

**City Council Workshop  
October 17, 2023  
Council Chambers  
7:54 PM**

**COUNCILORS PRESENT**

Councilor Beaudoin  
Councilor Berlin  
Councilor de Geofroy  
Councilor Desrochers  
Councilor Fontneau  
Councilor Gilman  
Councilor Gray  
Councilor Hainey  
Councilor Hamann (remote)  
Councilor Larochelle  
Deputy Mayor Lachapelle  
Mayor Callaghan

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Katie Ambrose, City Manager  
Carol Petruszewicz, resident  
Shannon Desilets, Choose Love  
Steve Poggi, Waste Management

**COUNCILORS EXCUSED**

Councilor Malone

**Minutes**

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Callaghan called the City Council Workshop to order at 7:54 PM. Prior to the Public Hearing preceding the workshop, he had announced that Councilor Hamann was connecting remotely to the meeting. Per RSA 91-A, he asked Councilor Hamann if it was reasonably impractical for him to attend the meeting in person and asked him to state for the record the reason he could not attend. Councilor Hamann stated that it was impractical for him to attend in person due to medical reasons. He stated he was alone in the location from which he was connecting, however his wife was in the house.

Prior to the public hearing, Deputy City Clerk Cassie Givara had taken the roll call attendance. The following Councilors were presents in Council Chambers: Councilor Beaudoin, Berlin, de Geofroy, Fontneau, Gilman, Gray, Hainey, Larochelle, Deputy Mayor Lachapelle, and Mayor Callaghan. Councilor Hamann was connecting to the meeting remotely, as stated above. Councilor Malone was excused.

**2. Public Input**

Carol Petruszewicz, resident suggested that the City Council should have delayed the vote taken at the Special meeting, regarding funding for the new school, in order to gather more data and perform testing at the site.

City Manager Ambrose reported that there was one online public input submission received from Virginia Lyness titled "Proposed school on Salmon Falls Road."

### **3. Communications from the City Manager**

City Manager Ambrose reported on the following:

- The ribbon cutting ceremony for the Route 202A Water Main Extension and Storage tank project had taken place that morning. She stated that this storage tank is the tallest structure of its kind in the State of NH. There will be pictures and drone footage of the ribbon cutting event forthcoming.
- City Wide Trick or Treat will occur on October 30<sup>th</sup> 4pm to 7 pm
- Rochester main street will host a Downtown trick-or-treat and zombie walk on October 27<sup>th</sup> from 4 pm to 6 pm
- Rochester Main Street will host a Halloween "Spooktacular," including a spooky doll contest as well as Trunk-or-treat on October 28<sup>th</sup>. This will take place Downtown from 12 pm to 4 pm
- The City Clerk's Office is preparing for the upcoming Municipal Election on November 7. All polling places will be open from 8 AM to 7 PM on Election Day.
- The Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce will be hosting a Candidates Forum for the City Council and Mayoral Candidates on Monday, October 30 at 6:30 PM. This event will be broadcast on Comcast channel 22, Breezeline channel 26, and livestreamed on the City's website. The program will also be available on demand on the website and re-broadcast on the government channel.
- The Tri-City Mayors of Dover, Rochester, and Somersworth in collaboration with the Strafford County Commissioners are issuing a Request for Proposals to identify a qualified operator for the Willand Warming Center in Somersworth. The RFP can be found on the bid page at [www.Rochesternh.gov](http://www.Rochesternh.gov) and will be open until October 25<sup>th</sup> at 5 PM. The bid opening is scheduled for October 26<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 PM in Council Chambers.

- The State of NH Division of Motor Vehicles recently completed their audit of the tax office as the municipal registration agent for Rochester. The audit concluded that all stickers and decals were accounted for in the inventory and the tax office was in compliance with all applicable state laws and procedures.

### **3.1. Adopt-a-Spot Certificates**

Mayor Callaghan Ambrose presented a certificate to Becky Warburton of the Rochester Police Department for her adopt-a-spot in front of the police building.

City Manager Ambrose read the names of the other adopt-a-spot award recipients who could not be present at the meeting to accept their certificates.

## **4. Communications from the Mayor**

Mayor Callaghan said he had been fortunate to be able to attend the Foley Foundation 5K which was held on October 14<sup>th</sup> at the James W. Foley Community Center. There were over 11,000 runners who participated in this event, both in Rochester and remotely throughout the country. The event raised approximately \$150,000 for the foundation, which assists with hostages of conflict and those wrongfully detained.

## **5. Choose Love Movement – Shannon Desilets**

Shannon Desilets, NH Division of Behavioral Health at DHHS, gave an overview of the history of the Choose Love Movement. The program was started 5-years prior but had born out of the Sandy Hook tragedy in Newtown, CT 11-years ago. Ms. Desilets explained that she worked and continues to work with families in Newtown as a post-trauma therapy provider.

Ms. Desilets presented a video explaining the inception of Choose Love, which was cofounded by Scarlett Lewis following her 6-year old son's murder at Sandy Hook. The initiative has been adopted in communities throughout the world; however, NH is the first state in the nation to make it a statewide initiative. This is an evidence-based social and emotional learning curriculum for kids, parents, and communities; a style of learning that can help to proactively prevent violence. Ms. Desilets gave a summary of the studies and data supporting the curriculum and gave an overview of the positive results reported by participants.

