

CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING
March 17, 2015
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM

COUNCILORS PRESENT

Councilor Bogan
Councilor Collins
Councilor Gates
Councilor Gray
Councilor Hamann
Councilor Keans
Councilor Lachapelle
Councilor Larochelle
Councilor Lauterborn
Councilor Varney
Councilor Walker
Mayor Jean

OTHERS PRESENT

City Manager Daniel Fitzpatrick
Deputy City Manager Blaine Cox
John Marzinzik, CEO, Frisbie Memorial
Hospital
Molly Meulenbroek, Resident
Martha Wingate, Resident
Michael Provost, Exec. Dir. of Rochester
Main Street
Gregg DeNobile, Resident

MEMBERS EXCUSED

Councilor Torr

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

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

Mayor Jean led those in attendance with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Jean called for a moment of silence in honor of Gary Stenhouse, former City Manager of the City of Rochester, who had recently passed away unexpectedly.

2. Introduction: John Marzinzik, CEO of Frisbie Memorial Hospital

Mayor Jean introduced the newly appointed CEO of Frisbie Memorial Hospital, John Marzinzik, and invited him to speak on some of the things that are happening at Frisbie.

Mr. Marzinzik said he was pleased to report that Frisbie is one of those "very special gems" that nobody knows about. He said the quality care that is provided at Frisbie is exceptional; it is a remarkable community hospital.

Mr. Marzinzik said that Frisbie Memorial Hospital's costs are 30-40% lower than other similar facilities in the seacoast area. It will continue to maintain low cost, quality health care.

One of the units that Frisbie has that is unique to it is a geriatric psych unit. There are only two other units in the State of New Hampshire. Frisbie will be expanding the unit from 10 beds to 20 beds later this spring. Additionally, Frisbie has added a rheumatologist and podiatrist to the staff.

Mr. Marzinzik spoke of Frisbie's contribution to the community. He said that there is a program to display artwork from local high schools. The staff at the hospital will have an opportunity to view the artwork and vote on the monthly displays. The monthly winners will then compete at the end of the 9-month period for a scholarship.

Mr. Marzinzik expressed his pleasure in being chosen to serve as CEO of Frisbie Memorial Hospital, saying he is enthusiastic about the future of the hospital and the community of Rochester.

3. Public Input

Mayor Jean invited any members of the public to come forward to speak on City-related issues.

Molly Meulenbroek, resident and business owner in Rochester, as well as the Chair of the Historic District Commission, spoke on her reasons why she believes the City Hall Annex should be preserved and rehabilitated for City use.

Martha Wingate, resident and Vice-Chair of the Historic District Commission and past principal of Gonic School, cited several examples and stories regarding her support for the preservation of the City Hall Annex.

Michael Provost, Executive Director of Rochester Main Street, spoke on behalf of the Board of Directors and volunteers of the Main Street program. They support preserving old structures in the city and, especially at this time, the City Hall Annex.

Gregg DeNobile, resident, referred to recent articles in *Foster's Daily Democrat*. He questioned the City Manager's comments that Rochester has one of the fastest growing economies in the region. He said he would like some background information to support that comment. He also cited the increase of the City's budget from \$6 million dollars in 1986 to the current budget of \$100 million dollars. He hopes that the City will take a long, hard look at the economy when preparing this year's budget.

Councilor Varney responded to Mr. DeNobile's comments. He said that in the 1980s the City of Rochester had no significant water department, no sewer department, and no control over the Arena. Those are things that have added to the increase in budget.

4. Non-Meeting: Non-Meeting, RSA 91-A:2, I (b), Consultation with Legal Counsel

Councilor Lachapelle **MOVED** to enter a Non-Meeting under RSA 91-A:2, I (b) [Consultation with Legal Counsel] at 7:32 PM. Councilor Varney seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a roll call vote of 12-0. Councilors Hamann, Walker, Larochelle, Gates, Varney, Gray, Keans, Lauterborn, Lachapelle, Collins, Bogan, and Mayor Jean all voted yes. *Councilor Torr was absent.*

Councilor Lachapelle **MOVED** to exit the Non-Meeting at 8:15 PM. Councilor Walker seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by unanimous voice vote.

5. Communications from the City Manager

There was no discussion.

6. Communications from the Mayor

6.1 Announcement: Dog Registration for 2015/2016 Now Available

Mayor Jean announced that dog registration is open for the 2015/2016 season and encouraged people who own dogs to register them in the City Clerk's office.

