

MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL MEETING

DECEMBER 10, 2012

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Spencer, and upon roll call, the following members were found present: Pepin, Soldati, Hebert, Donohue, Tapscott, Witham, Jarvis and Sprague. Absent: McCallion.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS.

Councilor Witham moved to accept the minutes of the October 1st, 2012 City Council Meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Tapscott and passed unanimously.

COMMENTS BY VISITORS.

Paul Goodwin, Ward 1, said he wished to thank the people who put a lot of hard work into making the holiday parade a success. It was great. He indicated that Beth Poulin, Jeanette Gagne and Elizabeth Miller as well as the Mayor did a lot of work and the community appreciated it.

Mr. Goodwin said he wished to take the opportunity to welcome our new City Councilor, Coty Donohue. He hopes other people are as excited as he is to see a young, energetic person joining the Council.

COMMUNICATIONS.

LETTER FROM SCOTT GESSIS.

November 13, 2012

Frank Richardson
Conservation Commission Chair

Frank,

I am resigning from the Conservation Commission effective 01/01/13. This is due to the stroke, which I continue to struggle with.

Thank you for your leadership and I pray that the Commission continues to serve the City well.

Scott Gessis

LETTER FROM MARTIN P. DUMONT.

November 13, 2012

Diane DuBois, City Clerk
City of Somersworth

Please consider this letter my resignation as Ward 3 Moderator effective immediately.

Sincerely,

Martin P. Dumont

LETTER FROM DAVID A. WITHAM.

December 9, 2012

Mayor Matthew Spencer
City of Somersworth
1 Government Way
Somersworth, NH 03878

Dear Mayor Spencer,

As discussed I desire to vacate my seat as the City Council representative to the City of Somersworth Historic District Commission (HDC). As such, please accept this letter as my formal resignation from that position effective immediately.

As I know you recognize the HDC is another evening meeting in addition to many others that I have between City Council and Planning Board, which has all too often been difficult to manage given work and family demands. The work of the HDC is important and I hope that another City Council representative can be appropriately nominated.

Thank you and I hope this can be acted on at the December 10, 2012 City Council Meeting.

Sincerely,

David A. Witham
At-Large Councilor

Councilor Witham asked that filling of the HDC vacancy be placed under New Business, Other, Item C tonight.

MAYOR'S REPORT.

Mayor Spencer reported the following activities:

- 11/14/12 – Attended Before Hours Chamber of Commerce event at City Hall.
- 11/15/12 – Attended the Local Government Center Conference and was appointed to the NH Municipal Advisory Committee for the next three years.
- 11/15/12 – Attended Christmas Parade Committee Meeting.
- 11/16/12 – Attended the ribbon cutting for Quest Geothermal.
- 11/27/12 – Attended Christmas Parade Committee Meeting.
- 11/28/12 – Participated in packing and observing the process for filling bags for the 68 Hours of Hunger Program.
- 12/01/12 – Attended and participated in the Holiday Craft Fair with the Christmas Parade Committee.
- 12/13/12 – Attended the City Council/School Board Workshop.
- 12/05/12 – Attended Christmas Parade Committee Meeting.
- 12/06/12 – Attended event at Charpentier Apartments.
- 12/06/12 – Attended a holiday open house at Goodwin Community Health Center. Spoke with Congresswoman-elect Carol Shea-Porter and she is looking forward to helping Somersworth.
- 12/08/12 – Attended the 2012 Christmas Parade. Thank you to everyone who attended. He can't stress enough the great job the Committee did – Beth Poulin, Jeanette Gagne, Mary Shaw, Elizabeth Miller, Steve Goff, and Don Ouellette.
- 12/09/12 – Attended a holiday open house at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Commanding Officer's quarters.
- Conducted meetings with all City Council Chairs with the exception of two.
- Two Somersworth Housing Authority Commissioners resigned, Connie Margowsky and Joan Lynch. Appointed Marty Dumont to replace Ms. Margowsky, and should have one other commissioner appointed by 12/12/12.
- 2013 Christmas Parade Committee will select its new committee on Tuesday, 12/18/12 at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall in the Executive Conference Room.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

