

MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL MEETING

NOVEMBER 12, 2013

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

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.

- Minutes of City Council Meeting held on 10/21/13 – **Motion by Councilor Pepin to accept the minutes of 10/21/13. The motion was seconded by Councilor Tapscott and passed unanimously.**

COMMENTS BY VISITORS.

Bill Boulanger, 55 Myrtle Street, said he is back to continue the discussion about roads. He appreciates what the City Council is doing. They need to keep that on the top burner. He hopes the Council starts putting dollars in the budget for road improvements, specifically High Street, Main Street, and Blackwater Road.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY COUNCILORS.

Councilor Soldati announced that on Thursday, 11/14/13, there will be a public service presentation on the Affordable Care Act at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. There will be someone here from the State and someone from Goodwin Community Health to answer all your questions.

Councilor Soldati announced that on Tuesday, 11/19/13, the Chamber of Commerce will be holding a Business After Hours at Hilltop Chevrolet at 5:00 p.m.

Councilor Soldati announced that on Thursday, 11/21/13, the Chamber of Commerce will hold a public information session about their trip to China. This will be the sixth year they do this. The trip will be in March and it is very affordable.

Councilor Soldati announced the Chamber of Commerce annual Gingerbread House Contest will be held again this year and there will be three prizes of \$100 each (one per category). The Gingerbread Houses will be on display at City Hall.

Councilor Hebert thanked everyone who voted on 11/05/13, especially in Ward 3.

MAYOR'S REPORT.

Mayor Spencer reported the following:

- 10/23/13 – Attended Wizards Basketball Fundraising Game at Somersworth CTC.
- 11/11/13 – Attended American Legion Post 69 Veteran’s Day Ceremony.
- Congratulated those who ran for office and congratulated all the winners.
- Appointed members of an Ad Hoc Committee for Parking in the Downtown Corridor as follows:
 - Councilor Marty Pepin, Chair
 - Councilor Brian Tapscott, Vice-Chair
 - Police Chief or his designee
 - Dave Sharples, Director of Planning and Community Development
 - Jeff Pratt of 4 Grand Street
 - Thomas Bascom, owner of Somersworth Tax Service and LPL Financial
 - Vanessa Polychronis, Manager of New Beginnings Boutique
 - Councilor Soldati as Chamber of Commerce representative
- The Christmas Parade will take place on 12/14/13 at 4:00 p.m.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES.

RECREATION COMMITTEE.

Councilor Pepin reported this Committee met on 11/08/13 and discussed the following items:

- Security light at Noble Pines is too bright. Staff will work with PSNH to correct the problem.
- A resident asked Councilor Donohue if there is an outline of the walking trails in the City. Director Sharples indicated they are working on doing this via GPS. The information will be on our web site.
- Discussion about dissatisfaction with the paving job at the skateboard park. It is too cold to work on it now, but hopefully it can be corrected in the spring.
- Some of the fencing that was donated several years ago is in disrepair. Staff will evaluate and get back to the Committee.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE.

Councilor McCallion reported they met on 11/04/13. They discussed the following items:

- Legislation on building codes and keeping up to date.
- Discussed the properties at 28 Green St. and 1 Winter St.
- They asked Economic Development Manager Christine Soutter to look into the Getty Station. She is looking at other funding through Strafford County.

PUBLIC WORKS & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE.

Councilor Sprague said they will be meeting on 11/20/13 at 8:00 a.m. They will be going over new road projects. They will have an update on the downtown improvement project. They will

be talking about the road maintenance program. Our road program needs to be brought up to snuff.

REPORTS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES.

SCHOOL BOARD.

Councilor Pepin reported the School Board met on 10/22/13. He gave a copy of the financial statement of the school budget to date to all Councilors. The School Board also met on 11/07/13. High School Principal Sharon Lampros gave a presentation on recertification of schools. There is a process where people come in and look at all the schools. The cost for this is about \$20,000 to \$25,000. She whittled it down to about \$15,000. This is something that has to be done if we want our schools to be certified.

COAST BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

Councilor Pepin reported they met on 10/23/13. Free transportation was given to military and veterans on 11/11/13. Route 2 is going to be expanding after the holidays. The Portsmouth area will be doing extended hours. They will be stopping bus runs around 8:00 p.m. on 12/24/13 and 12/31/13.

NEW BUSINESS.

DISCUSS POSSIBLE DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENT CHANGE ORDER FOR MARKET STREET REGARDING GRANITE PLANTERS.

