

**City Council Workshop Meeting
July 21, 2020
Meeting Conducted Remotely
6:30 PM**

COUNCILORS PRESENT

Councilor Abbott
Councilor Belken
Councilor Bogan
Councilor Gray
Councilor Hainey
Councilor Hamann
Councilor Hutchinson
Councilor Lachapelle
Councilor Lachance
Councilor Rice
Councilor Walker
Deputy Mayor Lauterborn
Mayor McCarley

OTHERS PRESENT

Blaine Cox, City Manager
Katie Ambrose, Deputy City Manager
Terence O'Rourke, City Attorney
Steve Whitman, Resilience Planning
Kelly Davis, Consultant

Michelle Mears, Senior Planner
Seth Creighton, Chief Planner
Mike Scala, Director of Economic
Development

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor McCarley called the Workshop meeting to order at 6:30 PM and read the following preamble:

Good Evening, as Chairperson of the City Council, I am declaring that an emergency exists and I am invoking the provisions of RSA 91-A:2, III (b). Federal, state, and local officials have determined that gatherings of 10 or more people pose a substantial risk to our community in its continuing efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19. In concurring with their determination, I also find that this meeting is imperative to the continued operation of City government and services, which are vital to public safety and confidence during this emergency. As such, this meeting will be conducted without a quorum of this body physically present in the same location.

a.) **Providing public access to the meeting by telephone:** At this time, I also welcome members of the public accessing this meeting remotely. Even though this meeting is being conducted in a unique manner under unusual circumstances, the usual rules of conduct and decorum apply. Any person found to be disrupting this meeting will be asked to cease the disruption. Should the disruptive behavior continue thereafter, that person will be removed from this meeting. The public can call-in to the below number using the conference code. Some meetings will allow live public input, however you must have pre-registered online, otherwise, the meeting will be set to allow the public to "listen-in" only, and there will be no public comment taken during the meeting. [Public Input Registration](#) (Please note: In order to notify the meeting host that you would like to speak, press 5* to be recognized and unmuted)

Phone number: 857-444-0744

Conference code: 843095

b.) **Public Access Troubleshooting:** If any member of the public has difficulty accessing the meeting by phone, please email PublicInput@RochesterNH.net or call 603-332-1167.

c.) **Public Input:** Due to the ongoing situation with COVID-19, the City of Rochester will be taking extra steps to allow for public input, while still ensuring participant safety and social distancing. In lieu of attending the meeting, those wishing to share comments, when permitted, with the City Council (Public Hearing and/or Workshop settings) are encouraged to do so by the following methods:

- **Mail:** City Clerk/Public Input, 31 Wakefield Street, Rochester, NH 03867 (*must be received at least three full days prior to the anticipated meeting date*)
- **email** PublicInput@rochesternh.net (*must be received no later than 4:00 pm of meeting date*)
- **Voicemail** 603-330-7107 (*must be received no later than 12:00 pm on said meeting date in order to be transcribed*)

Please include with your correspondence the intended meeting date for which you are submitting. *All correspondence will be included with the corresponding meeting packet (Addendum).*

d.) **Roll Call:** Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by Roll Call vote.

Let's start the meeting by taking a Roll Call attendance. When each member states their name (and/or ward), also please state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to-Know law. (Additionally, Council members are required to state their name and ward each time they wish to speak.)

Deputy City Clerk Cassie Givara took the roll. Councilors Abbott, Belken, Bogan, Hainey, Hamann, Hutchinson, Lachapelle, Rice, Walker, Lauterborn, and Mayor McCarley were present and indicated that they were alone in the location from which they were connecting. Councilor Gray was present and stated his spouse was occasionally present. Councilor Lachance was excused.

2. Public Input

City Manager Cox read correspondence from Lou Archembault in regards to the city's purchase of vacant properties.

There was correspondence read from Amy Cann in regards to a noise disturbance caused by a cannon firing on the 4th of July.

**There were technical issues occurring with the conference line and it was determined that if there were any callers wishing to speak once the line was reestablished, they would be allowed to participate later in the meeting.*

3. Communications from the City Manager

City Manager Cox announced that the Planning Director position had been filled by Shanna Saunders who will start on August 17, 2020. He also announced the Public Information and Community Engagement position had been filled by Matt Wyatt who will start on July 27th. Finally he announced that the interviews for the Library Director position had been completed and the City would likely be making an offer within the next few days.

Councilor Hutchinson asked how many applicants the City had received for the newly created Public Information and Community Engagement position. City Manager Cox reported that he did not have a final number, but last he knew there had been 26 applications received. Mayor McCarley confirmed there had been over 28 application received, although some were not considered because they were not appropriate to the position being filled. The interview committee reviewed the applications and then met with 6 candidates, with two final candidates sent to the City Manager for selection. Councilor Hutchinson asked if all qualified candidates had been offered an interview. Mayor McCarley stated that many of the candidates reviewed had backgrounds which related to only one

portion of the job. The candidates which the committee had chosen to interview had a good mix of skills relevant to the position being filled. Mayor McCarley spoke briefly about the City Manager's purview of hiring and firing staff and to what extent Council should be involved.

4. Communications from the Mayor

No discussion.

