

Council Meeting

June 2, 2016

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The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Thursday, June 2, 2016, in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Lovett at 6:30 p.m.

Members of the Council present were:

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

Absent:

Ward I Councilor Carolyn Towle

Also present were:

Guy Santagate, City Manager
Jane Taylor, City Solicitor

AGENDA CHANGES

None

CITIZEN'S FORUM

Anne Cuadrado, Ward 2, talked about pickle ball, estimating that 2 million people play. She said four pickle ball courts fit on one tennis court. She said the Claremont Savings Bank Community Center has 3 pickle ball courts, but it's not ideal. The court lines are confusing and the lighting is suboptimal in the basketball court. She said it would be great to have courts outside and asked if they could put courts at Monadnock and Moody Parks.

Chuck Allen, Ward 3 resident and Arrowhead Recreation Area representative, gave a list of Arrowhead activities. He compared this past winter season being warm with little snow, which affected attendance, with other years. During the winter the building is cold and in the summer it is hot and he asked the City to replace the single pane windows. They are looking for new volunteers and leaders. He talked about the summer concert series and said he would come back at the next meeting with concert information.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, said he looked at other NH city budgets including Berlin, Laconia, Somersworth, Lebanon and Keene. He liked the way those other cities presented their budgets and felt they wanted to communicate with their citizens.

BUDGET

Planning & Development

Department Request \$864,291 City Manager Proposed \$804,291

TIFD-Downtown

Department Request \$898,600 City Manager Proposed \$898,600

Nancy Merrill, Planning and Development Director, showed a PowerPoint presentation explaining that the Planning and Development Department encompasses economic development, marketing, planning, zoning, code enforcement etc. There have been 503 building permit applications at an estimated construction cost of \$6,219,227 done since July 1, 2015. There has been \$5,066,365 in grants received in their office during 2015/2016. She gave a brief overview of the City's marketing. She listed several new business construction and expansions.

Ms. Merrill talked about Marketing in the current budget (\$5,000 from Planning budget and \$40,000 from the River Road TIFD budget). She requested \$45,000 in this Planning budget, but the City Manager proposed \$5,000. She said a full-time planner is in this budget.

Mayor Lovett read from Ms. Towle's written request to find a minute taker for the Planning Department.

Mr. Raymond said it is important to have a full-time planner. Regarding the full-time planner, Mr. Santagate said the money has been included every year and it has been used to pay for consulting services.

Ms. Merrill said the consulting fee is \$15,000 a year. A full-time planner would cost more with salary and benefits, but they are busy and need one.

Ms. Merrill said they expect to encumber \$8,000 for the Master Plan.

Mr. Koloski said economic development is important and he doesn't know if \$5,000 will be sufficient for Marketing.

Mr. Bergeron said it doesn't make sense to have a full-time planner and cut Marketing.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, asked about the Planning Department vehicle not being under a lease agreement. Ms. Merrill said a new car would be on a lease plan.

Ms. Merrill said the appraised values in the Downtown TIFD are low. That TIFD was based on all three of the mill buildings being developed, but one building was not developed. There will

be some PILOT money coming in from MakerSpace. Improvements to the other buildings will add taxable value. 13 Water Street is a 79-E, Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive, project, so there won't be an increase in those taxes for a couple of years. Her department will try to get people into that area and provide the tools to upgrade some of those buildings.

Mr. Santagate said it is more than just the Peterson building. It's lower property values all around the country. Claremont is not unique. There was a housing downturn all around the country. The City worked with Mr. Illick and he did some upgrades to the Peterson building at a cost of \$2 million. It's a 65,000 square foot building and it is hard to fill. Mr. Illick is not interested in developing only part of the building. Mr. Santagate talked to Dartmouth, but they wouldn't come to Claremont because of the schools. He thinks Claremont's housing will be attractive to empty nesters without children in school. The housing market is not back to where it was and that is a real issue.

Ms. Merrill said they are starting to see some rise in sales.