Following much discussion, **there was a motion by Councilor Witham, seconded by Councilor Soldati, to approve the change order request, which would encompass using existing granite from Market Street to build a retaining wall in front of businesses further up the street on the opposite side.** Councilor Hebert said he planted about one thousand lilies in that area several years ago and he hopes they will be transplanted somewhere else. **The motion passed by a vote of 8 yeas, 1 nay,** Councilor Hebert voting in the negative.

Councilor Sprague moved to stick with the original Option C for benches, mixing backless benches and those with backs, and going with the hooded version of trash receptacles without a recycling section. The motion was seconded by Councilor McCallion and passed unanimously.

It was the consensus of the Council to hold off on making a decision regarding light posts.

DISCUSS POSSIBLE BROWNFIELD'S GRANT APPLICATION FOR CLEANUP OF THE PROPERTY FORMERLY KNOWN AS BRETON'S CLEANERS LOCATED AT 1 WINTER STREET.

Councilor McCallion said this property comes before the Council every year. This year there are changes in the regulations and we have the urgency of trying to get this grant. Because this property has been vacant for so long, there is a chance there might not be as much contamination as we thought.

City Manager Belmore said that if this property is cleaned up it would have to be monitored until it is deemed totally clean. We would need a resolution to accept a tax deed on the property. He had a conference call with Attorney Beliveau that gave him some unease about going forward with this. We need to make sure we are comfortable with this before we go forward.

Councilor Tapscott said there are seven items Attorney Beliveau is concerned with. He cannot vote in favor of this tonight. We would have to take control of the property without knowing if we will get the grant. He would rather wait until December.

Manager Belmore said we would have to wait 30 days after taking the property before applying for the grant.

Councilor Sprague said if we wait until next year the only thing we would be chancing is their changing the rules again.

Councilor McCallion said because of the government shutdown there is a little leeway this year. It could still be in line if a resolution is passed in December.

Manager Belmore said there will be a resolution on the agenda for the December meeting. He will speak with Attorney Beliveau and ask him to be here.

EFFECTIVE DATE FOR NEWLY ADOPTED CITY CHARTER AMENDMENTS.

Councilor Tapscott said the amendments were all processed through the Government Operations Committee. There were 13 changes voted on, 9 of which were requested by the Attorney General's Office to meet State standards. The City Attorney sent a memo stating they would normally take effect on 7/01/14 unless Council votes otherwise.

Motion by Councilor Soldati, seconded by Councilor Donohue, that the charter amendments, as passed by voters, be effective immediately. The motion carried unanimously.

CITY COUNCIL CERTIFICATION OF RETURN OF VOTES FOR THE 11/05/13 MUNICIPAL ELECTION.

Councilor Witham moved to certify the return of votes for Wards 1 through 4 and postpone certification of the return of votes for Ward 5 due to the fact there is a recount scheduled for 11/13/13. The motion was seconded by Councilor Donohue and passed unanimously.

COMMENTS BY VISITORS.

Bill Boulanger, 55 Myrtle Street, felt that a JBC should have been created to deal with the decisions regarding the downtown improvement project. He also commented that if the City is going to replace utilities all the way to the houses in the downtown area he has a couple at his house he would like paid for. He has to pay for his utilities from the curb stop in. He reiterated his feelings about road improvements in the City.

John Joyal, 1 Molly Lane, agreed with Mr. Boulanger, stating taxpayers deserve better infrastructure. He feels the big box stores should pay for the road improvements. He commended the Council for improving the downtown. He wondered if the medical buildings on Route 108 pay property taxes, or if they are all non-profit. He felt the number of voters who came out to vote was better than surrounding communities. He does not feel that political signs should be on public property.

Real Roseberry, 405 Route 108, agrees with everything Mr. Joyal said except his feelings about political signs. He feels that taxpayers should be able to put political signs on public property.

CLOSING COMMENTS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS.

Council members thanked everyone who came out to vote on 11/05/13.

Councilor Witham recognized Bill Twitchell who recently passed away. Mr. Twitchell served on the Fire Department for many years and made many contributions to the City. He agreed with Mr. Boulanger that a JBC should have been created for the downtown improvement project, however Council members are very excited that this is happening. Councilor Witham favors the road study that would be done by the company out of Maryland. Councilor Witham heard the Somersworth Festival Association is considering moving the Children's Festival out of the downtown area in 2014. He feels it should stay in the downtown.

Councilor Sprague agreed with this, stating the construction should be about 90% done by then.

Councilor McCallion congratulated the Pee Wee Team that made it to the championships on Sunday.

ADJOURNMENT.

Motion by Councilor Tapscott to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilor Pepin and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. DuBois, City Clerk

