



Planning Board Meeting
Monday, March 14, 2016 7:00 PM
Council Chambers, City Hall

MINUTES
Approved 3/28/2016

I. Roll Call

Present: Richard Wahrlich, Marilyn Harris, Mayor Charlene Lovett, James Short, Chris Belvin, David Putnam, Neil Ward, Nicholas Koloski

Absent: William Greenrose, Bruce Kolenda

City Staff: Michael McCrory, Interim City Planner; Mary Walter, Finance Director

Mr. Wahrlich asked Mr. Ward to site in for Mr. Kolenda and Mr. Putnam to site in for Mr. Greenrose. Mr. Koloski sat in for Mr. Bergeron as the City Council representative.

II. Review of Minutes –

a. February 22, 2016

Motion: To accept the minutes of the February 22, 2016 meeting as written.

Made by: Mayor Lovett **Second:** Mr. Putnam

Vote: Unanimous in favor

III. Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

IV. New Business

a. Capital Improvement Plan

Claremont Finance Director, Mary Walter, gave a brief presentation on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) as a refresher for veteran board members and as an introduction to CIPs to new board members. (NOTE: The CIP Refresher is available at <http://www.claremontnh.com/residents/departments/finance/budget-and-financial-information.aspx> under “Presentations, Capital Improvements.”)

The Capital Improvements Program, known by the acronym CIP, links local infrastructure investments with master plan goals, land use ordinances, and economic development. A CIP bridges the gap between planning and spending, between the visions of the master plan and the fiscal realities of maintaining and improving community facilities.

Following the refresher, Ms. Walter turned to presenting the current draft CIP. This draft was produced by the CIP advisory committee (Nancy Merrill, Director of Planning & Development, Ms. Walter, Interim City Planner, Mike McCrory; and Planning Board chair, Richard Wahrlich) following the committee’s solicitation of

department heads' requests. The CIP committee must ensure that the projects are a reflection of the Master Plan's goals and objectives. All projects are ranked using several variables by both department heads and the advisory committee. Once the committee has completed its review of the draft, it is submitted to the Planning Board for review and adoption. The Finance Director and City Manager work to fit CIP funding requests into the City's annual budget, which ultimately is adopted by City Council.

Ms. Walter highlighted the projects that have been added to this year's CIP. She said if all of them are funded, it will result in a \$0.63 increase in the tax rate due to new debt.

Ms. Walter proceeded to explain the figures on the CIP and to answer questions from the Board. She explained that some projects may be funded by grants and that grant applications are scored higher if items from the Master Plan are in the CIP.

Ms. Walter said that normally the CIP work would have started in January, but work was delayed this year. Mr. Putnam was concerned that the Board did not have enough time to understand the document before they are being asked to vote on it.

Questions were raised concerning the Broad Street parking lot, police cruisers, fire department turnout gear, Half Mile Road, police department tazers, fire trucks, the fire station and more. Ms. Walter said she would get clarification where requested.

Mayor Lovett questioned the amount of money allocated for paving/roadway improvements (\$250,000) and additional paving money (\$150,000). She said the Council struggles each year with deciding how much money to set aside for paving. Historically the amount has fluctuated and has resulted, in the Mayor's opinion, in the City getting caught in a bonding cycle to cover paving costs. She stated that with the number of miles of road to be maintained and the condition they are currently in, \$400,000 is insufficient. Taxpayers' number two complaint is the condition of the City's roads. Ms. Walter said there is \$750,000 left in the bond and \$500,000 is being put into drainage – add to that the \$400,000 requested and the total figure comes to \$1,650,000 going into road improvements. Ms. Walter said it costs \$800,000 to repair a mile of road – with 120 miles of roads there will never be enough money to get caught up.

Mr. Putnam asked for clarification of the role of the Planning Board in approving the CIP – does the Board endorse it on financial or visionary grounds? Mr. McCrory described the CIP as a planning document, an “aspirational” document – it is not the budget. It should reflect “the Planning Board's attitude towards what's important”. Ms. Walter said that the projects that were chosen for this year's CIP were either rated “urgent” for health and safety or were already under contract – “pretty much everything else didn't” (get chosen).

Mayor Lovett said using the reasoning that the CIP is a visionary document, the Board should fund the highway projects sufficiently to get the City out of the bonding cycle it is currently in. She said the bond should not have been used for

routine maintenance, but rather for improvements that are above and beyond normal maintenance (e.g. reconstruction work).

Mr. Wahrlich said that as an advisory committee member, he did not evaluate the projects from a money standpoint – he focused on the Master Plan perspective. He said he is uncomfortable discussing project costs without the department heads being present.

Mayor Lovett said the CIP doesn't contain anything about extending sidewalks down Maple Ave to the train station or creating bicycle routes, despite the fact that these are plans that have been discussed and are in the Master Plan (connectivity). Ms. Walter said those projects would have come from the department heads. Mayor Lovett said that this is where the disconnect lies – department heads are looking for funding for their everyday department operations whereas the Planning Board is looking to fund the visionary projects of the Master Plan. So how do the department heads become engaged with the Master Plan projects?

