

MINUTES OF THE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM
August 29, 2016 – 3:30 P.M.

Committee Members present: Councilor Jennifer Soldati, Chair
Councilors Nancie Cameron, (arrived @ 4:43 pm,)
Martin Dumont and Jessica Paradis

Administration/staff present: City Manager Bob Belmore
Human Resource Manager Linda Corriveau
Deputy City Clerk Elise B. Brelis

Others present: Mayor Dana Hilliard
Paul Edgar
Fosters Daily Democrat Judy Currie
Fosters Daily Democrat Shawn St Hilaire
Richard Brooks
Somersworth Now Jenne Holmes

Chairman Soldati called the meeting to order at 3:34 p.m.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councilor Dumont, seconded by Councilor Paradis, made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 1, 2016 meeting. The motion passed.

TEN COMMANDMENTS MONUMENT

Chair Jennifer Soldati opened the discussion about the monument.

Mayor Hilliard had ruling from Attorney- *Not* a violation of establishment clause. Historical monument donated throughout country. Mayor and CM were already working on sign with the Historical Society and had talked about installing more flags before this happened. Mayor is *not* in favor of selling the land. His plan is to put monument back, add marker/sign to the plot and add flagpoles.

Chair Soldati wants to remove it. Maybe it could be in a museum. She likes the idea of flagpoles but would rather see them at an entrance to the City. She thinks this monument would be considered unconstitutional now. Placement in Forest Glade Cemetery would be less offensive and more appropriate. Government has no place in promoting this.

Councilor Cameron sees both sides, but considered its historical value. She is in favor of leaving it.

Councilor Dumont in favor of keeping it, believing it has tremendous historical value. That churches were near has relevance. He said we are deciding our future of Somersworth.

Councilor Paradis is not in favor. They should never have been there in the first place. She is in favor of moving it to a more appropriate location.

Richard Brooks, resident, feels that removing this would be government over-reach. "In God We Trust" is on our currency, Christmas is a government holiday. If the monument is removed from here, he wants it in the nation's capital.

Mayor Hilliard wants to see three possible scenarios and to then put this on the next agenda under "Other" for Council discussion.

Councilor Dumont, seconded by Councilor Cameron, made a motion to present one recommendation: to restore the monument to its original site. The motion failed, 2-2. Paradis and Soldati opposed.

The Committee recessed from 4:18 pm to 4:24 pm.

Councilor Paradis, seconded by Councilor Soldati, motioned to come up with three other (scenarios.) The motion failed and the discussion will come forward at the Council meeting.

MISCELLANEOUS

Richard Brooks spoke to the committee as a member of the Historic District Commission. There were a number of steps between his appointment and swearing in to his beginning to serve that were not handled smoothly and he expressed frustration and would like the process to be looked at. He also finds the City website to be very frustrating and not adequate for informing residents, particularly about meeting postings, etc. He would like meeting information to be available to interested residents earlier, even if the agendas are not yet available.

The City Manager apologized and said that we will look into this.

The City Manager provided a brief update on vacancies.

The Mayor and Fosters Daily Democrat reporter and photographer left at 4:33pm.

Councilor Paradis, seconded by Councilor Cameron, made a motion to go into non-public session per 91-a, personnel. The motion passed at 4:38 pm and the Committee went into non-public session.

Respectfully submitted,

Elise B. Breilis, Deputy City Clerk

