

MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL MEETING

APRIL 15, 2013

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

Mayor Spencer called for a moment of silence for the victims of the bombing at the Boston Marathon.

COMMENTS BY VISITORS.

Councilor McCallion moved to hold public comment to three minutes per person due to the large number of people here. The motion was seconded by Councilor Jarvis and passed by a vote of 7 yeas, 2 nays, Councilors Witham and Sprague voting in the negative.

Carrie Mute said she has been a Somersworth EMT for the last 2-1/2 years. One of the things they learned in EMT training is how to listen to our patients. When we arrive on a scene, the first thing we do is assess the situation by listening. She encourages the Council to take the time to listen to the citizens of Somersworth. Over the past week they have been going door-to-door, from business to small business, engaging with citizens about the issue of who will be awarded the ambulance contract with the City. The citizens support the work that AMR does and the services they provide to the City. Taxpayers, residents, small business owners, husbands, wives, grandparents, all support the work AMR does. Tonight she would like to present to the Council the nearly 450 cards people have signed in support of AMR over the last ten days. These are the voices of your constituents supporting AMR. They also heard that 50 residents sent emails to the Council and that dozens of phone calls were made. This community means the world to her, and she appreciates the opportunity to serve each and every day.

Ellie Ann Ivy said she wished to say thank you to the EMT's and paramedics for saving lives in our City for over thirty years. We owe them a debt of gratitude for the work they do. They do things and see things that many of us could not handle and a lot of us would not be here if it were not for them. The workers at AMR know their jobs. That is why she thinks we should renew their contract with the City. We trust these workers with our lives and they are our friends. They work with our firefighters and they have good relationships with hospitals. She doesn't see any need to bring in outsiders who do not know our City. These hardworking EMT's and paramedics also provide good care. Also, we need to keep our tax dollars here in New Hampshire. AMR is an American owned company and they employ nearly 50 EMT's and paramedics in the area. We want to keep these experienced workers right here in our City. They know how to keep us safe better than anyone. She hopes the City will go ahead and renew the contract with AMR.

Dennis Therrien, 78 Market Street, said in years past he and his wife would occasionally bring a meal to a gentleman who was a recluse that lived in their neighborhood and he wouldn't let anybody in. One day, when his wife brought some food, he didn't answer the door, but she could hear him very faintly. They asked the Police Department to do a wellness check and they did. When they entered his home it was found he had around 35 cats and there was fecal matter and urine all over the place. The police officers could not bear the smell and backed out of the room gagging. Two individuals from AMR went in to the building and stayed with him and cared for him. They ignored the odor and treated him with dignity and loving care. He appreciates what they did.

Mr. Therrien said he is a former firefighter and knows the importance of knowing your city, knowing your streets. He supports this group of individuals and hopes the City keeps them here.

Joshua Danley said he has been a paramedic and EMT for AMR here in Somersworth for seven years. He thanked the residents who came out to support quality EMS. You can tell by the number of people here that this community really understands the value of public safety. They have served Somersworth for quite a long time and they would like to continue that. What he has learned over the last few days is that the community values partnerships. People want to know that professionals are working together to provide the best service possible. They work as partners with firefighters and area hospitals to make sure residents get what they need. He hopes the City will consider renewing the contract with AMR so they can continue to do what they do best.

Sean Houle, Somersworth Professional Firefighters, Local 2320, said he is here representing the firefighters and fire officers of the Somersworth Fire Department. They are the men and women that respond in your time of need. Their members care about being there for the citizens of the City, to respond fast, and with the right resources to make a difference. For them, the optimum coverage for our City is fire based emergency medical services. There is a direct connection in response time between someone's heart stopping and a fire occurring. You must arrive within 4 to 6 minutes of either of these events in order to make a difference. Arriving in time is only half the battle. They need to be trained and they need to have the right equipment to handle either of these emergencies. He is here tonight to urge the Council to continue our relationship with AMR. While they may not be able to achieve their optimal situation, fire-based EMS, AMR has a long history with our City and understands our Fire Department.

Mr. Houle said he wished to clarify a few points of misinformation. The problems their local has had with AMR in the past have been local management-based. The management that was recently replaced found no interest in making sure our Fire Department operated at a high level of skill. Many of their members dropped advanced certifications because that group of managers made it impossible for them to operate at that level. Also, they are the workers that actually fight fire and do EMS work, together with the workers of AMR. They have tried to work as a team. They had no input, nor were they asked when the City decided to go through a request for proposal process. Furthermore, they wholeheartedly disagree with the recommendation of the RFP

Committee. They are very concerned that the new ambulance service is run by the same managers that they feel created many of their early criticisms. In their opinion, this creates an unhealthy environment and makes them concerned about the potential for mission success. They have met with senior management of AMR and they have assured us they will work with our department as a partner, and not as a competitor. They have already agreed to provide them with tools and training necessary for them to provide a higher level of care to our citizens.

Mr. Houle said AMR has been serving this City for decades. Keeping our current EMS provider, local and experienced, affects public safety. He knows that fire-based EMS is the best route for this City, however until that day comes he urges the City Council to maintain an effective and efficient level of services for our citizens. He trusts that the City Council puts public safety as its highest priority. Changing EMS providers at this point is not in the best interests of the City or its citizens.