Mr. Putnam asked what it would cost to maintain 7-8 miles of roads each year with the goal that every year the oldest roads are being taken care of. Ms. Walter said it would cost \$6M every year to do that much road work and the City can't afford it. The City would need the right mixture of businesses and houses to support the 120 miles of roads.

Mr. Koloski said he was uncomfortable being asked to approve the CIP without department heads being present to answer some of the Board's questions. Mr. Putnam said that he could vote on it tonight if it is a visionary document, but not if it is a financial one. Ms. Walter said that logistically it is not possible for the Board and department heads to have that many meetings to discuss the CIP (in advance of the Board's vote). That is why the Board chair is chosen to represent the Board and the Planner and Director are chosen for their familiarity with the Master Plan.

Mr. Wahrlich said he did not add projects to the CIP (as Planning Board chair), but rather accepted what the department heads were asking for and then asked how they fell into the Master Plan.

Mayor Lovett said that as a visionary plan, the CIP does not completely reflect the Master Plan and fails to provide the bridge between the Plan and the budget. She said, for example, sidewalks are not mentioned in the CIP and sidewalks are a "huge issue".

Mr. Putnam asked if the CIP could be shared with the Master Plan Steering Committee. Mr. Wahrlich said it might be helpful to have the MPSC make recommendations to the Planning Board, though he wasn't sure how that would work.

Mr. Ward said it appears that in the past, the Board has been asked to endorse the work of the advisory committee so that Ms. Walter can do what she needs to do and then it goes to the City Council. He said it appears that the Board is under a time

constraint (this year) and that the Board must approve the CIP at this meeting (Ms. Walter said the Board could take another meeting to discuss this further if the Board chose to, but acknowledged that there is a time constraint.) He suggested that perhaps next year the Board could take more time with the CIP and meet with some of the department heads if need be. Ms. Walter said perhaps the number of people on the advisory committee could be increased. Mr. Putnam said maybe a task force of three Planning Board members including the chair might work. Ms. Lovett said the group would “marry the CIP with the Master Plan”. The Board agreed with that idea.

The discussion then turned back to dollar amounts of the CIP. Mayor Lovett said that when the Council gets a Planning Board–approved CIP, the Council believes that the Planning Board agrees with the proposed level of funding. Mr. Wahrlich disagreed with that saying that he does not see his role as a financial one. Yet Ms. Walter said the advisory committee had increased the amount of funding for highway projects over what the DPW had requested. Mayor Lovett repeated that for her the priority is to get the City out of the bonding cycle that it is currently in. Mr. Putnam wanted to increase the funding to \$750,000 to fund ¾ mile of road and sidewalk paving. Mr. Wahrlich said the funding shouldn’t be for paving but reconstruction – paving belongs in the operating budget, not the CIP. He said that any discussions of road reconstruction should be justified by being in the Master Plan, for example the Plan calls for the City to be “walkable”. He said he would not be comfortable setting any mileage or dollar amount without department heads being involved.

Mr. McCrory suggested that rather than altering the CIP, the Board could direct the staff to write recommendations from the Planning Board to the City Council regarding the Board’s priorities – e.g. the Board would like the Council to focus on road and sidewalk reconstruction. The process could then change next year to take into account concerns raised this year.

Motion: To accept the CIP for FY16-17 with comments and further recommend that the CIP be shared with the Master Plan Committee for review and inclusion in 2017 and 18.

Made by: Ms. Harris **Second:** Mayor Lovett

Vote: Unanimous in favor

The Board asked that the following recommendations be made to the Council as part of the CIP acceptance:

- Emphasis be placed on:
 - Streets and sidewalks
 - Downtown area
 - Broad Street parking lot
- Improving communication between the City and the School District with regard to the City parks most heavily utilized by the schools.

V. Reports from Boards and Commissions

a. Master Plan Steering Committee

Mr. Putnam reported that the MPSC had completed its first public forum. 70-80 people attended. He said there were many interesting comments and conversations in each of the break-out groups (each break-out group represented a chapter of the Master Plan). Each group had a different process for gathering information to make it interesting for the attendants. The MPSC will review the results of the forum at their next meeting. They will also be finalizing, approving and selecting a distribution date for the public survey.

He also announced that the school district would be hosting a forum on homelessness on March 15th. The Healthy, Vibrant Claremont Committee will be hosting a forum on poverty on March 22nd. The TLC will be hosting a forum later in April on Raising Children in New Hampshire (time and date TBD). He noted that it was a pleasure to see these organizations working together to make things happen in Claremont, but stressed the importance of everyone's attendance to these functions.

VI. Other

a. UVLSRPC candidate nomination

The Board has received an application from Tom Rock for re-appointment to the UVLSRPC.

Motion: To nominate Tom Rock for re-appointment to the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission.

Made by: Mr. Short **Second:** Mayor Lovett

Vote: Unanimous in favor

VII. Correspondence

VIII. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting.

Made by: Mayor Lovett **Second:** Mr. Putnam

Vote: Unanimous in favor

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

deForest Bearse

Resource Coordinator