

Minutes of City Council Meeting
Wednesday, January 24, 2024

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mayor Gerding and, upon roll call, the following Council members were present: Pepin, Vincent, Paradis-Catanzaro, Michaud, Messier, Witham, Goodwin, Cameron, and Messier

Councilor Gibson was excused during roll call.

Councilor Gibson arrived after roll call.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilor Vincent led the Council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

RECOGNITION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE – OUR NATIVE ANCESTRAL AMERICANS

Mayor Gerding read the Recognition of Indigenous People – Our Native Ancestral Americans

PUBLIC HEARING

There were no public hearings scheduled.

COMMENTS BY VISITORS

There were no public comments.

CONSENT CALENDAR

- A. Approve Minutes of the City Council Meeting held on January 8, 2024
- B. Letter of Resignation from Alternate Member of the Planning Board Paul Goodwin

Councilor Cameron made a motion to adopt the Consent Calendar as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Pepin and passed 9-0 by voice vote.

COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications.

COMMENTS BY CITY COUNCILORS

Councilor Witham shared comments regarding the Willand Warming Center. His comments included the cost sharing responsibilities of Dover, Rochester and Somersworth and those Communities being the primary funding sources of the Center. He confirmed that Somersworth funds \$15,000 as well as providing in-kind emergency services to the Center. Councilor Witham clarified that he understands that the Center is necessary during the cold winter nights, however, that it is not solving the problem of the life circumstances that have led individuals to rely on the Center and he feels that is where there needs to be improvements. He stated that the population of individuals utilizing the Center are not only from the Tri-Cities and therefore, the funding is not equitable as the responsibility has fallen on Dover, Rochester and Somersworth and that is not fair.

Councilor Witham requested calls for service data from the City Manager from emergency personnel to the Willand Warming Center and he noted that the calls service has increased. He added that the increase in the number of individuals utilizing the Center, with upwards of 100 individuals on any given night, one might expect that the calls for service could increase. The increase in occupancy have raised safety concerns for him and he wonders if the Center is outgrowing its need. Councilor Witham made a plea to the public for ideas and feedback. He stated that he has felt the “not in my backyard” perception due to increased calls, crime, abandoned shopping carts and trash in the area of the Willand Warming Center which has a negative affect on local businesses and outward appearance of the City. In the meantime, he believes that improvements can be made to fix the current situation regarding the Center. Councilor Witham spoke about the appearance of porta potties in front of the Center on Willand Drive, he requested that they be relocated to the side of the building. Councilor Witham concluded his comments with the occupancy numbers at the Center and he questions some of the issues may be that the numbers are outgrowing the facility.

Councilor Cameron requested a personal prayer from the public asking that those who believe in prayer, please say a prayer for former City Councilor and former Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, Jennifer Soldati who is dealing with serious medical issues at this time.

Councilor Pepin reported on data received regarding the Willand Warming Center, he shared that since early January 2024, there were three nights which reported that the total number of individuals was 100, 113, and 130 each night. He shared detailed numbers pertaining to individuals that reported coming from Dover, Rochester and Somersworth including the average, lowest and highest numbers from each City. Councilor Pepin also shared data regarding individuals reporting that they came from a community outside of the Tri-City area, including some from other States. He also acknowledged Commissioner Maglaras working to rectify the homeless situation but he continues to hit roadblocks when trying to make progress. Councilor Pepin commented that he feels that the need for homeless services has become bigger than what Dover, Rochester and Somersworth can handle and for that reason, he may consider voting against funding the Center for the next season. He clarified that he does not blame the organization running the Center nor would he expect for them to send anyone away seeking warmth or the communities that send people to the Center, however, he does believe that the need is outgrowing the facility and a resolution needs to be considered.

Councilor Vincent commented that after reviewing the reports regarding the Warming Center, he too believes that it is a County and State problem where all cities and towns would be responsible for contributing to the Center. He shared a conversation that he had with Strafford County Commissioner Maglaras, and he confirmed that he is continuing to work on a plan that would allow the County to build a new County nursing home and that would allow the current facility to operate as a shelter. Councilor Vincent confirmed that this plan would ensure that all of the cities and towns throughout Strafford County would equally contribute funding. He also clarified that he is not against having the Warming Center but agrees that more help is needed by the County and State.

