

# DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES ON GOAL SETTING REPORT

## November, 2016

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Master Plan**

- ◆ Master Plan has draft chapters for Economic Development, Natural Resources, and Transportation. The Master Plan process awaits discussion by the Planning Board and the Master Plan Advisory Team.

#### **Land use - Zoning recommendations for CR zone**

- ◆ Planning Board received the proposed recommendations for a CR2 Zone at its September 13<sup>th</sup> meeting and held a public hearing on November 1, 2016.

#### **Continued infrastructure repairs**

- ◆ Laconia Parks and Recreation has identified various infrastructure elements that need repair and have included requests for funding through the upcoming Capital Improvement Program. Some of these elements have recently been funded through the current budget including playground equipment, Leavitt Park tennis courts and Memorial Park softball field bleacher replacement. These projects will be completed in the Fall of 2016 and Spring of 2017. Items that are being requested as part of the upcoming CIP request include the Bond Beach bath house replacement, resurfacing of courts at Tardif and Sanborn Parks, fencing replacement at Opechee Park and installation of a sidewalk across Opechee Park.
- ◆ Parks and Recreation has refocused its Capital Improvement Program requests to target repair and replacement schedules at a time when equipment and facilities are near the end of their useful life. Many of our equipment and facilities (i.e. courts, vehicles, bath houses) are not repaired or replaced until they are in very poor condition.
- ◆ Parks and Recreation needs to effectively promote and maintain the Park system to make it appealing and user friendly for all ages. It is our belief that our Park system is a great asset to the community and we intend to continue to expand the promotion of our Park system through the City's website, existing publications and through social media. It is important to educate the public and potential new residents on what our City has to offer.

Maintenance of our Park system is critical in providing attractive and enjoyable recreational opportunities. Parks and Recreation requested an additional full time year round maintenance position to help us achieve this goal and the City Council approved the funding for this position. This increase in staffing will help the Department maintain our existing facilities as well as our new facilities that we have been fortunate to add to our system.

#### **Continued revitalization of downtown area**

- ◆ Parking Garage – DPW staff is waiting on additional guidance.
- ◆ Parks and Recreation is exploring ideas for major events in Laconia. Initial ideas include a Winter Carnival, New Year's Eve Celebration, Riverwalk Festival and a holiday season related festival. The winter and spring time frames are being targeted due to the lack of a major event during these seasons.

Parks and Recreation also assisted with the New Hampshire Pumpkin Festival this year by partnering with the Chamber of Commerce on the organization and oversight of the Pumpkin Festival parade.

Parks and Recreation is planning to expand the events and programs at the Weirs Community Park amphitheater. The Department continues to partner with the Weirs Community Park Association with providing events in the summer and early fall. Parks and Recreation has also had preliminary discussions with the Putnam Fund Committee on their potential involvement with bringing additional programs to the amphitheater.

- ◆ Parks and Recreation is continuing to explore opportunities to promote growth and development in the Downtown area. The Department is making attempts to revitalize the Adopt-A-Spot program by encouraging the community to participate in this beautification program. A new brochure was created for the Adopt-A-Spot program and a greater outreach effort is planned for this spring.

The Parks and Recreation Commission simplified the approval process for use of the Rotary Park bandstand by those requesting the Park for weddings, ceremonies and various other events. Requests for use of this Park have increased significantly the past summer and the benefits to area organizations like the Belknap Mill Society are measurable.

The development of the Riverwalk is progressing with the recent completion of both the Beacon Street West connection and the River's Edge segment. Parks and Recreation representatives continue to work with other City departments, the Downtown TIF Advisory Board and the community with the design of future Riverwalk segments being funded in part through a Transportation Alternative Program federal grant.

Parks and Recreation is also working with other departments on the completion of Phase 2 of the WOW Trail. Completion of this phase of the trail is nearly completed. Additionally, wayfinding signage and information kiosks are in the process of being planned in conjunction with wayfinding signage for streets in the Downtown core with the goal of having a consistent theme for the City.

