well and it was well attended.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Santagate talked about the difference between a workshop and a regular meeting and whether or not votes can be taken at a workshop. Usually a workshop is used to get deeper into only two or three items. He thinks a vote can be taken at a workshop with proper notice.

Mr. Santagate said Jewell Trucking's move to Syd Clarke Park is complete. He had hoped Canam would buy the old Jewell property which is now complete. He talked about this allowing Canam to expand and creating a lot more jobs. New Hampshire Industries will be moving into the former water bottling plant building. There are about 70 machine-type jobs available, but the companies are having a problem finding workers. City staff thinks we should start to stress that Claremont has excellent paying jobs and a low cost of housing; we'll put that on the website. He talked about the agreement for welding training between River Valley Community College (RVCC) and Canam. He talked about the partnership between RVCC and Red River Computer Co. for computer training and congratulated RVCC President Dr. Harvey-Smith on her job training efforts.

Mr. Santagate talked about the success of First Night; the Rotary Club was the prime sponsor along with other businesses. They are talking about doing it again next year.

Mr. Santagate wants the Fire Chief to come to the January 27th or the February 10th Council meeting to talk about the overtime and injuries his department is dealing with.

Mr. Santagate talked about the recent snow event and that the road crews can't get to all places on the first day of the storm. We only have one shift of drivers. The roads are the first priority. Downtown and around the schools are typically not done on the first day. To do the sidewalks in the downtown and around the schools on the first day would cost around \$120,000 to contract out. He reminded people to be patient in the downtown areas and around the schools.

There was a consensus of the Council to have an overview of the City Manager's Report in writing, in bullet form, in the packet.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

A motion was made by Mr. Simonds and seconded by Mr. Koloski to accept the minutes of the December 9, 2015, City Council meeting as corrected.

Mayor Lovett said on page 2, 2nd paragraph last sentence should be 2008 instead of 2007. Page 10 Training for Councilors, 5th item, add the word "committee" after policy.

Voice vote: motion carried 6-0 with 3 abstentions (Messrs. Pope, Temple and Damren as they were not at that meeting).

APPOINTMENT TO BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Zoning Board of Adjustment

A motion was made by Mr. Bergeron and seconded by Mr. Damren to appoint Carolyn Towle to seat #4 of the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Mayor Lovett said two Alternate seats are available.

Mayor Lovett said Councilor seats on Boards and Committees will be discussed at the next meeting.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

CITIZEN'S FORUM

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, said in his opinion Council Rules need work. He gave samples from Laconia, Somersworth and Lebanon (guiding principles). He talked about adding a Communications item to the Order of Business for items sent to the Council as a group. He talked about citizens' comments and Mayor Neilsen (early on in his term) asking for comments from the audience. He also talked about department heads attending meetings when they have items on the agenda.

Mayor Lovett said Council will discuss Council Rules on January 27th.

Candy Crawford, Ward 2, spoke as a member of the Claremont Development Authority. She said she wanted to share some good news with the public. She gave some recent highlights: 1) 2015 nearly \$10 million was invested in Claremont by improving and upgrading properties; 2) She hears we need more jobs, but currently the unemployment rate in Claremont is 2.7% which is extremely low and now several businesses are trying to find workers; and 3) organic growth of existing companies: National Field Representatives added a 2nd location and more employees in 2015. In 2016, North Country Smokehouse will build an additional 67,000 sq. ft. facility in Syd Clarke Park and will add a significant number of employees.

Mr. Temple said along with the \$10 million investment, there will be \$15-20 million in economic activity that goes along with that from a multiplier effect.

Donna Montenegro, Ward 1, said her friend, Reb Mackenzie could not be at the meeting, so she asked Ms. Montenegro to read a letter regarding "Recycling-Based Waste Management Action Plan Update" which was sent to the Council. The update recommends public education on how to reduce waste and expand opportunities for reuse; introduce curbside recycling; provide support for composting; and encourage reuse of construction and demolition materials.

Mayor Lovett said the Transfer Station Ad Hoc Committee will come to the Council with recommendations.

Mr. Pope wanted to notify the public that the entire Council received this mailing.

OLD BUSINESS

Ordinance 543 No Parking on Charles Street - Pleasant to Highland – Second Reading – Public Hearing

The purpose of this proposal is to prohibit vehicle parking on both sides of Charles Street between Pleasant Street and Highland Avenue. Parking on the south side of Charles Street is already prohibited. The Traffic Advisory Committee requested this change after it determined that allowing parking on either side of Charles Street in this area creates a safety hazard because this portion of Charles Street is much narrower than the section of the street between Pleasant and West Pleasant. The Committee re-affirmed its position at its December 3, 2015 meeting.

