



**LACONIA CITY COUNCIL MEETING
DECEMBER 29, 2010
CITY HALL – CONFERENCE ROOM 200A
7:30 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER:

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

SALUTE TO THE FLAG:

Councilor Brenda Baer led the Salute to the Flag.

ROLL CALL:

City Clerk Reynolds called the roll with the following Councilors present: Councilor Doyle, Lahey, Baer, Hamel and Bolduc. Also present City Manager Eileen Cabanel.

Council Lipman was excused.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

- **Regular minutes and non-public minutes of December 13, 2010**

Councilor Bolduc moved to accept the regular and non-public minutes of December 13, 2010. Seconded by Councilor Hamel. **Motion passed unanimously.**

CONSENT AND ACTION CALENDAR: NONE

CITIZEN COMMENTS FOR MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA: NONE

INTERVIEWS: NONE

COMMUNICATIONS: NONE

PRESENTATIONS:

- **Abatement Process/Jon Duhamel, Assessor**

City Manager Cabanel explained the revaluation process. Normally, when you do a “traditional” revaluation, the process involves the costly process of visiting each home in the areas of the municipality, ensuring all of the information on the Tax Card is correct. With 10,000 parcels, this was

going to cost approximately \$800,000 to complete; the alternative was to undertake the inspection process over a four year period, completing one quarter of the City each year.

The next step was to have Vision Appraisal complete the statistical process. Some changes that were needed included correcting the proportionality of land and building values and correcting the neighborhood model, which was adjusted from over 200 to around 40. The reason for the skews in statistics was because a complete revaluation had not been done for a long amount of time.

The revaluation process was completely monitored by the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) Appraisal Division to ensure accuracy and equitability between each municipality by reviewing the data as the revaluation is happening, from a statistical point. They also attended the hearings between Vision Appraisal and the taxpayers to make sure that Vision Appraisal was listening to the taxpayer and treating them fairly with respect to their concerns.

The DRA also allows a margin of error of up to 10% by State law. As of April 1, 2009, the values of the City were at approximately 105% equalized value, which means that the City was overvalued by approximately 5%; with values dropping very quickly, it is difficult to keep up. At a recent meeting with the DRA, they expressed that the City is now at 95% and allows for fluctuation before the next revaluation. The value of the entire City before the revaluation was \$2.1 billion and is \$1.9 billion now, with the expected 10% drop reflected.

Assessor Jon Duhamel reviewed the application, approval or denial, and appeal process of an abatement as represented in Attachment #1.

Mr. Duhamel and City Manager Cabanel encouraged taxpayers to review their tax card at least annually so they can be aware of the information on the card.

Councilor Baer thanked Mr. Duhamel for his explanation. She also expressed that she would like to have the residents of Laconia realize that this is not unique to Laconia. The drastic changes in tax assessments this year are prevalent throughout the entire State and Country. Once again, prices are falling all over the United States, and more is predicted for 2011. Please don't feel that anyone is alone in this situation; this is something caused by our economic condition and the best way to get our property values increased again is to make sure that our State and National budgets do something to inject life back into the economy.

City Manager Cabanel emphasized that this is not an adversarial process; it is the right of each taxpayer if they feel their assessment is incorrect to come in and file for abatement. This is not an intimidating process; the Assessing Office will help you in any way they can. The most important thing is that the values are correct.

Mayor Seymour asked for an example of what "a portion" of property being appealed would be considered. Mr. Duhamel explained that if someone is appealing their land value, the Assessing Office will not just inspect the land, but the building value as well.

Mayor Seymour invited any taxpayers present that may have questions or comments to do so. With none, Mayor Seymour thanked Mr. Duhamel for his presentation.