### **Weirs Beach**

- ◆ The Lakeside Avenue project is still on schedule. DPW coordinated with Eversource to extend the placement of the electric lines between Tower and Foster underground.
- ◆ Parks and Recreation continues to work with Public Works on erosion, water quality and infrastructure improvements in the Weirs Beach area. The City applied for and received a Watershed Assistance Grant through NHDES to address erosion and water quality issues. Implementation of erosion control elements is planned for Fall 2016 and Spring 2017. Possible erosion control elements include the following:
  - Installation of pervious concrete panels in a section of the Weirs Beach parking lot
  - Improvements to drainage swales behind the Weirs Beach bath house and along the Weirs channel
  - Resurfacing of the service road to the Mount Washington dock to minimize erosion and sedimentation

Additionally, final design and permitting for the restoration of Weirs Beach is ongoing with implementation expected in 2017. Possible restoration elements include extension of the jetty, manual back passing of sand, wind erosion fencing and beach nourishment.

Infrastructure improvements and enhancements have been recommended by the Weirs TIF Advisory Board and approved by the City Council. These improvements include colored concrete crosswalks, brick pavers, water services for irrigation and concrete sidewalks. Other improvements recommended by the Weirs TIF Advisory Board and approved by the City Council include the burial of overhead utilities and installation of ornamental street lighting.

- ◆ Through its involvement with the WOW Trail organization, Parks and Recreation will assist with the planning and development of the trail as it expands to the Weirs Beach area of the City. The vital trail link to Lakeport and Meredith will play a key role in the future economic growth of Weirs Beach.

### **Development of certain large tracts of land**

- ◆ Parks and Recreation has been working with Happy Tails Dog Park on the development of the Spruce Street parkland for an off leash dog park. A significant donor has stepped forward to fund the project. We are awaiting final approval from the NH Parks and Recreation and the National Park Service due to the parkland being originally purchased through the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Improvements on LWCF acquired properties are subject to this review.

### **Improve the overall image of the City**

- ◆ Parks and Recreation has identified all four welcome signs that need replacement. After researching the history and the origin of these signs, the Department drafted and sent a letter to the many service organizations that are depicted on the signs asking for their assistance. We are awaiting a response from these organizations in the hopes that they are willing to work with the City to improve the gateways.

Parks and Recreation offered these signs as beautification opportunities through our Adopt-A-Spot program. The sign at McIntyre Circle was newly adopted this year and this sign has seen some fresh plantings this past summer.

- ◆ Parks and Recreation will look to improve the overall cleanliness of its facilities by identifying deficiencies, prioritizing repairs and effectively addressing areas that need improvement. The Department is exploring the use of part time seasonal staff that have sufficient skills to address repairs and maintenance of our parks. We believe that there are many people that are looking for part time work vs. full time work due to other commitments, physical limitations or simply not having the need to work full time. Parks and Recreation currently has three part time seasonal employees on staff. By offering some part time positions for seasonal work, we believe the Department can be more successful with securing dedicated, skilled and dependable employees.

### **Housing**

- ◆ Planning, Zoning, and Code Departments are working more closely together to develop consistent processes for enforcing violations. This includes a tracking spreadsheet and a written policy with flowchart for clarity of process. This tracking and policy development will enable the departments to better work with property owners to bring their properties into compliance and make upgrades/changes as necessary.

- ◆ Zoning and Property Maintenance staff will soon be implementing a more regular program of inspections and reviews of properties. Communication with property owners will be a key component of this program.
- ◆ Planning Department is developing a scope of work and schedule for completion of the Housing Chapter of the Master Plan. Anticipate finalizing the Housing Chapter and adopting the Master Plan in its entirety by Spring 2017.

### **State School Property**

- ◆ DPW is supporting the State's Committee that is investigating the sale of the property. One committee member has requested information on the City's water and WRBP's sanitary sewer system that supports the State's complex.

### **Regional Economic Development**

- ◆ Parks and Recreation will continue to have a presence with the planning and development of future phases of the WOW Trail as it becomes a portion of a larger regional trail system.
- ◆ Parks and Recreation has had preliminary discussions on how it share services and resources with other towns in the area. Initial ideas include joint field trips, sharing of expenses for programs (outdoor movie night, athletic field usage, combined promotional efforts) and sharing of specialized maintenance equipment. Parks and Recreation will be reaching out to other towns for ideas.
- ◆ Laconia Fire Department has recently made two significant changes towards an increase in shared services. First is the inter-municipal agreement with the Town of Belmont for the services of Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief. This agreement has benefited Belmont and Laconia both from a financial and an emergency service effectiveness standpoint. This arrangement could easily be the foundation for similar service sharing agreements for the City, and outside municipal partners.