Councilor Gibson stated that he agreed with many of the comments made by the Councilors before him regarding the Willand Warming Center. He commented that the City’s obligation is to the people within their Community and that that obligation needs to be fulfilled somehow. Councilor Gibson shared his experience as an Uber driver who has driven individuals to and from the Warming Center, he specifically noted the times he has driven someone to or from their jobs and hearing the stories of people being priced out of their homes. He stated that as a Community, we need to begin to look at zoning changes for specific developments such as tiny homes or barracks type buildings that would be

more affordable to those struggling. Councilor Gibson spoke about the housing crisis and it needing to be looked at from a Federal level, he also agreed that having three small communities footing the bill for the Warming Center is not fair.

Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro thanked Councilor Witham for raising such an important issue within the Community. She recalled the issue being discussed when she was on the Council two years ago and spoke about her experience volunteering at the Center in the past. She commented that individuals reporting where they are coming from can mean something different to each person. Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro requested to see the calls for service data that Councilor Witham referenced during his comments because the emails she had received from the organization running the Center reported less calls. She thanked Councilor Gibson for his comments regarding the fact that some of the individuals utilizing the Center are working full time jobs, she added that it is important to talk about the folks with dignity. Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro is hopeful that the formation of the Mayor's Housing Task Force can work to address the issues surrounding the housing crisis and assist in shepherding changes. She also mentioned that the Tri-City Task Force on Homelessness that once was and she suggested including stakeholders such as public safety officials and other Tri-City representatives. She concluded with leaving those thoughts with the Mayor to move the discussion forward and work towards progressive action.

Councilor Witham shared data regarding the calls for service memorandum he received, he stated that the data showed a comparison of November 1, 2022 through January 16, 2023 reporting 16 calls for service, and November 1, 2023 through January 16, 2024 reporting 25 calls for service. He added that absent from the comparison is the number of operating days which would be important to the discussion as well. Councilor Witham noted that the calls for service reports from the Police Department versus the reports provided by the organization operating the Willand Warming Center do not align as he has seen historically between the two reports for an unknown reason.

Councilor Messier commented that he has driven by and also visited the Willand Warming Center. He expressed some frustration over having seen abandoned shopping carts and questioned accountability for those leaving the carts behind. Councilor Messier stated that he understands the need for the Warming Center but shared concerns that the Center has become a "dumping ground" for other communities. He mentioned previous conversations regarding the County assisting the Tri-City's to correct the issue with the new nursing home project which has since failed gaining approval to move forward. Councilor Messier commented that when the vote arises in the Fall to vote on the funding for the Center, he is not sure how he will vote. The Center is within an industrial park and the City should be attracting businesses to help the taxpayers of the City. He commented that he does not believe that the Warming Center is sustainable and he also shares safety concerns of occupancy limits. Councilor Messier acknowledged that the organization overseeing the operations of the Center is doing the best that they can.

Councilor Goodwin commented on the Warming Center naming it a critical service that he would continue to support. He stated that it may not be perfect but that there are other driving sources that go beyond this Council to solve including Regional and National mental health crisis, addiction crisis, and housing crisis. However, he does believe that the City can still do something to better the lives of its citizens with funding and by also looking into affordable housing by revisiting Zoning Ordinances. Councilor Goodwin does not think that the City should just accept how things are, but continue to provide the critical services while working towards addressing the issues that are within the Council's control.

PRESENTATIONS OF PETITIONS AND DISPOSAL THEREOF BY REFERENCE OR OTHERWISE

There were no presentations of petitions and disposal thereof by reference or otherwise.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Gerding's Report for City Council Meeting January 24, 2024.

Mayor Gerding thanked the Councilors for their comments regarding the Willand Warming Center and he informed the Council that he has a meeting with the Rochester and Dover Mayors next week to discuss the Center and he will be bring the concerns that have been brought up during comments. He added that he believes the County Commissioners will also be in attendance at the scheduled meeting to discuss solutions.

