

MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING  
EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM  
March 3 2017, 3:00pm.

Committee Members present:      Councilor David Witham, Chair  
   Councilor Dale Sprague (Arrived 3:55pm), Vice Chair  
   Councilor Martin Pepin  
   Councilor Jennifer Soldati

Administration/Staff present:      City Manager, Bob Belmore  
   Finance Director, Scott Smith  
   Public Works Director, Michael Bobinsky  
   Assessing/Code Clerk, Christien DuBois

Others present:                      Judi Currie Seacoast News Reporter

---

Councilor Witham called the meeting to order at 3:05pm.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Motion made by Councilor Soldati, seconded by Councilor Pepin, to accept the minutes of the meeting of February 6, 2017 as presented. Motion carried by a unanimous vote of 4-0.

SOMERSWORTH PLAZA HAPPY CITY WATER/SEWER CONNECTION FEE ABATEMENT REQUEST

Councilor Witham provided a brief overview of the history of the abatement for the laundromat located at Washington Street which will now occupy only one of the two units the former Happy City operated out of. The Committee had been under the impression that the laundromat would be occupying the entire space, rather than half at the time the abatement was given.

Councilor Witham clarified that the only waived fee was the sewer connection fee for the laundromat and he saw the new happy City restaurant as a new request. The lawyer for Happy City Restaurant, Attorney Hartnett confirmed that the laundromat is in unit 7, and the restaurant will be in Unit 6 and that they were two different parcels within Somersworth Plaza. When asked to provide their case for the abatement request Attorney Hartnett explained that because Happy City was a restaurant and because the usage of that particular space is not changing receive a credit for the former restaurant and therefore an abatement for the New happy City take-out restaurant going in there.

Councilor Witham posed the question when the sewer connection fee was calculated prior to the move request, whether the City applied the credit for Happy City Restaurant usage and if so, what was the amount abated. Finance Director Smith indicated that there had been credit given.

Councilor Pepin posed the concern about similar requests in the future if an exception was made at this time, and Councilors Witham and Soldati iterated that they felt some charge should be assessed. Councilor Witham explained that the Committee had made it clear in October that if usage beyond 14 machines occurred there would be a fee and that since more than 14 washing machines worth of water is going to be used there ought to be a fee. City Manager Belmore corrected that there are 18 machines intended to be used in total. Witham stated that the applicant should submit a new abatement request for the additional 4 machines.

Councilor Witham stated that they should only be looking at one abatement request now for the new take out restaurant. There was discussion about the calculation used based of the State of NH guidelines in our ordinance and whether we could look at a similar restaurant facility's use which is allowed in the Ordinance. Finance Director Smith agreed and suggested that we could use like units that would be similar to find out whatever their water use is and assign a fee based off of that number.

Councilor Witham motioned to not grant the abatement but would allow the applicant to submit a similar comp that might be acceptable to the City that could be lower or the City's present fee should be paid.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Pepin.

Vote 3-0 motion carries.

### SOLAR ARRAY UPGRADE

Finance Director Smith stated that after the February 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, City staff met with NH Solar Garden looking for additional proposals due to concerns over future market rates.

After reviewing several different proposals, Director Smith suggested that the new proposal with a floor rate to perhaps be a reasonable offer with limited risk to the City.

Councilor Witham believed the current proposal was better than the previous one but stated that there was still some risk involved with the decision. Councilor Witham stated that the current piece of land produces nothing in value for the City and that a solar array would enhance public image. Councilor Witham asked what the next steps of the process would be; City Manager Belmore explained that the proposal would now go before the entire Council.

Motion made by Councilor Witham to bring the proposal to the full Council with a presentation by staff, seconded by Councilor Pepin. Motion passed unanimously 3-0.

## REPORTING

City Manager Belmore stated that the primary concern is the Public Works budget due to the overage. Councilor Witham asked for clarification of expenditures in the Police budget; Director Smith explained that overtime expenses were the cause of the overages.

Councilor Soldati asked if the City utilizes outside contractors to assist with snow removal, and Councilor Witham asked if current salt stockpiles were factored into their budget. Director Bobinsky confirmed that the City does use outside contractors and that the current stockpiles of salt were factored into the budget.

## LED STREET LIGHTING UPDATE

City Manager Belmore stated that Director Bobinsky reached out to Eversource and secured a projected credit of approx. \$73000 to offset the full upgrade cost. City manager Belmore stated that Eversource can't guarantee what funding would be available in the next funding round.

Councilor Witham stated that the City has the money in the fund balance to pay for the replacement. Councilor Witham also stated that the fund balance exists to pay for unexpected expenses or large projects and it makes sense to begin this project now where the City can improve quality and also return those savings quickly.

Councilor Soldati confirmed with Director Bobinsky the quantity of CO2 the City was reducing by switching to LED lighting and stated that this moves Somersworth toward becoming a more sustainable City.

## PRIMEX CONTRIBUTION ASSURANCE PROGRAM (CAP)

Chairman Witham recused himself and left the room and asked Vice Chairman Sprague to Chair this issue.

City Manager Belmore stated that the rate of worker's compensation claims have gone down.

Director Smith stated that this program caps the potential increases in the future workers compensation rates, and that Somersworth had a few costly injuries to staff over the last few years. Primex has seen a turnaround in our claims and Somersworth has now stabilized and reduced its cost with the implementation of the PRIME program.

Councilor Sprague asked how long Somersworth has been out of the CAP program and what has been our last couple increases.

Director Smith answered that it had been the last couple of years, one year we saw a 9% increase and another year there was approx. a 23% increase.

Councilor Pepin motioned to authorize City Manager Belmore to rejoin Primex CAP for our worker's compensation program, and Councilor Sprague seconded the motion carrying 3-0 vote.

## MISCELLANEOUS

Chairman Witham returned to take the Chair.

City Manager Belmore requested the Committee vote to support a Resolution to the full Council to accept the NH DES Brownfields grant. Councilor Pepin motioned to move on a Resolution to the full Council, Councilor Soldati seconded with the motion carrying a 4-0 vote.

## ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Councilor Pepin seconded by Councilor Soldati to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 4:07pm.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Christien DuBois, Assessing/Code Clerk