

Economic Development Committee  
Executive Conference Room  
November 7, 2014  
8:00 AM

Committee Members Present:

Councilor Jonathan McCallion, Chair  
Councilors Collins, Sprague and Witham

Administration/Staff Present:

City Manager Bob Belmore  
Finance Director Scott Smith  
Building Inspector Timothy Metivier  
Code Enforcement Jack Kenyon  
Deputy City Clerk Elise Brellis

Others present:

Chair SHA Robert Crichton  
Commissioner SHA Martin Dumont

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Councilor McCallion, Chair of the Government Operations Committee, opened the meeting at 8:04 AM.

City Manager stated that Dave Sharples and Christine Soutter were away for training and excused from this meeting.

APPROVE MEETING MINUTES.

Councilor Witham, seconded by Councilor McCallion, made a motion to accept the minutes of the October 14, 2014 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

CODE ENFORCEMENT CONCERNS AND SB347 ADOPTION.

City Manager Belmore spoke of the new SB 347 legislation which will allow New Hampshire cities and towns to issue summons for land use violations, hopefully resulting in better compliance and enforcement. He would like to have a presentation for Council in December or January. Councilor McCallion thinks it would be good for the public to hear. CM Belmore reported that the law can be implemented on Jan 1<sup>st</sup> without Council action. A draft citation form and fee schedule, developed by Tim Metivier, with assistance from NHMA attorney Steve Buckley and City Prosecutor Bill Harper, was discussed. Belmore said the fee schedule needs clarification. Councilor Witham believes the fines are too low. Mr. Belmore is okay with higher fees as long as the law allows. The Committee wants clarification about who is cited: whether it is the tenant or the property owner/landlord. While the consensus was that the property owners are ultimately responsible, both code officers expressed that some situations may be easily

resolved by dealing with tenants. Tim Metivier assured them that in all cases, the property owner will be notified of violations. The Council will provide feedback on the form via a workshop, but Councilor Witham doesn't think the Council should "approve" the form. CM Belmore wants clarification as to when violators actually appear in district court. There was discussion about how Rochester handles these situations. The City Manager said they could look at that system and propose options next year such as hiring a property maintenance prosecutor, bike surveillance, etc. Both Councilors Witham and McCallion agreed that they would support a "robust" discussion on this topic. Mr. Belmore said we will need the addresses of all landlords.

The committee discussed the status of City action regarding two particular locations of concern; specifically they just want compliance so that garages are not conducting business as junkyards and no one is dealing in junk cars/scrap metal inappropriately. The Council also wants uniformity of enforcement, so that all (i.e. garages in the City, etc.) are in compliance. The City Manager will seek a legal opinion. Councilor McCallion wants to speed up our actions. They will schedule a televised workshop and likely invite the City Attorney to attend. Councilor Sprague asked about the status of another property and was given a quick update by Tim Metivier.

Tim Metivier and Jack Kenyon left the meeting at 8:35 AM.

#### REVIEW CITY INVENTORY OF REAL ESTATE PROPERTIES-UPDATES.

Two properties were to be discussed: the former creamery property on Green Street and the former police station on Main Street.

CM Belmore reported that the prior potential buyer for the old police station has backed away from their proposal. Two of the five Somersworth Housing Authority Commissioners, Robert Crichton and Martin Dumont, were present to express the Housing Commission's interest in the property. After summarizing his impressions of the building and the amount of work that would be required, especially on the first floor, Bob Crichton asked the committee what the City was looking for and whether the prior proposal was available for review. (It was not.)

Councilor Witham, speaking for himself, said that he wants the building occupied in some meaningful way with a first floor commercial space with market rate or better upper floor rentals. He thinks that a vibrant downtown needs these types of properties. He will never support selling it for \$1.00.

Marty Dumont, speaking as Chair of the Queensbury Mills, would like to help focus on the downtown. He said they have some resources and he is interested in feasibility. He thinks they need a particular kind of entrepreneur to make it work; it is no good if it doesn't succeed, he said.

There was discussion about the extent to which parking is a problem. Councilor Sprague does not want it to be just housing, He said that the split is intriguing. The idea of tearing

it down and starting again or creating a park came up again. He will not support selling it without a restaurant or retail (venture) in the proposal and he would like the deed to reflect that is how the property continues to be used; the Council wants to protect the community. Walkability and parking in the downtown area were discussed. Councilor McCallion said that the downtown needs a draw. The suggestion of leasing for a couple of years or other enticements, just to bring someone in, was offered by Councilor Sprague. Mr. Crichton feels that the Housing Authority would need some issues ironed out up front.

Getting back to SB 347, Councilor McCallion wants Housing to help educate about the new law. He mentioned pamphlets or brochures. He wants a discussion with Housing about this.

Robert Crichton and Marty Dumont left the meeting at 9:06 AM.

The committee considered “Miscellaneous” issues before discussing the property on Green Street, as they will most likely go into non-public session to discuss the Green Street property.

#### MISCELLANEOUS.

Parking on Constitutional Way was revisited. Councilor McCallion now thinks that it should have stayed two-way during construction. By instituting a one way pattern and putting side by side parking on the other side of the street, they can utilize 22 parking spots. Other configurations, one way with parking on the alternate side of the street creates 13 side by side spaces, or two-way with parallel parking along one side. Councilor Witham talked about a switchback near Washington Street, where the road narrows. He said it was clearer that way, (that it is one-way.) Councilor McCallion thinks traffic doesn't flow right the way it is. Councilor Collins said that when he was campaigning and talking to people, this issue was the second most talked about concern that people had. The suggestion was made that perhaps the pattern could be two-way just to the bank,

CM Belmore reported on noise, smoke, fights, etc., at a private club at the Plaza, and how these issues are affecting other tenants. A discussion about liquor licensing *under one roof* ensued. CM Belmore said he will talk to the Police Chief.

CM Belmore reported the following:

Councilor Witham motion to go into non-public session at 9:18 AM. (NH RSA 91-A:3-d). 2<sup>nd</sup> Councilor Collins, roll call vote 4-0.

Councilors discussed a proposal that the City received to purchase and develop City owned tax deeded property, 28 Green Street (former property referred to as Chabot's Creamery).

The City Manager received some direction from the Committee in regards to getting more details about the possible purchase and development.

Motion to come out and then adjourn- Councilor Witham/Councilor Collins 2<sup>nd</sup>- 4-0 vote at 9:38 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

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Elise B. Brellis, Deputy City Clerk