The second recent change is to use the Code Enforcement Inspector to fill the role of part-time Fire Inspector as part of his daily duties. This adds consistency to the availability of the Fire Inspector, increasing the working relationship between property owners and the Fire Department/Code Enforcement. This will be a more effective and efficient way of conducting business.

## **SOCIO ECONOMIC CONDITIONS**

### **Partnerships with community stakeholders**

- ◆ Laconia Fire Department has many long-standing community partnerships. The number of partnerships continues to grow based on newly recognized needs of our citizens in which our services will be beneficial in the betterment of the community. These partnerships include: Lakes Region General Hospital, Lakes Region Partnership for Public Health, Partners in Community Wellness, Lakes Region Community Emergency Response Team, Laconia Housing Authority, and Genesis Behavioral Health.
- ◆ Since the implementation of Problem Oriented Policing (POP), the Department consistently collaborates with over twenty organizations within the region. The importance of true collaboration to address some of the most serious social issues is fully understood. Many of our employees sit on boards for various organizations, including the Boys and Girls Club, Human Relations Committee, Lakes Region Community Services, the Humane Society,

Genesis Behavioral Health, New Futures, Stand Up Laconia, SAMSA Leadership Team, and others.

### **Homeless population**

- ◆ A POP Project was initiated several years ago when it became apparent that the homeless population was increasing, especially in the downtown corridor. The focus was on addressing the key contributing factors that lead to homelessness, including mental health and substance misuse. An outreach plan was developed to identify and contact those in need, and provide them with the available resources in the region. We partnered with Genesis, the Salvation Army, and other organizations to help accomplish our goal. The project proved to be a challenge and was successful to an extent. Today, we continue to balance the concerns of those affected by the quality of life issues associated with the homeless population, while realizing our duties as guardians. Sergeant Cameron attends monthly homeless coalition meetings and we continue to work with our partners to reduce those numbers. Regular patrols and overtime walking beats are focused on the downtown corridor, including Busy Corner, S. Main Street and Court Street.

### **Troubled youths**

- ◆ DARE programs are in the elementary schools and Middle School, and plans are underway for a third program in the High School. Other programs targeting youth development/intervention are the Police Explorer Program, Police Athletic League, Criminal Justice Program, In the Presence of Children, School Resource Officer, Juvenile Detective, officers in the schools, and mentoring.

### **Drug Crisis**

- ◆ Prevention, Enforcement, Treatment Coordinator, Narcotics Unit, DARE programs in the elementary schools and the Middle School, and plans are underway for a third program in the High School. There is heavy participation with organizations addressing substance misuse, including Stand Up Laconia, Partners in Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Use, Recovery Court, Belknap County Jail, and Lakes Region General Hospital, as well as advocacy at the local, state and federal level. Chief Adams and Officer Eric Adams have been panelists at several substance misuse forums, and have also provided testimony in favor of bills supporting funding for additional treatment/recovery programs and enforcement efforts. We have met with the new Governor's Advisor on Addiction and Behavioral Health, James Vara, to discuss ongoing prevention and enforcement efforts, and identify what role the state can play in our local efforts. We are actively seeking federal and state funding through the Department of Justice to support enforcement and prevention efforts. An application for Granite Hammer, a state-wide grant focused on enforcement efforts, has been submitted in the amount of \$96,000.00.

### **Continue to raise prosperity for the community**

- ◆ Parks and Recreation evaluates the outdoor lighting at all parks and identifies opportunities to improve safety at these facilities.
- ◆ Our Fire Prevention Bureau has worked hard to ensure safety and property protection for residents, property owners, and the business community of Laconia. This has included 132 multifamily inspections, and multiple fire and life safety inspections at commercial properties. With the shared services between Fire and Code Enforcement we can anticipate an increase in these services.

