

CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP FOR REVIEW OF GOALS – 10/01/2012

Mayor Spencer indicated the purpose of this workshop is to go over our goals that we set at our goal setting session on 2/25/12. He feels it is good to review your goals half way through the year so you can revise, adjust or add to them if necessary.

The Mayor said we can review what we have and then have some discussion.

PRESERVE

- 1) Reuse of Hilltop Elementary School Property – Working Collaboration with the Friends of Somersworth (FOS).

The City Manager had remarked that staff continues to assist when requested. Building Inspector Metivier and Director Sharples met with Nora Molloy to go over historical files from the building.

Yankee Thermal Imaging also met with staff. They received their initial report and are awaiting a follow-up.

Councilor Soldati said she would like to augment that a little bit. Since this was written, FOS has formed a formal Board of Directors. They have non-profit recognition both with the Attorney General's Office and the Secretary of State's Office, and they recently received their IRS tax exempt status as a public charity.

Councilor Soldati added that FOS has been in touch with the new Development Director and identified a couple of grants they might be able to collaborate on. They also have met with Dowling on the City's recommendation, which is a company that deals with heating issues. FOS is awaiting their formal estimate.

Councilor Soldati said the Board of Directors has gotten to a point where they are hoping that by the end of 2013 they will have the first floor done in terms of construction. That will depend on funding. The estimate on heating is \$75,000 by itself. They have developed a floor plan, and that is to make the first floor a ceramic arts center, which would be unique to the entire region.

Councilor Soldati said they have made quite a lot of progress in the last 8 months and they are moving forward. They would be happy to have anyone who wishes to volunteer.

City Manager Belmore reiterated that staff is available at any time to meet with FOS. He commends City staff for making themselves available.

Councilor Soldati said the City has been incredibly helpful and cooperative and has been a great resource to the Board.

Councilor Soldati said the FOS had their first fund-raising event which was very well attended. They raised a significant amount of money.

2) Fund Balance and Stabilization of the Tax Rate.

- a. Continue the strategies for a strong fund balance to assist in the efforts to stabilize the tax rate.
- b. Continue examination of the use of the Capital Reserve Fund and discuss issuance of a bond to address needed capital improvement projects and infrastructure as well.

Council received last year's audit and it is noted that the Fund Balance is consistent with Council policy. Council recently approved a non-capital reserve fund for school and city building maintenance.

City Manager Belmore said in regards to our bonding instruments, there will be moving forward through the Finance Committee to the Council's agenda for the next regular meeting a bond proposal for \$1M, roughly half of which will be for more HVAC work at the schools and the other half to put towards the High Street/Market Street project the Council has already bonded.

Mr. Belmore said we are looking at capital reserve funds throughout the year and how we might stabilize the tax rate and better prepare ourselves for what is in store for us in the future.

3) Sustainability. Our goal is to support our ongoing initiatives on the Sustainability Committee and other possible environmental-friendly efforts.

The Committee received a grant for recycling bins and launched a community garden effort. Part of the funds received from the Clean Air Cool Planet Grant by the Sustainability Committee was used for recycling education. The Committee is going to use the remaining funds from that grant for a traveling display board to be put in various public places to educate the public in regards to sustainable practices.

Councilor Soldati said the Sustainability Committee has made some progress, however she does think the City can begin looking at itself department by department in terms of compliance and actually fostering a sustainable environment. For example, she was dismayed and disappointed to learn that the City uses chemicals to remove weeds on the sidewalks. She further noted there were 3 different chemicals being used on the lawn at Idlehurst. She feels the City would do well in terms of fulfilling its goal of being a sustainable community to start to examine its use of chemicals on City properties and on public ways and do some research into the safety and long-term effects of the chemicals.

She indicated that in the United States there are over 800,000 chemicals that the public is exposed to and fewer than 2,000 are regulated.

City Manager Belmore said he doesn't believe the City is involved in managing the Idlehurst lawn. He believes it is the district. He will be taking this message to the Superintendent of Schools and will be asking his department heads to look internally into what we can be doing better.

Mr. Belmore indicated if the School Department is not represented on the Sustainability Committee, it might be something to consider.

Councilor Soldati asked if the School Department is bound to the City's Master Plan.

The City Manager replied that they fall under our CIP and they fall under our Master Plan.

Councilor Soldati said she doesn't fault them because she doesn't think the issue of sustainability has been brought to their attention, although Idlehurst certainly is a sustainable school.

City Manager Belmore said he is excited about the further study and exploration of the potential solar energy project at the landfill.

Councilor Soldati said that is very forward-thinking and the Committee is excited about that project also.

4) Regionalization. Our goal was to continue to work on and examine opportunities to partner with other communities, the County and the School Department.

Progress towards this goal:

- a. The Police Department recently received a grant which is being administered by the County for the Somersworth and Rochester Departments.
- b. We recently received a joint bid for street line striping with Dover.
- c. We recently purchased bulk copier paper through the School Department purchasing cooperative.
- d. The City continues to partner with neighboring cities on bids. In addition, we partner with Dover, Rochester, Portsmouth and Pease in economic development advertisements.
- e. The City has participated in County regionalization meetings.