Mayor Gerding reported that the City is expecting to receive Opioid Settlement Funds which can be utilized to find ways to improve affordable housing, additionally, the funds can be used for the Warming Center as he recalls Rochester may be looking to fund the Center with some of their settlement monies. He added that he is also hoping to explore other avenues to gain more funding sources to find ways to offset Somersworth's costs and to also mitigate the number of people needing to utilize the Warming Center. Mayor Gerding stated that he will be requesting that the Mayor's Housing Task Force Committee discuss ways to best utilize some of the settlement funds.

Mayor Gerding thanked the voters that came out for the Presidential Primary and he noted that the turn out of Republican voters was a record He also thanked the Election workers who spent long hours to keep the polls open, as well as the afterhours to count the large number of write-ins received. Mayor Gerding also thanked City staff for ensuring a smooth and safe election.

Other informational items for the Council are that, which I imagine the City Manager will speak about these dates as well during his report but is worth mentioning as well, is that, after speaking with the City Manager, we have decided to schedule our two **2024-2025 budget review meetings** for the following date:

- Saturday, April 6th at 8:30 a.m.
- And a special budget meeting, if necessary - meaning, only if the budget has not passed by this date - on the date of Monday, April 22nd at 6:00 p.m.

Please make sure to put these dates on your calendars now so that the full Council can be in attendance.

Also, I'd like to note that under Section 13 (nominations, appointments, and elections) that I will be appointing **Ken Vincent Council Rep for the Traffic Safety Committee**. This appointment does not require a council vote and is coming before you tonight because it was left off accidentally at the last council meeting when I made my slate of appointments. I will also be appointing **Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro to the COAST Board of Directors** as our City Council representative.

I also like to announce that the mayor's office is still accepting submissions for the **Mayor's Quarterly Art Show**. Four times throughout the year, the Somersworth Mayor's Office will display new artwork submitted by residents of Somersworth in order to showcase the culture, talents, and creativity of our diverse community. Artwork can be any medium and size, as long as it will fit comfortably within the Mayor's Office. Please consider submitting your work for consideration. The deadline for submissions for 2024 will be March 1st, 2024. Submit a picture of your artwork to **mgerding@somersworthnh.gov**, including the name of the artist, size of the work, medium, and artist's description of the work. Submitted artworks will be judged and chosen by the Mayor's Commission for Arts and Culture, and the first round of work will go on display in the Mayor's Office starting April 1st, 2024 through June 30th, 2024.

Also tonight, I will be making my first proclamation as mayor - one that is very near and dear to my heart. This fall the **Somersworth High School Football Team** added another major achievement to their long, storied record of quality play, sportsmanship, and pride. As many may be aware, in November, the Hilltoppers won their third straight New Hampshire High School Football Division IV State Champion, making for a record third three-peat - the last occurring nearly 30 years ago. This win is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and discipline of the many student-athletes on the team, as well as an example of the strong leadership of their coaching staff and team captains. Congratulations to all! It is with great admiration and respect that I invite the Somersworth High School Football Team to receive this proclamation.

Mayor Gerding presented his first proclamation as Mayor to the Somersworth High School Football team. Mayor Gerding read the following proclamation:

WHEREAS, during the 2021 football season the Somersworth High School football team was the New Hampshire High School Football Division IV State Champion after securing a 40-13-point win over Fall Mountain High School; and

WHEREAS they repeated their championship win during the 2022 season to secure yet another New Hampshire High School Football Division IV State Championship with a win of 14-6 over Newport High School; and

WHEREAS, this season, the Somersworth High School football team beat out Newport High School by a score of 21-7 to win the New Hampshire High School Football Division IV State Championship on November 11th, 2023 for a third consecutive year, making this their "three-peat" win; and

WHEREAS, this is the third time in Somersworth High School football history that such an accomplishment has been achieved, the last time being 30 years ago; and

WHEREAS, the hard work and dedication shown by the team and the coaches is a direct representation of true Hilltopper spirit.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Matt Gerding, Mayor of the City of Somersworth, New Hampshire, on behalf of the Somersworth City Council, do hereby proclaim Thursday, January 25th, 2024 as Somersworth High School Football Day in the City of Somersworth.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal of the City of Somersworth, New Hampshire, this 24th day in January in the year two thousand and twenty-four.