MAYOR'S REPORT: NONE

CITIZEN REQUESTS TO COMMENT ON CURRENT AGENDA ITEMS: NONE

PUBLIC HEARING: NONE

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. **FINANCE:** (Lipman, Hamel, Baer)
 - a) WOW Trail Fund
 - b) Special Item Budget Requests Procedural Review

No report on any item in committee

2. **PUBLIC SAFETY:** (Baer, Doyle, Lahey)
 - a) Fair St./Court St. traffic problems and accidents

No report on any item in committee

3. **GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ORDINANCES:** (Doyle, Bolduc, Lahey)
 - a) Energy Committee
 - b) Amendment to Zoning ordinance re Drug Treatment Facilities
 - c) Service on more than one board or commission

No report on any item in committee

4. **PUBLIC WORKS:** (Bolduc, Baer, Lahey)
 - a) Ordinance Amending Chapter 221, Vehicles and Traffic/Parking on Sublawns
 - b) Oak & North Main St. Intersection
 - c) Proposed ordinance regarding vehicles over 18,000 lbs. and engines idling between the hours of midnight and 6:00 a.m.
 - d) Proposed ordinance regarding large vehicles parked on City streets and sidewalks
 - e) Inventory of Public Works Equipment

No report on any item in committee

5. **LAND & BUILDINGS:** (Hamel, Lipman ,Bolduc)
 - a) Repair & maintenance of City Buildings

No report on any item in committee

LIAISON REPORTS: NONE

MANAGER'S REPORT:

During the revaluation process, it was brought about that there were a few areas in the City that were of concern. The residents on Methodist Circle thought the values were too high, which resulted in having several meetings with Vision Appraisal and the taxpayers. Consequently, Mr. Duhamel has consulted Vision Appraisal and made adjustments to some of the properties in this area. On the other end, residents in the area of Sarah Circle were concerned that the values were too low. Currently, the Assessing Office is in the process of going to this neighborhood to inspect the properties in question and

will make adjustments accordingly if they are necessary. If the value is raised, they will not be charge the difference because the Warrant has already been signed and cannot be changed. The new assessment would reflect starting with the 2011 tax year.

Andy from Harley Davidson has contacted the City in regards to Bike Week. At this time, Harley Davidson is looking into another venue other than City Hall to hold their event; no reason was given for this change, but it is the thought that there is not enough support from the Downtown area. It has been expressed that they are happy with the event, but they have always wanted the Downtown to get involved, making comments each year encouraging the City to try and get them involved. There are hopes that we still have a chance to bring them back, and calls will be made in the next few weeks to merchants to get input on their interest in the event and see if they are willing to participate. Another good element would be to add the train; it would be nice to offer having a train ride inclusive of Meredith, the Weirs, Lakeport and Downtown.

In regard to the Colonial Theatre, the report is still in draft form and should be completed soon. There will be a meeting with the informal committee next week to discuss some action steps that need to be taken, including a business plan for the operation and ancillary businesses (store fronts and apartments) and the cost associated, as well as a fundraising campaign. City Manager Cabanel has spoke to some local banks in regard to purchasing Tax Credits also. The final step will be to put together a small formal committee, which will include regional representatives with experience, knowledge and means to help in any way they can. They will be addressed by the information committee first to ensure they are interested and understand the task at hand, and then presented to the Council for appointment.

In preparation of the work session at the next meeting, City Manager Cabanel requested to have the Councilors present her with any topics they want to discuss that may need to be researched before the meeting.

With regard to the applicants for the vacancy of Code Enforcement Officer, first interviews were conducted last week, and second interviews will be conducted next week.

City Manager Cabanel would also like to meet with the School Board sooner than later in regard to the upcoming budget. Contracts will need to be looked at again this year, as they are all open or will be expiring on June 30, 2011. It would be beneficial to give them an idea of what the picture looks like before they begin negotiations. Councilor Baer asked if they have a deadline to have it submitted, and City Manager Cabanel assured the Council that they have always gotten it to her in an acceptable time. Mayor Seymour noted that the new Chair of the School Board is Bob Dassatti, and he has contacted Mayor Seymour in regards to the budget and would like to start after the first of the year as soon as possible.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. American Legion Post 1 request to raise funds at Memorial Field July 2 & 3, 2011

Don Vachon, Chairman of the American Legion Post 1, was present.