The City Manager indicated we do look to joint purchase whenever possible. We also continue to look at joint purchasing of salt and sand for the winter months with Dover or Rochester. We also go through chemical cooperative purchasing for our Water Treatment Plant. We are constantly looking at ways to leverage our purchasing power. We will continue to look at that. We also have Police and Fire Department mutual aid agreements with other area communities.

Councilor Witham indicated there is a model of a regionalized Wastewater Treatment Plant in the Lakes Region where the State of NH actually runs it. The participating communities are members of the Winnepesaukee Basin Project and consists of probably 7 or 8 communities who all contribute to that Wastewater System. Individual municipalities maintain the collection system and the pumping stations. The difficulty of looking at regionalization of those services would be the infrastructure involved. Conceptually it makes sense, but in the current environment he is not sure how that would happen.

ACHIEVE

1) Image and Marketing of the City.

- a. Goal is to recruit businesses, take steps to attract good companies and retain both businesses and talented residents by offering quality services; be business friendly in our approaches to code inspections and business start-ups.

Progress: The Fire Chief recently took steps to modify fire inspection protocol in a more user-friendly manner with the Fire Prevention Ordinance, Chapter 21. It also provides more flexibility for businesses to meet code. Also, the City's Certificate of Occupancy process has been streamlined to allow more expedited review for existing structures.

- b. More positive press; celebrate City successes.

Progress: The City received good press through the LED award received by Director Sharples and new planning intern project. The Fire Department was recognized for assisting the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard during a submarine fire.

Councilor Witham said he feels it is critically important that we wave our own flag as often as we can and our department heads generally look for the opportunities to do that through the press.

Councilor Witham said there are some other areas we can do that with, such as the High Street and Somersworth-Berwick bridge projects. Getting some information on display is important. We need to celebrate ahead of time the things we have going on. We need to let people know what is on the horizon.

Councilor Soldati said that is an excellent idea and she reinforces it. That would mean something to the residents. Possibly we could do a press release and put something on the web site.

Councilor Tapscott said he agrees with this. We could even go a step further and put a big sign on the windows at the high school stating "your tax dollars at work".

City Manager Belmore said he agrees with this also. They recently did a walk with Hoyle, Tanner and PHB around the entire project area and he asked them at that time to get the City some displays. We will make sure to get them as soon as possible.

- c. Foster partnerships with Chamber, Festival Association, Skyhaven Airport, etc.; support efforts like Pumpkin Festival and Children's Festival.

Progress: Draft article was finalized and submitted to the Chamber for printing in the Chamber newsletter.

Councilor Pepin said the Vision 2020 Committee has been actively working with the Festival Association trying to come up with new ideas. The Festival Association does a lot for the Pumpkin Festival also.

Councilor Soldati reminded people that the Pumpkin Festival will be held on 10/13/12 from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. in the Somersworth Plaza.

City Manager Belmore indicated there was a nice piece that the Chamber put in about our new Economic Development Manager, Christine Davis. In November we will be hosting a business before hours here at City Hall.

- d. The new Economic Development Manager would be charged to focus on these ideas and implement steps to accomplish them.

Mayor Spencer stated we now have an Economic Development Manager and we look forward to her working with the Council and promoting the City.

- e. Mayor to explore re-establishing a Christmas/Holiday Parade.

Mayor Spencer indicated there is a committee working on this. They do need some help. People can contact him if they are interested in helping.

- f. Look to bring culture and arts into the City; more destination stops.

The Mayor commented the Friends of Somersworth are doing a great job with that.

2) Code and Property Maintenance – Neighborhood Appearance.

- a. Consider quarterly neighborhood cleanups and more educational outreach on property care; public works to place more trash receptacles in key areas.

Progress: There has been some trash receptacles added on Green and Franklin Streets and four more in the downtown area.

Councilor Witham said he feels this is an area that needs a lot more work. That is both through his personal observation and complaints from constituents throughout the community. This is a red flag issue for our community. He is amazed when he drives down various streets to see couches, mattresses, random trash bags, Somersworth blue bags that are put out on a Thursday and won't be collected until several days later, dumpsters that are not screened. It is an image thing and it is out of control. He knows the Code office takes many of these complaints and one of the things that is painfully apparent when we read the monthly reports is that there are some frequent flyers in the community. The same addresses appear over and over again. He is not sure what the answers are here, other than we are not doing enough.

Councilor Soldati said she shares this view. She commended the City for the added trash receptacles. She recalls having discussions about ways to get compliance.

Councilor Sprague said the previous Council tried to pass an ordinance that would allow inspections of multi-family properties if they were not owner-occupied. The problem was it was going to take about four years to do these random inspections and there was a lot of bad feedback from landlords. His idea was that if someone had three or more violations within a 12 month period it would trigger an inspection. He feels that would get the landlords on board since they would make their tenants keep the outside cleaned up in order to avoid an inside inspection. That would also alleviate our Code Enforcement Department.