Councilor Jarvis reported this Committee met on 11/26/12. They approved the minutes of the previous meeting, and discussed the following items:

- Reviewed the bids for a forklift. Tom Willis reviewed the bids that were received to replace the current forklift that is used at the Water Treatment Plant. There were 5 bids received from 4 vendors. The amount of \$29,500 was budgeted in the current budget. Motion passed unanimously to accept staff recommendation and approve New England Industrial Truck from Saco, ME for \$23,970.
- Reviewed property tax deeding. The City Manager gave them an overview of the process and the costs to the City that are associated with the mobile home units

and also reviewed what other towns are doing about this type of issue. The consensus at this point is to support the resolution that was put before Council and continue with research going forward.

- Tax cap implementation was discussed. The City Manager discussed RSA 49-B:6 IV(b) regarding effective dates of charter amendments, which would be July 1st, 2013, with the City Council's option for it to go into effect prior to that date. After review, they decided to put it on tonight's agenda. It will be reviewed later in the evening.
- They discussed the fact that Council Committee Chairs should get their minutes done in a timely fashion.

REPORTS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES.

COAST BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

Councilor Pepin reported this Committee met on 11/28/12. He handed out the proposed 2014 budget for COAST to all Councilors for municipal fundraising formula data. It also has the populations of the different communities, handicapped people, people over 65, also the mileage the buses travel throughout the community.

Councilor Pepin indicated it costs a little over \$5M per year to operate COAST buses throughout the communities. It is funded by State, Federal, municipalities, and fares from people riding the buses.

Councilor Pepin said they are requesting \$567,000 from municipalities to make the budget work. That would be an increase of \$123,000 which is 27.8% more than last year. One of the highest costs they have is transporting people who are handicapped in any way. COAST is mandated to transport handicapped people if they live within a certain perimeter of the bus route. Some suggestions to offset costs are selling advertising space on the bus shelters, fare increases on certain routes, and regionalizing their ADA with different organizations that have services. Also, they may have to cut some services if the ridership isn't up there.

SCHOOL BOARD.

Councilor Pepin attended a School Board meeting on 11/27/12. The following items were discussed:

- The State of NH approved the Withdrawal Committee's proposal for moving on to another school.
- So far the budget is in the black. We are only three months into the school year. They did have a discussion about special education, which is what everyone watches the most. The number of students fluctuates day to day.
- The School Board met with the Barrington School District on 12/5/12 to go over their RFP for educating students in Barrington.

Councilor Pepin thanked all members of the City Council and School Board for attending the 12/3/12 workshop. Everybody was in attendance. The School Board Chair had asked if any Council members had questions pertaining to HVAC systems that will be addressed by Resolution No. 18-13. The School Board did prepare a packet on some of the questions and he feels a lot of questions were answered.

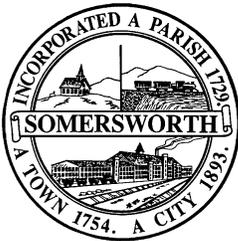
SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE.

Councilor Soldati reported this Committee met on 11/15/12. At this time of year, they have been focusing on closing up the City gardens. They had 10 of 17 plots that were used by gardeners. They also had a communal herb and tomato plot. They feel they will have even wider participation next year.

Councilor Soldati said the Committee is closing out the year by documenting their activities for the year and outlining some plans for 2013. She mentioned to the Mayor that the Chair of the Sustainability Committee, Liz Wilson, would like to make a presentation to update the Council and the public on the Committee's activities.

Councilor Soldati indicated their next meeting will be on 12/20/12 at 6:00 p.m. Any member of the public is invited to attend.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT.



