

The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Wednesday, August 24, 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 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:

Mary Walter, Acting City Manager
Jane Taylor, City Solicitor

AGENDA CHANGES

None

MAYOR'S NOTES

Mayor Lovett read letters of congratulations from the UNH (University of NH) Roads Scholar Program for three Public Works employees: Kenneth Hamilton, Master Road Scholar; Dean Hooper, Safety Champion Award; and Todd Murray, Road Scholar 2. Congratulations from the Council.

CITIZEN'S FORUM

Walter Stapleton, Ward 3, said he is a candidate for NH House of Representatives, District 10. He talked about losing the local bus service on September 9. It is an important service for the area. There will be a meeting tomorrow in Newport at 1 p.m. to meet with NH DOT (Department of Transportation) regarding alternatives for continuance of that service. A large number of people in Claremont need this service (i.e. disabled with no auto or no other transportation services, students, Bourdon Centre residents going to doctor appointments, shopping). When an alternative is announced, he urged Claremont to be generous in its support. An August 17 Valley News article reported contributions from Charlestown \$14,000; Newport

\$5,000; Sullivan County \$25,000 and Claremont \$1,300. Claremont's contribution is way under its value to the City.

Ursula Ramjit, Dennison Avenue, said she has used CATS (Community Alliance Transportation Services) since arriving in Claremont. She takes the bus to work. If the bus service terminates on September 9th, she will lose her job. She uses the bus to get to health care and shopping. She knows a large number of elderly who use the bus service to get to appointments, shop and to meet other people. She said a large number of River Valley Community College students use the service. Charlestown residents also use the service. Mothers use the service to take their children to daycare. She urged the City to support this service.

Dave Numme, Ward 3 resident and candidate for the NH House of Representatives, said he has lived in Claremont for the past 10 years. He talked about drug addiction in the community. We need to broaden our approach to fight against drug addiction. He urged the Council to help those in need. He said he was concerned about the number of empty businesses in the community. He urged the Council to look for ways to make Claremont community friendly. He is concerned about the loss of CATS. He urged the Council to find ways to continue the service.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, asked about Mr. Bergeron's request for information about Current Use. He asked if the information was received and when received he would be interested in getting that knowledge.

OLD BUSINESS

City Manager Search Discussion

Alan Gould, President of Municipal Resources, Inc., said he has been with the company for 8 years. Regarding the City Manager search, he got input from the Mayor and toured the City. He said he would like to receive information from other Councilors over the phone. He talked about the process. He would like to be onsite next week, Wednesday, August 31, a.m., to meet with staff and p.m. to meet with the public.

Mr. Gould asked for the contact information for the Councilors to schedule time to speak with each one. He's looking for the strengths, weaknesses and challenges in the City.

Mr. Gould said the ad for the City Manager's position will be posted on the ICMA website, Union Leader, etc.

Mr. Gould said the soft deadline for applications to be received will be September 19. Because it is summertime, he may get applications after that. Essays will be sent to the applicants based on discussions with the Council. After the essays are scored, they will do a preliminary background check and telephone interviews. Afterward, 10-14 candidates will be submitted to the screening committee for review. Six candidates will be chosen for onsite interviews. Three candidates will be presented to the Council and a conditional offer will be made to the number one candidate subject to a background check, which will be completed in about two weeks. During

that time an employment agreement will be worked on. This should all come together about 3 weeks after the Council interviews.

Mr. Gould said the screening committee should be made up of a school representative, clergy, business community and/or chamber, health care/hospital, college/university, senior community, and representative from each ward. Nine is the most he would like to have seated with a couple alternates. Timing is crucial. They would need to commit 3-4 hours to read submittals; meet with MRI; and have a full day of interviews, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with a working lunch. Mr. Gould suggested using the normal City application process for the screening committee. He offered to assist with that process if Council wanted.

Councilors agreed that the screening committee applicants must live in Claremont.

Mr. Koloski would like to add a top tier business and a lower end mom & pop business to the screening committee.

There was a consensus of the Council that the screening committee would be made up of 9 members with 2 alternates. Application deadline will be September 7th and applications will be included in the September 14th Council packet.

