

FINAL

**LEBANON CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES, REGULAR SESSION
REMOTE VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS
LebanonNH.gov/Live
Thursday, April 30, 2020
5:30 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Tim McNamara, Assistant Mayor Clifton Below, Bruce Bronner, Erling Heistad, Karen Liot Hill, Suzanne Prentiss, George Sykes, Jim Winny,

MEMBERS ABSENT: Karen Zook

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Shaun Mulholland, Deputy City Manager Paula Maville, Deputy City Clerk Kristin Kenniston, Library Director Sean Fleming, Planning & Zoning Director David Brooks, Fire Chief & Emergency Management Director Chris Christopoulos, Police Chief Richard Mello, Interim Parks & Recreation Director Rick Desharnais, Recreation Coordinator Krissy Flythe, Tom Taplin (IT), Public Works Director Jim Donison, Assistant Public Works Director Jay Cairelli, Solid Waste Manager Mark Morgan, Chief Assessor Rick Vincent

Mayor McNamara called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

City Manager Mulholland informed the public this meeting is taking place virtually due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and is thereby being conducted in accordance with the Emergency Orders issued by the New Hampshire Governor. The topics being discussed by Staff at this Work Session regarding what the City's objectives will be during the coming year are subject to potential budget rescissions.

1. ANNUAL WORK SESSION: PRESENTATION OF DRAFT OUTCOMES & WORK PLAN

A. Overview with City Departments:

Library: (pages 4-6 in agenda packet)

Mr. Sean Fleming, Library Director first spoke about Library renovations, noting the reasons for renovating at a time like this are low interest rates; injecting money into the local economy by helping employ people on a project; the fact that this would not impact the tax rate until 2022; and there is a possibility of Federal funding. He will be presenting this as a CIP Project later in the year.

Mr. Fleming then reviewed the strategies, 2019 accomplishments, the 2020 outcome measures, and looking ahead (2021-2022) plans for the library as follows:

- Maintain the Lebanon Public Libraries Role as the Information "Center of Community":
The idea that everyone in Lebanon has easy access to the internet is a myth. There is still a digital divide in Lebanon, even though we are better off than other communities. There are a lot of people who need help accessing the internet and the libraries have about 20 Sprint Wifi Hotspots with unlimited data for at a cost of \$10 month. Unfortunately, this deal is just extended to libraries and we cannot reach everyone in need because Sprint does not have coverage to all

areas in Lebanon. Some people do not have the funds to pay for high speed internet at home, so once the libraries are open again we will see a lot of people coming in to use our computers to apply for jobs, fill out forms, etc. He also spoke about the role libraries are playing in the City during the pandemic, noting the IT & Systems Librarians are working with Melanie McDonough to help implement improvements to some of the digital systems in place to help reduce live contact.

- Continue to Provide Quality Programs and Services to Library Users:
Not included in the agenda packet under outcome measures were the implementation of three new programs: Mango Languages, Hoopla (access to eBooks, audio books, shows and movies), and Tumble Books (eBooks for grades K-6).
- Finding ways to Increase Library Funds in order to provide the best service to patrons:
We recognize the need to fundraise for the Lebanon Library Renovation Project. The Library Board of Trustees has agreed to spend up to \$25K and fundraise for this renovation.

Councilor Liot Hill asked if the wireless Hotspots were all being used; if they could be to ordered from different providers like Verizon; and if he has been in communication with the School District to make sure that families who are having a hard time with remote learning are being targeted for some of these Hotspots.

Director Fleming said this was discussed with SAU, who said they could use some Hotspots as a back-stop. However, we found out from Sprint that there were none left. Even the ones the library ordered pre-pandemic were not received until last week. Sprint is really the only one that offers this type of deal and Verizon does not offer an unlimited data plan. He is trying to work with the libraries IT Director to figure out how many houses in Lebanon do not have access to a Fiber Optics Network and spoke about what is called “dark fiber,” where companies choose not to turn on Fiber Optic Networks in certain areas because of high foreclosure rates and other factors. More research is being done on this.