6.2 Letter to REDC

Mayor Jean said that a letter had been drafted to Rick Lundborn of the REDC regarding a building to be considered for a city office building. He said that the Finance Committee discussed it and decided against using the building.

7. Presentation: Rochester Main Street

Michael Provost, Executive Director of Rochester Main Street, gave a PowerPoint presentation with highlights of what has been happening in the downtown area of Rochester. He pointed out several businesses that have located in the downtown area, as well as some that have left Rochester.

Mr. Provost discussed a brochure that has been printed that is for use as a walking tour of the historic areas of Rochester. He talked about several new programs that have been implemented over recent months.

8. Department Reports

Councilor Varney asked for clarification of an item in the Economic Development Department report. He questioned the mention of a "public park" near the COAST bus stop at "The Ridge" shopping center. He said he wanted to be sure it was not a park that the City would be paying for. Mayor Jean said it was an amenity that was being provided by Waterstone Development.

Councilor Varney asked if the events that are being planned for the Fairgrounds are in compliance with certain zoning regulations. He was particularly concerned with the five musical events that are planned and how they will affect the neighboring residents.

Councilor Varney asked if the Hanson Pines Pavilion and the Library HVAC system projects are being coordinated with the Public Buildings and/or Public Works departments. Councilor Gray said that they have gone through Public Works.

Councilor Varney questioned the grant application for the proposed *Management Assessment and Opportunities for the Willow Brook Watershed Plan* project. He wanted to know if the City was planning to do something with Willow Brook. City Manager Fitzpatrick said he would get him that answer.

Councilor Varney wanted to know if anyone knew what was happening with "Bridging the Gaps." City Manager Fitzpatrick did not have any information on that, but Mayor Jean said he believed Community Development Coordinator/Grants Manager Julian Long was working on it. Councilor Larochelle said he had met with Julian and he thought that the plan had to be submitted by the end of the month. He added that it is being worked on at this time.

Councilor Varney wanted to know why there is a project for a handicapped elevator at the high school. Councilor Keans said the current one is undersized and needed to be updated. She said that some of the newer wheelchairs are heavy and the elevator cannot accommodate them.

Councilor Varney asked if anyone knew what Rochester's financial commitment would be in order to get Hyder House running again. Councilor Gray said that Hyder House is in the County's budget and is expected to open July 1, 2015. He said that while in the past the hospice services were restricted to the Hyder House only, the future operation will allow the facility to be open to other hospice organizations, as well. Councilor Lauterborn said there is a "Friends of Hyder House" organization that will be fund raising for the Hyder House that will assist in making it work. Councilor Gray said that as long as the eight beds are filled then that is what is needed to keep the facility open.

9. Presentation: Oak Point Associates

Ken Weston of Oak Point Associates said that the last time he spoke before City Council he had outlined what Oak Point had to present to the Council for potential use of the City Hall Annex. There were three components to the study: (1) space planning analysis for the City Hall departments; (2) a study of the integrity of the building [structurally, architecturally, and code-wise]; and (3) a study for what could be fit into the Annex.

Mr. Weston said that at the end of the presentation in October there was a lively debate. He expected they would get some specific questions from the councilors. In the interim, they did a quick study of the Community Center and the suitability of that space. He said he listened to the last City Council meeting and heard a lot of questions being put forth by the councilors. Mr. Weston said that those questions should be directed to him and not to each other. He said that at the end of the process there should be no questions left unanswered.

Mr. Weston said that Councilor Keans had asked if there could be smaller office spaces for some of the workers. Mr. Weston said yes. He said that the draft was an ideal space requirement based on industry standards. He said it is possible to work on a "thinner" plan.

Mr. Weston said that Mayor Jean had asked about having an outside contractor look at the building. He said, with all due respect to the mayor, that nobody knows that building better than his team. He said he can provide answers to any of the engineering questions.

Mr. Weston said it is certainly possible to brainstorm for a better fit to the building. Space issues can be worked on and changed accordingly. He said if there are some specific questions that need to be answered they can be put in writing and he will provide the answers. He said that the report he had presented in October should not be what holds up the project.

Mayor Jean commented on the report and the challenges before the City Council regarding the Annex building. He said that at this point it seems to be more of a political issue than a practical one.

Councilor Gates asked what year was the building [City Hall Annex] built? Mr. Weston said it was 1904.

Councilor Varney asked Mr. Weston what type of construction would "new construction" be and how was the cost determined. Mr. Weston said there is research done on analyzing different types of construction. He said that municipal buildings are typically looked at as buildings that will be owned forever. There are square foot cost numbers used based on the location and the recent costs in the area.