Mayor Lovett will put this information in her weekly column and advertisements will be sent to the Eagle, Valley News, City's website and CCTV (Claremont Community Television).

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, said there was an article in yesterday's Union Leader regarding the search and he offered to send a copy to anyone who wants one. He said he had done a mini SWOT (strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) questionnaire of the Council after the election of this Council and he offered to send that to Mr. Gould. He said his expectation was that the screening committee meetings with the candidates would be non-public.

Mr. Gould said according to NH RSA 91-A, the entire hiring process can be non-public. He asked that whoever serves on that committee to respect the candidate's confidentiality. He said he can be contacted by email: claremontcm@mrigov.com or office phone 603-279-0352, ext 320.

Mayor Lovett reminded everyone Mr. Gould would be in Claremont on Wednesday, August 31st, in the afternoon to receive public input.

NEW BUSINESS

Downtown TIFD

Nancy Merrill, Planning and Development Director, showed a PowerPoint presentation about Downtown Development.

- Downtown Development

- Pre-TIFD Conditions
 - May 1972 Council discussed an inner mall concept for School Street, trial master plan for Pleasant Street mall, two-hour parking and southbound traffic routed Walnut, Oak and Pear
 - 1973 Downtown Plan Pleasant Street and Opera House Square as a mall and plaza
 - April 1978 Central Business District Improvement Program
 - 2002 Demolition estimate – Peterson, Wainshal & Sawtooth - \$995,945
- Pictures prior to establishing the Downtown TIFD
- Picture of the Sawtooth before Remediation
- Return on Investment – Mill Project
 - Direct
 - New companies
 - 150 new jobs
 - Indirect
 - Spin-off city center investment
 - Sewer/storm water separation
- Projects
 - Water/Mill Street Reconstruction
 - Sawtooth Studies
 - Sawtooth Hazardous Waste Remediation
 - Parking Garage Engineering
 - Sawtooth Parking Garage Construction and Mill Renovation
 - Construction Oversight
 - North Street Surface Parking Lot Construction
 - Pedestrian Bridge over Sugar River
 - Totals \$14,562,363
- Other Mill District Investments (Private)
 - Ramunto's Brick Oven Pizza
 - Ink Factory
 - CVS
 - MakerSpace
- Other Private Investment
 - Moody building
 - Union Block
 - Odd Fellows building
 - Latchis building
- Claremont Development Authority
 - Established to foster and support the community's economic development, acting in concert with the City of Claremont's Economic Development office
 - 2002 actions paved the way for Farwell Block rehabilitation
 - Active role in both Brown Block and Mill Project with loans
 - CDA properties pay full property taxes plus CDA pays \$20,000 a year to the City general fund for staff support
- Farwell Block Project

- Brown Block Project
- City Center Committee Economic Development
- City Center Committee Neighborhoods
- City Center Committee Regulatory Barriers
- City Center Initiative Committee Energy
- City Center Initiative Committee Business, Neighborhoods, Transportation
 - Signage
 - Directional signage
 - Truck Route study
 - Parking Study
- Current Master Plan Actions Impacting Downtown Development
- Master Plan Update 2016-17
- Sullivan County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- City Center Marketplace
 - Meetings with merchants and the Chamber of Commerce
 - New City Center page on the City website
 - New film page due soon
- Current Downtown TIFD Projects
 - Real Steel Fitness
 - MakerSpace
 - Gasworks site remediation
- Barriers to Development
 - Private market forces not always a barrier
 - Redevelopment costs for historic buildings versus potential end use/rent to cash flow
 - Main Street entrance to downtown often inspires negative comments
 - Main Street Project to begin this fall (Elm Street to Opera House Square)
 - Note number of privately owned buildings in the area
 - Overnight parking for upper level residential uses
 - Enforcement of parking limits, better signage
 - Complaints mention shoplifting, vagrancy, trash dumped on sidewalks, wish for more police presence
 - Complaints and compliments on fire and building codes
 - Aesthetics; maintaining buildings; deteriorated or weathered facades
 - Infrastructure issues
- Options
 - Market is working; leave it alone with economic development support and encouragement. Become a shop local consumer
 - Pleasant Street, 1st block – sidewalk repair, ADA accessibility, light poles and street tree improvements. Estimate without engineering \$428,000
 - Implement parking recommendations from study (September meeting)
 - Implement truck route study recommendations (September meeting)
 - Pleasant Street, 1st block – pedestrian mall. Estimate without traffic re-routing costs \$2,650,000