Signed, Mayor Matt Gerding

This respectfully conclude my first Mayor's Report of my tenure, for January 24th, 2024.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Finance Committee – Councilor Witham reported that the Committee met on Monday, January 22nd and began their discussion with reviewing a list of properties provided by the City's Tax Collector regarding tax deeding of properties. He explained that the Committee and Council annually review properties that owe back taxes and that City staff will begin to notify property owners of the deeding of property. He also stated that the Committee and Council decide on some properties to not take for a variety of reasons including hazardous materials on the property or mobile homes that would require the City to pay lot rent. Councilor Witham added that historically, when the Tax Collector notifies property owners of the deeding process, the City is usually contacted to provide resources or setup a payment plan.

The Committee discussed solar exemptions; Councilor Witham noted that the Council had previously adopted to exempt the value of solar equipment from the assessed value of a taxpayer's property. The Committee discussed what the original intent of the exemption was, and the Committee voted 3-1, to re-adopt the solar exemption and to limit the exemption to a suggested maximum amount of \$25,000. Councilor Witham explained that most solar roof panel structures costs under \$25,000 and this re-adoption will make it clearer and more straight forward. He added that the Committee and Council can review this exemption and modify the dollar amount as market prices change.

Councilor Witham reported on the Committee's discussion pertaining to the conversion from propane to natural gas at the Police Station and Public Works Facility. He stated that the furnaces require a conversion which was approved by the Finance Committee to move forward with. The Committee also discussed the Capital Outlay needs as the 2024-2025 budget is underway with City staff. It was agreed by the Committee, to fund some of the necessary projects with remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to meet the deadlines in committing and spending these Federal funds. Councilor Witham reported that the Committee voted to utilize ARPA funds to replace the failed Police Station air conditioning system as well as to upgrade the City-wide radio system which will benefit the Fire Department, Police Department and Public Works Department.

Councilor Witham stated that Finance Director Smith shared reports of the City's expenditures to date and with forecasts, and unanticipated revenue from the sale of the former Police Station and National Guard Readiness Center. The Committee discussed areas of concern which included overtime within the Fire Department due to staff shortages and the emergency replacement of a catch basin. Director Smith assured the Committee that as a whole, the budget is in good shape and that the overages are within department line items. Councilor Witham also noted that City staff will continue to monitor the Public Works budget due to the unknown winter weather conditions regarding snow and ice.

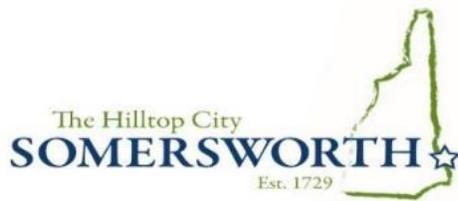
Economic Development Committee – Councilor Goodwin reported that the Committee is scheduled to meet on Monday, February 5th at 6:00 p.m. prior to the Council meeting. He requested the public to contact him with ideas as one of the agenda items related to goal setting.

Public Safety Committee – Councilor Pepin reported that the Committee is scheduled to meet on February 7th at 4:00 p.m.

Public Works and Environment Committee – Councilor Messier reported that the Committee met on January 22nd and began the meeting by discussing an easement request submitted by Public Service of New Hampshire, d.b.a. Eversource Energy which would provide electricity to the new natural gas transmission line substation off Maple Street at what is commonly known as the “Turcotte Pit”. The Committee also discussed the Greenview subdivision road acceptance of Whippoorwill Way and Sandlot Lane, he noted that there are third party reviews that still need to be worked out but the Committee voted in favor of the acceptance subject to all outstanding issues being resolved. Councilor Messier Reported that the replacement of water meters continues throughout the City and the vendor reports having completed 40-50% of the projected replacements, he noted that Saturday appointments have been added to accommodate resident’s schedules.

REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES, CITY OFFICERS AND CITY MANAGER

City Manager’s Report



Office of the City Manager

TO: Mayor Matt Gerding and City Council Members
FROM: Robert M. Belmore, City Manager
DATE: Monday, January 22, 2024
SUBJECT: City Manager’s Report for Wednesday, January 24, 2024 City Council Meeting

Unfinished Business (under Section 15 of Agenda)

Resolutions

- A. Resolution 29-24: To Authorize the City Manager to Enter into a Grant Agreement with the New Hampshire State Library and to Accept a Moose Plate Grant Award for Vital Record Preservation.** Again, attached is a copy of the Grant Agreement for this Vital Record Project.