Mr. Damren asked how much the Downtown TIFD owes the General Fund. Ms. Walter said over \$1.2 million.

Mr. Santagate said the Council has the option to pay off the Downtown TIFD bond with the surplus from the River Road TIFD. He recommended doing that, but it's up to the Council.

Ms. Walter said there will be approximately \$1.8 million available when the River Road TIFD closes out and the goal is to apply that to the Downtown TIFD debt. When the Downtown TIFD makes money, it will pay back the General Fund. On paper there is a \$1.2 million deficit for the Downtown TIFD and the City needs to have a plan to pay it. Mr. Santagate said an option would be to put it on the tax rate; it's up to the Council.

Mr. Damren said there needs to be a plan. He said he doesn't see anything great coming to the downtown.

Mr. Damren would like the Council to see the close-out entries for the River Road TIFD before that is done. Ms. Walter said that will come to the Council. She said one of the TIFD bonds will be paid off next year.

Mr. Santagate said with the closing of the River Road TIFD, \$11 million in assessed value will come back on the tax base.

Ms. Walter said that \$11 million is calculated into this budget projection.

Parks

Department Request \$470,321 City Manager Proposed \$302,456

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Mark Brislin, Parks and Recreation Director, said the Parks and Recreation Department takes care of 7 parks including 620 acres, Claremont Savings Bank Community Center, 15 special events a year and supports economic development. There is one full time and one part time staff in the parks and they maintain the athletic fields for Stevens High School. He talked about upgrading the aging tennis courts.

Mayor Lovett read a letter from Ms. Towle and Ms. Towle is not in favor of cutting fireworks from this budget.

Mr. Koloski asked about combining both the Parks budget and the Recreation budget. Ms. Walter said in most places they are combined. It would be easier to administer. Mr. Brislin said it would be easier to manage. Mayor Lovett said that could be scheduled at a future date. Ms. Taylor said it would require revising the ordinance.

Mr. Koloski asked about the tennis courts at Moody Park. Mr. Brislin said the courts at Moody and Monadnock Parks are in rough shape. The courts at Monadnock Park were repaired a couple of years ago, but were not replaced. They need to be rebuilt and the project is estimated to cost \$350,000-\$400,000. Moody Park courts can be patched up for about \$100,000. He likes Ms. Cuadrado's suggestion for making one of the tennis courts a pickle ball court

Ms. Walter said this is listed in the CIP (Capital Improvements Plan) for a future bond. The tennis courts are listed at \$420,000 and the Arrowhead parking lot is listed at \$400,000.

Mr. Damren asked about a written agreement with the school for maintaining the athletic fields for the school. Mr. Brislin said we do not have one. He said for 12-15 weeks a year one staff is paid through the school and that helps off-set the cost of maintaining the fields. This year the school put money in its budget to pay for the lights.

Regarding the \$10,000 Mr. Brislin requested and the City Manager cut out for the JSL Building, Ms. Walter said the City hopes to sell the building, but if not, the City will be back to ask for money from fund balance to heat the building.

Building M&R requested was \$50,000 and City Manager proposed was \$20,000. Mr. Bergeron is not in favor of cutting maintenance.

Mr. Raymond is in favor of putting the \$13,000 back into Summer Celebration (fireworks and July 4th events).

Mr. Koloski would like to see a deadline for the sale of the JSL building and if it does not sell, he would like it to go out to auction.

Mr. Koloski is concerned about reducing the Arrowhead funding by \$3,000. He does not support taking away the fireworks money. Mr. Bergeron agreed with Mr. Koloski about the fireworks. People come to see the fireworks and they spend money in our community.

Mayor Lovett asked about advertising on the fencing around the parks. Mr. Brislin said it has been discussed with some of the adult leagues at Veterans Park, but nothing has been done with Monadnock Park.

