

**TOWN OF NEWMARKET, NEW HAMPSHIRE
TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOP**

November 30, 2016 7:00 PM

TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Approved 12/21/2016

PRESENT: Council Chairman Gary Levy, Council Vice Chairman Phil Nazzaro, Councilor Dale Pike, Councilor Amy Thompson, Councilor Toni Weinstein, Councilor Kyle Bowden, Councilor Amy Burns

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator Steve Fournier, Mr. Rick Alpers and Ms. Shelley Walts of Primex

AGENDA

Chairman Gary Levy called the meeting to order at 7:16 pm.

TOWN OF NEWMARKET GOAL SETTING SESSION

Town Administrator Steve Fournier stated that the purpose of the Workshop Session was to set longer-term goals for the Town, and said he had discussed with the Council having Primex (Public Risk Management Exchange) come in and facilitate a goal-setting session to develop Council goals. He said Primex was an insurance carrier for New Hampshire Risk Management based in Concord, and said Primex Consultants Mr. Rick Alpers and Ms. Shelly Walts were present to assist with the goal-setting session.

Introduction/Agenda Review

Mr. Rick Alpers said they were pleased to be there to talk about Council goals that could be achieved over the next year or so and put dates around them. He reviewed the brief agenda and said these sessions helped to keep communities organized and on-task and helped reduce risk management. He said the Seacoast was vibrant and there was a lot of competition among surrounding communities to attract residents and economic development.

Things Going Well in Newmarket

Mr. Alpers asked the councilors what was going well in Newmarket now and where they were succeeding:

Councilor Thompson said the Town had a team of staff, administrators, and department heads with phenomenal integrity. Councilor Weinstein said they had a vibrant Downtown with diverse businesses and the successful renovation of the Mills. Vice-Chair Nazzaro said the Town had a good reputation in the local area. Councilor Burns said they had a great Recreation Center with lots of programming for all ages, and Councilor Weinstein said they had a lot of Natural Resources with the river and the bay.

Councilor Bowden mentioned Public Safety and their dedication to the Town. Chairman Levy said currently the Town was affordable and felt their location between Exeter and Durham and nearness to Portsmouth had helped Newmarket grow. He said though pricing on property was currently affordable, the tax rate was higher than most communities around and would probably be going up.

Councilor Thompson mentioned the small-town character of the community which had a lot of long-time families, and said the Town was close-knit and had a lot of pride. Councilor Pike said he felt there was a nice spectrum of philosophies on the boards, and said the range had increased for both the School Board and the Town Council. Councilor Bowden felt Newmarket was a great town community for new families with a lot to offer, and said it was continuing to grow.

Things in Newmarket Needing Work

Mr. Alpers asked the councilors what things in Newmarket they thought needed more work and attention:

Councilor Pike said that School Facilities was a big issue now and there was excellent work being done to come up with a proposal. He said if it passed it would add to the tax burden, and that if it did not pass a lot of people would be really discouraged. Vice-Chair Nazzaro said that Downtown parking was an issue for businesses and it was getting worse. Chairman Levy said the Town roads were not in great shape.

Councilor Weinstein mentioned limited Public Transportation to and from the Town. Vice-Chair Nazzaro felt it was a lot for the size of the community, and Town Administrator Fournier said the Town had 2 bus services, the University and Coach. Councilor Pike mentioned the traffic issue with Route 108, which was very busy. Chairman Levy stated that Planning needed to be cognizant of what things needed to be improved and the impact they would have on the traffic. He said he also wanted to mention infrastructure needs like Water & Sewer which would mean increases for rate-payers. Town Administrator Fournier said that money had already been set aside for Water, but there would be an increase in Sewer rates.

Councilor Pike said there were a lot of agency regulations tied in with Water & Sewer, and said they needed to have smart growth in both urban and rural areas. He felt it was difficult to take all that information and implement it into good planning practices. Vice-Chair Nazzaro said the Town lacked a cohesive, unified, vision for the future across all government boards that they were working together towards. Chairman Levy said they also did not have any design standards which they might want to develop.

Mr. Alpers stated that Exeter had forced planning, zoning, historic and town selectmen together in one room to have a frank conversation. Chairman Levy said that another strength of Newmarket was the proximity to UNH and the potential for the Town to have some start-up businesses because of the

affordability of space along the Route 108 corridor. He felt the Town was limited as to how much it could diversify its tax base. Town Administrator Fournier said another difficulty in attracting businesses was that every community in the area was competing with a State-owned Industrial Park.

Vice-Chair Nazzaro questioned how the development of more Student Housing in Durham might impact Newmarket, and Town Administrator Fournier said the Town was currently attracting more college grads. Chairman Levy felt the amount of multi-family housing was high, and Councilor Pike said it was the highest in the area. Councilor Thompson said they did have a large transient population, and she felt overbuilding and density were real threats to the Town. Vice-Chair Nazzaro pointed out that they had a lot of land in Conservation, and Town Administrator Fournier said they had a total of 12 square miles.

Vice-Chair Nazzaro felt they needed to think creatively about how they were going to deliver services of the same quality in the future. Chairman Levy stated that prioritization would be very important to the Town. Councilor Burns said they needed prioritization and a balance, as they could not just stop. Councilor Thompson said the tax rate was approaching \$30 and that a lot of people would not be able to afford to stay in the Town. Vice-Chair Nazzaro added that another positive thing was that they had a very low debt ratio as a community.

Mr. Alpers asked that each councilor and the Town Administrator take some time to write down 2 or 3 goals they wanted to see succeed over the next year or so, and then take a 5-6 minute break while they consolidated the goals to come up with a list.