Bill Connor, Pinewood Drive, read his letter which referred to the City Council Meeting of April 1st, 2013 during the portion of the meeting where citizens are allowed to make comments. At that time, a citizen presented his comments about agenda item No. 2 “Emergency Ambulance RFP”, including the minutes of the Public Safety Committee Meeting of March 29, 2013.

The City’s Public Safety and Interview Committees are comprised of well-educated and highly regarded professionals who are equipped to be more than familiar with RFP requirements, their specific details, and are able to comprehend legal agreements.

The Interview Committee’s panel initially conducted and completed their interviews with the three ambulance company officials. The Committee then approved forwarding their findings and recommendations over to the Public Safety Committee who then performed a comprehensive reviewing process of all three ambulance company’s submitted proposals, focusing on the Interview Committee’s recommendations, service response times, costs of provided service, beneficial offerings and contract guarantees, adverse changes in service, and criteria that professionals normally review during such an assignment.

After deliberations, the Public Safety Committee decided by unanimous vote that their recommendation be brought forward to the City Council as to which ambulance company the Committee had selected.

And now back to citizen X at the podium, what gives me thought-provoking concern would be that during this individual’s extended timeframe at the podium while expressing his opinions and rationale regarding agenda item No. 2 was his unrestrained use of disrespectful, libelous, disparaging language and hurtful remarks aimed at:

1. Public Safety Committee and City staff.
2. City Council members.
3. City Manager and his wife.
4. American Ambulance Service (AASNE) organization and its staff.

5. City Planning Board.
6. Strafford Regional Planning Commission.
7. Citizens having the misnomer of being “Home Boys”.

It seemed to give an impression that nobody went without being scathed, with exception to our family pets.

At the conclusion of his second time at the podium, he accused the City Council with broad statements such as “cronyism is the normal and usual practice of this City Council in the handling of these matters”.

The definition of cronyism is “the act of doing cronies (long standing friends) favors; special treatment and preference given to friends or colleagues, especially in politics”.

I would reject this most egregious labeling of this City Council and the Public Safety Committee, as it is the most outrageous of allegations of wrongdoing.

What is the definition of ethics? “A code of recognized morality and decency: a system of moral principals governing the appropriate conduct for a person or group and how they conduct themselves.”

The administrative, legal, corporate management of a City is highly complex and requires dedicated professional personnel to oversee and maintain its infrastructure and daily operations to insure the safety and well-being of the community and its citizens.

The Honorable Mayor and the City Council are the legislative branch of our City’s government, are responsible for making the most difficult of decisions, passage of budgets, resolutions, ordinances, appointments, the creation and overseeing of committees and boards, and the awarding and funding of legally binding contracts when necessary. They have all sworn to do this work in an unfettered and unbiased fashion, to serve the public devoid of any conflicts of interest in accordance with the City Charter (Article VI), subject only to their own limits and restrictions.

They are widely recognized to be beyond reproach and are distanced from the influences of union organizations, self interests, or newsprint articles.

I would only ask that when you are in attendance at your church service this coming Sunday to thank your God that you are living a rich and full life and to say a healing prayer for those whom have trespassed against you and to forgive them.

William L. Connor
Pinewood Drive, Ward 2

Jen Myers said she is a taxpayer and a resident of Ward 4. She is an eight year firefighter/paramedic with the City of Dover. They respond to Somersworth as part of mutual aid. By doing that, she gets to see this issue from both sides. Their department

runs fire-based EMS at the paramedic level, which allows their citizens to achieve the optimal medical service. Firefighters arriving first on scene with the proper training and equipment assures higher chances for success. As a fire service professional, she has serious concern that many Somersworth firefighters drop their advanced level certifications because of a group of managers that made it difficult or impossible for them to operate at this level. In Somersworth, a provider of ambulance service must view the department as a partner. Coordination and cooperation of emergency services has to work in cohesion across public safety disciplines, fire, EMS, and police.

Ms. Myers said she is here tonight to urge the Council to consider enhancing fire-based EMS in the near future. As elected officials charged with public safety, you need to do everything possible to create an environment that will protect the people of our City. Somersworth must partner with those seeking to provide emergency medical services that will work collaboratively with public safety services, and not competitively. She urged the Council to continue the contract with AMR. They are local, they know the City, they have expressed a strong desire to continue to work with the Somersworth Fire Department in protecting our City. As a firefighter, decisions are made based on an analysis of the emergency in front of us. To do so without regard to the neighborhood the person is from, whether they are rich or poor, and they certainly do not allow politics to weigh into their decisions. She is asking the City Council to do the same. Fire-based EMS works in the City of Dover and in many surrounding towns. She knows that it would work in the City of Somersworth as well, however, until we can make that transition, she urges the City Council to not change providers at this time. AMR deserves this contract.