5. *Presentation: Downtown Master Plan – Resilience Planning & Design, LLC*

Mayor McCarley gave some background on the history of this agenda item. She stated that for over a year, there has been a great deal of community engagement to gather information and support. The City has held two public meetings, and formed a large steering committee including members of the public, City staff and subject matter experts. Mayor McCarley clarified that the Master Plan will get approval by the Planning Board at their first meeting in August and that City council approval is not required.

Steve Whitman of Resilience Planning and Design presented a power point and gave an overview of how the process came together from outreach and engagement through the final stages. Plan focused on implementation strategies and how to bring about these changes within the City.

Michelle Mears stated that some of the implementation efforts within the master plan have already begun; such as the BendonAdams zoning changes brought before Council last year. She stated that when she first started with the City of Rochester, there were very few special downtown review projects, but just last year the planning department reviewed 5 projects for special downtown review. There were also 17 apartments added into the downtown commercial zone. The Historic District commission reviewed 12 applications as well.

Ms. Mears outlined the upcoming changes and projects in downtown already underway, such as the Scenic/Salinger block being developed, the purchase of the Hoffman building, Rochester Riverwalk, Wayfinding project, and the outdoor dining initiative.

Ms. Mears suggested that there be a downtown master plan steering committee created as well as scheduling quarterly presentations from the Planning Department to city council to make sure they are on track with the implementation.

Seth Creighton, Chief Planner, clarified that the process for approval is

different than what council typically sees. The council can make recommendations, but approval is at the planning board level. Mr. Creighton recommended that if councilors had questions or suggestions, they can be sent to the planning department within the next couple weeks prior to the planning board meeting. Mr. Creighton directed council to a link for the full downtown master plan for review.

**6. Presentation & Discussion: Hoffman Building (55 North Main Street)
– Kelly Davis, consultant**

Mayor McCarley said that over the years, she as well as others from the City had been in contact with the family trust which owned the Hoffman building to see if there was any interest in selling it. The selling price had been far more than Rochester was willing to spend. Last year the City started to think about other ways to approach the use of the building other than sale. The City inquired about the possibility of leasing the building for use as indoor covered market spaces for small businesses. The City would renovate the space and the renovations could be used to offset the rent on the building. Mayor McCarley said that the negotiations had stalled and eventually ceased entirely before any decisions had been made. The City has since purchased the building and would like to revisit the idea of using this building as an incubator space for small businesses.

City Manager Cox introduced Kelly Davis, consultant, who gave an overview of the specifications of the building and the considerations of what the City could potentially do with the space if used as an incubator space for small businesses.

Councilor Lachapelle referenced Mr. Davis' proposed use of the Union Street parking lot as an expanded area for outdoor dining and seating space which had also been referenced by Michelle Mears in the previous presentation. Councilor Lachapelle said that the Union Street lot had been considered as a potential site for a parking garage in the future. This is something to think about when considering placing more outdoor dining in this area and the potential future view.

City Manager Cox stated that some merchants have reported that the current available retail spaces in downtown are too large or too expensive for them to manage; many of these merchants are looking for smaller more affordable spaces to either try out a new concept or to grow their small business. City Manager Cox said that this concept of having a multi-merchant incubator space is unique to the area as there are no others like it in the Seacoast. This concept could set Rochester apart.

Councilor Rice asked if the available spaces would have walls or if there would be "stalls" and open space. Mayor McCarley said that this has yet to be determined. If the City decides to move forward with this plan, it will be part of

the conversation as there are multiple options dependent on how the renovations are approached. Mayor McCarley said there are still other options being considered, such as selling the building to a developer.

Mike Scala, Director of Economic Development, stated that they are in the process of having a market study done which is being paid for through a grant. This study should be completed in 3-4 months and will give the City an idea of what the concept will cost and if it is plausible. Mr. Scala stated they are currently looking into various funding programs to assist with the process if the decision is made to convert the property into an incubator space for small businesses.

Councilor Lachapelle asked if there would be an egress needed to the outside of the building from the basement per code. Mr. Davis stated that direct outside egress is not required and that there is egress from the basement onto the main level of the building. He also said that the building is fully equipped with sprinklers.

7. Review of Legislative Policy Recommendations and Selection of Delegate

Councilor Lauterborn said that she has been a delegate to this conference for many years. The idea is for each City and Town in NH to have a vote to direct the Municipal Association lobbyists on what to support or not support at the legislature. Councilor Lauterborn said that the Council normally reviews the policy recommendations and picks out particular items to discuss; they do not vote on each individual item. The person chosen as the delegate needs to be prepared to represent Rochester and vote on amendments as they arise during the conference.

Councilor Hainey volunteered to be the delegate to the conference and stated she had some questions regarding some of the proposed policies. Mayor McCarley stated that there will be an agenda item at the August regular council meeting to discuss and vote on select policy items after councilors have had a chance to review.

8. Department Reports

Councilor Rice inquired why there have been some department reports missing from the packet and listed as "forthcoming" in the agenda. He requested a report from the City Manager on why these reports are not being completed on time.

9. Other

No discussion.

10. Adjournment

Mayor McCarley **ADJOURNED** the City Council Workshop meeting at 7:31 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara
Deputy City Clerk