In response to Councilor Liot Hill’s question Director Fleming said programs the libraries are offering are available on lelibrary.com. If you take a tour of the new webpage, you will come across the resources available, but people need to have resident’s library card to access these resources.

Assessing: (pages 10-11, agenda packet)

Mr. Rick Vincent, Chief Assessor, chose not to review all of his bullet points with the Council, but gave the Councilors time to review his strategies, 2019 accomplishments, 2020 outcome measures and plans for 2021-2022. The big issue this year is the City-wide re-evaluation that is being done.

In response to Mayor McNamara’s question about people being able to pay property taxes, he said he has received some responses from commercial owners stating since they are not receiving any income and doubts they will be able to pay their taxes in July. The City-wide re-evaluations should be done in July/August 2020, noting that they would be doing a statistical re-evaluation (number crunching) and will be coming up with some new values. They will not be doing any property inspections but may do some drive byes.

Mayor McNamara asked if he saw a significant number of construction projects come on-line in the past year. Mr. Vincent said some were started last year, mostly along Rte. 120; there are apartment/condos behind the Mascoma building (Tree Tops), and new apartments at the Altaria Development.

In response to Councilor Heistad's questions about the Special Tax Programs regarding the exemptions for Veteran's (National Guard/Reservists), Mr. Vincent said he believed the National Guard would be included if they had a DD 214.

In response to Councilor Bronner's questions, Mr. Vincent informed the Council that he does not hear from banks regarding foreclosures, noting that right now there is a moratorium on forecloses.

Police:

NOTE: Please refer to the extensive details regarding the Lebanon Police Department Strategic Plan for 2020-2024 (pages 15-44, agenda packet).

Lebanon Police Chief Richard Mello reviewed the Lebanon Police Department's Strategic Plan for 2020-2024, highlighted the LPD 2019 accomplishments (highlighting CALEA Accreditation), their 2020 outcome measures, and plans for looking ahead (2020-2024) as follows:

- Sense of Security – Effective and Efficient Allocation of Personnel.
- Sense of Place & Security – Desirable, Safe Livable Neighborhoods.
- Increased Technology Use for Enhanced Citizen Access to Information.

Chief Mello also informed the Council about: the complete overhaul of LPD's Evidence Room; the communications repeater project; boiler replacements; facility study; DEDAX; roll-out of a citizens survey; the addition of a new lieutenant in the prosecution Division; the donation-driven Canine Training Facility; LPD's drone program; and increasing the LPD's presence within the City due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Councilor Prentiss signed into the virtual meeting at approximately 6:05 PM.

Councilor Liot Hill asked if there has been an uptick in both traditional and domestic crime. Chief Mello has seen a reduction in some calls for service, but some calls have increased by three-fold (i.e., business checks, child custody disputes, disorderly conduct (400%), substance abuse, and overdoses). Councilor Liot Hill suggested the LPD do an assessment looking back to after the last recession so we can be more pro-active in planning for what may be coming in the coming year.

In response to Councilor Heistad's question about RAD classes, Chief Mello said that due to some of the physical/hands-on training this is on hold, but the program will resume once the COVID-19 crisis has ended and contact restrictions are lifted.

Planning Department (This is a carry-over discussion from the Council's April 28, 2020 meeting and was added to the agenda to give Councilors the chance to ask questions):

Councilor Liot Hill spoke about the significant changes to Rte. 12A due to development and was concerned about the City losing out if the City was not able to move quickly enough in this area, referring to a study done by a Dartmouth College Professor. She was uncertain if the current City's Zoning supports a tremendous redevelopment vision on Rte. 12A and asked if it was worth having a task force or some initiative to review the potential changes that might be coming down the road, particularly the Zoning along the Rte. 12A corridor. She noted that in the last 15-years, the City has not shown the ability to move very quickly on Zoning changes and was concerned that if we do not jump start that process, we could end up being behind the 8-ball very quickly. Mr. Mulholland thought this concern was premature

because the City is trying to deal with the immediate financial crisis and the emergency we find ourselves in due to COVID-19.

