



**Rochester City Council Workshop
August 21, 2018
Council Chambers
7:00 PM**

COUNCILORS PRESENT

Councilor Abbott
Councilor Bogan
Councilor Gates
Councilor Gray
Councilor Hamann
Councilor Hutchinson
Councilor Keans
Councilor Lachapelle
Councilor Lauterborn
Councilor Torr
Councilor Walker
Mayor Varney
Mayor McCarley

OTHERS PRESENT

Blaine Cox, City Manager
Terence O'Rourke, City Attorney
human, resident
Paul Martin, resident
Ray Barnett, Resident
Tom Kaczynski, Resident and
State Representative
Lou Archambault, Resident
Gregg DeNobile, Resident
Mike Dugas, NH DOT
Michelle Mears, Staff Planner
Seth Creighton, Chief Planner
Molly Meulenbroek, Historic District
Commission

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor McCarley called the City Council Workshop to order at 7:00 PM.

2. Public Input

Mayor McCarley invited members of the public to come forward and address the Council.

human, Portland street resident, spoke about the recent discussions of the Police Commission. human also inquired why there was not an agenda bill in the packet for one of this evening's resolutions.

Paul Martin, Brenda Lane resident, spoke about manufactured home

ordinances in the City of Rochester and the fees associated with zoning ordinance amendment requests.

Ray Barnett, Crimson Lane resident, spoke about excess TIF funds and the development of impact fees in Rochester.

Tom Kaczynski, resident and state representative, spoke about fire safety codes as well as updates to codes in Rochester as it pertains to downtown development.

Lou Archambault, Chesley Hill resident, spoke about proposed changes to the fire code.

Gregg DeNobile, Chesley Hill Road resident, spoke about the proposed changes to the fire codes. Mr. DeNobile also spoke about the TIF and the proposed Council action regarding 38 Hanson Street.

3. Communications from the City Manager

3.1. Employee of the Month

City Manager Blaine Cox announced Steve Trepanier as the Employee of the Month for September 2018.

4. Communications from the Mayor

Councilor Gray stated that he had attended a meeting with the Attorney General that morning. The Attorney General wanted to pass along his congratulations for a job well done to Chief Toussaint in regards to the standoff in Rochester the prior evening.

5. Presentation: NH DOT – Area Project(s) Review

Mike Dugas, Highway Safety Engineer for the NHDOT, gave a presentation outlining several safety initiatives the DOT has underway in Rochester.

The first project is safety improvements to the area of Route 125 between the traffic signal at Rochester Neck Road and the intersection of Gear Road and Colonial drive. This project originated from the City requesting a road safety audit on this particular stretch of highway. Mr. Dugas stated that the audit was unnecessary because the existing data showed that there had been twenty-one accidents in this area over the past ten years, including one

fatality. The audit was bypassed and instead the DOT went directly into the project.

NHDOT agreed with the one of the potential solutions which had already been endorsed by area residents and Council; to add left turn lanes along this stretch of Route 125.

This project will entail resurfacing the existing highway. There will be no widening necessary, but by taking width from the paved shoulders and putting it into the center of the highway, they will be able to extend the middle lane to the North to the Gear road intersection, providing a left turn lane. They will also complete some minor signal improvement and modernization at the intersections, and eliminate the passing zone on this stretch. Mr. Dugas stated that there would be no effect on private properties which will make the project less expensive and it will move along more quickly.

Mr. Dugas noted that bids will be advertised within the upcoming week and construction will begin after spring of 2019. The total cost of the project is \$465,000.00, all of which is being covered by federal safety funds. There is no cost to the City of Rochester other than adjusting the frames on two sewer manholes.

Councilor Keans inquired what the "minor signal improvements" on this stretch of road would entail. Mr. Dugas indicated that it would be changes to software within the signal controllers to modernize the system.

Mr. Dugas discussed a study which is about to be undertaken on a two-mile stretch of Route 11 starting at Tractor Supply heading toward Farmington. On either side of this stretch there are multi-lane signalized intersections, but this is a gap which has not been improved. Prompted by a letter from Cornerstone VNA following two severe crashes on this stretch.

This stretch of highway was scheduled to be resurfaced this year, but the resurfacing has been delayed in order for the DOT to conduct the safety study.

Mr. Dugas stated that when looking at the traffic volumes, conditions and crash statistics, the stretch of highway on Route 11 is very similar to the area being improved on 125 in Gonic. The proposed solution is to consider putting in a 2-way left turn lane on Route 11 as well, although this two-mile stretch of 125 would require widening which makes it a more complex project.