Eric Anderson, Ward 4, said it is tough for him to speak here because he has worked with some of the people who are on the Council, and from 2001 through 2005 he worked for the City of Somersworth as a firefighter. He has also worked with a lot of the people at AMR. It is difficult for him to speak about the former AMR management that is now the management of American Ambulance. He is fully in support of sticking with AMR ambulance. His decision to leave Somersworth and start a job with the City of Dover as a firefighter/EMT was because of the management of AMR. When he was on the Somersworth Fire Department, he was the only EMT-Intermediate. With that certification, he had to complete a certain amount of skills within the year in order to keep his license with the State. He had zero support from the management of AMR in order to let that happen. He was told by medics that worked for AMR at the time that he was not allowed to use his skills under their license. It was difficult for him to keep his certification. He had to volunteer his time at the hospital in order to perform the skills necessary to keep his certification. At that time he tried to make a difference by trying to get the Fire Department to work more as a team with AMR and that didn't go over very well. The core problem with the City was that management did not work well together. At that time, he was told by AMR that they did not want or need firefighters on calls with them.

Mr. Anderson asked the Council to think about the citizens of Somersworth and make the decision that is best for them.

Thomas McIntee said he is the regional Chief Executive Officer representing AMR. He is asking the Council to consider the offer proposed by AMR in response to the City's RFP for ambulance service. What you see here tonight is a great example of teamwork, a team that has worked together for years and has been tested and won the public's trust. For more than 30 years, AMR has been a committed partner with the City and their employees have faithfully served Somersworth citizens in their time of greatest need. They are asking the Council to insure continuity and to permit AMR the opportunity to broaden and deepen the public/private partnership between AMR and your City firefighters.

Mr. McIntee said in response to the RFP, three proposers first considered whether to fully comply with the terms set forth in the RFP, then they each decided how much they would commit to Somersworth over the coming three years and what sort of innovation and program improvement would they include in their offer. Once those decisions were made, the proposers sealed their bids and delivered them to the City. When those bids were opened, AMR clearly had the best proposal. Along with the base proposal, there were offers contained there which would have added more benefit to the City. Those offers were never explored. One thing they have proposed, their greatest system enhancement, was the commitment to train, equip and support Somersworth firefighters in advanced life support clinical levels. This public/private partnership was viewed as a significant improvement that would save lives and elevate patient care in the Somersworth EMS system.

Mr. McIntee said in closing, they asked that the Council consider AMR's dedication and superior commitment, their willingness to be strong partners with the public sector, and they also ask that you consider the request of many of our supporters as you deliberate the future of EMS in Somersworth.

Lewis Fields, 67 Kelwyn Drive, said he is against renewing a contract with AMR for the simple reason that he has been listening to them on the scanner for the last two months and they frequently don't know where they are going. If they are that well trained, they should be able to figure out where they are going. They have brought new ambulances in, but he rode in their old ambulances and they were clunkers. They had very high mileage.

Denise Stuart, 275 High Street, said she is a diabetic and has been for 42 years. She has called AMR frequently and they have responded very quickly every time. They are always very professional. She hopes the City will continue the contract with AMR.

Martin Dumont, 73 Crest Drive, thanked the Mayor, City Council, City Manager and staff for what they do for the City. He commended the City Council for taking the time to do due diligence in researching this issue. Choosing the appropriate ambulance service for the City is a very important task. It is unfortunate that not everybody did the same amount of diligence. He commended the Committee and the City Manager for their

efforts in evaluating the proposals submitted. He agrees with their recommendation of American Ambulance being the most qualified to provide the service we need.

Mr. Dumont called attention to the fact that the demographic in this City is elderly. We have a rich history of millworkers and industrial workers. They depend on a fixed income and they pay the part of the bill the insurance doesn't cover. It is the elderly who are the recipients of the services of the ambulance companies. The burden is placed upon our residents to offset the increases. AMR decided to raise their charges, and then they decided to rescind it. This is probably because the RFP was requested.

Real Roseberry, 405 Route 108, said AMR had a contract for 30 years with no opponent. Now there is a new ambulance company, and there is competition. AMR doesn't like competition. AMR's proposal consists of a lot of lobbying. He had people come to his house on behalf of AMR who weren't even from New Hampshire. This is your union for you. American Medical has employees working for them that used to be with AMR and he wondered what the reason was. He also wondered why AMR is going public on the stock market. The answer is they need money.

Mr. Roseberry also wondered why AMR doesn't have their 911 dispatch in Somersworth. They have it in Newton, MA. American Ambulance will have 911 dispatch right here in town if they get the contract. They also have six new ambulances. He feels the City should go with American Ambulance. This will give some competition in the City. AMR never had any competition.

Mr. Roseberry said both companies are good. The Council has to make up their mind.

Councilor Witham moved to suspend the rules to go beyond the 30 minutes allotted for public comment. The motion was seconded by Councilor Pepin and passed unanimously.

George Guilmette, 7 Wolcott Street, said he thinks what is happening here is a bunch of political b.s. We've elected a Council to do their job, the Public Safety Committee has made a recommendation, and he believes they made the right recommendation. He feels the Council should follow this and do the job they were elected to do. We do not need people coming in from out of state, passing fliers out around homes all over town, and distracting from what is really going on in this City. We have had a great relationship with AMR. The people who have left AMR and gone to work for American Ambulance have over 200 years of combined experience, and they know this City.

Mr. Guilmette said he has heard AMR employees on the scanner also, indicating they don't know where they are going. There are life safety issues here that need to be addressed. He believes we should go with American Ambulance for this contract and if it doesn't work out we have competition in the area.