New Business (under Section 16 of Agenda)

Resolutions

- A. Resolution 30-24: To Authorize the City Manager to Convey a Distribution Utility Easement to Public Service of New Hampshire (PSNH), Doing Business as Eversource.** Attached is a copy of the request from Eversource, as well as a Draft Easement Deed. I have sent the Easement Deed to our City Attorney to review. City Council has already approved Easements for Unutil and Consolidated Communications for the new Unutil Natural Gas Facility at the former PIT, present City boneyard.

Informational Items

- A. Estimated Tax Cap Impact FY 2024-2025 Budget.** Attached is a copy of the Tax Cap Analysis for the next Fiscal Year prepared by Finance Director Scott Smith. I have also sent Estimate to the School Board.

B. Proposed FY 2025 Budget Review Meetings.

- Saturday, April 6 at 8:30 a.m.
- Monday, April 22 at 6:00 p.m. (if needed)

Attachments

- 1. City Attorney Certifications:** One (1)

Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro questioned the tax cap memo provided by City Manager Belmore, she asked if the Councilor could review the information compared to last year and also inquired about the net construction value reporting all zeros. City Manager Belmore referred to the City Charter under the tax cap provisions which states that under a City-wide reevaluation the City is prohibited from utilizing the net construction values.

NOMINATIONS, APPOINTMENTS AND ELECTION

In accordance with Council Rules 17, Appointments, the following are being brought forward and placed in nomination:

- A. Stephen Dow as an Alternate Member to the Conservation Commission with a term to expire February 2027
- B. James Sweatt as the Ward 4 Ward Clerk with a term to expire December 2025

In accordance with Council Rules 17, the nominations will remain open until the next regularly scheduled meeting.

In accordance with Council Rules 17, Appointments, the following Mayoral Appointment is being brought forward:

Mayoral Appointments Not Requiring Council Vote:

- A. Kenneth S. Vincent as a Member of the Traffic Safety Committee

LAY ON THE TABLE

There were no items under Lay on the Table.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

RESOLUTIONS

- A. **Resolution 29-24** – To Authorize the City Manager to Enter into a Grant Agreement with the New Hampshire State Library and to Accept a Moose Plate Grant Award for Vital Record Preservation

Clerk LaPanne performed a second reading of Resolution 29-24.

Councilor Messier made a motion to adopt Resolution 29-24 as submitted. The motion was seconded by Councilor Pepin and passed 9-0 by roll call vote.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTIONS

- A. **Resolution 30-24** – To Authorize the City Manager to Convey a Distribution Utility Easement to Public Service of New Hampshire (PSNH), Doing Business as Eversource

Clerk LaPanne performed a first reading of Resolution 30-24.

Resolution 30-24 will remain in first reading until the call of the Chair.

COMMENTS BY VISITORS

Melana Lugo and Amy Malone introduced themselves as the COO of Karlee's Home Team and the Directors of the Willand Warming Center. Ms. Malone commented that she heard the concerns from the opening comments by Councilors and wanted to have a face-to-face interaction. Ms. Malone stated that poverty is not pretty and that the Center has been utilized by 85-100 individuals on any given night and she added that most of the guests are from the Tri-City. Ms. Malone commented that the Center being open is saving the Cities with regards to their City services. She spoke about the individuals that she has met coming into the Center, she stated that they are parents, grandparents, veterans, plumbers, etc., many who have been priced out of their homes mostly due to many landlords taking advantage of the NH Emergency Rental Assistance Program funds and significantly increasing rental amounts. Ms. Malone commented on the abandoned shopping carts mentioned during opening comments of the Councilors, she admitted they can be unsightly but that one cart can carry an individual's whole life and how they get their belongings back and forth. Ms. Malone urged the Councilors to have a conversation with some of the people utilizing the Center, she is confident that it would become obvious that many people are at the Center because they are victims of circumstances. She also spoke about the calls for services stating that the Police Department is more often dropping people off at the Center rather than picking people up due to calls for service. Ms. Malone also shared that many of the individuals that stay at the Center find ways to help care for the facility such as mopping, cleaning, shoveling, chipping at ice in the parking lot, etc. She noted that there are a lot of hardworking amazing souls that utilize the Center to stay alive.