Mr. Dugas stated that once they had a better handle on the scope of the

project, they could start coming up with a benefit to cost ratio. In order to qualify for federal highway safety improvement funds, they need to demonstrate that the value of the safety improvements in reducing accidents will at least equal the cost of the project itself.

Councilor Varney spoke about a different area of concern in the City: The other end of Route 11 from the referenced project, on the other side of the overpass. There are two lanes exiting the City which merge into a single lane backing traffic up significantly. The single lane also makes it very difficult for the people leaving the mobile home park to exit. Councilor Varney also spoke of some projects down the road which the City with which the City may need help from the DOT.

Councilor Torr asked Mr. Dugas about snow removal from Route 11 and where the City ends and DOT takes over. Mr. Dugas stated that he would have to confirm, but he believed the limits were changed due to the turnpike project and the DOT does take over for the City at the overpass.

6. Presentation: Consultant's Preliminary Report - Downtown Density and Historic District Design Guidelines

Michelle Mears, Staff Planner, introduced via phone Chris Bendon and Sara Adams of the Colorado consulting firm BendonAdams. Mr. Bendon and Ms. Adams presented a PowerPoint giving an overview of two projects which are currently underway in Rochester. Mr. Bendon gave a presentation updating Council on Downtown Density. Mr. Bendon stated that BendonAdams is working under two grants which had been awarded to the City of Rochester.

The first grant deals with the desire to invigorate downtown and increase density. The second grant focuses on updating and modernizing the guidelines for historic properties.

Mr. Bendon reported that in the density analysis, his firm was asked to look for barriers in Rochester's codes and to assess obstacles. They were also asked to perform public outreach and get public opinions on what the community saw as obstacles to development downtown.

Mr. Bendon outlined several case studies giving potential solutions to housing and increasing downtown development while staying within the current zoning guidelines. Mr. Adams also gave an overview of a summary of recommendations made by his firm. The entire report is available in the planning department upon request.

Ms. Adams presented on Historic District Design Commission Guidelines. Ms. Adams stated that the recommendation is to focus on streamlining the review process, explain expectations, and taking out subjectivity which helps not only applicants, but staff as well.

Ms. Adams stated although the National Park Service designated Rochester's commercial and industrial historic district to the National Register, this does not prevent demolition, deferred maintenance or inappropriate alternations.

Ms. Adams detailed what design guidelines would provide in regards to rehabilitation and development and summarized BendonAdams custom recommendations for the City of Rochester's Historic Overlay District. The guidelines are based on the Secretary of the Interior's standards as well as community input. These guidelines are used by City staff to determine appropriate changes and for property owners during planning and design to understand expectations.

Ms. Adams presented an example of a handout summarizing specific design and rehabilitation topics. The handouts are designed to be user friendly and can be given to property owners, renters and contractors outlining guidelines and suggestions.

Councilor Varney inquired what the Planning Department was going to be bringing back to Council, such as recommended ordinance changes for the downtown commercial district.

Ms. Mears stated that the recommended changes are included in the summary available through the Planning Department. The Planning Department will also bring ordinance changes to Council after they go through the Planning Board.

Councilor Varney requested that the ordinance changes come back to Council in parallel with the changes going to the Planning Board in order for Council to review them over time as opposed to getting them all at once.

Seth Creighton, Chief Planner, stated that the Planning Board has gone through several iterations of the density review. The next step will be to take the list of recommendations and incorporate them into the current zoning ordinance to capture these recommendations and address what is preventing development from occurring downtown. Questions and comments can be directed to the Planning department which will begin writing these ordinances shortly.

Mr. Creighton stated that the density guidelines are lagging behind slightly. They had been supported by the Planning Board the night prior and it was recommended that they be sent to Council for feedback.

Councilor Walker asked Mr. Bendon if the City was to hypothetically eliminate barriers and density requirements, how the parking issue would be addressed.

Mr. Bendon suggested that the City may need to bolster their street parking program, make long-term capital investment in a parking structure or other available lots.

Mayor McCarley inquired if, when looking at the two case studies regarding density and square footage in apartments, if the recommendation was to consider low-income or work force housing. It was determined that it is dependent on who is developing the property and what obstacles they face in developing the property. Ideally, there would be a mix of both market-rate and affordable housing.

Mayor McCarley spoke about BendonAdams touching on the leadership issue involved with these proposed changes. The Mayor asked if Council felt there needed to be a dedicated committee working with Economic Development and Planning to try to move these recommendations forward as opposed to just discussing them.