Councilor Varney asked Mr. Weston if his firm has had experience with similar buildings in New England. Mr. Weston said yes, there are several. He cited many of the buildings that are now, or have been, constructed under their guidance.

Mayor Jean referred to the 2007 study that came back as a little "too rich" for the needs of the City. The recent study by Oak Point is more within the scope of what the City is looking for.

Councilor Walker asked Mayor Jean if he had reached out to Fenton Groen to look at the project. Mayor Jean said not yet, but that there was an erroneous report that he was going to arbitrarily award a bid to someone. He said that was incorrect and that Mr. Groen was going to offer his services *gratis*. There were other contractors that some of the councilors suggested, as well.

Mayor Jean asked Mr. Weston if it is possible to get the same energy efficiency from the old building being retrofitted as there would be in new construction. Mr. Weston said there would be an equivalence that is possible with retrofitting.

Councilor Gates asked Mr. Weston that, assuming the Council voted to demolish the existing building, could his firm design a building that would look identical to it. Councilor Gates said it seems that people are interested in the historic look of the building. Mr. Weston said it could be done.

Mayor Jean asked the Councilors to submit any questions they need answered in writing to Deputy City Manager Cox who will pass them on to Oak Point. The deadline for submitting questions will be April 6, 2015, to give Oak Point time to answer the questions prior to the City Council meeting on April 21, 2015.

Councilor Larochelle asked Mr. Weston if a new building can be built with the character of the old building, citing the slate roof. Mr. Weston said recycling the slate does not work well as it tends to break when removed, but that a synthetic slate has been used recently. Real slate varies on cost depending on where it is quarried.

10. Discussion: New Hampshire Legislative Issues

10.1 HB 547 Utility (Telephone) Pole Tax

Mayor Jean said the telephone pole tax is a matter that should be followed closely at the state level. Councilor Gray said it has been voted on in the House and has moved to the Senate. The vote is favorable to the telephone company, exempting it from paying the fees. Councilor Lauterborn said the only hope for the City to benefit from the pole tax will be in the Senate. Mayor Jean said that the City will lose \$47,000 in tax revenue if the telephone company is exempted from paying the tax.

10.2 Municipal Bridge Aid Fund

Mayor Jean said that funds may be cut for bridge repairs. Michael Bezanson, Acting Director of Public Works, said that the last project that the City of Rochester had was the North Main Street bridge and this would probably not affect the city. Councilor Gray said this matter will be part of HB 1 and 2 (the budget process).

There was a brief discussion on how cutting funding for road repairs or new road construction directly affects the infrastructure and attraction of business to the state.

Councilor Varney asked Deputy City Manager Cox if the bond that was recently sold was all for 20 or 30 years or was it broken up into smaller amounts. Mr. Cox said it was broken up into different amounts and time frames. Mayor Jean asked what the rate was for the bonds. Mr. Cox said it is 2.4%. Mayor Jean said that was excellent for the city as it applies to the fund balance. It adds approximately \$1.2 million to the city's debt service.

Councilor Keans asked where the City stands at this time with regard to employee contracts. Mayor Jean said that all contracts have been settled, with the exception of the Fire Department, for which negotiations are under way.

11. Non-Meeting and Non-Public Session (cancelled)

12. Other

Councilor Gates said he had asked for information regarding the requests for property abatements. He said that on or before March 2, 2015, there had been 117 abatement applications submitted to the Assessor's Office. Out of the 117 applications, 30 have been dealt with, 24 abatements were granted, and 6 were denied. That is an 80% abatement grant percentage. There was a brief discussion on the abatements, such as where the properties are and whether or not the Assessors were granted access to the property when the assessing was originally done.

Mayor Jean congratulated the Spaulding High School hockey team for making it to the state championship, but falling short at the final game (particularly since the loss was to Dover). He was proud of their 20-0 season and praised their excellent efforts.

Mayor Jean also commended the Spaulding High School basketball team for their great season, as well. They played in the semi-finals that evening against Londonderry and, unfortunately, lost by 7 points. Councilor Walker said that head coach, Tim Cronin, had been named "Coach of the Year" for Division 1.

Mayor Jean said that all of the coaches at Spaulding High School do an exceptional job with the teams and they present themselves as a class act.

13. Adjournment

Councilor Walker **MOVED** to **ADJOURN** the meeting at 9:23 PM. Councilor Lachapelle seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia H. Roddy
Deputy City Clerk