Mr. David Brooks added that over the last five (5) years, the City has updated its Zoning Ordinance to allow for additional uses in that areas general Commercial Zone, including housing that speaks to the mixed use concept. Through a variety of efforts, including the sidewalk construction project that is underway, contacts and have been made to develop relationships with the property owners along Rte. 12 A, including some of the big plaza owners. Ms. Kelly Kilika was the Dartmouth College Professor who did a study on this area 15-20 years ago and he will email Councilors a copy of her study.

Councilor Prentiss felt Mr. Brooks' Planning presentation was very strong, but ambitious. She questioned Lebanon's need for so many large large-scaled units and what other communities in the Upper Valley were doing for housing. While she understands that Lebanon is a regional hub she felt the City needs to take a serious look at what is already planned for, being built, or has been built.

Mr. Brooks said some of the projects underway have been approved for more than a decade and since he does not see an urgency on the part of those developers he is uncertain if those developments will ever come to fruition. Some of the projects that are underway will be finished and was uncertain if some of the projects that have gone through the Conceptual Review will result in actual formal applications. He pointed out that if you add Hartford, Enfield, Norwich and Hanover, all of those towns combined have the same number of jobs that Lebanon has. The idea of Smart Planning is to put housing close to where the businesses, transit and services might be located. He was uncertain if Lebanon can control what other communities can/cannot do. If the City of Lebanon does not do what it needs to do (for housing) the people who would be hurt are the businesses that are already here and the employees that would like to be here.

Mayor McNamara had some of the same concerns as Councilor Prentiss, which he expressed at the January 22, 2020 Council meeting when he voted against a change for some of the districting on Rte. 120. He remains to be continually concerned and wants to make sure is that by accepting, what sometimes feels like all the new rental housing in the Upper Valley to satisfy the needs of the Lebanon businesses, that the City is not putting taxpayers in a situation of subsidized economic development. What the City found over time is that businesses we thought were a net-positive to the tax base, sometimes were not, and the number of calls for police, fire, and ambulances to retail businesses were far greater than we thought they were. He wants to make sure that we are all going into this new situation with our eyes wide open and with as much data as we can gather to analyze what the economic impacts are of literally over 1,000 new housing units. He would also like time to look at these projects holistically and work with the school district to see what sort of challenges these will present for them, noting there are probably challenges we have not envisioned yet.

Ms. Paula Maville spoke about her experience when she first came onboard with the City. At that time, we were in the midst of a huge development boom and hundreds of housing units were on the books, but when things crashed in the very late 1980's all of those housing units on the books did not get built. Then we moved into an era where commercial and industrial started really kicking in (i.e., DHMC relocated and Centerra was built). Much of the other development happened since the late 1980's and our residential population/growth did not keep up with the commercial/industrial sector. When the housing study first came out citing the need for 5K + units, people started trying to file back into Lebanon replenishing our housing stock, but then we hit another recession and it all (housing) went down again.

These things coming in waves, and through this whole entire time, Lebanon has continually become more transient. We are not building single-family residential developments like we used to, we are building large scale apartments/rental housing because that is the market demand. There are more complexities in all of this that needs to be looked at, such as trying to manage the environmental side of things; managing all the people trying to get to work in their cars because we do not have a large Transit system; and trying to build housing that will serve those businesses - these need to be balance.

Assistant Mayor Below thanked Ms. Maville for her thoughts and in that context he wanted to call attention to page 37, #5 in the April 28, 2020 agenda regarding energy efficient building and sustainable development. He felt it was interesting that the types of jobs being developed in Lebanon were in the medical profession (DHMC) as well as in the high-tech businesses, such as those located in Centerra or in other parts of the City. These types of businesses tend to attract a younger population who have not started families yet. His point was that the Work Plan on this issue bears a lot of thought and thinking through the concerns that were raised. In looking ahead, he suggested that bullet #3 (page 37, #5 in the April 28, 2020 agenda packet) be entirely put off until next year and be broken into two parts: 1) Consider adopting the current version of the International Building Codes, which are continuously updated, and 2) Rethink the current City Building Codes.