CITY OF SOMERSWORTH
Office of the City Manager

TO: Mayor Matthew Spencer and City Council Members

FROM: Robert M. Belmore, City Manager

DATE: Friday, December 7, 2012

**SUBJECT: City Manager's Report for Monday, December 10, 2012
City Council Agenda**

Attorney-Client Privilege Private Meeting with City Attorney

6:00 P.M. – City Attorney Walter Mitchell and Attorney Jae Whitelaw plan to attend. Jae has been handling City Charter issues and Walter is handling the Sunningdale - tax deeded property issue. Two legal opinions are attached.

Lay on Table (under Section 11 of the Agenda):

Resolutions:

- A. Resolution No. 17-13 To Establish an Additional Fee on Motor Vehicle Registrations for the Purpose of Supporting a Municipal and Transportation Improvement Fund.** The Public Works and Environment Committee is recommending a \$5.00 fee. If the fee is set at \$5.00, this fund may generate approximately \$60,000 a year. This is another creative strategy in utilizing an available tool to establish funds towards future Public Works projects such as road work and sidewalk rehabilitation. *The City Council may now take this matter off the table for discussion and vote. The Council may consider a fee that is less than \$5.00; however, this fee is the maximum amount allowed by State Law.*
- B. Resolution No. 18-13 Bond for the Completion of a Downtown Improvement Project, Somersworth-Berwick Bridge Rehabilitation, and Replacement of HVAC Units in Somersworth Schools.** This additional funding may assist the City in meeting required matching funds for the Bridge project as present estimates indicate there may be a City shortfall. This Bond would affect the City Tax Rate by an increase of approximately 11¢.
- C. Resolution No. 19-13 To Establish a Capital Reserve Fund for the Purpose of a Municipal Transportation Improvement Fund.**
This is the companion action required should Resolution No 17-13 pass.

New Business (under Section 13 of the Agenda):

Ordinances:

- A. Ordinance No. 7-13 City Council Meeting Schedule for 2013.** The City Council should waive rules to act on this Ordinance this evening.

Other:

- A. Tax Cap City Charter Amendment Discussion per Council Finance Committee.**
- B. Vote to Request a NH DES Public Hearing on City of Dover Groundwater Withdrawal Permit Application.** Attached is a Memorandum from Director of Planning & Community Development Dave Sharples regarding the rationale for his recommendation to have City Council (the governing body) vote to request a public hearing on the Willand Pond related groundwater withdrawal permit. I concur and ask that you vote to do so and authorize the City Manager to make this request to the NH Department of Environmental Services. There is also a

copy of the NH DES notice sent to me as well as a portion of the Final Hydrogeological Report.

City Manager's Items (under Section 9 of the Agenda):

A. Informational Items:

1. **Budget Preparation FY 2014.** Attached is a copy of my Budget directive to department heads as we begin next year's budget process. I welcome any Council direction as I move forward in this budget development process.
2. **Somersworth-Berwick Bridge Project Update.** I have attached a Memorandum from Director Sharples that indicates the Bridge project construction start date will be pushed out from June 2013 to the Spring of 2014 due to State-Federal NEPA process.
3. **CIP FY 2014-2019.** In accordance with the City Charter, I hereby submit a proposed Capital Improvement Program for City Council consideration. I look forward to Council direction for future review and discussion opportunities.

B. Attachments:

1. City Attorney Certifications (1).
2. Monthly Reports & related memorandums from Department Heads.
3. City Manager CIP PowerPoint presentation to Planning Board on November 20, 2012.
4. COAST FY 2014 Draft Funding Report from Councilor Pepin.
5. City Observed Holidays – 2013.
6. City Council Meeting Calendar – 2013.

Councilor Sprague referred to the bridge project update, asking what exactly is going on. In the memo that was received in our packets, it states "the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process is the main driver of the schedule and its funding is authorized in stages and each step cannot begin until additional funding is allocated". He asked if all funding is set in place with the State of Maine? Secondly, this is troubling to him since we are pushing into 2014. We are trying to get our project done in 2013. The construction costs are going to be increasing as we go through the year 2013. Who is going to pick up our extra costs we will need to incur because of their timeline? We were going to try to marry the bridge project to the High Street project but now the time frame doesn't seem to work.

