SOMERSWORTH PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES OF WORKSHOP MEETING
NOVEMBER 20, 2013

MEMBERS PRESENT: **Anthony Delyani, Vice Chairman, Bob Belmore, City Manager, Dave Witham, City Council Representative Ron LeHoullier, Paul Robidas and Chris Cortez, Alternate.**

MEMBERS ABSENT: **William Sweeney, Chairman, Dan Proulx, Ernie Gallant and Paul Maskwa, Alternate.**

STAFF PRESENT: **Dave Sharples, Director of Planning and Community Development and Tracy Gora, Planning Secretary.**

The meeting was called to order at 5:37 p.m.

1) PUBLIC MEETING

A) Review and discuss proposed 2015-2020 Capital Improvement Plan.

Bob Belmore, City Manager addressed the Board and stated that he will give a PowerPoint slide show to go over the proposed 2015-2020 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) (copy attached). Stated that the slide show is just for the City side of things and not for the school. Stated that City staff and School Department staff are present to answer questions. Stated that the slides are pretty much the same as last year with this year's numbers. Stated that this is a rolling, six year plan. Stated that Finance Director Scott Smith will address the Board ad Director of Planning and Community Development Dave Sharples will talk about the three major downtown projects. Reviewed the second slide regarding authority and stated that the City Charter requires that this plan be submitted to the City Council every year. Stated that State RSA requires that the Planning Board review the plan before being reviewed by the Council. Reviewed the next couple of slides which goes over the CIP development process. Stated that once submitted the Council will either schedule a workshop to discuss the plan or couple it with their goal setting session. Reviewed the next slide on the criteria for a project to be included in the CIP. Stated that it needs to have a useful life of five or more years, have a cost of $10,000 or more and meet one of the other criteria listed on the slide. Explained the three priority ratings of projects. Stated that for 2015 the City projects net just under three million dollars. Reviewed the priority one recommendations, which includes water proofing City Hall, a new Fire Station, equipment for the Fire Department, police cruisers, Maple Street culvert replacement, and others. Stated that a priority is road resurfacing and reconstruction and that there have been discussions on using new technology to accomplish that. Stated that there is money from the transportation fund. Stated that a one million dollar bond will soon retire and that they are considering a replacement bond for future road reconstruction. Reviewed priority two and three projects, which include back up generators for City Hall and Public Works, a thermal imaging camera, a plow truck, etc. Review projects to be funded over several years including the thermal imaging camera, breathing apparatus, portable radios and police cruisers. Stated that replacing the police cruisers helps to keep the maintenance budget down.

Scott Smith, Director of Finance addressed the Board and reviewed the pie chart showing the 2015 funding sources. Stated that 41% of funding comes from the operating budget and that other funding sources include lease/bonds, grants/other and the enterprise fund. Stated that the net tax impact is just over $475,000, which is about .56 cents on the tax rate.

Dave Sharples, Director of Planning and Community Development addressed the Board and stated that he will give an update on the three major downtown projects. Stated that the engineering study phase of the Transportation Enhancement (TE) project has just been completed and that the next phase is to get a notice to proceed with a preliminary design.

Stated that they are hoping to go out to bid on that project this spring. Stated that the Somersworth/Berwick Bridge project will be going out to bid soon and that they expect to start construction in the spring and end in the fall. Stated that it is a one-season project. Stated that the downtown infrastructure project is looking to finish up for the fall. Stated that there will be some winter work but that it will be limited. Stated that construction will resume in the spring and end in the fall.

LeHoullier stated that he would like an overview from the School Department.

Jeni Mosca, Superintendant of Schools addressed the Board and stated that they tried to spend last year going over what got accomplished, where they want to go and how to present that in a six year plan. Stated that they decided to focus on HVAC and asbestos. Stated that the Council afforded the School Department with extra money through the bond process to tackle the HVAC units. Stated that they are about halfway through the process of replacing the HVAC units. Stated that the Council also allowed for window replacement at the High School, which was done. Stated that they continue to tackle the asbestos problem. Stated that last year they focused on the High School and that this year they will be completely removing the asbestos from the Middle School. Stated that other projects are the replacement of lockers at the Middle School, repair the bathrooms and office area at the Maplewood School and the doors and windows at the Middle School.

Witham stated that in years past they discussed how everything was together as priority one and applauded that it has been stretched out year to year. Stated that he likes that approach and that it seems more achievable.

Mosca stated that they got feedback from last year and that they have worked to present a document that addresses concerns and to show that they are trying to be fiscally responsible. Stated that projects haven't been kept up over the years so they want to address infrastructure and see if their needs are the same. Stated that they have been working on this all year.

Witham stated that there are a couple peaks, specifically in FY17 regarding the Career Technical School. Asked if that is the City's portion or if it is shared.

Mosca stated that the Career Technical School was built in 1990 so it is due for a renovation. Stated that they are due for their renovation in FY17 but that they have met to discuss the possibilities of what could happen. Stated that they submitted an estimate with what they plan to do for renovations. Stated that they have formed a committee to try to plan for ten years out. Stated that the State will pay 75% and that the school needs to provide the rest. Stated that they put it in the CIP for FY16/17, which coincides with the money that will expire at that time. Stated that they are starting the preliminary work.

Robidas stated that there was matching money for the Idlehurst School but thought that it ended. Asked if there is a potential that some funds could go away by then.

Mosca stated that there is always the potential for funds to go away. Stated that it's like there are two buckets: one for building aid and a different one for the Career Technical School. Stated that these renovations happen throughout the State and that right now funding is 75%/25%. Stated that it would need to be done by 2019.

Robidas asked what happens if they miss their window of opportunity.