Councilor Sykes echoed what Assistant Mayor said noting it was important for the City to keep up-to-date Building Codes.

Councilor Liot Hill strongly concurred with Assistant Mayor Below and asked when Building Codes become vested. Mr. Brooks said he believed it was with the issuance of the Building Permit, but will check on this and report back to the Council.

Fire: (pages 47-49, agenda packet)

Note: Please refer to the extensive details for Lebanon Fire Department’s strategic plans 2020-2024 (pages 51-86) in the agenda packet.

Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director Chris Christopoulos reviewed the Lebanon Fire Department’s Strategic Plan for 2020-2024, the LFD 2019 accomplishments, their 2020 outcome measures, and plans for looking ahead (2020-2024) as follows:

- “Best in Class” Fire & Emergency Medical Services.
- Safety & Security of Life and Property for Building Construction and Occupancy.
- Heightened Emergency Preparedness

Most of Fire Chief Christopoulos’ time over the last few months has been spent in response to COVID-19, noting that no one in the Fire Department has been exposed to the Corona Virus to date. The LFD has received a lot of calls for COVID-19 screening, have been stockpiling PPE for a possible second wave, and planning for a potential mass vaccination (most likely to happen in the winter/spring 2021).

In 2019, the LFD was able to secure an \$8K Grant to do a complete overhaul of the City’s Emergency Operations Plan and the Water Emergency Options Plan. LFD received \$32K under the first Cares Act release of funds from the Federal Government. He has submitted another application for \$75K+ based on lost revenues for March/April 2020.

Public Works: (pages 91-103 in agenda packet)

Mr. Jim Donison, Mr. Jay Cairelli and Mr. Mark Morgan reviewed the very robust Lebanon Public Works Department's Strategic Plans for 2020-2024, their 2019 accomplishments, 2020 outcome measures, and plans for looking ahead (2021-2022). Mr. Donison presented the following:

- Coordinated Energy & Facility Management.
- Strategic Public Works and Pavement Management Plan.)
- Providing Quality Engineering Management.
- Responsible and Sustainable Solid Waste Resource Management.
- Reducing Energy Consumption in all Public Facilities.
- Safe Drinking Water. (Jim Donison) It is important to note that we have met or exceeded all compliance testing! The water system received the Fluoride Award from the NH Dental Coalition in cooperation with the NH CDC.
- Safely Treated Wastewater.

In response to Councilor Heistad's requested for an update on the Packard Hill Bridge and the States standard for PFAS, Mr. Donison said that after discussions with the contractor, DPW received a proposal in the amount of \$180K+/- to do some improvements (i.e., replacing the roof, decking, and doing some structural repairs). DPW also hired a consultant to do a structural mode rating on the bridge. Presently, the bridge is closed but the plan is to have it opened to the public by the end of June. As far as PFAS are concerned, the State adopted drinking water standards in 2019, limiting PFAS contamination levels to 13 ppt (parts per trillion). This was challenged by a number of parties, so there is a legal stay on this standard. The NHDES had required that drinking water systems be sampled for PFOS/PFAS starting in the fourth quarter of 2019 and continuing for three (3) additional quarters. DPW has taken samples in the first two quarters and he believed we were eligible for a waiver to not continue any additional samplings.

Recreation: (pages 106-112, agenda packet)

Mr. Rick Desharnais (Interim Parks & Recreation Director) and Ms. Krissy Flythe (Recreation Coordinator) reviewed the Parks & Recreation Department's Strategic Plans for 2020-2024, their 2019 accomplishments, 2020 outcome measures, and plans for looking ahead (2021-2022) as follows:

- Having a functional Mascoma River Greenway (Krissy Flythe)
Of particular note, there is a resource called inaturalist.org, which is a great resource to help manage invasive species, what are/are not good plants, what are weeds, etc.