Enactment of this proposed Ordinance will improve public safety on Charles Street.

Police Chief Alex Scott gave a brief history of the proposal which started because vehicles parking in the road made it impossible for some residents to receive fuel deliveries. The Traffic Advisory Committee (TAC) reviewed the issue and recommended No Parking on both sides of the street due to the narrowness of the street and the pitch of the street. That recommendation came to Council and based on input from some neighbors, Council asked to not eliminate all the parking. The Council then adopted an ordinance for a handicap parking space and additional parking which was adopted. The apartment building owner requested to amend the ordinance to move the handicap space. A third variation came back to the Council and other neighbors came back to suggest the original request was best and the original request is back to eliminate parking on both sides. He spoke to all but one of the affected residents. A mailing was sent out to notify residents of this meeting. 13 and 12 Charles Street residents were okay to eliminate parking on that portion of Charles Street. Another resident didn't take a position because it doesn't impact them and 8 Charles Street was not in agreement, but would like to have flexibility when having large gatherings as they don't have enough room to park in their driveway. Chief Scott said arrangements could be made to accommodate those particular events. He said the TAC recommended eliminating the parking.

Mr. Damren asked who is on the TAC. Chief Scott said himself, the Fire Chief, and Public Works Director. Mr. Santagate and Ms. Taylor regularly attend and the Planning and Development Director attends when needed.

Mayor Lovett opened the public hearing.

Rick Blake, Ward 2, 12 Charles Street, said his only concern is the safety. He agreed this should go back to No Parking on both sides; it is a narrow street.

Abigail Carman, Ward 2, 15 Charles Street, said her driveway is not on Charles, but her house is across from the apartment building and parking on the street affects her ability to get fuel deliveries.

Mr. Temple asked about establishing a precedent because streets in the Trinity Street area are narrower than Charles. Chief Scott said it is one-way traffic there.

There was a discussion about off-street parking for multi-family units being an issue. Ms. Taylor said under the revised zoning converting dwellings to multi-family units requires parking, however multi-family units already in existence are a different issue.

Nancy Merrill, Planning and Development Director, confirmed that according to city center zoning ordinances parking needs to be available to the side or rear of the lot. The parking study will be reviewed with the Council.

Chief Scott said there is more than adequate parking for the apartment building.

A motion was made by Mr. Bergeron and seconded by Mr. Simonds to adopt Ordinance 543 No Parking on Charles Street - Pleasant to Highland on Second Reading

Mr. Bergeron read the explanation of proposed action.

Roll call vote: motion carried 9-0.

Motion for Drapers Corner Close Out

Kurt Beek, Project Manager, said construction on the Drapers Corner Project was completed well over a year ago. Closeout paperwork needs to be completed and this motion is one of the requirements.

A motion was made by Mr. Simonds and seconded by Mr. Damren that WHEREAS the Drapers Corner Reconstruction Project (the "Project") was completed in September 2014, with certification of final completion by the project contractor and the project engineer having been received in December 2015, and whereas federal and state regulations require that City of Claremont formally accept the completed project;

NOW THEREFORE the Claremont City Council, as owner, hereby accepts the Project as complete and further authorizes the City Manager or his designees to execute all documents and undertake all actions as may be required under federal and state regulations for the final acceptance of the Project.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

NEW BUSINESS

City Fee Schedule – Public Hearing

Changes were requested to the following department fees: Assessing, Cemetery, City Manager's Office, Fire, Management Information Systems (MIS) Electronic Data and Copies, Parks and Recreation, Planning and Development/Planning and Zoning, Police, and Public Works.

Mayor Lovett said this is updated annually and the purpose of the fees is to recover, as close as possible, the cost of the service provided. She asked to move this item to the January 27th meeting in order to get justification for the changes. There was a consensus of the Council.

Mayor Lovett said that last year there was a discussion about the need to increase the Community Center fees and that the consensus was for incremental increases. She would like that to be considered. She would like to share some findings from the Transfer Station Ad Hoc Committee with Public Works. She said that was not part of this process.

Mr. Temple wondered what impact the Transfer Station increases will have on the structural deficit. It looks like there is a price reduction for smaller bags.

Mr. Damren would like to review the Claremont Savings Bank Community Center (CSBCC) fees every six months. Ms. Lovett said when the finance committee is created, that might be one of its jobs.