Mosca stated that another school could take their spot and they would have to go to the end of the line.

Robidas stated that he wants to echo what Witham said and that it is nice to see progress being made. Asked about the impact from the tax cap. Asked if it will shut any projects down or have an impact on the schools.

Witham stated that the Career Technical Schools in the State are regional and asked if any other communities help support this.

Mosca replied not directly and that it's the City's center. Stated that there is a Tri-City arraignment with Rochester and Dover and that Somersworth can send students to those schools and vice versa. Stated that some communities have to pay tuition to send students to use but that it is our building so the cost is on us.

Witham asked if any added cost gets calculated into the price of tuition for the other students.

Mosca stated that she doesn't think so and that the State sets the tuition rate.

Robidas asked about the impact of the tax cap.

Smith stated that it is going to be a challenge and that they have to look at the budget as a whole. Stated that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 1.3%. Stated that the total increase for the City would be $450,000 and to fund it would exceed the tax cap.

Witham stated that typical budgets include retirement, etc.

Smith stated that he hasn't looked at the operating budget yet.

Witham stated that when they develop of CIP they look at the needs and try to flatten it out so you don't see spikes. Stated that they try to look at debt that is expiring and replace that. Stated that it is a key piece for developing the CIP. Asked if they consider undesignated fund balances.

Belmore stated that they don't consider that when developing the CIP. Stated that they do look at the debt that is retiring. Stated that they have had internal discussions on the tax cap and that they will need to have a workshop with the Council for clear direction moving forward. Stated that there are override provisions for certain things and provisions to protect the public regarding City's services.

Witham stated that there are certain projects where they are actually a number of smaller projects lumped together, like the work at the Noble Pines. Asked if it makes sense to lump the projects together or separate them and show smaller progress over the years.

Belmore stated that they have discussed doing that before.

Sharples stated that they have talked about that but some projects on their own don't qualify to be included in the CIP. Stated that they could separate some of them.

Witham stated that this document isn't set in stone and that it is very fluid. Mentioned getting grants to lighten the load.

Belmore stated that the benefit of having it in the CIP is to show everything at once. Stated that there are certain benefits for showing it in this type of document.

Witham stated that he would like to have a conversation about the fire station. Stated that a number of years ago there was a place holder in the CIP for an addition and modifications but

they looked at it and felt that it may make more sense to build a new station instead. Stated that he would like to see why a new station would be better than renovating the existing one.

Belmore stated that when Interim Fire Chief Bliss was here, he didn't think it made sense to renovate. Stated that Dover just built a new fire station. Stated that the Fire Fighters are there all day and that they live there. Stated that there is not a lot of room in the existing station. Stated that the operation and organization of the department needs more room. Stated that the existing station may not meet code. Stated that there was a discussion with Council on how they man the station and that perhaps there is a need for other officers like a deputy Fire Chief. Stated that they talked about bringing the Office of Code Enforcement to the fire station like some other communities do. Stated that they look to see how they can be more efficient and effective. Stated that rehabilitation was a lot of money so they looked at building a new station.

Keith Hoyle, Fire Chief addressed the Board and stated that the existing fire station is not earthquake proof. Stated that it is starting to crumble now and that there are structural issues. Stated that they do not have separate quarters for female fire fighters. Stated that it is at a great location but that it is not up to code and they can't expand.

Witham stated that it has less to do with the upkeep of the building but with how it was originally constructed.

Hoyle stated that it doesn't conform.

Cortez confirmed that they would reuse the site.

Hoyle replied yes and stated that that is what they would recommend because it is in the middle of the City. Stated that they are not hampered by the location.

Cortez asked about the timeframe.

Hoyle stated that it would probably take a year to build a new station. Stated that the department could use half of the station and knock down the other half and then bring trailers in.

Cortez asked if there was a design yet.

Hoyle replied no and stated that this is just in discussions now.

Belmore stated that this hasn't been discussed at Council yet and that there needs to be more conversations to take place. Stated that he has talked with the National Guard and they can help with housing apparatus if needed.

LeHoullier asked about the timeframe.

Hoyle stated that it is in the CIP for next year but that he assumes that it would take several years to go through the process.

Belmore stated that if it doesn't get placed in the budget then it will get pushed back.

Witham stated that an important point about the CIP is that since he's been on Council, it has never been fully funded. Stated that it gets hacked because of funding and priorities change.

Belmore stated that the decision-makers need time but that they have to make the community aware of what they need.

Robidas asked if there is a way to save money with a new fire station. Stated that Dover has a new station and asked if we could use their plans.

Belmore stated that he would be willing to look at that.

Robidas stated that engineering and design costs are expensive.

Hoyle stated that Dover doesn't have enough apparatus bays. Stated that this is the only station for Somersworth and that they also need to look to the future.

Cortez agreed that they need to keep the discussion of a new fire station going.

Witham stated that typically the Planning Board forwards a letter to the Council that articulates their view of the plan. Stated that last year an element of the letter was to direct the school to have more manageable pieces and it worked.

Robidas stated that last year the Board recommended that the Council adopt the plan.

Motion: Witham moved that the Planning Board recommend adoption of the CIP as presented and underscore that wherever possible as bonding instruments retire that bonding debt be looked at to address some of the needs that were articulated tonight.

Seconded by Robidas.

Delyani stated that he agrees with Witham regarding the concept of bonding year to year to stretch it out.

LeHoullier thanked the school department for acting on the recommendations from last year.

Delyani thanked everyone for attending.

Motion carried with a 5-0 vote.

Motion: Witham moved to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Robidas. Motion carried with a 5-0 vote.

Meeting adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Tracy Gora, Planning Secretary
Somersworth Planning Board