Mayor McNamara would like to get Grant funding/DOT funding/or some sort of funding to get the Railroad Bridge over the interstate painted, noting it is getting very rusted and his guess is the State has no intention of maintaining it. Mr. Mulholland looked into this issue and said if he City is willing to work with the NHDOT with cost sharing (i.e., 90% City cost and 10% NH DOT cost) this could be something they would entertain. However, this was prior to the COVID situation and would be a low priority for the NHDOT.

Councilor Prentiss felt the Mascoma River Greenway is one of the jewels of the City and while she appreciates all the volunteer she wondered who controls/plans for the up-keep & cleanup. Mr. Desharnais said the Rec. Dept has maintenance staff on the Greenway three days a week, but they do rely heavily on citizens/volunteers to informing them if they see something that is out of place, or if there are excessive amounts of trash. They also rely on volunteers for cleanup. Parks & Rec. have been working with

homeowners along the Greenway and many have reached out to them wanting to cleanup stuff that was thrown over the embankment many years ago by previous homeowners.

Mr. Mulholland informed the Council this was addressed last year with Paul Coats, and the City offered to have homeowners remove some of the trash on the Greenway at no cost to them. He will try to make another effort again this year to see if there will be some cooperation from the property owners.

- The need to make sure there is adequate Athletic Field Space available city-wide, especially adult fields. (Mr. Desharnais/Krissy Flythe)

Councilor Prentiss asked what happened the plan to build a Community Center at the Seminary Hill site. Mr. Desharnais said they have worked closely with the SAU to develop a vision for the building on Seminary Hill, which included architectural plans to renovate the building, but the SAU decided (Seminary Hill) was not in their plans so Parks and Recreation is now developing a Leadership Team to come up with a vision for a Community Center and will be making a vigorous attempt to collect information from the City's residents regarding what they envision for a building. Councilor Prentiss wanted to go on the record noting that she continues to be disappointed with the continual inability, for whatever reason, to come to a good meeting of the minds with another jewel of the City, which is the space at Seminary Hill and thanked the Parks & Recreation for all the good work they are doing.

Councilor Hill echoed Councilor Prentiss' disappointment with the SAU regarding Seminary Hill. She suspects that within the next year or two the SAU is going to feel increasing pressure from the property taxpayers regarding how they are stewarding their resources effectively.

Councilor Heistad asked if there has been any thought about using the Bagley Field, noting there is access to the field coming across from Heater Road. Mr. Desharnais said they recently worked with Pathway Consulting about this possibility, but the greatest challenge is the access. Parking for that field and handicap accessibility would be a great challenge without building a bridge to cross the river. Even a pedestrian bridge poses accessibility issues. It would also be difficult to get an easement from the State to run a road along the highway in order to come in from Heater Road, along with resistance from the neighborhood due to the increased traffic that would bring.

- Making sure the City has a Diverse Number of Programs and Special Events. (Ms. Krissy Flythe)

Councilor Hill would like to see some events that are not online and suggested creating a make-shift drive-in theatre or creating a drive through event for the 4th of July, etc.

Mr. Desharnais said the Rec. Dept. has partnered with the SAU and every Tuesday they are delivering just over 300 packs that will get kids outside (i.e., Frisbees, sidewalk chalk, paper airplanes, garden seeds, pots & soils, etc.)

- Accessible Walkable Park Lands that are a sense of pride for Lebanon residents. (Ms. Krissy Flythe/Mr. Desharnais).
- Having citizens recognize the healthy choice is the easy choice (Mr. Desharnais/ Ms. Krissy Flythe).
- How "Friends of Lebanon Recreation & Parks" are enhancing our parks. (Mr. Desharnais/ Ms. Krissy Flythe)

The meeting was adjourned at 7:57 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dona E. Gibson

Recording Secretary