Ms. Lugo spoke about the number of calls for service being reported, she stated that according to Councilor Witham's reporting of data, the calls for service are currently up by 3% when compared to last years calls and they have double the number of individuals. She went on to clarify the potential discrepancy between reports with the Willand Warming Center and the Somersworth Police

Department, she stated that Karlee's Home Team is only reporting on calls made by their staff or volunteers and not when a guest makes a call. She also clarified that staff and volunteers require that all individuals coming into the Center check in, however, not all are staying overnight. Some people stop by for a warm shower or meal and then leave without staying overnight. Ms. Lugo also spoke about the placement of the potter potties, which have since been removed from the property. She stated that the potter potties are to supplement the two indoor bathrooms which is not sufficient enough for the number of individuals utilizing the Center, additionally, the placement of the porta potties was strategic to be within camera view and monitored closely. Ms. Lugo concluded her comments by stating that often Somersworth Police Officers will stop into the Center when they are changes in patrol to check in.

CLOSING COMMENTS BY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Councilor Witham commented that he appreciated Ms. Malone and Ms. Lugo providing details in their comments regarding the concerns of the Center. He wanted to be clear that he believes that the Center is an important necessity that he would not debate. He stated that his comments earlier in the meeting were made because he has been contacted by his constituents and he wanted to bring the concerns forward for discussion in hopes of finding a strategy to improve on those things. Councilor Witham stated that he was not aware that the potter potties were needed because of the lack of bathrooms in the facility, he added that it is a shortcoming that can be addressed. He gave accolades to for what Karlee's Home Team is doing for the local communities and he wants to make improvements that will allow the Community to accept the Center as well. Councilor Witham also commented on the sports dome projected in Somersworth which has broken ground on the project. He explained that the delay has been due to the State of New Hampshire Department of Transportation requiring that the entrance to Willand Drive be widened and that the City's Planning Board had approved the project a while ago. He commented that if the Planning Board needs to make amendments to the plan to get the project moving, then so be it.

Councilor Goodwin thanked Ms. Malone and Ms. Lugo for sharing their comments and insight. He added that the organization and the Center has his full support and he greatly values what they do. He encouraged the organizations staff and volunteers to reach out with ways to improve the system as there is a knowledge gap between the Council and their expertise in the field.

Councilor Cameron thanked Ms. Malone and Ms. Lugo for their dialogue about the Willand Warming Center, she stated that many things that were stated, are things that she was unaware of such as the facility being too small and their needing to be a better solution. Councilor Cameron hopes that a better plan can come forward by the Strafford County Commissioners to assist with the homeless situation throughout the County.

Councilor Messier thanked Ms. Malone and Ms. Lugo for educating him on a number of things regarding the Center. He stated that he still has concerns about the Center but is aware that 100 people that would otherwise be using the Center, cannot be living in the woods during life-threatening weather conditions. He added that he is also aware that many resources are full and are therefore, are not available to help most of the individuals staying at the Center.

Councilor Pepin stated that he hopes his earlier comments were not seen as negative, he added that he is appreciative of Karlee's Home Team and he does not have a problem with the individuals utilizing the Warming Center. He expressed frustration over the fact that "we as a society" do not take care of the people we should and the responsibility is dumped on cities and towns. Councilor Pepin is concerned that the Center will not be suitable in the coming year and he wonders where the money is going to come from. He questions how the taxpayers of Somersworth are going to be able to continue

to afford to live within the City if funding for the Center requires an increase to operate and he agrees that the issue has become bigger than the Tri-City's and he doesn't know how else to get the word out.

Councilor Vincent thanked Ms. Malone and Ms. Lugo for providing some education to the Council regarding the Willand Warming Center and he liked witnessing the compassion coming from Ms. Malone during her comments. He stated that he appreciates what the organization is doing for the Community, he added that he is not against the Center, but agrees that it needs to be relooked at and improvements need to be made to make it better. Councilor Vincent commented that he has been contacted by constituents regarding the Somersworth Plaza and its lack of lighting for the signage throughout the Plaza. He requested that the Mayor assign the Plaza appearance to a Committee for discussion because he feels it is in need of upgrades. Councilor Vincent congratulated the Somersworth High School Football team and coaches on their recent win.

