

Council/School Board Meeting

August 9, 2016

Page 206

The Claremont City Council held a joint meeting with the School Board on Tuesday, August 9, 2016, in the John Goodrich Room of the Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center on South Street.

The meeting was called to order by School Board Chair Brian Rapp at 6:12 p.m.

Members of the Council present were:

Ward I Councilor Carolyn Towle
Ward II Councilor Scott Pope
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 (Late)

Absent:

At-Large Councilor Keith Raymond

Members of the School Board Present:

Brian Rapp, Chair
Patrick Adrian
Chris Irish, Vice Chair
Rebecca Ferland
Michelle Pierce
Brent Ferland (Arrived at 6:17 p.m.)

Absent:

Frank Sprague

Also present:

Guy Santagate, City Manager
Dr. Middleton McGoodwin, School Superintendent

NEW BUSINESS

City Overview

Mayor Lovett said the purpose of the meeting is to discuss what hinders the community moving forward. She showed a PowerPoint presentation and talked about the City Council's primary goal of Economic Development, reducing the tax burden and cultivating opportunity (jobs, education, etc.); and creating a community where people want to live and work.

The City needs to grow a tax base that can support the infrastructure. The City needs to grow its population. There has been marginal population growth since 2000. There is a need to attract new residents and businesses by leveraging/promoting assets.

The City has good paying jobs, but not enough qualified workers to fill them. She talked about creating partnerships with educational institutions to meet training needs and that living wage jobs will increase the wealth of the community.

A couple of years ago the City did a revaluation and the valuation of the City dropped by about \$110 million. The City's spending did not increase, but because the assessed value of a lot of the properties decreased, the City's tax rate increased. To increase the valuation of the City, you can put more on the Grand List and the other way is to increase the market value. With the sunseting of the River Road TIFD (Tax Increment Finance District), the City gained about \$11 million that was put back onto the tax rolls. The City needs to maintain its infrastructure (i.e. roads) to increase marketability.

The City is working on interrupting the cycle of generational poverty with health initiatives, quality child care, affordable housing and education.

Mayor Lovett listed her own suggested common ground issues: education of workforce; early childhood development; capital improvement plans and shared marketing/grant funding initiatives.

School District Overview

Dr. McGoodwin showed a PowerPoint presentation. The City of Claremont and the Claremont School District cannot go forward without each other. Our schools impact each student's future, as well as the future of Claremont.

He talked about a book, "Our Kids, the American Dream in Crisis." He wants to emphasize the importance of education to our future. He talked about the relationship to poverty and what the schools are doing as well as the challenges. He talked about the differences between people with education of high school or less versus bachelors degree or more (i.e. growing wealth gap, births to unmarried mothers, children living in a single parent family, adolescent obesity). High poverty high schools have more disciplinary problems.

What can schools do? Students in poverty must overcome inequalities to learn. We cannot “fix” poor students. We can confront our mindset as a school. Classism: low expectations for low income students; class biases affect our interactions with, and expectations for, students. Myths about poverty: if the myths are believed, then the expectations for the child are lowered. Teachers’ expectations hold more power than most parents. Teaching matters more than any other factor in a student’s school years. Health and nutrition are critical factors in students’ learning. Effort and energy. Mindset-teachers looking at students in a different way.

Relationships: the one thing that makes the greatest difference in students’ learning is the quality of their relationships with teachers.

Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) – this is the first year. Kindergarten students went from 44% below or well below in reading to 72% meeting the benchmark from April 2014 to January 2016. FDK improved early language development, increased positive socialization skills, increased opportunities to identify and provide early intervention services and support for children with developmental or learning needs. If all goes as planned, the schools will increase their commitment to pre-kindergarten (ages 3 & 4).

FY17 and beyond, early learning (PK-2) – increasing focus on early learning (pre-kindergarten to grade 2).

Stevens High School PSAT scores from fall of 2015 – school’s mean score was higher than the state and national mean scores.

Average Budget Increase, 2011-2016, 1.9% (including \$12.5 million expenditure for the high school).

FY17 Budget Decrease: between December 2015 and January 2016, the FY17 budget was reduced \$968,095.

FY16 vs FY17, FY16 budget: \$31,190,622 and FY17 Budget: \$31,269,283 = \$78,661 increase. They are reaching capacity of how much more they can reduce without making some major changes.

The City Council and the School Board have similar priorities. Poverty is not an excuse and something can be done which will help reduce the disparities. There is a need for a workforce with skills and those skills come from a public school education. They are starting in the middle school talking about what students will do after high school.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, regarding growing Claremont, he asked why aren’t people attracted to Claremont. There are real estate bargains in town. He talked about increasing Claremont’s housing market value. He talked about class war. He talked about expense sharing between the school and City. He liked Dr. McGoodwin’s data-based presentation. He would like to see the

City do a data assessment comparing Claremont with other comparable NH cities. Identifying and fostering resilience would help children help themselves.

Discussion of Issues that Negatively Impact both Entities

Mr. Adrian noted that people from the Upper Valley are buying homes in Claremont. He didn't see the benefit of using data to compare Claremont with other cities.

Mr. Irish talked about people believing the perceptions they hear. Both boards need to be their own best cheerleaders and change the negative attitudes.

Ms. Towle would like to have two discussions: one, what can be done for targeted vocational training and the other about what can be done to deplete the poverty level in Claremont.

Mayor Lovett said according to 2014 labor statistics, individuals below the poverty level was 13.4%.

Mr. Pope talked about economic development and George Bald, former DRED (NH Department of Resources and Economic Development) Commissioner, who said it comes down to attitude...attitude...attitude. Mr. Santagate said that attitude is more important than water and sewer when it comes to economic development.

Mr. Pope talked about One Hit Training and suggested talking with the college about it.

