

MINUTES OF THE JOINT GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE / PUBLIC
SAFETY COMMITTEE / CITY COUNCIL MEETING
EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM
December 19, 2019 @ 8:30 am

Committee Members present: Councilor Martin P. Dumont, Sr., Chairman
 Councilor Martin Pepin
 Councilor David A. Witham
 Councilor Kenneth S. Vincent
 Councilor Richard Michaud, Mayoral Appointment

Administration/Staff present: City Manager, Bob Belmore
 Deputy City Clerk, Kelly Gagne
 Finance Director, Scott Smith
 Fire Chief, Keith Hoyle
 Police Chief, David Kretschmar

Other: Kyle Stucker, Fosters Daily Democrat Reporter

Chairman Dumont called the meeting to order at 8:35am.

EXTREME WEATHER EMERGENCY SHELTERS

City Manager Belmore provided an overview of the Fidelity Committee meeting minutes that he had passed out, as well as what the City of Rochester has done in regards to proposing an Inclement Weather Special Event Permit.

Manager Belmore explained what the City of Somersworth has done in the past is to set up public notifications regarding the opening of the Library and City Hall and the Flanagan Center at the Somersworth Housing Authority that would be open as warming shelters during business hours.

Councilor Pepin asked how many in our community are homeless. Police Chief Kretschmar stated that he is unsure of a number but that he is aware of a couple of areas where people currently stay.

Councilor Witham stated he attended a meeting for the Mayor in regards to cold weather shelter efforts in Strafford County. He explained the surge capacity and how the county was handling it. County shelter low barriers have little to no screening of the folks that come in. Fire Chief Hoyle stated that he believed the Strafford County facility will be closing at end of year and those funds will be used to treat those with addiction.

There was a robust discussion on how the City is handling homeless currently and the struggle of no room in shelters, so those who are homeless are being put up in hotels by the City through the Welfare Office process.

Councilor Vincent spoke of a conversation he had with Councilor Dumont regarding the use of churches being able to help out as warming facilities.

Councilor Dumont explained how the City of Richmond Virginia handled their homeless situation when he lived there. Churches took turns week by week during a cold spell providing transportation, shelter and food.

Councilor Witham stated that it was reported in the press recently that there is a lack of political will to do something in regards to the homelessness. He doesn't have a lack of political will, it's a lack of information regarding what is being asked, is it City funds, what? There is no information on what is actually being asked; this has been too fragmented at this point.

There was discussion on having the faith-based communities' involvement to help with the homelessness situation. Manager Belmore passed out what the City of Rochester has come up with in regards to their Drafted Inclement Weather Special Event Permit process to aid in the assistance to civic, religious and other social services opening as warming shelters.

Councilor Witham stated that this goes back to his point. He likes the idea of having something ready to go in case that is the direction that we go, much like having a street "shovel ready."

Councilor Pepin suggested that we get local faith based leaders together in a round table to see if they could help. Chairman Dumont stated he would work on such a meeting.

Councilor Witham, seconded by Councilor Pepin and Vincent, made a motion that City staff move forward with developing a Special Weather Permit. Motion passed 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Councilor Pepin, seconded by Councilor Witham. The meeting adjourned at 9:27am. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Gagne, Deputy City Clerk