

The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Wednesday, March 23, 2016, in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

The meeting was called to order by Assistant Mayor Bergeron at 6:30 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 (Late)
At-Large Councilor Allen Damren
At-Large Councilor Bruce Temple
Ward III Councilor Nicholas Koloski

Absent:

At-Large Councilor John Simonds (Excused)

Also present were:

Guy Santagate, City Manager

MAYOR'S NOTES

Mr. Raymond noted there was a good news story on the front page of the Eagle Times, "NH Industries begins process of moving in."

Mr. Pope said on April 1st there will be a Donate Life event in Broad Street Park. March 24th to April 9th German students, as part of the German American Partnership Program, will be here and several Claremont students will go to Germany.

Mr. Bergeron read a list of notes from Mayor Lovett:

1. Councilor Simonds is absent this evening due to official business.
2. Numerous businesses in Opera House Square have complained that the two hour parking limit has not been enforced. This has been brought to the attention of both the City Manager and Police Chief, and parking limits are now being enforced and violators are being ticketed.
3. German exchange students will be arriving tomorrow evening and spending two weeks with host families from Stevens High School. Representative Gagnon has volunteered to give them a tour of Claremont on Friday. This will be the first time that they have visited America, and a wonderful opportunity to introduce them to our community and New England.

4. Earth Day is Saturday, April 23rd. Please consider what you can do to help beautify your community in honor of Earth Day.
5. April is Donate Life month. A Flag Raising Ceremony will be conducted at Broad Street Park at noon on Friday, April 1st. All are welcome to attend.

Mr. Bergeron congratulated City Staff on the tax deed auction; it went well.

Mr. Bergeron said due to Mr. Simonds absence, Mr. Koloski is taking over as the Sergeant-at-Arms tonight.

CITIZEN'S FORUM

Mr. Bergeron invited citizens to speak. No one spoke.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Forestry Update

Victor St. Pierre, Assistant Public Works Director, gave a summary of the 2008 Forestry Management Plan. He said the City manages 1,594 acres of forest. Hazard Cuts at the Claremont Airport and Transfer Station have been added this year. We have harvested 641 acres since 2010. 40% of the Forestry Management Plan is complete. Some benefits of the Forestry Management Plan: removed many hazard trees; built trails in Moody Park and at Arrowhead Recreation Area; and improved health of the City's forest. Total income received since 2010 is \$547,253.01, not including timber tax.

Mr. St. Pierre listed some projects for the near future: Transfer Station (not on the Forestry Plan, but has overgrown pine with a lot of blowdowns); Winter Street next to Claremont Arms Apartments; Rice Reservoir (use the revenue to fix the spillway); Arrowhead; Whitewater Reservoir; Cat Hole Road.

Mr. St. Pierre talked about the Arrowhead part of the Plan. He said the trees are marked and it is ready to go out to bid. The Orchard Road access is the preferred access. The work will be done in the winter. He estimated 140 truck trips over a 6 week period (1 trip per hour). To reduce the impact, the work will be done in the winter to help mitigate the damage to the road and lawns. Winter is the safest season as there are fewer people walking in that area. Winter access using the Arrowhead parking lot would create a severe safety issue and erosion problems. There will be less noise and dust in the winter. There will be a contingency fund for repair of roads and lawns. Ridge Avenue is due to be repaved and we want to do the logging before the repaving gets done.

There was discussion about having to pay someone to cleanup Arrowhead after recent logging activity and washout by the Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center. The cleanup has been done and the washout is something Parks and Recreation will need to address.

The sharp turns and narrow streets were discussed. Mr. St. Pierre said the trucks will stay in the City's right-of-way. Money will be held to address repairs after the work is done.

Mr. Temple said regarding the logging on the backside of Whitewater Reservoir, that a bridge would be needed, so he suggested the City purchase a bridge instead of renting and when finished with it, take it to Whitewater Brook Road where there is a failing culvert. Mr. St. Pierre said that is being looked at.