Councilor Gibson thanked Karlee's Home Team and appreciates all that they have done and also for sharing their comments tonight which got him thinking about where the states are today and the fact that we shouldn't be surprised. He feels that with continuing to have older men running for Presidency and Congress, we cannot expect that suddenly they will take care of the problem. He believes that people need to "wake up" and work to get a new generation of leadership in the Country or we will continue to witness the same results. Councilor Gibson thanked the City Officials for their work at the Presidential Primary especially with being inundated with write-in votes for Joe Biden. He commented that as a life-long Democrat, he feels it was a slap in the face that Biden did not file for candidacy on the New Hampshire ballot and yet he won on the State's Democratic Ballot. Councilor Gibson wishes that New Hampshire would open the Primary's and stop letting parties decide on the elected officials. He shared his frustration with how U.S. Veterans are treated after serving the Country and he shared a brief story about his brother's experience. Councilor Gibson offered an idea to hide the porta potties by installing a screen which he expects would not be very costly and an easy fix to that problem. Councilor Gibson concluded his comments with him coming across a writer who stated that America is different from other countries in that Americans do not understand sacrifice, he added that it is time to wake up and deal with the problems taking over the Country and become a true Democracy.

Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro thanked Ms. Malone and Ms. Lugo for sharing their comments, she echoed many of the comments made by her fellow Councilors and she also expressed the importance of them being able to hear live comments from Karlee's Home Team experiences and knowledge. Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro agrees that the Willand Warming Center is saving tax payers money which is something that she learned from her time volunteering in the public health sector in the past. She gave thanks to the City Clerk's Office for putting in a long day during the Presidential Primary and having it run smoothly in comparison to previous years. Councilor Paradis-Catanzaro commented on the Constitutional Way Complete Streets Project and she inquired about including the crosswalks near the Pawn Shop on High Street as she has safety concerns for pedestrians in that area. She stated that perhaps it would help save the City money if they were to do both projects at the same time. She gave a shoutout to the Somersworth Public Library and she spoke about the large number of books, eBooks, magazines, movies and more that are available within the Library or by signing up through Hoopla and Libby to have the resources digitally available. She encourages everyone to sign up for a Library card if they haven't already.

Councilor Michaud commented that he appreciates Ms. Malone and Ms. Lugo sharing their perspectives of the Willand Warming Center. He stated that he will do his best to help out with the Center, and spoke to the County Commissioners plan for the new rest home being shut down due to the cost of the project. He added that he feels the need for the Center is outgrowing the Somersworth facility that was not originally built to be utilized as a warming center.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Mayor Gerding requested that the Council schedule a special meeting to tour the Willand Warming Center at the discretion of Ms. Malone and Ms. Lugo of Karlee's Home Team. Mayor Gerding invited Ms. Lugo to share thoughts or preferences. Ms. Lugo stated that individual Councilors are invited to visit any time the Center is open, however, if the Councilors as a group wished to tour the Center, she would ask that it be scheduled outside of operation times. The Council agreed and Mayor Gerding confirmed that he would follow-up with Ms. Malone and Ms. Lugo to schedule a time.

Councilor Gibson asked that the Mayor consider discussions pertaining to road clearing policies and listed some areas of concern on the hilltop, High Street parking in front of the new Fold'd restaurant, and traffic safety at the intersection on Washington and High Street with vehicles blocking the right of way when traffic is backed up. Mayor Gerding confirmed that he would be sending the topics to the appropriate Committees to be discussed.

NONPUBLIC SESSION

There were no nonpublic sessions scheduled.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Pepin made a motion to adjourn at 8:56 p.m. The motion was seconded by Councilor Witham and passed motion passed 8-1 by voice vote. Councilor Gibson opposed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen LaPanne, City Clerk



City of Somersworth – Resolution

Resolution No: 29-24

TO AUTHORIZE THE CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A GRANT AGREEMENT WITH THE NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE LIBRARY AND TO ACCEPT A MOOSE PLATE GRANT AWARD FOR VITAL RECORD PRESERVATION

January 8, 2024

WHEREAS, the City of Somersworth values its history and understands the importance of preserving and maintaining the City's records; and

