



**LACONIA CITY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
DECEMBER 23, 2013  
CITY HALL – CONFERENCE ROOM 200A  
6:00 P.M.**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Mayor Seymour called the meeting to order at the above date and time.

**DOWNTOWN TIF COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN REVIEW:**

The following Councilors were in attendance: Councilor Doyle, Lahey, Lipman, Baer, Hamel and Bolduc. Also in attendance City Manager Scott Myers and Finance Director Donna Woodaman

The following members of the Downtown TIF Advisory Board were in attendance: Kevin Dunleavy and Pat Wood

Mr. Dunleavy reviewed the Comprehensive Master Plan with the Council (see attachment).

Councilor Hamel asked what the bond fees would be on \$1.5 million. Finance Director Woodaman replied that it would be approximately \$15,000 depending on the bank. Councilor Hamel stated that this would leave a \$13,000 contingency. Director Dunleavy confirmed this and stated that he feels it will be sufficient.

Mayor Seymour opened the conversation to any members of the public that would like to speak.

Gretchen Shortway addressed the Council. Ms. Shortway explained that she has visited the local towns and visited the shops and areas in there downtowns to analyze what is needed or wanted by the shop owners. Ms. Shortway stated that when visiting other towns she did not have some of the experiences she had in the City, such as being asked for money and seeing random people wandering the streets. While Ms. Shortway supports the WOW Trail she does not feel it would be beneficial to Downtown to spend the funding on this because it is not going to contribute to the shops and appeal of Downtown. Maor Seymour asked what Ms. Shortway would recommend to be done to stimulate the economic revitalization of Downtown. Ms. Shortway replied that she does not have any direct solutions but feels that parking is a possible issue.

Andrew Thomas, representing the Masonic Hall, addressed the Council. Mr. Thomas explained that he does not feel that Walgreen's owns any property along the river because it is owned by the Masons. The Masons are in support of the WOW Trail but Walgreen's doesn't own property on the lower section of Rowe Court but the Masons would be happy to discuss this with the City.

Mr. Wood addressed the Council and explained that Walgreen's does not own property down to the river and the Riverwalk is on the Landmark Inn property.

Jean Compton, from New England Porch Rockers, addressed the Council. Ms. Compton stated that she is a supporter of the WOW Trail and the Riverwalk but feels the funding should be used on the interior of the Downtown before the other projects.

Marie Macozek, a resident at Beacon Street West, addressed the Council. Ms. Macozek stated that the plans from Chinburg Builders show that the Riverwalk would interject through two of the buildings on the property and asked if the City intends to follow this path. Ms. Macozek was advised that she would need to take this up with the developer.

Rick Nagagast, 110 Beacon Street West, addressed the Council. Mr. Nagagast stated that he would like to see the pocket part on Pleasant Street reconsidered and to have a facelift done to Downtown by having a theme.

Charlie St. Clair, Laconia Antique Center, addressed the Council. Mr. St. Clair stated that he was hoping the Council could find some funding to enhance the security of Downtown, such as a video surveillance system, that would protect the businesses from vandalism and crime. When windows are shot out by bb guns it is costly for the business people and enhancing the safety of Downtown may make it more appealing.

Mr. St. Clair commented that the lights on the Christmas tree in Veteran's Square could be used to line the bridges in Downtown and make it more attractive.

Mr. St. Clair also commented that there was a comment made regarding the Downtown traffic pattern and offered to give direction if anyone is in need because it is not as confusing as previously stated.

Mr. Wood commented that one of the goals of the Riverwalk is to get to the boat launch on Water Street and would be a future project and is a long term goal.

Councilor Lipman asked if Mr. Dunleavy could comment on Beacon Street West. Mr. Dunleavy commented that he is not familiar with the developer's plans but the plan for the Riverwalk is to stay along the river line. Ms. Macozek was pleased with this response.

Dick Smith, resident of Laconia, asked if there is any way to capitalize on the water ways of the City. In the past the Weirs Beach area capitalized on the lake access and they were successful in bringing in thousands of people. Opechee Park had water skiing meets that also brought in thousands of people. If there could be some use of one of the lakes it could be beneficial for the area.

Mayor Seymour commented that he would like Council deliberation on the plan.

Councilor Lipman stated the the context of the Downtown TIF there have been a number of comments on how to support the businesses and development of Downtown but the City does not have the ability to market specific businesses and private investors need to make some decisions. The strengths that the infrastructure capitalizes on need to take advantage of the nature and waterways and will be enabling for other things to happen. Councilor Lipman added that the money for the TIF was intended to support the infrastructure of the City and the proposals made by the TIF intend to do that. Councilor Lipman stated that he intends to support the proposals.

Councilor Lahey agreed with Councilor Lipman and noted that there is only so much the City can do to support private businesses. When references are made to other towns they need to take into consideration that there was a large private investment made. Additionally, there has not been a public/private partnership brought forward for the properties Downtown but the volunteers of the WOW Trail Board have come forward and are doing the work. The WOW Trail and Riverwalk are City parks and the resources should be used there. Councilor Lahey also stated that the private property owners need to understand that the City is willing to work with development, such as with the Veteran's Square water line extension, but that private property owners need to take responsibility and be forthcoming as well.

Councilor Lipman commented that this is a small investment on an annual basis that will have a large impact.

Councilor Bolduc commented that he has received a lot of feedback from individuals over the last week opposed to the project and feels that some of the statements made this evening may have helped clarify the information for people. Councilor Bolduc added that he is not interested in spending tax payer money on private buildings and the property owners in Downtown need to take responsibility for their investments.

Councilor Lahey clarified that there are some excellent merchants Downtown and the issues with maintenance are not necessarily related to the merchants but the property owners.

Mayor Seymour added that with the bonding information provided there will still be funding coming into the TIF and there will be funds available for additional projects. Mayor Seymour also acknowledged that there are merchants that are trying to make successful choices for their business but that the City is not in the business of owning properties. When someone makes a visit to other communities for a day they should be informed that these communities are facing the same issues.

Councilor Hamel commented that he feels that this is something we can do for the area and he does not disagree that there could be improvements to the sidewalks and walking areas of Downtown. Councilor Hamel also visited many towns and villages in the State and there some doing very well while others are not. The City is trying to do something and by doing this it does not take away from other projects in the future, such as sidewalks and trees replacements. There is a maintenance employee spending the summers in the Downtown to help with the maintenance. Councilor Hamel added that he agrees that surveillance units are a good idea as well and should be considered.

City Manager Myers commented that the pocket park is not out of the picture but will be considered at a later time in conjunction with other projects.

Ms. Macozek commented that the City is very unique because of its waterway access points and asked if the City would consider placing a dock at the end of the WOW Trail or at another point of the water ways to make it more attractive. Councilor Lahey replied that there is a boat launch on Fair Street and Messer Street.

Councilor Hamel added that the City doesn't own property abutting the water; it was very difficult to get the State to build the boat launch on Fair Street and the opportunities are not prevalent. The State has been asked to look into other areas that may be available.

Councilor Lahey commented that the waterline extension alone will benefit the City because it will generate taxes that will exceed the cost in a few years.

Councilor Lipman stated that he would like to approve the amount of \$1.5 million subject to satisfactory written agreements from the property owners abutting segments of the Beacon Street West and Walgreen's to ensure City interests.

Mayor Seymour closed the special meeting at 6:59 p.m. and noted it will continue into the regular scheduled meeting.

Respectfully Submitted:

Mary A. Reynolds  
City Clerk