Russell Timmons, Ward 1, said he is thankful for the opportunity to address the Mayor, City Council, and staff. He was asked to participate in the selection process to recommend a City ambulance service. He read the proposals, listened to the oral

presentations, and a decision was made based solely on those two criteria. Three ambulance services had competed for the contract. The committee members were not influenced by unions, public opinions, on any outward or inward influences. There were no backdoor politics, and no feelings of entitlement. They made a recommendation based on the two requirements of a verbal presentation and a written presentation.

Mr. Timmons said they recommended American Ambulance. They believed then as he does now that American Ambulance is the best ambulance service available to serve the City of Somersworth.

Mr. Timmons said AMR has provided the ambulance service to Somersworth for years. Whether they were known as Benoit's, Chalk's, or AMR, they answered our calls when an ambulance was needed. It was not without incident. There have been missed opportunities by AMR to provide that highest level of response in answering our medical needs. Of late, they have been in contract with the administrators of AMR to resolve some serious communication issues. Simply stated, it has taken far too long, on occasion, for AMR to get on scene. They still have radio communication problems and they have not yet been resolved. In closing, he stated that his reputation in Somersworth is important, as is the reputation of all who participated in the selection process. He has great distaste for those who suggest that this selection was done fraudulently or with any pre-determined outcome.

Kenneth Vincent, Ward 3, said he is for fire-based ambulance service also. He has 30 years of fire service. What is important is patient care. He has listened to the complaints of firefighters over their dislikes and likes of AMR.

Mr. Vincent indicated we have talked about Paul Robidas tonight several times, who was an employee of AMR and now works for American Ambulance. Mr. Robidas is a resident of this City, he is going to be working for American Ambulance, and he would rather have a resident working in this City. He pays taxes here. He toured American Ambulance recently. They have new equipment. Now, suddenly, AMR has new equipment instead of their sub-standard equipment they previously had.

Mr. Vincent said part of the new equipment brought here by American Ambulance is a new dispatch center which will now free up the Police Department from their 1,000 to 2,000 calls for EMS alone. Those calls would now be going directly to American Ambulance. They have state of the art equipment here.

Mr. Vincent said he is in favor of giving the contract to American Ambulance. On top of everything, they have good quality people with a lot of time as paramedics. He is probably odd man out, because he is part of local 2320, but he believes everyone is entitled to their opinion.

John Joyal, Ward 4, said he is upset that the Council cut the comment time from 5 minutes to 3 minutes. He referred to an article in Foster's on Sunday showing an individual from American Ambulance, Charles Maymon, holding a document, stating

“there were no additional offers made to the City of Somersworth following the submission of their original RFP”. You can see a little blue shaded area on the document he had in his hand stating “new offer from American”.

Mr. Joyal wondered if Mr. Timmons is here as a committee member for the RFP, or was he sharing his thoughts as a professional reference for American Ambulance. The previous speaker spoke of American Ambulance like it was an American company. It is not an American company, it is a foreign company.

Mr. Joyal said the people who have been calling people in Somersworth and sending emails and knocking on your doors are union activists. They are the kind of people that gave our country its freedom. They believe in standing up and fighting for a cause. They are not lobbyists, they represent the workers of AMR.

Mr. Joyal said if any City Councilors complain about anybody calling them or sending them an email, they should be ashamed of themselves. That is how this country works.

Mr. Joyal said that he and his family they appreciate it if the Council supports AMR.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY CITY COUNCILORS.

Councilor Soldati announced that on 4/20/13 the Somersworth Festival Association will be holding a craft fair and farmer’s market at Somersworth High School beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Councilor Soldati indicated the Chamber of Commerce is now seeking nominations for business of the year, citizen of the year, and teacher of the year. The deadline is 4/22/13. She hopes people will take the time to introduce a nominee. The forms can be obtained on the Chamber web site, somersworthchamber.com.

Councilor Soldati announced that on 5/04/13 they are having the sixth annual Spirit Up Somersworth day. Everyone will gather at the Middle School early in the morning to clean up the City, and from noon until 2:00 p.m. there is going to be a party. She hopes to see people there beautifying our City.

Councilor Witham extended thanks to the many community members that came out this past Saturday morning to clean up the various ball fields in the City. It was a good work product. There were 50 to 100 people who came out to get things spruced up getting ready for the playing season. Thank you to all who helped.

MAYOR’S REPORT.

The Mayor reported the following activities:

- April 3rd – Toured American Ambulance of New England (AANE).
- April 5th – Invited to speak to a gathering of Tri-City Covenant Church members.
- April 6th – Attended the City Council Budget Workshop.

- April 12th – Toured American Medical Response (AMR).
- Received Somersworth Housing Authority Payment in Lieu of Taxes for approximately \$22,000.
- April 15th – Proclamation reading and tour for the Topper Tots Child Development Center. I proclaimed this to be the Week of the Young Child™.

WHEREAS, the Topper Tots Child Development Center and other local organizations, in conjunction with the National Association for the Education of Young Children, are celebrating the Week of the Young Child™, April 14-20, 2013; and

WHEREAS, these organizations are working to improve early learning opportunities, including early literacy programs, that can provide a foundation of learning for children in Somersworth; and

WHEREAS, teachers and others who make a difference in the lives of young children in Somersworth deserve thanks and recognition; and

WHEREAS, public policies that support early learning for all young children are crucial to young children’s futures;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT KNOWN that I, Matthew L. Spencer, Mayor of the City of Somersworth, do hereby proclaim April 14 - 20, 2013 as the Week of the Young Child™ in the City of Somersworth, and encourage all citizens to work to make a good investment in early childhood in Somersworth.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES.

