



City Council Meeting Minutes
March 9, 2013
2013-2014 Goal Setting Workshop

Present: Mayor Matthew Spencer, Councilors Brian Tapscott, Jonathan McCallion, Dale Sprague, David Witham, Robin Jarvis, Martin Pepin, Jennifer Soldati, Marcel Hebert and Coty Donohue.

Staff present: City Manager Robert Belmore, Police Chief Dean Crombie, Fire Chief Keith Hoyle, Director of Planning & Community Development David Sharples, Director of Finance & Administration Scott Smith, and Director of Public Works & Utilities Tom Willis.

Folks arrived starting at 8:30 for coffee. The meeting was called to order at 9:00am in Council Chambers at City Hall. Manager Belmore facilitated the workshop discussion. Councilors Jarvis and Soldati arrived at different times after the start; Councilor Sprague left prior to adjournment.

Here is a summary of the Council's 2013-14 Goals and Action Items that were discussed.

Downtown Infrastructure Project

The Downtown Infrastructure Bond and Transportation Enhancement Grant contracted engineers had completed a couple of City meetings that had led to several possible design scenarios for improvements to the sidewalks and streetscape layout of the project area. Council agreed the engineers should prepare design concepts for the following options.

- High Street: parallel parking on both sides from Constitutional Way to Government Way so that the sidewalk along the City Hall side could be widened. This would be coupled with changing Constitutional Way to One-Way coming in from High Street for the entire length to Washington Street. Angle parking would then replace parallel parking on the Washington Plaza side of Constitutional Way to expand the available public parking along this Street. This additional parking would in theory make up for the reduced parking spaces on the High Street section.
- At the intersection of High Street/Main Street/Market Street: there would be a significant sidewalk bump out area to create a better merging of traffic flow; this area would have some green space and a retaining wall and it would eliminate some parking spaces in front of some of the store fronts. In order to compensate for the lost parking spaces with this design, the Council would like to consider making Main Street One-Way from Station Street (at the Library) heading towards Market and reverse the traffic flow direction on Station Street. Angle parking on the former Police Station side would then increase the amount of spaces on Main Street in this section.
- Market Street: the Council would like to consider the possibility of eliminating the granite plantings next to the Housing units and perhaps widening the sidewalk along the store fronts and angle parking on the housing unit side; or some combination thereof.

Councilor McCallion suggested we look at last year's Council goals to further efforts on some of them as a road map for the next Council.

Riverfront Development

- Mayor Spencer brought up the idea of trying to create public access and a park along the river. Director Sharples said the issue was on his list of to-do items re: continue to develop a proposed plan for a walking path along the riverfront. He explained his contact with property owners that the City would need to partner with.

Regionalization & City-School Partnerships

- Agreement to continue examining opportunities to partner with other communities, the County and the School Department. Chief Crombie talked about the possibility of the Dispatch Center being handled by another community. Manager Belmore mentioned the good relationship with the School Department including the use of their purchasing cooperative. Councilor Soldati suggested considering a more local company for copier paper and the like.

Code/Property Maintenance & Safety

- Councilors and staff discussed the difficulty with code enforcement regulations as the regulations relate to State Law and the Courts as evidenced by a recent City enforcement matter. Councilors discussed inviting State Legislators to a workshop to examine possible changes to State Law to allow for more effective local code enforcement action to take place. Council targeted September to set-up a workshop.

- Councilor Jarvis asked if there was a way to identify "trouble spots" and then leverage our present resources more efficiently to address these problem areas of the City, not just for code but for police and fire too. Discussion ensued regarding the development of more proactive strategies. Chief Crombie suggested the use of active video-taping cameras in these areas. Manager Belmore suggested a new "GOTCHA" initiative. Chief Crombie will develop a plan for the use of cameras. Councilor Witham said he would also add to a future Public Safety Committee meeting agenda a discussion of more community outreach efforts.

Ambulance – Emergency EMS 911 Service

- Councilor Witham mentioned the City's recent Request for Proposals for Emergency Ambulance Services and asked others to weigh in on developing a plan for moving the service into the fire department operations. Manager Belmore suggested the discussion should take on an even greater significance when the Council discusses the CIP proposal of a new Fire Station in a couple of years. If we moved towards the City handling EMS then plans could include more space for Ambulances as well as additional staffing quarters. Councilor Witham mentioned a Lakes Region hospital partnering with Laconia for ambulance purchases. Councilor Jarvis suggested the City explore a stronger partnership with the two nearby hospitals.

Planning Board & Development

- Councilor Sprague said the Planning Board should work on ensuring developers were held accountable for off-site improvements needed for or related to their projects. Councilor Witham suggested the Board did so.

City Parking Lots

- Manager Belmore asked the Council for direction regarding the City owned parking spaces in the lot next to Citizens Bank off Constitutional Way (behind High Street buildings). Council consensus was to consider an Ordinance designating these parking spaces as City permitted spaces similar to the City parking spaces off Winter Street. Council also wanted to consider the same for the apartment allocated parking spaces at the City Plaza lot. Chief Crombie was charged with drafting a amendment to City Ordinances for Council consideration.

Support of Local Businesses / Buy Local

- There was discussion and consensus that new Economic Development Manager was being well received by businesses and was working closely with the Chamber of Commerce. These efforts should continue. Councilor Soldati also mentioned EDM Christine Davis was a new member of the Chamber Board of Directors.

Downtown Zoning – Business District

- Councilor McCallion stated we should continue our discussions about a possible Downtown TIF District.

- Councilor Soldati mentioned a concern about types of businesses being allowed in the Downtown area. The Council consensus was to consider taking action in a two step approach: the City should immediately consider the table of uses in the present Zoning Ordinance and look to amend it to better reflect our Community vision for a vibrant Downtown; then, we should consider changes to either the Historic District regulations and/or the creation of a new Central Business District. It was also mentioned that immediate steps should be taken regarding the type of store shop window signage/displays now allowed.

Road Infrastructure

- Councilor Witham suggested we develop plans to address other road repair issues outside of the downtown area. Council agreed that the Manager should have staff develop a plan that prioritizes the next 3 to 5 years or so, developing a strategy with a list of priority road repairs and how the repairs might be funded with short-term funding as well as new road reconstruction bonding as older City bonds are retired.

Mayor Spencer thanked everyone for attending.

Goal Setting Workshop adjourned at 11:00am.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert M. Belmore
City Manager

March 14, 2013