The City Manager stated Public Works Director Willis and Director Sharples are certified regarding the NEPA process. We had to send staff to be trained with this process. The process involves federal funding. The process is similar to the TE grant.

Councilor Sprague moved to suspend the rules in order to hear from City staff. The motion was seconded by Councilor Pepin and passed unanimously.

Dave Sharples indicated all the money has been programmed for the bridge project, but each step has to be authorized before the money is meted out. They work up to the amount that is authorized, then they need further authorization before they can continue.

Dave Sharples said he would look into the time frame of the project. Maine DOT has taken the lead on the bridge project and they had several reasons why they thought the schedule was aggressive to begin with. Also, they did some soil borings and did find some soil contaminants which is not unusual under a railroad bed. The NEPA process was expected to take several months. Maine DOT did not like the idea of the two projects going on at the same time because they thought the traffic problem would be tough to handle. NEPA made the decision to put off the schedule. According to the preliminary traffic plan, one half of the bridge will be worked on at a time leaving the other half open. There will be two actual closures, which will be on weekends.

Councilor Witham echoed displeasure with this. He understands the rationale behind the delay, but he doesn't like it. We fast-tracked our downtown project to marry with the bridge project to seemingly have less interruption with traffic flow. What he hopes will be conveyed to VHB and to Maine DOT is that since our road project would be done in advance of the bridge project that he would not want to see any of our good work disturbed for their efforts on the bridge including the fact that they were considering using the Somersworth side for a lay down yard for their equipment. In his mind, that idea is closed if we have improvements in that area.

The City Manager implied that if this was just being done with City money we could move expeditiously and just get it done. We are dealing with the NH DOT, Maine DOT, and federal parameters. It is a very frustrating process for everybody. They have had some push back about the lighting on the bridge. The lighting is in the design and we went after federal funding to get extra money to get this project moving. Part of the rationale to the money that was approved was for the ornamental lighting on the bridge, a good railing, and an aesthetically pleasing bridge.

NOMINATIONS, APPOINTMENTS AND ELECTIONS.

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION.

Mayor Spencer said Councilor Donohue had expressed an interest in serving on this Committee.

Councilor Tapscott moved to nominate Councilor Donohue as the City Council Representative to the Historic District Commission. The motion was seconded by Councilor Witham.

Councilor Witham said he feels it is important that this position be filled tonight and he thanks Councilor Donohue for stepping up to the plate. The HDC seldom has a month off and it is important to maintain a Council Representative on the Committee.

The nomination passed unanimously.

LAMPREY REGIONAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

Mayor Spencer said that Councilor Donohue indicated he would be willing to serve on this Board.

Councilor Tapscott moved to nominate Councilor Donohue to the Lamprey Regional Board of Directors. The motion was seconded by Councilor Pepin and passed unanimously.

Mayor Spencer indicated, for a point of record, that he also appointed Councilor Donohue to those committees vacated by Councilor Durkee, namely the Economic Development, Recreation, and E-911 Committees.

LAY ON TABLE.

RESOLUTION NO. 17-13 TO ESTABLISH AN ADDITIONAL FEE ON MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATIONS FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUPPORTING A MUNICIPAL AND TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT FUND.

Councilor Witham moved to remove Resolution No. 17-13 from the table. The motion was seconded by Councilor Tapscott and passed unanimously.

Resolution No. 17-13 passed by roll call vote of 8 yeas, 0 nays.

RESOLUTION NO. 18-13 BOND FOR THE COMPLETION OF A DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT PROJECT, SOMERSWORTH-BERWICK BRIDGE REHABILITATION, AND REPLACEMENT OF HVAC UNITS IN SOMERSWORTH SCHOOLS.

Councilor Witham moved to remove Resolution No. 18-13 from the table. The motion was seconded by Councilor Tapscott and passed unanimously.