Councilor Jarvis reported the Finance Committee met on 4/12/13. They reviewed the Hoyle Tanner Associates engineering contract amendment for the downtown infrastructure project. Due to the scope of the design being changed including street scape, conduit for street lights and additional survey work, there was an amount of \$79,270 that needed to be added to the resolution bringing it to a total of \$317,470. The committee members voted 3-0 to support that resolution, which will be coming forward.

PUBLIC WORKS & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE.

Councilor Sprague reported this Committee met on 4/12/13 and discussed the following items:

- Went over the Hoyle Tanner Associates contract amendment and agreed to adopt that also.
- Unitil Trench Permitting – They are currently going to be putting a large investment in our community. When they bought Northern Utilities the PUC mandated that they upgrade the lines from steel to plastic. With us redoing the downtown corridor, they agreed to come during the next few months with three crews and get it all done now so we don’t need to worry about tearing up the road

again. They have asked us to waive the bonding requirements and the trench permitting requirements that we presently have in place. The committee decided not to waive the bonding requirements, but has decided to adopt what Dover is doing right now. Typically trench permits are involved in small areas. They will be doing a long gas line and to do nuclear testing would be an astronomical price for them. They decided to have them do some nuclear testing when they commence the work, and as long as they keep compacting in the same way, they decided to waive the third party nuclear testing. The City would still have the authority to enact the testing at any point in time if they feel it is needed.

- Street line striping plan – They had the wrong linear footage when they put out the bid but they corrected it. They notified both companies who bid on the project and they both had no problem with the price they had given us per linear foot. The committee decided to cut out a couple of spots, saving the City about \$1,000.

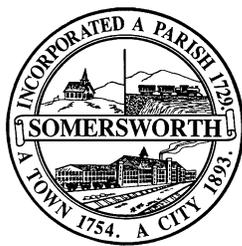
Councilor Sprague indicated he met with Hoyle Tanner on Monday of that week along with Councilor Jarvis, Councilor Soldati and Councilor Tapscott. They reviewed Option C of the downtown plan with them and gave them some feedback on some of the issues.

On Thursday, he and Councilor Witham conducted a site walk with staff and members of Brox Paving and Bourassa Construction on the delamination project on High Street. They will be putting a sign up within the next couple of days notifying residents they will be commencing work next week. Utility work will be starting next week and will take a couple of weeks, then paving will take about a week.

REPORTS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES.

Councilor Pepin reported there will be a joint workshop tomorrow with the School Board at 5:30 p.m. at the Career Tech Center Conference Room in reference to the school budget.

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, April 12, 2013

SUBJECT: City Manager’s Report for Monday, April 15, 2013

City Council Agenda

6:45 p.m. Public Hearing

Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive Application from Brian Caple, Manager, Gunwale Properties, LLC for Property Located at 44 Market Street

New Business (under Section 14 of Agenda)

Other

- A. Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive Application from Brian Caple, Manager, Gunwale Properties, LLC for property located at 44 Market Street.** No later than 45 days after the Public Hearing, the City Council shall render a decision to grant or deny the tax relief and if so granting establishing the relief period. This time frame does allow the Council time to further evaluate and if needed to ask for more information.
- B. Emergency Ambulance Services Agreement.** All City Councilors should now have received copies of the three company proposals. Respectfully, the process was drafted with input from the Council's Public Safety Committee. The full City Council was informed of the process and panel make-up by email on March 14th and at the March 18th City Council meeting. Without objection, the ambulance company interviews were conducted. There were no proposal addendums requested by the City or new formal proposals received. Each company did provide information on how they would meet the City needs best, and each company offered to negotiate in order to enhance their proposal. The results were reported back to the Public Safety Committee who was steering the process back to the full City Council.

City Manager's Items (under section 10 of the Agenda)

A. Informational Items:

1. Meeting Reminders.

- a. There is a joint City Council – School Board meeting tomorrow night at 5:30 p.m.
at Somersworth High School, CTC.
- b. Budget Public Hearing is next Monday, April 22nd starting at 7:00 p.m.

2. Somersworth – Berwick Bridge Project. I received a telephone call on Friday to inform me of two scheduled meetings.

- a. Final Bridge Design Public Hearing, Wednesday, May 8th at 6:00 p.m., Berwick Town Hall
- b. Bridge Utilities Staff Meeting, May 8th at 2:00 p.m., Berwick Town Hall

A. Attachments:

1. City Department Head Monthly Reports
2. Proposals from AMR, American Ambulance Service, and CarePlus Ambulance.

Councilor Sprague commented regarding the bridge design, stating that a member from Berwick, ME was talking with staff stating they want to bring the water line underneath the bridge back to the table. The City Manager expressed our concerns about this, stating we are not going to pay for the water line, it is Berwick's dime. As far as he is concerned, he would like them to take their light down. That is impacting our community. The gentleman from Berwick agreed with him. The bridge will be an extension of our downtown and he feels we need to do this together and that the light could be a bargaining point for them to have the water line.