Mayor Seymour asked Chairman Vachon what conditions the Parks & Recreation Commission had set for this event. Chairman Vachon advised that they will be getting an insurance binder and Kevin Dunleavy will be looking into a water supply.

Mayor Seymour if there was any discussion as to how the electrical cost and water cost will be handled. Chairman Vachon noted they have not discussed this yet; however, it was discussed using the City Hall parking lot for parking. City Manager Cabanel assured Chairman Vachon that they will work together about the parking issue.

Councilor Hamel asked how late in the evening the shows will go until. The shows are scheduled to be done around 9:00 p.m. on Saturday and by 7:00 p.m. on Sunday.

Councilor Lahey asked if there is gated entry onto the field. There is, and it is located off of West Street and is adequate to move equipment in and off of the field.

A few other parking options were discussed, such as South Street, the parking garage and the Belknap Mall. City Manager Cabanel again assured that an arrangement will be made for parking.

Mayor Seymour thanked Chairman Vachon and noted that it would be nice to have the circus in the City.

Chairman Vachon thanked the Council, as this is a fundraising event and the money benefits the residents of the Lakes Region. City Manager Cabanel asked what they are raising money for. Chairman Vachon stated that the biggest items they fund are American Legion Baseball and scholarships. American Legion Baseball costs approximately \$12,000 per year. Councilor Hamel asked what percentage of the money stays in town, such as maybe 10%. Chairman Vachon stated it would be much more than that.

Councilor Baer moved to approve the request of the American Legion Post 1 to raise funds at Memorial Field on July 2 and July 3, 2011. Seconded by Councilor Bolduc. **Motion passed unanimously.**

2. Weirs Action Committee request to raise funds at Endicott Rock parking lot June 11-18, 2011

City Manager Cabanel explained that this is the same request as prior years, which involved parking during the Bike Week event.

Councilor Bolduc moved to approve the request of the Weirs Action Committee to raise funds at Endicott Rock parking lot June 11-18, 2011. Seconded by Councilor Doyle. **Motion passed unanimously.**

3. Schedule public hearing regarding impact fees for January 24, 2011

Councilor Lahey moved to schedule a public hearing regarding impact fees for January 24, 2011 to take place during the regular Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Bolduc. **Motion passed unanimously.**

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. WOW Trail
2. Master Plan
3. EPA Update
4. Sewer & Water Master Plan
5. Single Stream Recycling/Concord Co-Op

NOMINATIONS, APPOINTMENTS & ELECTIONS: NONE

COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Councilor Bolduc asked why the jersey barriers for the WOW Trail are not placed at the trail ends in Lakeport and Messer Street, but are up the trail. City Manager Cabanel will find out why and have them moved.

Councilor Bolduc wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Councilor Hamel noted the passing of Barbara Maheux, wife of Police Commissioner Armand Maheux sending his regards and condolences.

NON - PUBLIC SESSION:

Councilor Lahey moved to enter into non-public session according to RSA 91-A:3, II: (a) The dismissal, promotion or compensation of any public employee, or the investigation of any charges against him, unless the employee affected (1) has a right to a meeting and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted. Seconded by Councilor Hamel.

On a roll call vote of the Council, it was entered into non-public session. Mayor Seymour noted there will be no further business conducted after the non-public session.

On motion of Councilor Bolduc and seconded by Councilor Hamel, it was voted to come out of non-public session. Councilor Bolduc moved to seal the minutes for five years, seconded by Councilor Lahey. Motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT:

Councilor Bolduc made a motion to adjourn at 9:35 p.m. Seconded by Councilor Doyle and passed unanimously.

A True Record Attest:

Mary A. Reynolds
City Clerk