Councilor Witham said this Resolution is in regards to an additional bond in the amount of \$1M with that being divided for additional funds for the completion of downtown enhancement projects including the bridge, as well as replacement of HVAC units in the Somersworth School System.

Councilor Witham indicated that if this Resolution passes tonight, we will have made, in the last several months, very exciting progress in the School Department. We have taken some aggressive steps in whittling away at their CIP items. On the City side, the lament

we always hear is about the roads and the town image. We have taken some very forward steps already in that process, and this makes sure we have the money to do the project right. He applauds Councilors Hebert and Sprague for bringing this Resolution to bear because we need to get this project right the first time.

Councilor Hebert said he wondered whether \$1M would be sufficient for this project, and now feels that it will be if the bridge project is being postponed for a year. He is concerned about having enough money to make sure any underground work is done professionally and we do not have to redo it in five years or ten years. The interest rates are low right now. He wonders how other Councilors feel about amending this to \$1.5M or \$2M.

Councilor Tapscott said he feels \$1M is sufficient from his perspective.

Councilor Soldati said she wholeheartedly supports this. She hears complaints about our roads all the time. We want economic growth in our community, and you can't invite people to come into your "dirty yard" and open their business. We want to clean it up and make it attractive. She feels that a lot of our downtown retailers have done an excellent job in making their storefronts attractive. She has heard many comments from outsiders on our wonderful shops and she thinks this project is well worth the money.

Councilor Jarvis said she feels \$1M is feasible. As is she supports this Resolution, however she would not support it if there were any amendments to it.

Resolution No 18-13 passed by unanimous roll call vote.

RESOLUTION NO. 19-13 TO ESTABLISH A CAPITAL RESERVE FUND FOR THE PURPOSE OF A MUNICIPAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT FUND.

Councilor Witham moved to remove Resolution No. 19-13 off the table. The motion was seconded by Councilor Tapscott and passed unanimously.

This resolution is in relation to Resolution No. 17-13 which was passed earlier. The prior resolution establishes an additional fee to motor vehicle registrations of up to \$5. This resolution establishes a capital reserve fund so that those monies that are generated from that additional fee are specifically designated to transportation improvement projects. We have work to be done on our roads and this puts us in position to be able to do that.

Councilor Sprague commented that this Resolution is something we have to do. By State statute, we have to do this and cannot even think about putting this money in the general fund.

Resolution No. 19-13 passed by roll call vote of 8 yeas, 0 nays.

NEW BUSINESS.

ORDINANCE NO. 7-13 CITY COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2013.

Somersworth, NH
December 10, 2012

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SOMERSWORTH THAT, in accordance with Chapter 3.7 of the City Charter which provides that the City Council's "regular meetings shall be held on the first and third Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. unless otherwise designated by ordinance..." and Chapter 6, City Officials, Section 6.8.2 of the City Ordinances which also provides that the "City Council shall meet in regular session on the first and third Mondays of each month at 7:00 p.m., unless otherwise agreed on by a majority of the members of the Council" that the City Council Meeting schedule for 2013 shall be as follows:

- January 7, 2013 and January 22, 2013 (Tuesday)
- February 4, 2013 and February 19, 2013 (Tuesday)
- March 4, 2013 and March 18, 2013
- April 1, 2013 and April 15, 2013
- May 6, 2013 and May 20, 2013
- June 3, 2013 and June 17, 2013
- July 15, 2013
- August 12, 2013
- September 3, 2013 (Tuesday) and September 16, 2013
- October 7, 2013 and October 21, 2013
- November 12, 2013 (Tuesday)
- December 9, 2013

This ordinance shall take effect upon its passage.

Introduced by

Mayor Matthew L. Spencer

Approved:
City Attorney

Councilor Witham moved to suspend the rules in order to have Ordinance No. 7-13 read by title only. The motion was seconded by Councilor Tapscott and passed unanimously.