- Pleasant Street, 1st block/Main Street – buy buildings? Demolition?
- Parking meters?
- Beautification

Ms. Merrill said the Downtown TIFD area is Opera House Square, Tremont Street to CVS, down Lower Cul de Sac Road to the Gasworks site, includes properties on North Street, Spring Street, on river side, Main Street, both sides of Main Street as you get near the Square and the first block of Pleasant Street and a little way down Broad Street.

There was a question about condemned properties. Ms. Taylor said with privately owned buildings, it's a building inspection process and we may not be able to discuss it publicly.

Ms. Merrill said several properties are for sale. Another avenue is the City can purchase them and then demolish them.

Mr. Koloski suggested the Mayor sit down with the property owner(s) to see what their intentions/problems are.

Mayor Lovett wants an understanding of the TIFD and to strategize improvements.

Ms. Merrill said a Master Plan committee has been established for economic development and she intends to put this information in front of them.

Mr. Koloski said he has done a lot of business on Pleasant Street and he strongly encouraged someone from the Council to have a discussion with business owners to see what they need.

Ms. Merrill said there are a lot of reasons why these haven't been fixed up. The cost to rehabilitate historic buildings can be expensive.

Mary Walter, Finance Director, showed a second PowerPoint, The Downtown TIFD.

- The Bridge to “nowhere” became an integral part of the Mill District Redevelopment
- But in the Beginning
 - The thought of economic development and available grant money began an idea
- The Bridge Before
 - \$1.5 million project
- The Bridge Completed
- The Mills Renovation
- Contemplating the Mills
 - Cost of demolition was too expensive
- A Public-Private Partnership (3P) Would be Needed
- Underground Issues Would Need to be Resolved
- Above Ground Issues Would need to be Resolved
- A Collaborative Effort

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- Parking garage
 - Anticipated new value of the 3 mill buildings estimated to be \$25,500,000
 - City's share estimated to be about \$10,000,000
 - Downtown TIFD anticipated revenue expected to cover the cost of the bond
- Sawtooth-Parking Garage
 - Saving the Sawtooth
 - Saving the west wall
- Sawtooth Building
- Sawtooth Timeline
 - 1996 demolition proposed
 - 1998 NH Department of Environmental Services closed the site due to petroleum hydrocarbons released into the soil and groundwater
 - 2000 Mill Area Parking Study
 - Recommend utilize Sawtooth building as ground level or multi-level parking facility
 - 2004 Sawtooth building – Brownfield's Redevelopment Pilot Project
- Contaminants Found
 - Include antimony, arsenic, etc.
- HRP Recommendation
 - Most cost effective remedy would be to demolish the building and pave over it
- A View from Above
 - Before and after
- Photos of Water Street, Mill building renovations, Common Man renovations, Mill renovations, making rooms with a view, Parking Garage
- Mill District Redevelopment Infrastructure Improvement Development Projects
 - Totals \$14,562,363
 - Cobbled together a lot of different source funds to do this
- City Center View
- Following the Money
 - What would be needed in excess value to support a bond
 - Anticipated excess value for Downtown TIFD with the 3 Mill Buildings, \$25,500,000
 - Anticipated revenue at 2007 tax rate of \$30.37 (not including state education portion), \$774,435
 - Cost of 20 year Bond at full \$10 million @ 5%, \$774,121
- Downtown TIFD Partnerships
 - We are only taking in 2/3rds of what we need in taxable value, because the Peterson building is empty
- Partnerships
 - 2008 Recession caused developer to not go forward with the mixed use/condos in Peterson Building
 - What's the plan going forward
 - Encourage citizens to "shop local-buy local"
 - Work with businesses that are trying to rehab their buildings