Councilor Sprague referred to the monthly report from the Department of Development Services, asking what "Operation Stakeout" is all about.

Councilor Witham moved to suspend the rules to allow City staff to speak. The motion was seconded by Councilor McCallion and passed unanimously.

Dave Sharples explained there are continuous problem areas that they deal with regarding garbage in the street, up against houses, and in alleys. He directed the Assistant Code Officer to go to these areas and talk to people about the problem, and possibly sitting in the area on occasion. The problem is they never see anybody doing it, then they get a complaint. He hasn't received any complaints lately, so maybe it is working.

NOMINATIONS, APPOINTMENTS, AND ELECTIONS.

- Conservation Commission - Emilee Kenyon, term to expire 4/2016.
- Historic District Commission - Beth Poulin, term to expire 4/2016.
Arthur Hendrickson, term to expire 4/2016.
Julie Rowe, Alternate, term to expire 4/2016.
- Trustees of Trust Funds - Tammy Sneddon, term to expire 4/2016.

The Mayor indicated these nominations will be acted on at the next regular meeting.

NEW BUSINESS.

Other:

COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION TAX RELIEF INCENTIVE APPLICATION FROM BRIAN CAPLE, MANAGER, GUNWALE PROPERTIES, LLC FOR PROPERTY LOCATED AT 44 MARKET STREET.

Councilor Witham said he believes there is a public benefit to this application. Section 7 of the ordinance outlines the public benefit. Item A says that it enhances the vitality of the downtown. The applicant has indicated that a restaurant will be put into that location, a restaurant that he feels would be a destination venue. That would enhance the economic vitality of the downtown area. Item C says that it promotes the development of a compact and vibrant municipal center and talks about safety and a greater sense of community.

Councilor Witham indicated the building was run down with boarded up windows, not a vibrant municipal center and not the safest type of building. The building also had a number of structural concerns that this project looks to address. That hurdle is clearly met.

Councilor Witham said the one thing he is not sure about is the length of time we should grant for tax relief. The ordinance says we can grant tax relief for up to 7 years. He asked if Director Sharples could address the Council and talk about what factors we should use to determine how many years tax relief should be granted.

Director Sharples said we are all working through this because it is the first application we have received. He looked at how other communities addressed this. Sometimes they looked at the pay back period on what was spent, also what will be gained from an income producing property such as this. He feels it is a completely discretionary act. He didn't see any hard and fast formulas that people used. In most cases they gave 5 years, but in some cases they gave the additional years.

Councilor Witham said he asked the applicant earlier if our investment in the downtown factored in to his decision to do this project. With the investment the City is making to the downtown, 5 years seems like a reasonable number to him.

Councilor McCallion said he chaired the Committee that brought this forward and really spent some time on it. It is very important to get that first person to really make that investment. At any time we can pull it off the table and we can extend it. He thinks 5 years is a middle ground road to go with. We really need to embrace anybody that is willing to make an investment in the downtown right now providing they meet the criteria.

Councilor Sprague said he applauds Mr. Caple for stepping forward and being the first to apply for this tax relief program in Somersworth. This allows someone to make an investment and not get hit twice. He is open to going for 5 years, but wouldn't have a problem going the 7 years, because it is like found money. We are open for business.

Councilor Soldati thanked Mr. Caple for being the kind of developer that we have been looking for, someone who takes pride in their work and creates an attractive product that is well built. He has really gone the extra mile. For that reason, she agrees with Councilor Sprague about going the full 7 years. She would like to keep his money a little more liquid and hopes that sometime during the 7 years he will look at other properties.

Councilor Donohue said as a member of the Economic Development Committee and the Historic District Commission, he has reviewed Mr. Caple's proposal. He has also seen some of the work he is doing at the building and some of his other properties, and he seems like a really good landlord, the kind Somersworth wants. He cares about his properties, his tenants, about codes and safety. This project is the best case scenario. He is in favor of giving Mr. Caple the 7 years.

Councilor Jarvis asked Director Sharples if we grant 5 years if we can come back and extend it at a later time.

Director Sharples said he did not believe so, not under the same application.

Councilor Witham said the idea of keeping Mr. Caple's assets liquid appeals to him. There are a lot of properties that could use that development.

Councilor Sprague indicated that this property is in the Historic District and he knows the outside improvement to the property would be regulated differently than in a regular district and the dollars do not go as far. That is another reason he feels the tax relief should be granted for the full 7 years.

Councilor Witham moved that Community Revitalization Tax Relief be granted for Brian Caple, Manager of Gunwale Properties LLC, for property located at 44 Market Street, for a period of 7 years based upon the public benefit described during our discussion.

The motion was seconded by Councilor McCallion and passed unanimously by roll call vote.

EMERGENCY AMBULANCE SERVICES AGREEMENT.

Councilor Sprague recused himself from debate and vote on this matter.

Councilor Witham moved that the City Manager be directed to draft a 3-year agreement/contract with American Ambulance of New England (AANE) in line with the RFP submittals for City Council consideration and/or approval.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Pepin.