Councilor Witham moved to suspend the rules to have a second reading of Ordinance No. 7-13 by title in order to act on it tonight. The motion was seconded by Councilor Tapscott and passed unanimously.

Following the second reading of Ordinance No. 7-13 by title, it passed by roll call vote of 8 yeas, 0 nays.

OTHER.

TAX CAP CITY CHARTER AMENDMENT DISCUSSION PER COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE.

Councilor Jarvis said the Finance Committee asked to have this on the agenda for discussion of implementation and what the tax cap City charter amendment meant at this point. As it stands right now, under RSA 49-B:6 IV(b) regarding the charter amendment, the effective date would be July 1, 2013. The City Council has the option to amend this and implement it prior to that date. The difference that makes is that the decisions we make on the current budget we are reviewing for 2014 are made and go into effect no later than June 30th of 2013. As is, it would not be affecting the 2013-2014 budget. It would be affecting the following year's budget. It is up to the Council to leave it as is, or to have discussion about whether it should be implemented prior to June 30th.

Councilor Witham thinks there is still a long way to go before the Council fully understands how to go about implementing a tax cap budget. The only saving grace is there are other surrounding communities that have been through this before and we can lean on their administrative professionals to lead us through the process.

Councilor Witham indicated the City budget for FY 13-14 is already in process. The School Department is well into the process. The City Council is already engaged in the process by passage of numerous bonds over the last several months.

Councilor Witham said he feels that if the individuals who crafted the charter amendment that was voted on wanted an earlier implementation date, it should have been put into the charter amendment language. It was not put in there, and he feels we need to follow the law. He favors not changing the implementation date.

Councilor Sprague said he does not like the tax cap, however it was voted for and he will honor it. We also have a City charter, which is our constitution. He cannot assume the voters wanted it to start before July 1st, 2013. If the creators of the amendment wanted it to be enacted for the current budget we are working on, it was up to them to address that. He doesn't feel they should vote to push it ahead. He will take the numbers into account during this budget year because the voters have spoken, but he is not for pushing it ahead.

Councilor Soldati said she doesn't know if the voters are confused right now, but she is. She honestly doesn't know what to do. She feels we need to abide by the rule of our charter. She does think that the average person thinks it will be in effect when they get their next tax bill. She is undecided on how she would vote on this.

Councilor Jarvis said she does not think the Council should amend this to go into effect prior to July 1st, 2013. The School Department is already partway through their budget and the City is starting budget preparation. She thinks it would put the Council in a very bad situation. We would be pushing through this year's budget more rapidly than we

should and possibly overlooking some serious items. She is in favor of leaving it as is and letting it start on July 1st, 2013.

It was the consensus of the Council to not change the implementation date of the tax cap charter amendment.

VOTE TO REQUEST NH DES PUBLIC HEARING ON THE CITY OF DOVER GROUNDWATER WITHDRAWAL PERMIT APPLICATION.

Councilor Tapscott moved to request a public hearing in regards to NH DES City of Dover Groundwater Withdrawal Permit Application. This is in regards to Willand Pond.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Witham. He feels the City of Somersworth has as much at stake on this as does the City of Dover. They have a lot to gain and we have a lot to lose. He wants to make sure that everything is vetted out in its entirety. He applauds City staff for raising this idea and bringing a public hearing here to Somersworth.

The motion carried unanimously.

COMMENTS BY VISITORS.

Real Roseberry, Ward 1, said the people of Somersworth figured the tax cap would start on 12/01/12. He will be calling the Secretary of State and the Attorney General and will check with them to find out if it should be effective 12/01/12 or 07/01/13. He feels the Council is playing games and they will probably be getting a call from Concord.

Emmett Soldati, Ward 1, said he voted against the tax cap. As a member of the public, he feels we should keep the date at 07/01/13. Prior to the tax cap being on the ballot, we were already establishing our budget and it would be unfair to change this.

Mr. Soldati said it is clear the voters voted for the tax cap, but that does not mean they voted for you to always vote in favor of upholding the tax cap. They voted to require you to have a two-thirds vote to override the tax cap.