Mr. McGoodwin thinks the Council and School Board have much in common. He talked about partnerships with businesses to retool K-12 training/skills.

Mr. Rapp said Canam needs welders and the welding program is in Newport. He asked how Claremont can start something here.

Mr. Irish would like to create a tech center subcommittee to include Chair and Vice Chair of the School Board, Mayor, Assistant Mayor, City Manager, School Superintendent, River Valley Community College, Granite State College, Canam and Red River Computer.

Mayor Lovett is in favor of setting up a subcommittee.

Mr. Pope talked about a number of businesses that are looking for skilled labor. He suggested including tech center instructors on the subcommittee. Because Mr. Pope is a Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center (SRVRTC) instructor, Mayor Lovett asked if he would draft what he thinks the subcommittee would look like. He said he would, with the direction of Mr. Schneid, SRVRTC Superintendent.

Ms. Towle, Mr. Pope and Mr. Irish volunteered to be on the subcommittee.

Ms. Pierce said there should be a focus on training for what is needed such as health care.

Mr. Koloski asked about school capacity. Dr. McGoodwin said there is room to double the student population of Stevens High School and there is capacity in the elementary and middle schools.

Mr. Koloski asked about a curfew, students being on the streets late at night and the impact. Mr. Santagate said that a curfew could be a Constitutional rights question.

Dr. McGoodwin said there is an attendance issue with some students, but he couldn't be certain if they are the ones that are out late. However, school age children that are out late is problematic.

Mr. Damren will meet with River Valley Community College Chancellor regarding workforce training. Collaboration between the colleges or between the colleges and local groups will be vital.

Formulate Priorities and Next Steps

Mayor Lovett asked for no more than three things people wanted to work on going forward.

Mr. Bergeron said one is to publicize good things going on in the community and the other is addressing the growth of poverty.

Mayor Lovett talked about marketing the school and City. She asked if there is a strategic marketing plan being developed for the City. Mr. Santagate said yes. She asked the school if they have a strategic marketing plan. Dr. McGoodwin said no, but he would like to learn more about what the City is doing.

Mayor Lovett said she would love to be on a marketing subcommittee.

Ms. Pierce would like to see Pleasant Street cleaned up. Mayor Lovett said the City has a full-time building inspector who has been very effective at getting properties cleaned up.

Mr. Pope asked if the marketing subcommittee would include real estate agents. Regarding poverty, the dental program changes kids' lives for the better. Other schools have pantries in the schools to be used by kids in need. Also, some have clothing shops in the schools.

Mr. Pope would like to see some follow-up on the homeless issue that was presented in March by Assistant Superintendent LeClair.

Ms. Towle would like to change the perception of the schools and so would like the newspapers to put positive stories on the front page instead of negative stories. Also, she would like the radio stations do positive stories.

Council/School Board Meeting

August 9, 2016

Page 211

Ms. Pierce talked about working with parents that are in poverty and Mayor Lovett suggested a third subcommittee would be about poverty and Ms. Pierce should be on it.

Mr. Adrian stated there needs to be collaboration with some of the non-profit programs to publicize them.

Mr. Koloski said there needs to be a poverty task force made up of stakeholders (i.e. hospital) created first.

Mr. Koloski talked about having a school open house where you can highlight what's available in Parks and Recreation, the school district, 4-H and Boy Scouts, etc. He suggested when a child enrolls in the school, something could be sent to that family from the City that includes City information as well as the school information.

Mr. Irish suggested there should be one combined website for the City and schools instead of two separate ones, to make it easy for people to see what's going on.

Becky Ferland suggested a single publicity person for both entities. Mayor Lovett said the marketing committee would need to come together to discuss all of the options and then make a presentation.

The next joint meeting of the Council and School Board will be in three months.

Mr. Koloski asked about buying things cooperatively to save money. Mr. Rapp said it is done with fuel oil and Mr. Damren said electricity.

Ms. Cory talked about initiatives on poverty that are already being worked and asked to work with the subcommittee.

Brent Ferland would like to see subcommittee for capital improvements for both committees. Mr. Irish thinks a fourth committee for capital improvements is a good idea.

Mr. Rapp talked about budget information being shared by the executives of these two entities when budget process starts., etc.

Mr. Rapp asked about sharing minutes and packets with each other.

Mr. Bergeron thinks three subcommittees is enough: Marketing, Votech and Poverty.

Mr. Santagate talked about a variety of issues going on in the City. He said the City has spent an enormous amount of money on infrastructure (i.e. water and sewer) and those have constant expenses. Regarding roads, we've received about \$10 million from the feds for safety for Drapers Corner and for North & Main. He talked about lost valuation, tax rate and the tax bill. When you have a revaluation and the values go down, the rate goes up and vice versa. He talked about the \$6.5 million spent on a community center that is worth \$10 million. He talked about

the quiet story of the dental clinic and how it helps children become successful (you can't learn if your teeth hurt). He talked about advertising jobs that are available in Claremont, average salaries, and average rents. He would like to see a healthy community. One way is by having pride which is based on real accomplishments. You measure it by being a place where young people want to stay. In Claremont we have quality of life. He talked about the community center, middle school, technical high school, arrowhead, trail system, Monadnock park, and the high school all being in one area and what a great thing that is. We have the Sugar River which we need to do better job of marketing.

Tech committee will be led by Scott Pope. Other members will be Chris Irish, Carolyn Towle and Patrick Adrian. Marketing committee will be led by Charlene Lovett. Poverty committee will be led by Michelle Pierce.

Mr. Pope reminded that those meetings have to be publicly noticed and minutes taken.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, also reminded the subcommittees about minutes, public notice, etc.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:25 p.m. a motion was made by Mr. Koloski and seconded by Ms. Pierce to adjourn.

Voice vote: motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council