Mr. Koloski would like to know the number of winter burials this year. He said this year the ground is still soft, but people have been charged winter rates. He would like a clarification of the CSBCC Independent Physical Therapist rate. He would like an explanation of the sign permit fee. He is concerned that increasing fees at the Transfer Station will increase dumping along the roads.

Ms. Taylor said she will include in the packet a section of the City Code authorizing the City Manager to revise the fee schedule which the Council can amend as it sees fit.

Mayor Lovett opened the public hearing.

Peg Hall, Ward 1, noted the Fee Schedule posted on the website is from 2014. She said under Public Works Transfer Station Fees, Household Items, the humidifier should be a dehumidifier.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, said it would be interesting to have the entire file of property record cards for statistical analysis. He suggested that the entire file would fall under routinely stored information for \$10.

Mayor Lovett closed the public hearing.

Mayor Lovett asked the City Manager for the concerns and justifications for the changes to be addressed at the next meeting.

A motion was made by Ms. Towle and seconded by Mr. Temple to table this discussion until January 27, 2016.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

Resolution 2016-24 to Raise and Appropriate from Fund Balance up to \$8,000 To Heat JSL – Public Hearing

The City has closed the Junior Sports League (JSL) Building for public use because it does not meet current building, life safety and ADA requirements for occupancy. The building has a flat membrane roof that is subject to failure unless the temperature of the membrane is properly controlled. The City is currently marketing the building for sale and wants to prevent further deterioration of the structure, which would impact its marketability. No funds for heating the JSL Building were included in the current operating budget and the Council now finds there is a need to provide maintenance levels of heat for the building. This is a request to raise and appropriate the sum of up to \$8,000.00 to be taken from fund balance (to have no impact on the tax rate) for the purpose of heating the JSL Building.

Mark Brislin, Parks and Recreation Director, said that last year a minimum amount of money was put into the budget for the JSL building hoping it would be sold. The City still owns it and the building needs to be heated to maintain the roof throughout the winter.

Mr. Santagate said that if the building is not sold, money will be placed in next year's budget for heat.

Ms. Merrill said the building has been advertised several times without bids. She has shown people the building and she will continue to show it.

There was a brief discussion about auctioning the property. Also, the building is not code compliant so it cannot be used for public purposes.

Ms. Merrill said there is a policy for selling City-owned property. The JSL building has been advertised throughout the state. She is not sure she would recommend changing the policy at this time. She thinks there is still a possibility for selling this property.

Mayor Lovett asked to have on the February agenda an update of the policy for auctioning City-owned properties.

A motion was made by Mr. Damren and seconded by Mr. Raymond to adopt Resolution 2016-24 to Raise and Appropriate from Fund Balance up to \$8,000 To Heat JSL.

Mr. Damren read the resolution into the record.

Mayor Lovett opened the public hearing. No one spoke. She closed it.

Mr. Damren asked instead of using the words “fund balance” to use “unassigned fund balance” in the future.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Councilors said the Finance Report in the packet was out of date. Mr. Santagate said he was aware of it.

Resolution 2016-25 Household Hazardous Waste – Public Hearing

The Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC) coordinates regional household hazardous waste collections for residents of participating municipalities, with scheduled collections for 2016 to be held in Lebanon, Newbury and Newport. The cost to the City to participate in the 2016 household hazardous waste collections is anticipated to be \$3,000 for the current fiscal year, a sum which is not included in the City's current budget. The cost of the current expense will be offset by unanticipated revenue received as a result of the City having hosted a 2015 regional household hazardous waste collection. This is a request to raise and appropriate the sum of up to \$3,000.00, said sum to be taken from unanticipated revenue (with no impact on the tax rate), for the purpose of participating in the 2016 household hazardous waste collections as coordinated by the UVLSRPC.

Fire Chief Rick Bergeron said this is a three-year plan. One year Claremont is the host community and the other two years we participate and residents can go to Newport, Lebanon or Newbury. Last year's expenses were less than funded so we received a refund which will partially fund this year.

A motion was made by Mr. Raymond and seconded by Mr. Simonds to adopt Resolution 2016-25 Household Hazardous Waste.

Mr. Raymond read the resolution into the record.

Mayor Lovett opened the public hearing. No one spoke. She closed it.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

Annual Review of Strategic Planning

Mayor Lovett said Council would start on this now and finalize it on January 27th. She asked for thoughts on the top three goals and ideas to improve the Strategic Plan document that was adopted in June 2014.

Mr. Simonds said economic development has to be a priority.

