

The Claremont City Council held a special meeting on Friday, September 9, 2016, in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Lovett at 6:00 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

Absent:

At-Large Councilor John Simonds

Also present were:

Guy Santagate, City Manager  
Jane Taylor, City Solicitor

## **AGENDA CHANGES**

None

**A motion was made by Mr. Koloski and seconded by Mr. Damren to suspend Council Rule 2 requiring 48-hour notice for Special Meetings.**

**Roll call vote: motion carried 8-0.**

## **CITIZEN'S FORUM**

Crystal Covington was concerned about there not being enough school bus drivers, so they have changed the times for special need students, which causes difficulties. She has met with SAU 6 officials but they only tell her that they don't have enough drivers.

Mayor Lovett explained that the City Council does not have any jurisdiction over school district matters and suggested that Ms. Covington take her concerns to the next school board meeting on September 21.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### Potential Loss of Public Transportation

Mayor Lovett said that when she called the meeting, the City did not have confidence of another provider. This afternoon confirmation was received that Southwest Community Services (SCS) will take on the issue. She read a release into the record from the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) stating that SCS has agreed to provide transportation services to Newport, Claremont and Charlestown, as well as oversee the volunteer driver program. SCS hopes to resume service in October.

Mayor Lovett said that Medicaid transportation services will continue to be provided by CTS, which is separate from the former Community Alliance. She said the City does not have a legal obligation to provide transportation, but that does not diminish the need to encourage local and regional public transportation. She said she would like to reach a consensus on supporting the SCS effort, although it is premature to discuss dollars and cents.

State Rep. Raymond Gagnon said he was a member of the SCS Board of Directors and wanted to give special recognition to County Administrator Jessie Levine and State Rep. John Cloutier, ranking member of the Public Works and Highways Committee, for their involvement in making this happen. He said the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC) has offered its transportation specialist to work 1 day per week for 6 months to get the service started. He explained that to retain federal funding, a nonprofit needed to run the service. He also thanked Mayor Lovett, SCS and NHDOT Commissioner Sheehan. He said there was substantial feedback to SCS and NHDOT regarding the need for the service, which all helped keeping the effort moving forward. He suggested a task force of stakeholders be created as part of getting the new service up and running.

Rep. Cloutier said he had learned of the state's efforts from Comr. Sheehan in late July, but was asked not to go public. The County has \$25,000 in its budget for transportation and will support the new provider when it takes over.

Mr. Santagate also commended Nancy Merrill, Planning & Development Director, for her efforts on the issue. He said he was concerned about who would monitor the service and make sure that this does not happen again and that continuity is needed. He suggested it would be a good role for the County Delegation. He cited to the legislature approving a bus route in the Rt. 120 corridor, but not funding it, as an example of the problems with funding implementation.

Rep. Gagnon said that the federal transportation dollars are audited, but that the old business model was not working.

Rep. Cloutier said there are some concerns over how the former Community Alliance operated, but he is convinced SCS will be able to do a better job.

Ms. Towle asked what can be done to fill the gap in service until SCS service can start. Mr. Santagate said he would speak with SCS and UVLSRPC to see what might be done in the interim.

Mr. Temple asked who will end up with the former Community Alliance assets. Rep. Gagnon indicated that the rolling stock will go to SCS, but the building will remain with the former Community Alliance.

Mayor Lovett said it is difficult because SCS has no history in transportation. Comr. Sheehan indicated that they are working with a consultant to develop a budget and operational plan as quickly as possible. She said she would like a consensus of the Council to write a letter to NHDOT and SCS in support of the service.

Mr. Damren said he supports SCS providing the service because public transportation is an economic development tool. He said he expects River Valley Community College (RVCC) will support the effort and that they will also hear from additional businesses.

Mr. Temple said the Council can provide moral support, but wanted to know if businesses will be asked to contribute financially.

Rep. Gagnon said that the federal money is based on what is raised in the community; therefore one of the key pieces is fundraising.

Mr. Bergeron and Mr. Koloski both indicated their support. Mr. Simonds, who was unable to attend, sent a note indicating his support, which was read into the record.

Mr. Santagate said that to improve the transportation system, we need to find out what will be expected from the City and the community.

Bernie Folta, Ward 3, asked if other letters of support for the service give an indication of future financial support.

Mayor Lovett said that there is an expectation that the City should provide financial support but how we do it is for the future.

Mr. Pope asked about what would qualify for local match for the federal dollars and if it could be in-kind services. Rep. Gagnon and Rep. Cloutier did not know, but will look into it.

**A motion was made by Mr. Pope and seconded by Ms. Towle to send a letter of support to NHDOT, with a copy to SCS, for the restoration of transportation services in Sullivan County.**

**Motion carried 8-0.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**At 7:05 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Damren and seconded by Mr. Pope to adjourn.**

**Voice vote: motion carried 8-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Jane F. Taylor, City Solicitor