Mr. Soldati commented that the holiday parade was such a big success. People crowded the streets to watch it, and it was much longer than he expected. Kudos to the people who put the parade together in such a short period of time. This has really set the pace for next year. Other events that took place that day were the Whistle Stop Open Business Holiday Tour as well as the Night of Lights where businesses had their doors open later so people could do their shopping. He wished to reiterate that people should think local, shop local, and make sure to support your downtown economy because that is how Somersworth thrives.

CLOSING COMMENTS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS.

Councilor Tapscott welcomed Coty Donohue to the Council. He also wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Councilor Soldati reminded everyone that the Chamber is sponsoring its annual gingerbread house contest and that ballots are available in the Recreation Office or the Chamber Office. Voting will continue through 12/14/12.

Councilor Soldati congratulated everybody who worked on the parade. She thought it was wonderful marching in the parade as a City Councilor, waving to people and seeing the smiles on children's faces. Everybody was very happy, and it felt good to be part of it. She thanked the high school students for volunteering, and also the business sponsors. Without them it would have been very difficult. We should be very proud of our City.

Councilor Hebert said this is his first year on the City Council. He wonders if it wouldn't be helpful to get phone calls from Council members to talk about what you will be proposing. He is frequently surprised by things that are proposed. He would appreciate this and feels it is important to have discussion prior to the night something will be voted on. It is important to communicate.

Councilor Hebert wished happy holidays to everyone. He thanked Chief Hoyle for the fire trucks in the parade.

Councilor Witham said he agrees that a phone call or an email might be a lot more productive than a conversation in Council Chambers, but if there is one thing he has clearly understood since taking his Council seat, it is that we have to be very careful not to violate State law with regard to those sorts of conversations. In some cases they are illegal.

With regard to the tax cap and an override position, Councilor Witham said he and Councilor Sprague were on open mike a couple of weeks ago, and the basic question in front of them was "Now that Somersworth has passed the tax cap, what does that mean?" They both replied they were not sure yet and did not understand it and will have to find their way through it. At the end of the day, he did say that once the tax cap goes into effect it will probably require some level of hard decisions.

Councilor Witham said during budget discussions on the current budget, Mayor Spencer had proposed \$800 for a Christmas Parade. He doesn't believe he voted for that and he was a bit of a skeptic. The Mayor and the parade committee have proved him wrong. The parade was outstanding. He was surprised not only by the number and quality of entries, but perhaps even more so by the number of people that lined the streets. It was a very neat event and he applauded the Mayor and the parade committee.

Councilor Witham welcomed Coty Donohue to the Council. He wished everyone a merry Christmas and happy New Year.

Councilor Jarvis said the parade was phenomenal. She has heard nothing but positive feedback. It is amazing what the committee and the community was able to do. It was something this community needed. She thanked everybody that put it together and also those who participated.

Councilor Jarvis welcomed Councilor Donohue. She thinks it will be an interesting year. She wished everyone happy holidays.

Councilor Pepin also welcomed Councilor Donohue and wished everyone a merry Christmas and a very safe New Year.

Councilor Donohue thanked everyone for the warm welcome and also thanked the people who voted for him. He also thanked City staff for being helpful. He thanked the parade Committee and the community and said it was very nice to see families and kids enjoying the parade.

Councilor Sprague welcomed Cody Donohue to the Council and feels it will be a very good addition.

Councilor Sprague said he takes his hat off to everyone that was involved in the holiday parade. He remembers being in parades in years past and it is good to see the parade come back. He wished everyone a merry Christmas and happy New Year. He advised people to shop locally.

Mayor Spencer congratulated and welcomed Councilor Coty Donohue. He wished everyone a merry Christmas and happy New Year and thanked everyone for attending the parade. They are looking forward to having a successful parade once again next year.

ADJOURNMENT.

Councilor Tapscott moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilor Witham and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. DuBois, City Clerk