- Continue our marketing plan for the City which may help private owners sell their properties
- Continue to work with legislators to enact legislation to help cities and towns give tax incentives to businesses
- Keep assessments at full value
- Need to have \$8.5 million in excess value to balance the TIFD
- Be mindful when giving out 79-E's
- Hope economy continues to rebound
- Target Goals – Meeting the Shortfall
 - Economy picks up and values go up
 - Adaptive Reuse – Renovations & upgrades to current buildings
 - Peterson Building develops
 - Estimated shortfall for 2016-2017, \$330,500
 - Additional assessed value needed in Downtown TIFD to offset shortfall, \$8,480,883
- Following the Money
 - Audited by 3 largest firms in NH in last 10 years
 - Estimated year end fund balance for 2016, deficit of \$1,545,133
 - Received clean audits
- In summary
 - We put \$10 million in a project that cost \$14.5 million
 - We have received in tax warrants revenue of \$4.9 million

Ms. Walter said for every \$100,000 needed in the TIFD, we need \$2.56 million in assessed value.

Ms. Walter explained the BAN (bond anticipation note).

Mayor Lovett said this is the Council's first look at the information and she would need to digest it in order to form questions. Ms. Walter asked Councilors to email their questions to her so she can get the information they are looking for.

Mr. Temple talked about the dilemma of the \$330,000 shortfall in the Downtown TIFD. Ms. Walter said it will be 50 cents on tax rate. Mr. Temple estimated it may be a few years on the tax rate.

There was discussion about the Master Plan and its subcommittees. A survey was put out and had 250 responses. Ms. Merrill said economic development, energy, natural resources and parks and recreation chapters are being worked on. In a month, committees for economic development, housing and transportation will start. Drafts of all nine chapters are expected to be done by January. Ms. Merrill said Master Plan minutes are available online.

The economic development chapter covers three areas: citywide (manufacturing, River Road, workforce development), arts & culture and downtown.

Mr. Pope talked about all the groups working together on development.

Ms. Merrill said the most important recommendation of the Initiative Committee was the Parking Study and there will be a Parking Study discussion in September.

Downtown Revitalization Task Force Discussion

Mayor Lovett read a note she sent to the Council regarding Downtown Revitalization Task Force Discussion. She said in the 2016 goals and objectives, the economic development of the downtown area was a primary focus, however, it is still not where they would like it to be. It was her recommendation that the Council direct the City Manager to provide a comprehensive overview of the barriers that prohibit economic growth in the downtown area and recommendations for addressing those barriers. She acknowledged that Ms. Merrill's presentation identified some of those barriers.

Mayor Lovett also recommended Council direct the City Manager to outline the financial status of the Downtown TIFD and identify what growth in fiscal terms is needed to eliminate the need for a taxpayer subsidy.

Councilor suggestions:

Mr. Bergeron – look outside the City for help fixing the downtown.

Mr. Koloski – survey downtown property owners and shopkeepers to find out what their barriers are. He suggested hand delivering the surveys.

Mr. Temple – someone from DRED (Department of Resources and Economic Development) said communities need to improve neighborhood developments. Lebanon, where he works, just did a downtown core study and it cost over \$300,000. He estimated it would cost Claremont \$150,000 to bring in outside professionals. When you get the report, you need to put it in the CIP (Capital Improvements Plan) and the Master Plan, and if you go forward with it, you need to determine how to come up with the money.

Operations Efficiency Review of the CSB Community Center Discussion

Moved to September 14th meeting.

Finance Committee Discussion

Moved to September 14th meeting.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND DIRECTIVES

None

CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL

None

NON-PUBLIC SESSION PURSUANT TO RSA 91-A:3,II(d) – REAL ESTATE

A motion was made by Ms. Towle and seconded by Mr. Koloski to go into the non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3,II(d) – Real Estate and to invite Ms. Merrill, Ms. Russell, Ms. Taylor and Ms. Walter into the session.

Roll call vote: motion carried 9-0.

A motion was made by Ms. Towle and seconded by Mr. Damren to exit the non-public session.

Roll call vote: motion carried 9-0.

A motion was made by Mr. Pope and seconded by Ms. Towle to seal the minutes until the purpose for which the information discussed has been requested to be sealed no longer applies.

Roll call vote: motion carried 9-0.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:44 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Damren and seconded by Mr. Simonds to adjourn.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council