

Council Meeting

January 2, 2020

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The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Thursday, January 2, 2020, in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

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

OATH OF OFFICE FOR COUNCILORS, MAYOR AND ASSISTANT MAYOR

Gwen Melcher, City Clerk, swore in Mayor Charlene Lovett, Assistant Mayor Allen Damren, Ward I Councilor Andrew O’Hearne, Ward II Councilor James Contois, Ward III Councilor Jonathan Stone, At-Large Councilor Abigail Kier, At-Large Councilor Nicholas Koloski, At-Large Councilor Debora Matteau, and At-Large Councilor Erica Sweetser.

Members of the Council present were:

Ward I Councilor Andrew O’Hearne
At-Large Councilor Abigail Kier
At-Large Councilor Erica Sweetser
Assistant Mayor Allen Damren
Mayor Charlene Lovett
At-Large Councilor Debora Matteau
At-Large Councilor Nicholas Koloski
Ward II Councilor James Contois
Ward III Councilor Jonathan Stone

Also present:

Mary Walter, Acting City Manager

NEW BUSINESS

Councilor Orientation/Training

Mayor Lovett handed out a list of topics to be discussed.

Ordering Business Cards

Mayor Lovett told Councilors if they wished to have business cards to submit their requests to the Council Clerk.

There was a discussion about how the money is used from the Misc Expenses – Council Requests line in the budget. The money is used for Council photocopies, name plates, name tags, etc. Ms. Walter said at the end of the year, when money is left over, it is used for things in Council Chambers (i.e. new chairs and the Boston Post Cane box). Mr. Koloski would like some

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money to be used for hearing devices for hearing impaired people who come to meetings held in Council Chambers.

Laptops

All Councilors have been issued City laptops and it was recommended to set an update time and to open the computers at least once a week to allow the updates to run.

Mayor Lovett said copies of the Council packets are emailed to all Councilors. Councilors can make a request to receive printed copies of the packet. Ms. Walter said those copies will be charged to the Council budget.

Overview of Schedules

- A. Council Meetings
 - a. 2nd and 4th Wednesday 6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.
 - b. Previous Council held only one regular meeting in August, November and December
 - c. Budget season for Council will begin in May and must be concluded by June 30. Expect additional meetings in May and June
 - d. Non-meetings are held for legal consultation or collective bargaining, usually before a regularly scheduled meeting, and usually no earlier than 5:30 p.m.
- B. Joint Meetings with the School Board
 - a. Held to address community-wide issues
 - b. Held once per quarter, usually on a Thursday, 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m., at the Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center

Serving on Committees

- A. Although the Council has not set a standard, it is helpful for each Councilor to serve on at least one committee/board
- B. There are Council seats on:
 - a. Airport Advisory Board
 - b. CCTV Board of Directors
 - c. Planning Board
 - d. Conservation Commission
 - e. Historic District Commission
 - f. Claremont Energy Advisory Committee
- C. Council Committees
 - a. Finance Committee
 - b. Policy Committee

Mayor Lovett asked Councilors to come to the January 8 meeting with an idea of what board(s) they would like to sit on.

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There was a discussion about the process and it was determined that Councilors are already sworn in, so that doesn't need to be redone and board applications do not need to be filled out.

List of available training and discussion on training that Councilors may want to attend

- A. NHMA (NH Municipal Association) Webinars (free to Councilors)
- B. Workshops (reimbursable cost)
- C. NHMA/PRIMEX Governance Academy
- D. Land Use Law Conference (reimbursable conference fee)
- E. NH Municipal Association Annual Conference (reimbursable conference fee)

Look for trainings in the NH Town and City publication.

On January 8th, Council will discuss the criteria for Council approval before Councilors sign up for classes.

Reference Materials (in addition to list provided by our Council Clerk)

- A. NH Town and City Bi-monthly Publication
- B. NHMA Publications
- C. NHMA Attorneys
- D. Master Plan

Regarding Councilors receiving legal opinions from NHMA Legal Services, it was requested that those answers be shared with the entire Council through the Council Clerk.

Council Standards Regarding Decorum/Attire, etc.

- A. Somewhat outlined in the Code of Conduct, written in 2003
- B. Should there be written rules present in Council Chambers?
- C. Projecting professionalism, and what that looks like

There was a brief discussion about rules that were on an easel in Council Chambers a few years ago. Mayor Lovett said it would be up to the Councilors if they wanted to bring that back.

Reb Mackenzie said she would like copies to be available for the public.

There is no dress code. Councilors are photographed often and it was suggested they think about what image they would like to project.

Correspondence

- A. All correspondence from attorneys is considered privileged/confidential unless the Council votes to handle it otherwise

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- B. All legal counsel correspondence regarding Council business needs to be shared with the full Council
- C. All emails to/from Council members go through the Council Clerk in order to prevent RSA 91-A violations
- D. As a courtesy, the Mayor should be cc'd on questions to the City Manager regarding Council related topics. As a best practice, the City Manager sends responses to the entire Council.
- E. At times, the Council will receive, via the Council Clerk, emails from the Mayor. If the email contains information relating to an agenda topic, that correspondence will be included in the Council packet.
- F. Councilors will receive a digital copy of the Council packet on the Friday before the Council meeting. Should Councilors wish to have a printed copy, please relay that request to the Council Clerk.

Ms. Matteau and Mr. O'Hearne said that information does not have to go through the Council Clerk, it can be sent out to the entire Council by a Councilor with a note to not Reply All.

There was a discussion about Council Rules and the use of Roberts Rules with a recommendation to read Council Rules. It was also recommended that Councilors read the Charter. It was recommended the Councilors receive training regarding Council Rules and making changes to the Rules.

There was a discussion about sending emails of citizen complaints/concerns directly to Department Heads with a cc to the City Manager versus sending to the City Manager for his action. Mr. Koloski asked that this be an agenda item.

Current topics being addressed by the Council/Administration

- A. Union Contracts
- B. Council Goals
- C. Elderly Tax Exemptions and Credits and a Rewrite of the City Code Chapter 18, Taxation
- D. Revitalization of the City Center
- E. Merit Plan Update
- F. 139 Main Street
- G. Code Enforcement

Regarding union contracts, Mayor Lovett said the Council is not approving the language, it is approving the financial aspect of the contract.

Mayor Lovett said the Council Goals will be used to evaluate the City Manager; she recommended there be no more than three.

Mayor Lovett said regarding the Merit Plan update, that salary ranges are out of date and are not competitive with neighboring communities.

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To propose changes to City ordinances, Councilors should ask for that under Future Agenda Items and Directives.

Discussion of the possibility of a retreat in early 2020

This would help formalize/strategize Council goals. If the Council wants to do that, the earliest it could happen is in February. It will be an open meeting, with minutes taken.

Additional Topics Raised by Council Members

After Councilors receive their packets and if they have questions about the Department Reports, they should send them to the City Manager, so he can research and respond to the Council at the next meeting.

Mr. Koloski would like to do a few things in Council Chambers that makes it easier for folks to come out to see the Councilors (i.e. hearing device, add a water bubbler with cups).

Mayor Lovett said if Councilors want to make changes to the Charter, it is a long process to get on the ballot and that it should be decided sooner, rather than later.

Mayor Lovett said the next meeting is January 8, 6:30 p.m., January 9 is a joint meeting with the School Board, and then a Council meeting on January 22.

CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL

None

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:08 p.m., a motion was made by Mr. Damren and seconded by Ms. Matteau o adjourn.

Voice vote: motion carried 9-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council