Mr. Koloski said economic development with a focus on downtown. He will bring ideas back. Mayor Lovett asked him to send written ideas to Ms. Russell.

Mr. Temple said economic development with a focus on neighborhood improvements. Need to address water and sewer enterprise funds (i.e. aging infrastructure).

Mr. Damren said economic development is #1. He agreed with downtown. He asked what Claremont is to be known for. He would like to see more effort in marketing opportunities for skilled laborers and business activities. He would like to be more specific. Infrastructure is #2. He would like to know what the general focus is for marketing City-owned buildings.

Mr. Bergeron said #1 is economic development. He said we need to work with our two counterparts (school and county) to stabilize the tax rate. We need to look at the neighborhoods. Some are starting to fall apart. There are a lot of absentee landlords and we need to correct that.

Mr. Raymond said economic development, downtown, and getting out the word about RSA 79-E to help with the blighted buildings.

Mr. Pope said economic development, workforce training and partnering with the schools on training. The City needs to market to younger families. Neighborhood improvements. Maintain what we have.

Ms. Towle said strengthening the financial condition of the City is paramount. She believes a finance committee will be a big asset. Economic development. Policy committee can help with building codes, enforcers, etc. CIP (Capital Improvements Plan) is important.

Mr. Temple said regarding the tax rate, he thinks there will be heated discussions about what services the City will be able to do. The City portion of the tax rate has not changed a lot. He talked about breaking out the operations and CIP into two separate budgets.

Mayor Lovett would like to know what, specifically, the City is doing to market the City outside of our area. She requested a briefing by the Planning and Development office. Mr. Santagate said it will be no later than the first meeting in February. Ms. Lovett said she will gather what all the Councilors stated and will put it in the Councilor's packet for review at the January 27th meeting.

Mr. Koloski would like to discuss the TIFD-Downtown. Regarding the CIP, he would like Council to have a tour of City facilities.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, said regarding the CIP that Claremont's includes leased items and that leased items may be encumbered in future years. Ms. Taylor said all leases include non-appropriation clauses.

Mr. Santagate said he is proud of the City's vehicle replacement program; we have cut the age of the fleet by 2/3. You can cut taxes by taking them out of the CIP and bonding them or you could skip a year or two for buying new vehicles, but that's not good for the long run.

Mr. Temple said those things need to be brought out, but his discussion is on the tax rate. If you break out operations and CIP, it would create a lot of discussion.

Mr. Bergeron said the Council, school and state need to prioritize. He said there needs to be a discussion with the legislators about people moving to Claremont because we have the benefits.

Mayor Lovett asked for specific ideas from Mr. Koloski. Mayor Lovett would like to focus on the top three goals, specifically how to achieve them and the benchmarks to measure success.

Discussion for Creation of Policy and Finance Committees

Ms. Taylor handed Councilors a memo regarding a Council Finance Committee.

Mayor Lovett said Council will review and come back to discuss on January 27th.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND DIRECTIVES

Mayor Lovett said she would like Council to focus on getting the finance and policy committees, and the goals established. There was a discussion about having a joint meeting of the Council and school on January 27th. Some of the items mentioned: It's important for taxpayers to know that over 60% of the tax bill goes to the schools; homeless children; building a partnership; need to have a clear understanding of each board.

Mr. Koloski expressed concern that the Council may be putting City business on the back burner to deal with school issues.

Mayor Lovett said you can't talk about economic development if you don't have a school district that attracts people. The school is struggling with some difficult issues.

Mayor Lovett urged everyone to attend the school's public sessions and deliberative session.

Mayor Lovett will work with the school to schedule a meeting for a later date

Mr. Pope would like to know how much of the City's valuation is in the TIFD and where does the TIFD money go.

Mr. Damren would like to know the status of the FY 2015 audit. Mr. Santagate said it is not finished yet. He'll try to get a date.

Mr. Bergeron would like to know how much property is in current use.

Mr. Koloski would like a discussion regarding taking mobile homes for tax deed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None

CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL

None

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

At 9:26 p.m. a motion was made by Mr. Damren and seconded by Ms. Towle 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 9-0.

A motion was made by Mr. Temple and seconded by Mr. Simonds to exit the Non-Public Session.

Roll call vote: motion carried 9-0.

A motion was made by Mr. Bergeron and seconded by Mr. Pope to seal the minutes because it is determined that divulgence of this information regards a confidential personnel matter.

Roll call vote: motion carried 9-0.

ADJOURNMENT

At 10:10 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Temple and seconded by Mr. Damren to adjourn.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council