Mr. Temple said there may need to be a discussion about the spillway at the Whitewater Reservoir. He thinks it may be on the dam deficiency list.

Mr. Koloski said he had received a lot of phone calls regarding clean up/lack of clean up after the logging. Dennis McKenney, Consulting Forester for New England Forestry Consultants, said logging is not landscaping. He talked about the importance of doing the logging so the trees won't die from overmaturity. He talked about the transportation for the previous 14 harvests where over 2,000 truckloads of timber were moved. Most of the roads are very narrow. The drivers have excellent safety records. They will work mostly during the weekdays, but may need to work on Saturdays/Sundays depending on the weather. The ground needs to be frozen in the winter or dry in the summer.

Ms. Towle is concerned about the noisy jake brakes.

Mr. Koloski asked about the contingency fund. Mr. St. Pierre estimated the repairs to be under \$5,000.

Bill Dexter, Ward 2, was concerned about the landing on Apple Hill. He asked about having a landing at Arrowhead. He said there are four 90-degree turns and the last one is going toward a yellow house. He thinks there needs to be another plan. Mr. St. Pierre said they looked for other options.

Chuck Goodwin, Ward 2, submitted a list signed by residents of Ridge Avenue, Whitcomb Lane and Apple Hill Road who are against the proposed access for logging due to the disrepair of the roads, the damage the heavy equipment traffic will do to the roads and the run off.

Susan Parry, who lives on the corner of Orchard Road and Whitcomb Lane, said she is concerned about the safety of people as a lot of people are out walking in that area during the winter.

Mr. St. Pierre said the weight of the trucks will be under the legal load limit. All City roads need work. Roads on the list need to be worked on. Water runoff and soil erosion are happening now and that area hasn't been logged in 40 years. The City doesn't think it will be worse with the

logging. It is the intent to be safe. He acknowledged the tight corners and hopes to eliminate some of the issues by having the trucks drive on the City's right-of-way and then make the repairs when done.

At 7:23 p.m. Mayor Lovett arrived.

Councilors asked to schedule a tour of the area and to invite the Conservation Commission and public. Mr. Santagate will work on the transportation for the Council.

Bill Dexter, Ward 2, asked if any portion of Arrowhead will be used for a dragway for the logs and if so, will it be repaired. Mayor Lovett said that will be added to the list of questions.

Street Light Update

Mr. St. Pierre showed a PowerPoint presentation of the Claremont Street Lights. He shared some of the history since the conversion to High Pressure Sodium Lights in 2005. The City would like to convert the street lights to LED lights. The new lights will be owned by the City instead of Eversource. The estimated savings will be \$74,629/year. The projected payback will be about 48 months.

A motion was made by Mr. Koloski and seconded by Mr. Damren to authorize the City Manager or his designee to undertake all actions to apply for CDFR funding. Project to have no effect on the tax rate.

There was a discussion about procedure and there being no notice.

Mr. Koloski withdrew his motion and Mr. Damren withdrew his second.

A motion was made by Mr. Koloski and seconded by Mr. Damren to support the street lighting initiative.

Voice vote: motion carried 8-0.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, asked who to call if a street light is out. Mr. St. Pierre said to Call Norma Limoges at Public Works; she keeps track.

Property Tax Exemption Update

Marlene Jordan, Assessing Technician, had included information in the Council packet regarding the Elderly Tax Exemption.

There was a question about the estimated amounts. Ms. Jordan said she included the individuals who were taken off the list due to increased income, but she has no way of knowing who will apply if the income limits are increased.

Mayor Lovett said at the first meeting in April, Council will take a vote whether or not to make changes.

Ms. Jordan said the statutory application deadline is April 15, but the City may be able to extend the deadline for people who qualify under the new limits.

Councilor Training

Mayor Lovett said that David Scanlan, Deputy Secretary of State, is willing to train the Council on a Charter amendment process for the residency requirement and budgetary process free of charge. She said he can come to Claremont or be available by phone. She said he would be willing to look at a very rough draft of the proposed language change and he would talk to the Attorney General (AG) and give the Council any feedback he receives and then Council could submit formal changes. She said she talked to Mr. Scanlan about changing the residency requirement to a time or distance requirement and he sent that information to the AG's office but hadn't heard back.