Ms. Desilets said that there is no cost to this program and no funding requested. If Rochester is interested in becoming a "Choose Love" City, it would be the first City in the county to have that designation and stated she would be happy to assist.

Mayor Callaghan asked if there was training involved and, if so, how long the training takes to complete. Ms. Desilets explained that the structure is very flexible; programs can be accessed on the website and are self-paced. She spoke about how she envisioned the program would work in a community for schools, businesses, and local government to become a way of life. She said the community could be creative with the way they want the program to look and work within the City.

## **6. Waste Management Update**

Steve Poggi, Waste Management Director of Operations, addressed City Council regarding recent reports in the community of unpleasant odors from the Turnkey landfill. He gave a brief overview of the systems in place that deal with the gas produced by decomposition within the landfill. He said he is aware of the complaints regarding increase in odors starting around May. Mr. Poggi reported that in May when students, there is a shutdown in the Durham plant operated by UNH. This shutdown typically lasts one week, however, this year the shutdown lasted significantly longer due to challenges that the plant ran into getting replacement parts and other issues. This coupled with a significant increase in precipitation, elevated the amount of gas being produced by the landfill. He explained how increased precipitation can compromise the systems in place for gas collection.

Mr. Poggi reported that Waste Management has installed 5,500 linear feet of vacuum lines which produce negative pressure to remove gas, have installed 6,600 feet of horizontal collectors to collect gas, drilled and connected 49 gas collection wells that were either new or to replace existing wells. They put down 3.8 acres of temporary membrane, which allows for trapping and collection of the gas, and they have provided additional collectors to wells that were struggling with vacuum issues and made modifications to improve collection. Mr. Poggi detailed the work that Waste Management will be completing in the future to further improve gas collection and stated that if the over \$4 million in improvements are not adequate to deal with the odor complaints, they will pursue additional solutions. Mr. Poggi said that there has been a hotline established for residents to report odor issues and to allow Waste Management to investigate the causes and address them as necessary.

Councilor de Geofroy asked if there were sensors or gas detection systems in place for Waste Management to catch the problem before complaints are received. Mr. Poggi stated that WM had hydrogen sulfide meters installed at Turnkey for several years, which were removed for failing to register and alert of this gas prior to the smell becoming detectable. There is also a consultant which reviews the landfill quarterly for areas where methane emissions are occurring and to address these areas.

Councilor Fontneau said he has received concerns from constituents regarding the cause of the odor and whether it poses a safety risk for residents. Mr. Poggi said the cause of the odor varies; it could be landfill gas odors, a sludge truck, etc. He explained the chemical composition of the landfill gas, including the mercaptans added to the gas pipelines for leak detection. He reported that there are studies showing there are no safety concerns with any of these causes of odors. Councilor Fontneau asked if there was any outside oversight monitoring these issues to assure residents that it is not the company monitoring and regulating themselves. Mr. Poggi said that there are surface emission scans which are performed by outside consultants in conjunction with the NH DES to confirm WM findings. He further explained the statutory limitations and standards to which Waste Management needs to comply and the potential adverse result of WM not reaching compliance.

Councilor Fontneau asked if this odor issue has been experienced at other WM facilities in the country and if Rochester WM is following the same process for mitigation. Mr. Poggi said that this same issue has been experienced at other facilities and there is a process in place for addressing these issues similar to the process being followed in Rochester.

Councilor Larochelle referenced atmospheric conditions which could create an inversion layer, acting as a barrier to potentially trap the odor and contribute to the smell being more detectable to those who live at higher elevations. He asked if WM monitored atmospheric conditions and enacted higher vacuum during these times. Mr. Poggi explained that the wells are monitored daily and are adjusted based on set standards. He acknowledged that due to temperature inversion, the gas and odors do settle and travel in low lying areas. However, the landfill cannot be adjusted daily based on temperature inversion. Councilor Larochelle asked if flares are used to burn off excess gas as needed. Mr. Poggi confirmed that there are a number of flares on site to burn off excess gas.

Councilor Beaudoin asked if there is a correlation between time of day and when the odor is most detectable. Mr. Poggi said that there is not a known correlation between time of day and the odor, although there can be other factors at play such as the aforementioned temperature inversion, potential issue at the landfill, or wind direction.

Mayor Callaghan asked what the relationship is between WM and the testing done by NH DES and EPA. He asked if Turnkey had been in compliance or if there needed to be any remediation at any point. Mr. Poggi said there had been no need for remediation. Any concerns have been addressed and compliance has been reached.

Mayor Callaghan asked if there was a potential to use gas produced by the

landfill to help fuel the new school on Salmon Falls Road. Mr. Poggi explained that the plant at UNH which converts the gas to pipeline quality had cost approximately \$45 million to construct which was funded by UNH. Such a project is not plausible without significant capital investment for the Rochester school.

## **7. Department Reports**

There was no discussion on the department reports.

## **8. Non-public/non-meeting**

### **8.1 Non-Public Session – Land, RSA 91-A:3, II (d)**

The agenda was amended to hold the non-public session prior to the start of the public hearing.

## **9. Adjournment**

Councilor Lachapelle **MOVED** to **ADJOURN** the City Council Workshop at 8:39 PM. Councilor Desrochers seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous roll call vote with Councilors Gray, Hamann, de Geofroy, Beaudoin, Desrochers, Lachapelle, Gilman, Hainey, Fontneau, Laroche, Berlin, and Mayor Callaghan all voting in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara  
Deputy City Clerk