Councilor Sprague feels we cannot just have something on the books, we need to enforce what we have and give Code Enforcement some teeth to do that. That would also strengthen the rental market in Somersworth and would show people in town that we are looking out for them.

Councilor Soldati said there is another problem that is related to this. On her street, there have been two televisions on the side of the road for many weeks now. She received a phone call from a constituent who was very frustrated with the City because he had one or two television sets to dispose of. He was told he had to buy stickers and then bring the television sets to Public Works during his work hours. He wondered why the City was making this hard for him. She wonders how many people have been told this and have gone and dumped the television sets somewhere. They start out wanting to do the right thing, but if people work they cannot always get time off from work to do something like this. She is wondering if there is another way of accommodating people with the disposal of these items.

City Manager Belmore said that if people cannot make it during the hours Public Works is open we will do it by special arrangement. They are working on a plan on how we can expand this drop off/transfer station component of our solid waste program. The people at Public Works are putting together some numbers to see if something can be done. We are looking at options on how we might be able to do this better. Regarding stuff on the side of the road, it drives him wild too. He is constantly in communication with Code when he sees this. The City Attorney is working on a submittal to Superior Court on one

of our chronic violators. It is a cumbersome process. He doesn't know what would resolve this, but Council can explore options and put something on the table. The City is open to any suggestions the public or the Council might have.

Councilor McCallion said he knows there is currently training going on for Code that could possibly allow them to write tickets for violations.

Police Chief Crombie said they went to the District Court judge to see if we could do this. The judge said absolutely not, only a police officer can issue a summons. They asked the City of Dover how they handle this, and they said they do it through their attorney. They take it through civil litigation through the Court. Rochester and Portsmouth do the same thing.

Councilor Sprague said Dover has a recycling center that is open on Saturday mornings. We have a lot of land behind the City Barn and maybe there could be some expansion in the future to do something like this.

Councilor Soldati said she likes the idea of being open on Saturday mornings. She asked if the Code Enforcement Department issues warnings.

Director Sharples said the Code Department just wants compliance. Usually there is verbal contact, and people take care of the problem. If that doesn't work, we send out a notice of violation. It is not a summons. If that doesn't work, they have to look at the problem and determine if it is worth pursuing. If so, they would issue a land use citation with an actual court date through our City Attorney.

- b. City staff will examine and report back to Council on possibility of placing Building and Code Office/Property Maintenance under the direction of the Fire Chief/Fire Department operations. Examples of this model include the City of Dover and Town of Bedford, NH.

Progress: Follow-up discussion and meetings were completed. Staff recommendation was accepted not to make any change at this time.

Councilor McCallion said he thinks that decision was made because we were going to pursue this other avenue of training.

With Code Enforcement being at City Hall, there is more supervision and staff support. Logistically it doesn't seem to be the best fit right now. There is also a lack of physical space at the Fire Station.

- c. Council's Economic Development Committee to examine possible City ordinance amendments to better assist with property maintenance and code compliance.
- 3) High Street Infrastructure/Sidewalks/Streetscape.

Mayor Spencer said we have talked about these items a lot lately and there are already a lot of plans in the works.

4) City Information Outreach to Community

- a. Continue improvements to the website.

Mayor Spencer said he was looking at websites this afternoon and one City had archives for City Council agendas and minutes that went back to the 1950's.

Scott Smith indicated our website goes back to 2007. We have not digitized anything going back that far. That would be quite a project.

- b. Complete new Cable Franchise Agreement and institute educational channel and eventual Public Access Channel.

Mayor Spencer said we are still working on our Cable Franchise Agreement.

- c. Explore/implement WiFi Access in downtown area (check Pittsfield model). This was referred to staff and the Council's Economic Development Committee.

5) Review City Procedures for more Electronic Efforts.

- a. Implement motor vehicle e-reg; consider more paperless City transaction efforts for direct payments and banking lockbox process.

The Mayor indicated we do currently have e-reg online; we also have the EZ Pay Program.

6) Support of Local Business.

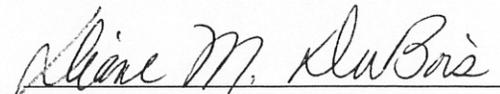
- a. Continue "buy local" options and initiatives to include banking efforts (perhaps vendors like Warrens office supplies in nearby Maine as well as NH and locally based financial institutions).

Councilor Soldati said in terms of public education "buy local" is an initiative that encourages cities, towns, municipalities and individuals to help their local economy. "Local economy" means looking at who owns the business and where the money goes. It means determining if the money stays in the area as opposed to going elsewhere. The whole State of NH is our local economy.

Councilor Soldati indicated the Chamber, in conjunction with the City, will be launching a major "buy local" campaign.

Councilor Tapscott said that in the process of building the Idlehurst School the Joint Building Committee insisted that all local contractors be used as much as possible.

Respectfully submitted,


Diane M. DuBois, City Clerk