***AGENDA CHANGE**

Due to the full agenda and the potential excessive length of the meeting, Mayor McCarley asked Karen Pollard, Economic Development, if she would be okay with postponing her presentation until the September Workshop meeting.

7. Discussion: 38 Hanson Street – Updates & Council Discussion

Mayor McCarley gave a brief overview of the recent history of the City's involvement with this property; originally there had been discussion of razing the building to make space for a parking lot. After objections from Council and some members of the public, the decision to raze the property was delayed while other options were considered. Although ideas were submitted, nothing panned out, and now the decision on what to do with the property has come back to Council.

Councilor Keans stated that she thought there was missed opportunity with the City not actively advertising the property for sale with signs, ads and marketing. It may not be widely known that the property is for sale.

Councilor Lachapelle concurred with Councilor Keans, but stated that the previous property owner had advertised, but the building sat vacant for years without much interest.

Councilor Varney agreed that the City should be more proactive in marketing the property, either to someone who would like to use the building or demolish it and find some other use for the property. Councilor Varney suggested that the City Manager work up a promotion plan to be presented to Council with an update next month.

Mayor McCarley asked if the Planning Department and Building, Zoning & Licensing Department could be included as part of the status update at the next Council meeting because they have done several walk throughs on the property and have additional information.

8. Discussion: NHMA Policy Conference – September 14, 2018

Mayor McCarley stated that she had nominated Councilor Lauterborn to be the Rochester Delegate for the NHMA Policy Conference on September 14, 2018.

Councilor Lauterborn said that she had been the delegate for this conference in the past years and will gladly attend, but she is willing to give other Councilors a chance to fill the position. Although each municipality only receives one vote, any of the Councilors are welcome to attend and confer with the voting delegate prior to decisions.

8.1. Floor Policies

Councilor Lauterborn reported that typically Council reviews the policies and votes on them as approved at the September Regular City Council Meeting, pulling out individual items to discuss what the City's position will be and whether they choose to approve or deny.

Mayor McCarley recommended Council review the policies as supplied on the packet and they will review any questions at the September meeting. Councilor Lauterborn indicated that if Councilors would like any more information from City staff and how these policies would affect Rochester, it can be brought up prior to the September meeting.

8.2. Action Policy Recommendations

Councilor Torr referenced an item regarding the City paying for police recruits attending the Police Academy for training. It was stated by members of Council that this has always been the City's Policy.

Councilor Gray clarified that the City pays for the salaries and benefits of the officers while they attend training, and in turn the State uses the money they collect from the municipalities to cover the food, room and board, and training.

Councilor Lauterborn stated that she believed this item was being brought up because there had been discussion at the State level that the State may no longer cover these additional expenses such as room and board or food. If the State moves to stop providing these expenses, the NHMA attorneys will do the best they can to keep the current policy in place.

Councilor Torr stated that the Cities need to keep an eye on how much money is being spent because of the potential high turnover rate in police departments.

Councilor Keans said she understood that the City of Rochester has a three-year "pay back" policy where, if an officer left prior to the completion of three years, they would owe money. Chief Toussaint stated there was in fact a training agreement; The City provides police uniforms and supplies, but the employee is on a prorated contract for 3 years with money being taken off each month up until the completion of the three years.

9. Presentation: NH Preservation Alliance Preservation Achievement Award, City Hall Annex Project - Molly Meulenbroek

Molly Meulenbroek, Chair of the Historic District Commission, presented to Council the Preservation Achievement Award from the NH Preservation Alliance. Ms. Meulenbroek said that the Elizabeth Durfee Hengen award is given to projects for overall excellence in education, planning, advocacy and restoration. Ms. Meulenbroek read a letter from the Preservation Alliance outlining why the City Hall Annex was chosen to receive this award.

10. Department Reports

No Discussion.

11. Economic Development Department: Initiatives & Updates

*Rescheduled for September 18, 2018 meeting.

12. Other

Councilor Varney inquired on the status of impact fees; whether or not they were still at the Planning Board and when they would come back to Council. Councilor Walker confirmed the impact fees were still in the Planning Board. He stated there is a consultant coming in to develop an impact fee table. It was confirmed that there is a City ordinance in place and this would just be an updated fee table to be added to the existing ordinance.

Mr. Creighton confirmed that the consultant was currently reaching out to several City departments in order to obtain more specific numbers to integrate into their formula for the final impact fee table. It is still in the data collection stages.

13. Adjournment

Councilor Lachapelle **MOVED** to **ADJOURN** the City Council Workshop Meeting at 8:49 PM. Councilor Walker seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara
Deputy City Clerk