Mayor Lovett will schedule Mr. Scanlan for the April 27th, but if he's not available, she will call a special meeting.

Mayor Lovett said she would include a copy of the section on Charter amendments from the *Guidebook for New Hampshire Elected City Officials – 2012 Edition* in the Council packet.

Mayor Lovett said September 17 there is a free workshop for elected city officials in Concord. She encouraged all Councilors to attend. This would be in lieu of on-demand training at \$475 for 2 hours. There will be a budget and finance workshop (\$80-\$90), September 20, in Manchester or September 27 in Bartlett. She'll send details. She said she has asked that any money left over in the Council line item to be encumbered for training next year.

City Manager Search Discussion

Mayor Lovett talked to Municipal Resources Inc. (MRI) regarding finding a senior executive (i.e. City Manager). She has also been given the names of two other consultants, Mercer Group and Slavin Management Consultants. MRI is sending her an overview of the process they follow and will come to Council to give a presentation. MRI estimated the cost for the search to be about \$14,000-\$16,000; it will be a 120-day timeline from search to sitting in the seat; and they recommended starting in July. MRI will come to Council with a presentation at no cost. She hasn't heard from the other two companies. She asked the Councilors how they wanted to select a company to do the search process.

Mr. Damren said for the record that he had previously done some consulting for MRI. He worked for another group that hired the Mercer Group. He said Primex does some type of recruiting.

There was a discussion about doing an RFP (Request for Proposal).

Then Mr. Temple suggested doing an RFQ (Request for Qualifications) with the price in a separate sealed envelope. Council would review RFQs, narrow them down to 2 or 3 firms, bring those firms in, ask questions and then choose.

Mr. Koloski pointed out that Lebanon is also looking for a City Manager, so the search may be tough.

There was a consensus to do an RFQ process.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND DIRECTIVES

Ms. Towle would like to get the ball rolling for Councilors to visit the different City departments.

Ms. Towle suggested involving youth groups and having them lead Council meetings in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Damren would like to set the budget calendar at the next meeting.

Mr. Koloski would like the name of the current Boston Post Cane recipient to be added to the plaque.

Mr. Santagate asked about putting the public forum for Ernest Montenegro's proposed sculpture for Opera House Square on the agenda. Mayor Lovett said that should be in April.

Mr. Koloski would like a facilities tour before the budget meetings start.

Mayor Lovett said regarding the budget schedule that the Charter is in conflict with the City's budget cycle. According to the ordinance, the City Manager will present the proposed budget to the Council no later than May 2nd.

Mayor Lovett said Council will decide on the schedule at the April 13th Council meeting.

Ms. Towle asked about allowing public input during the budget meetings. Mayor Lovett said if that is allowed, Council needs to be careful how many budgets are on each meeting agenda.

There was a discussion about touring the facilities. Councilors will come back to the April 13th meeting with which departments they want to visit and suggested dates for the tour.

Mr. Temple asked about whether or not Council will be looking at just one budget or two (working/operation budget and CIP (Capital Improvements Plan)). Mayor Lovett said Council will look at the CIP at the next meeting.

Mr. Santagate said the CIP comes from the Planning Board. It is a 6-year plan. Whatever is funded in the first year is in the budget. The vehicle replacement program is pay-as-you-go in the operating budget.

Mr. Damren asked if, using the accounting software, Mary Walter can group like items (vehicles) and then print that off by departments. Mr. Santagate said that would show a substantial reduction in the operating budget and then Council would need to decide what it wants to do (i.e. put in the operating budget or bond).

Mr. Koloski said with the CIP, background information is needed.

Mr. Temple thinks there should be discussion and public input about the CIP during the budget process.

CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:05 p.m., a motion was made by Ms. Towle and seconded by Mr. Damren to adjourn.

Voice vote: motion carried 8-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council