Top 3 Goals per Councilor and Administrator

Councilor Pike: (1) Capital Improvement plan and better long-term planning at the Council level, (2) Increase Town Council engagement with the Planning Board and other boards in on-going discussions, (3) Work on how the Council sets agendas for meetings.

Councilor Thompson: (1) Regionalization and partnering with other communities or the School on education services, (2) Manage growth with associated costs of services to keep the Town affordable, (3) Maintain the character of their small town in choosing development wisely.

Chairman Levy: (1) Set a number for the Budget which they could spend to rather than back into, (2) Prioritization addressing imperatives first, (3) See zero-based budgeting for the Town, to start and plan a budget from zero.

Town Administrator Fournier: (1) Address the parking issues, (2) Invest in infrastructure and roads, (3) Implement a long-range plan for development in the community.

Councilor Burns: (1) Decide what to implement for possible efficiencies based on the MRI Report, (2) Continue to seek places where the School and Town could work together to find efficiencies, (3) Continue to plan for the future and look at funding.

Councilor Bowden: (1) CIP long-term planning, (2) Continue to work with the School Board for more efficiencies, (3) Detail and implement a Technology Plan for the long term and look at monopolies like Comcast.

Councilor Weinstein: (1) Continue to find efficiencies with the School and with other communities, (2) Increase parking, (3) Continue to invest in our Natural Resources and Recreational activities as a way to attract businesses to our community.

Vice-Chair Nazzaro: (1) A unified, integrated, cross-department, community-wide Capital Improvement Plan, (2) A 5-year Budget Plan built on best current knowledge, priorities, and planned work, (3) An expanded Downtown on North and South Main Street that includes plans to address the parking situation.

Discussion: Chairman Levy said they had spent a lot of time on a charrette with Strafford Regional Planning and felt there was a disconnect between Planning and Zoning rules and regulations and what people wanted, and recommended that the Planning Board and the Council hold a meeting to have that kind of discussion. Councilor Weinstein said it was there in the Master Plan and it was just a matter of implementing it and revisiting it on a regular basis. Vice-Chair Nazzaro said people should go through elected officials, and said it was on the Planning Board as an elected office to write what the zoning should look like and on the Council to approve it. Chairman Levy said the Council had to wait for the Planning Board and things did fall through the cracks. Councilor Weinstein said there was a provision in the Town Charter that the Chairman of the Town Council and the Planning Board meet annually.

The Council went into recess at 8:29 pm, and the meeting was resumed at 8:36 pm.

Final Goals with Timelines

Mr. Alpers stated that he would provide a brief synopsis of four (4) goals the Council could set, get their general approval, put some deliverable dates around them, and determine the path they were going to take to address the problems.

[1] A Unified, Town-Wide Capital Improvement Plan.

Mr. Alpers asked when they wanted the plan to be implemented and when delivered. Councilor Pike stated that the implementation of a CIP process was a goal already assigned to Town Administrator Fournier. The Council discussed dates and agreed to have the process for a CIP Plan completed by June 2017 with the deliverable by October 2017. Town Administrator Fournier felt he could meet those deadlines.

[2] Increased Parking in Downtown.

Mr. Alpers asked how the Council wanted to address the parking problem and the possible expansion of the Downtown area to increase its vitality. Chairman Levy said they had discussed the issue and there were possible areas to the south of the Town Hall, some parking by the tracks, and a third area off Bay Road. Councilor Burns felt the issue should be looked at and figured out by one date and the

implementation started by another date. Town Administrator Fournier stated that there was a private entity looking at the issue.

Vice-Chair Nazzaro felt it should not be limited to a public/private partnership, as it could be a government or a private solution. He said he would like to see a viable option for long-term parking by the end of the 2017 calendar year. Town Administrator Fournier recommended the option be identified by the end of 2017 with implementation beginning 2018. Vice-Chair Nazzaro said that an option could mean setting up a partnership for creating a parking area. Town Administrator Fournier said that on top of these goals the Council had already assigned additional goals, and he wanted to make sure he could implement both.

Chairman Levy felt they first needed to evaluate how much parking they needed and determine the proximity of the parking location to the Downtown, and felt that this information should be obtainable by the end of 2017. Mr. Alpers suggested that the Planning Board could do some of those steps for the Council.

[3] Continuing Relations with the School Board to Find Efficiencies.

Mr. Alpers said they needed to finish the deals for Finance and Facilities and continue to have conversations with the School about working together in other areas.

[4] Set up a Council Meeting with the Planning Board.

Mr. Alpers said they needed to meet with the Planning Board to discuss zoning and plans that had been implemented over the years and also discuss sustainable growth. Chairman Levy asked that the information from the charrette with Strafford Regional be aggregated with the studies. Councilor Pike stated that it was incorporated into the Future Land Use Chapter, which had been agreed upon by the Planning Board. He said the Sub-Committee had laid out a sequence and prioritized the next steps, and they would like to meet with the Council to work on that.

Vice-Chair Nazzaro said he had an issue with the way the goal was written, in that the Planning Board was a stand-alone elected committee. He felt that the Planning Board and the Town Council should meet at the beginning of each year to align goals and determine together what the work plan would be. He felt the verbiage of the goal should be changed to "Meet with the Planning Board to work together to set up long-term goals for 2017." The Council agreed to the change and Mr. Alpers set the deliverable date to be the first or second quarter of 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

The Workshop Meeting was concluded at 8:56 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Denmark, Recording Secretary