Councilor Soldati said she is uncomfortable with the RFP process that was undertaken, maybe because we have never put our ambulance service out for RFP's. AMR's contract was always extended. That raises the question as to why we are doing this now. She is not impugning the integrity of any of the people on the panel that made the final decision, but they are human beings. Human beings sometimes have a hard time being completely objective if there are personal relationships involved. She would have preferred and would recommend in the future that the City consult with LGC for best practices in doing RFP's. She feels that would have served our citizens well. She appreciates every phone

call and email she received. It doesn't matter to her that the verbiage in each email was exactly the same. She has been a community organizer herself many times in the past, and there is nothing wrong with that, as there is nothing wrong with union organizing.

Councilor Soldati said she would like to see the City investigate best practices in the RFP process so that our citizens can have faith in the work of this Council. For that reason she is not going to support the panel's decision.

Councilor Jarvis said she has a lot of respect for both ambulance services. She has met with them and feels that both provide great service. Going forward in the future, we need to consider having an outside board. She does respect the people on the panel, and she knows they did not take this lightly. She has respect in their decision and she will support that.

Councilor Witham said if you follow this Council even remotely, he would hope that people would agree that he takes his time, does his research, does his homework, reaches out to people and listens to people before he makes any decision. He is never married to a decision. He finds himself to be a thoughtful person, and a person who cares deeply for this community, which is why he ran for City Council. He works in Concord, NH, so there is no geographic reason for him to live here. He is active in the community, having umpired Little League Baseball for 35 years, and is currently President of Babe Ruth Baseball. He helps out at his church breakfast, has been on the Charter Commission, was at one time on the Somersworth Festival Assoc. (SFA) Board of Directors, and now volunteers for the SFA putting up signs. He also spent 23 years as a call firefighter, and sometimes drove ambulances owned by AMR. He likes everybody in the community and cares deeply about the community. He has ridden in an ambulance 5 times during his life.

Councilor Witham said he has experienced the delivery side of EMS both here and in other communities. In those instances where the EMS provider was AMR, he had no trouble with their service. They were there promptly, they delivered professional care, transported him to the hospital, his insurance company paid the bill.

Councilor Witham said in the course of the decisions he makes as a City Councilor, whether it be this one or any other one, oftentimes his list of friends on Facebook diminishes. He ran for office not to make friends or keep friends. Probably tonight he will lose a few more friends. That comes with this job. Some decisions are very easy to make if you want to get re-elected because you vote with the popularity. It is not always the right decision to make. Citizens of this community put him into office because they wanted to entrust him to make informed, thoughtful, careful decisions on their behalf. Many of those citizens are elderly residents or those that are less fortunate. Some do not have good insurance, some do not have any insurance. If he was voting on that alone, he would have voted for Care Plus because they had the cheapest rates available to those residents. If he was to think about what is best for our firefighters, maybe AMR would be best.

Councilor Witham said he supports a fire based EMS model. It needs to make sense, it cannot be hasty, it needs to be done right and have the proper oversight. The proper oversight within our agency currently doesn't exist with only one Chief Officer. We would need to have another administrator within the Fire Department. That is not where we are at tonight. That is a discussion for the future. What we need to do is find the solution that is going to work for our residents.

Councilor Witham said to answer the question of how we arrived at an RFP process, there are a number of stories. The vast majority of calls answered by AMR in this community are handled without incident, but not all of them, and that is the concern. Every call matters, not just the majority of calls. One night as he was driving by the Fire Department he saw a Farmington ambulance dropping off a Somersworth firefighter. When he asked what a Farmington ambulance was doing here in town, he was told there were a number of factors, not the least of which is the current contract we have with AMR. The way it is structured there is a sharing of ambulances. There was a lack of ambulances that day and they had to call Farmington for an ambulance, taking 40 minutes to arrive for a man having difficulty breathing. There was another incident on a Saturday morning in January, under current AMR administration, when there were several calls for service. Some of the calls ranged from 15 to 20 minutes to get an ambulance there. That is too long. He was hearing of these problems with service and as Chair of the Public Safety Committee they discussed these problems at a meeting. What he heard, very loud and clear, was people thought the problem was with how the current contract reads and that we have an ambulance that we share with Berwick, ME, at least part of the time. That is a model that probably worked a decade ago when both communities were smaller and the demand for EMS was less, but that isn't where we are today. Both towns are busier and we needed to change the contract. He feels there was a communication breakdown to our public safety agencies. In the RFP that was agreed upon unanimously by the Public Safety Committee and by this Council unanimously, we went down a road of trying to improve the contract to deliver quality patient care for the citizens of Somersworth, to reduce response times and provide training for our firefighters.

Councilor Witham articulated that this is a zero dollar contract for the City. He has to think about all the citizens of Somersworth, and American Ambulance rates are cheaper. We hear a lot about the medics in the community and the services they provide, and we wonder about the abilities of those that might be with American Ambulance, or Care Plus if we had decided to go in that direction. What he knows is that here in the State of New Hampshire everybody from an EMT Basic to a paramedic is certified and licensed. Those things are checked on a routine basis by State agencies. He also knows that the ambulances owned by the companies are checked by the State to make sure they are roadworthy, and that they have the proper equipment on board. What we have to worry about is the product that is going to be delivered here on the streets in Somersworth.