Jim Feleen, Ward 2, spoke on behalf of the Parks & Recreation Commission. He said the Parks and Recreation budgets are woefully underfunded. Staffing is unacceptably low, maintenance funding is non-existent, and programming will be impacted by this budget. Mr. Feleen urged the Council to adopt Mr. Brislin's requested budget as he had asked for an additional position for maintenance. Ms. Walter said an additional person would cost \$62,100 and would add 9 cents to the tax rate.

Mr. Temple said it sounded like Council may be getting ready to add money to the budget. He reminded everyone that the water and sewer rates will be increasing. At the end of the year the unions will be negotiating pay raises. He reminded Councilors that there are a lot of people struggling to pay their bills now. He would like the record to show that he's concerned about where the Council is going with this and he asked if they plan to hold the line on taxes.

CSBCC-Recreation

Department Request \$1,226,408 City Manager Proposed \$1,195,124

Mr. Brislin said that things are no longer under warranty and they are starting to show wear and break down. They've had to replace a pool motor and HVAC motor, normal wear and tear. They are working to find out why the tiles in the corner of the pool are cracking. They've replaced some treadmills and added new rowers.

Mr. Koloski talked about retaining membership; parking; extending the hours, and blocking off certain areas to allow for 24 hour access. Mr. Brislin said they have increased hours on the weekends. People are coming forward wanting more hours on Friday evenings. They will look at that in the future.

Regarding the maintenance position, Mr. Santagate said he was focused on the tax rate. He said Mr. Brislin is saying he can't maintain the facility without the additional position, but Mr. Santagate didn't want to fund it. Mayor Lovett asked about increasing revenues to cover the maintenance expenses as they increase.

Mr. Brislin said this facility sees about 10,000 to 13,000 users per month.

Mayor Lovett asked about the discrepancy between the March financial report and what was in the proposed budget.

Mayor Lovett said she had received a letter from a private citizen who made allegations with regard to the Parks and Recreation Commission about whether or not the Parks and Recreation Commission had the authority to make a motion to have the Parks and Recreation Director

investigate the feasibility of corporate membership fees as noted in the March 2016 Parks and Recreation Commission minutes.

Jeff Coburn, Ward 3 resident and Parks and Recreation Commission Chair, said that Mr. Brislin had brought that request forward to the Commission and the Commission voted to support that.

Mr. Brislin said that a couple of businesses had asked about corporate memberships. He was not looking to change fees. The employee would pay a certain percent and then the corporation would pay the remainder of the set membership fees. He is still working on this.

CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL

None

Mayor Lovett said the School Board offered August 9 for a joint Council/School Board meeting. They offered the use of the Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center for this. She will send out an email to confirm Councilors' availability.

Mayor Lovett said there would be a non-meeting of the Council on June 8 at 6 p.m.

Mr. Temple talked about the Arrowhead logging operation and asked to have an agenda item to review/discuss the Forestry Management Plan. He would like to have that discussion before they discuss whether to log or not log. He's concerned about the bid going out for the timber sale. Mr. Santagate said that has been pulled back.

Mr. Temple said that Arrowhead is part of a city-wide Forestry Management Plan. He asked if the Conservation Commission should vet out the Arrowhead piece prior to it coming to Council for a formal vote.

Mr. Santagate said he got a call asking that if it's decided not to log up there, do we leave the diseased trees up there.

Mr. Temple would like the overall plan looked at and Arrowhead is a part of that.

Mr. Koloski said every year his restaurant holds a dinner in honor of the boards and commissions members. He would like to do that again and will schedule it through the City Manager's office. This is a donated meal. Ms. Taylor reminded him that each individual meal have a value of no more than \$25 to be in compliance with the Code of Conduct.

Mr. Santagate asked for a consensus of the Council to allow him to notify the board members of the dinner. Council agreed.

Mr. Koloski said there are Claremont 250th Celebration license plates in Central Collections. They cannot be placed on vehicles. He suggested they be given to board and commission members as collectibles. Mayor Lovett asked him to email the request to Ms. Russell.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:23 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Damren and seconded by Mr. Temple to adjourn.

Voice vote: motion carried 8-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council