The City of Laconia recently went through an evaluation by the Insurance Services Office (ISO) that rates a community's firefighting capabilities by evaluating items like water supply, fire station location(s), training and professional development, and emergency communications. Following the recent process, we have been informed that the City of Laconia will be moved from a Class 3 to a Class 2. This change in rating will potentially produce a decrease in fire insurance premiums, especially to commercial properties.

### **Support services to the region**

- ◆ The Fire Department could become an integral part of home health care within the City. This would be through the formation of a Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) system. The Fire Department would increase services to the community by providing specially trained personnel to go to the homes of clients who are in the need of medical care, but do not need transport to a hospital. These specially trained personnel would provide needed medical care to the end user, while decreasing the demand for emergency medical services and unneeded hospital admissions. This service would increase the need for specialized training and require additional personnel to make the service both effective and efficient. Although the Laconia Fire Department/City of Laconia and Lakes Region General Healthcare already have a 20+ year shared service partnership, this new service would further enhance the relationship between the two entities.

### **Provisions for aging population**

- ◆ Laconia Fire, in partnership with LRGHealthcare, has been an active participant in Senior Safety Day which allows fire departments to go out to the residences of senior citizens and either change smoke detector batteries or install new ones. Last year Laconia Fire made 92 senior home visits. Programs like this allow firefighters to interact and assist our senior population before an emergency occurs. Other senior services could be provided and would be an integral part of the MIH system once formed.

## **DEVELOPMENT PROCESS - BUSINESS FRIENDLY REPUTATION**

### **Staff training to include conflict resolution and customer service**

- ◆ Planning Department employees attend several Primex and State-sponsored trainings per year in areas such as customer service, customer satisfaction, conflict resolution, critical thinking, communication with customers, staying positive, and turning conflict into collaboration.

### **Streamline permit process**

- ◆ Availability and accessibility of information and clarity regarding policies and regulations can help with relations:
  - Code and Planning Departments have made efforts to better coordinate with and refer to other departments as early as possible when customers, builders, and developers make first contact with the departments. Giving complete and accurate information as early as possible in a customer's process helps maintain an open and transparent relationship.
  - Efforts have been made to make the website more user-friendly in content and format.
  - More information has been made available in various formats at the counters so that when customers come in, employees can go through the regulations, codes, etc. with the customer for better understanding.
  - Planning Department is working on an easy-to-follow checklist/timeline for developers to follow once they receive Planning Board approval. This will help developers anticipate, plan for, and schedule meetings, inspections, fees, and other requirements as they

complete their projects. This checklist/timeline will include information from other departments whenever possible.

- Planning Board and Zoning Board are now streamed live and recorded for YouTube replay. Conservation Commission, Heritage Commission, Special Events Review Committee, and Minor Site Plan Committees are scheduled to go live in October. This will mean ALL Boards and Committees from the Planning and Code Departments will be live and streaming on YouTube as of October 2016.
  - Revise Building Permit applications - by March 2017 (moving target depending on when CodePal is implemented).
- ◆ Working with developers at CodePal to create a program that will open lines of communication between departments and streamline permitting and approval processes.
  - ◆ As part of the inspection and permitting process/group within the City, Laconia Fire has been using Code Pal for many years. As the City expands its Code Pal user group we will be able to streamline the permitting and inspection process, helping to increase the relationship between the City and its customers.
  - ◆ Laconia Fire has employed as a part-time Fire Prevention office clerk for many years now. This employee works directly with the public in assisting them with Fire Prevention permitting. This position will continue to be part-time, but will be moved from 3 days per week to 5. This will increase consistency and allow us to better serve the public.

#### **Look at policies - can they be revised?**

- ◆ The new Director is reviewing Public Works policies as the part of his effort to learn the operational procedure of the Department.
- ◆ Planning & Code Department staff have added the following internal goal:
  - Revise Planning Board Policy & Procedures document – by March 2017
- ◆ Planning & Code Departments are constantly looking to improve policies and procedures. We take customer feedback and complaints very seriously. One of the biggest strategies we are currently using to address concerns is to make information and policies publicly available and as clear as possible. It is crucial that our policies and processes are transparent and easily understood by the public so as to avoid misunderstandings, frustration, and delays in projects.