WHEREAS, the City of Somersworth applied for a Moose Plate Grant through the New Hampshire State Library to preserve and protect the City's historical vital records; and

WHEREAS, the City of Somersworth has received notification of a Moose Plate Grant award in the amount of \$9,249 (Nine Thousand Two Hundred Forty-Nine dollars), to conduct preservation treatment, microfilm, and digitally scan three (3) volumes of Marriage, Birth, and Death records for the years 1938-1940;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SOMERSWORTH THAT the City Manager is authorized to execute any documents and agreements necessary for the grant's acceptance and execution, and take any and all other such actions relative to this grant project's completion determined to be in the best interest of the City.

Authorization	
<i>Sponsored by:</i> Mayor Matt Gerding <i>Councilors:</i> David A. Witham Nancie Cameron Crystal Paradis-Catanzaro Richard Michaud Paul Goodwin Denis Messier	<i>Approved:</i> City Attorney

City of Somersworth – Resolution 29-24

History

First Read Date:	01/08/2024	Tabled:	
Public Hearing:		Removed From Table:	
Second Read:	01/24/2024		

Discussion

01/08/2024

Clerk LaPanne performed a first reading of Resolution 29-24.

Resolution 29-24 will remain in first reading until the call of the Chair.

1/24/2024

Clerk LaPanne performed a second reading of Resolution 29-24.

Councilor Messier made a motion to adopt Resolution 29-24 as submitted. The motion was seconded by Councilor Vincent and passed by roll call vote 9-0.

Voting Record		YES	NO
Ward 1 Councilor	Pepin	X	
Ward 2 Councilor	Vincent	X	
Ward 3 Councilor	Gibson	X	
Ward 4 Councilor	Paradis-Catanzaro	X	
Ward 5 Councilor	Michaud	X	
At Large Councilor	Witham	X	
At Large Councilor	Cameron	X	
At Large Councilor	Messier	X	
At Large Councilor	Goodwin	X	
TOTAL VOTES:		9	0
On 01/24/2024	Resolution 29-24	PASSED	FAILED



City of Somersworth – Resolution

Resolution No: **30-24**

TO AUTHORIZE THE CITY MANAGER TO CONVEY A DISTRIBUTION UTILITY EASEMENT TO PUBLIC SERVICE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE (PSNH), DOING BUSINESS AS EVERSOURCE

January 24, 2024

WHEREAS, the Somersworth City Council approved an easement with Northern Utilities, Inc., doing business as Unitil, on September 7, 2021 for a natural gas transmission line; and

WHEREAS, Unitil needs distribution conduit from PSNH doing business as Eversource to support the monitoring and tracking and power needs of the new natural gas transmission line substation on City property to the former “Turcotte Pit” off Maple Street; and

WHEREAS, Eversource requires an easement from the City off Maple Street in what is commonly referred to as the “Turcotte Pit” for the right to lay, install, maintain, replace, and remove cables, wires, and related above/underground fixtures and appurtenances and lines;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SOMERSWORTH THAT the City Manager is authorized to convey a distribution utility easement to PSNH dba as Eversource on City owned property commonly known as the Turcotte Pit off Maple Street, and to take any additional actions required to convey this easement determined to be in the best interest of the City.

Authorization	
<i>Sponsored by:</i> Mayor Matt Gerding <i>Councilors:</i> Denis Messier Kenneth S. Vincent Martin Pepin	<i>Approved:</i> City Attorney

City of Somersworth – Resolution 30-24

History			
First Read Date:	01/24/2024	Tabled:	
Public Hearing:		Removed From Table:	
Second Read:			

Discussion

01/24/2024

Clerk LaPanne performed a first reading on Resolution 30-24.

Resolution 30-24 will remain in first reading until the call of the Chair.

Voting Record		YES	NO
Ward 1 Councilor	Pepin		
Ward 2 Councilor	Vincent		
Ward 3 Councilor	Gibson		
Ward 4 Councilor	Paradis-Catanzaro		
Ward 5 Councilor	Michaud		
At Large Councilor	Witham		
At Large Councilor	Messier		
At Large Councilor	Cameron		
At Large Councilor	Goodwin		
TOTAL VOTES:			
On	Resolution 30-24	PASSED	FAILED