Councilor Witham said much has been said about things AMR has done to get the word out here in town, and they are certainly entitled to that. That is their prerogative. Not too many months ago, he knocked on a lot of doors and sent a lot of emails and spoke a lot

here at this podium trying to deflate a tax cap. He didn't win that one, but he tried hard. He understands that process. What bothers him is when the process is clouded with a bit of misinformation. He received several emails from people he knows here in the community, but he also received several that said they "support us keeping the City's current EMS provider" coming from people who do not live in the community. He appreciates their concern for our community, but he needs to think about our residents. He also received a lot of phone calls driven by something that appeared in Foster's over the past week talking about the City "outsourcing its 911 services". When a person dials 911, the person who answers the call is not someone at AMR or American Ambulance, it is received at PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point), located in Concord, NH. The PSAP is equipped with an emergency medical dispatcher who then would route the call to the Somersworth Police Department. When it is a medical call, the emergency medical dispatcher will oftentimes stay on the phone with you and guide you through care until a proper authority arrives. We are not changing who answers your 911 calls. This was a bit misleading to people who do not understand how this business works.

Councilor Witham said what he wants to know, and what he wants residents to know, is that when they dial 911, that life-saving care is going to arrive quickly, and it is going to provide the best patient care possible to give them a chance. He is making his decision based upon facts, and he is basing his decision heavily on well-paid, experienced, professional staff that we hire here in the City to help guide our decisions.

Councilor Witham said if the Council tonight decides to go with AMR, he believes the contract they have developed through the RFP process will better position us from where we are today. If they decide to go with Care Plus, even with the \$65,000 it will cost us, it will put us in a better position that we are in today. He also knows that with an extension of the current contract with AMR we will continue to share an ambulance with Berwick, ME. That is not what is best for the citizens of Somersworth.

Councilor Donohue commented that he met with both companies. He met with the executives as well as the workers, and he met with members of AFSCME, and he appreciates all the work they did to spread the word. He also took some tours and checked out the equipment. He also went through the RFP's, and probably researched this topic more than any other during his time on Council. Through that research, it became clear to him why the panel recommended the company they did, and why the Public Safety Committee then recommended it to us on Council. He does feel that everyone at AMR does a good job. Through his research he has concluded that going with American Ambulance will be best for the City.

The motion that the City Manager be directed to draft a 3-year agreement/contract with American Ambulance of New England (AANE) in line with the RFP submittals for City Council consideration and/or approval passed by roll call vote of 7 yeas, 1 nay and 1 abstention, Councilor Soldati voting in the negative and Councilor Sprague abstaining.

COMMENTS BY VISITORS.

Dave Loren, paramedic with AMR, said he has been an EMS for 21 years, and a medic for 14 years. He stressed that the Council has made a wrong decision. The employees at AMR have over 200 years of experience. The new management lowered the rates. You will see your service go down because the previous AMR management is at American Ambulance. He thinks they made a poor decision.

Marty Dumont, Ward 3, said this was a difficult decision. He liked the process and he is proud of each and every one of them. He expressed his gratification. We had a room full of professionals here tonight and they do a great service to whatever community they are in. Our City Manager leads in a great way. Councilor Witham's comments tonight touched home a lot. Thank you all for what you do. Tough decisions take strong people to make.

George Guilmette, Ward 4, thanked the City Council for the choice they made. He feels they made the right decision. We'll see what happens in the future.

Real Roseberry, Ward 1, said he feels the Council did the right thing. They did what he told them to and used common sense. You went by the facts and it is a win-win situation for the City.

Ken Vincent, Ward 2, said the decision made was the right one. This is all about patient care and we can't lose sight of that. He commends them for stepping up to the plate. They have tightened up the contract. This will keep American Ambulance honest and keep their nose to the grindstone.

John Joyal, Ward 4, said he is not surprised by this decision. Every time you hear people talk about what they want, you always go against what the people want. He knows Mr. Witham is a neighbor of one of the individuals who runs that company and he knows Mr. Timmons is very tight with that individual. He is not at all surprised.

CLOSING COMMENTS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS.

Councilor Sprague said he recused himself on the vote for the ambulance contract tonight and it bothered him quite a bit to not be able to vote on this. If he had voted, it would also have been for American Ambulance. He respects the Council and the people of Somersworth and he wants them to know where his vote would have gone. He did a ton of research on all three companies. At the end of the day, he questioned why we haven't done this process before. We will have a stronger contract going forward. He learned that presently our firefighters, when they arrive on scene, do not have the ability to start administering emergency medical services, they have to wait for a paramedic service to come in. He wants to push for our firefighters getting those levels of training that would allow them to do this. It has to be a partnership between the Fire Department and American Ambulance.

Councilor Sprague said he has all the faith in the world in American Ambulance, especially Charles Maymon who is the regional CEO of the company, that they will do everything that is needed to work with our Fire Department. We need to work in unison.

Councilor McCallion said any time you have a situation where there are two sides it can be hard making a decision. The Council relies on the Public Safety Committee and City staff and respects their decisions. It was plain and simple that there was a clear choice. We do not take these decisions lightly.

Councilor Witham said current issue aside, oftentimes our City staff gets unfairly blamed for decisions that are made. A few years ago some positions were cut back or eliminated and that is done through the budget process. You should put the blame on the City Council, not City staff.

ADJOURNMENT.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. DuBois, City Clerk