

**CITY OF LACONIA - CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING
7:00 P.M.**

5/16/2022 - Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Hosmer called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Councilor Haynes led the salute to the flag.

3. RECORDING SECRETARY

Katie Gargano, City Clerk

4. ROLL CALL

City Clerk Gargano called the roll, Councilor Cheney, Councilor Soucy, Councilor Lipman, Councilor Haynes, Councilor Felch.

Absent: Councilor Hamel

Mayor Hosmer confirmed five Councilors are in attendance and a quorum is established.

5. STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Scott Myers, City Manager; Glenn Smith, Finance Director/ IT Coordinator; Dean Trefethen, Planning and Code Enforcement Director; and Kirk Beattie, Fire Chief

6. PRESENTATIONS

6.A. Department Budget Presentation

Planning/Code - Dean Trefethen, Director

Planning/Code Director Trefethen began his presentation with Code Enforcement, which can be found on pages 37-40 in the Proposed Expenditure Plan. The proposed budget for Codes is \$188,151.

The Code Department consists of three full-time employees; one Building Inspector, one Housing Inspector and one Administrative Secretary. The Administrative Secretary position is currently vacant.

Code Department activities include issuing Building, Electrical, Demolition and Occupancy permits. The Department conducted more than 1,500 inspections last year. Building permit value is at \$48 million dollars plus, an increase of 24% from the previous year.

There are several significant projects in the City that are either underway or about to start.

The Code Department also supports the Heritage Commission and the Board of Code and Buildings

Appeals.

Property maintenance is the most important function of the Code Enforcement Department; properties are inspected either by complaint or by conducting a drive-by. There are various methods of enforcement. The process begins by sending letters, then they issue violations. As a last resort, property owners are taken to court. There are currently a couple of cases with the City's attorneys at the moment.

The City's Housing Inspector is responsible for Short-Term Lodging Permit inspections and acts as a backup to the Building Inspector.

Councilor Cheney asked if the Code Enforcement inspector ever works on the weekends. Director Trefethen responded typically he does not, only on Motorcycle Week or for a special project. Councilor Cheney stated that he would like to see more time spent in the field on the weekends.

Director Trefethen moved onto discussion of the Conservation budget, which is on pages 41-44 in the Proposed Expenditure Plan. The proposed budget is \$3500; this is less than previous years. There were a few minor items cut from the budget such as telephone and postage costs. The budget is primarily used to support Conservation Commission activities.

The Conservation Commission advises the Planning Department and the Planning Board and other City departments on how to handle storm water management and wetlands protection to protect the lakes and their tributaries. They provide erosion control advice and provide money for conducting boat inspections as they come out of the water.

There is a Conservation Technician, and the salary for that position is in the Planning Department's budget.

The milfoil control dollars are primarily spent in Paugus Bay and Lake Opechee. Money for milfoil projects is received from grants, by fundraising activities, and from the City. Councilor Soucy mentioned that the Water Department has significant money available for this already and NH DES has people who work in Paugus Bay. He wants to make sure things are not being duplicated. Director Trefethen replied no, this is done in conjunction with the other departments. It is a group effort.

Councilor Haynes asked if the City does work in any other bodies of water like Lake Winnisquam. Director Trefethen replied no, they do not involve themselves, but they do make a contribution to the Winnisquam Association. Manager Myers said he believes about \$7,000 a year is contributed to the Association. It is a very strong Association and they do not see the need to get involved.

Director Trefethen moved onto the Heritage Commission budget which is on page 25 of the Proposed Expenditure Plan and is under Administration Special Items. The proposed budget for the Commission is \$750.

The Heritage Commission is in charge of proper recognition and protection of historic, cultural and aesthetic properties that are of community significance. The Commission has a delegated function to oversee demolition permits. The demolition permit process/Ordinance is not very strong. Changes to the existing Ordinance from the Commission will be coming forth to the Council in the fall.

Councilor Lipman mentioned a presentation of the Historic District Overlay and the expansion of the existing district. It has been a long time since he has heard anything about that and requested an update on where that stands. Director Trefethen stated that the Government Operations and Ordinances Committee has met with the Historic District Commission, but they are in need of another meeting. The subject has been put on the back burner because of Council members being on other City committees and they have had to focus on trash collection and DPW projects first.

Director Trefethen moved onto the Historic District Commission. Their budget is on page 25 of the

Proposed Expenditure Plan under Administration Special Items. Their proposed budget \$3,000.

The Historic District Commission's function is to oversee the protection of historic buildings in the Historic Overlay District, which is very small. The District currently consists of five parcels. The Commission has proposed an expansion of the District based off from a study done by Mae Williams, who has a very good rapport within the State. She has categorized and studied all of the buildings in a defined area of the downtown.

The Historic District Commission is still meeting and creating educational pamphlets. They visited all the downtown businesses to educate them about the proposed expansion and what they were trying to do.

Councilor Cheney asked about the dollar amount requested in the proposed budget, whether it came from the Commission or whether Director Trefethen comes up with the amount. Director Trefethen answered that the dollar amount requested was a little more than what is in the proposed budget, but was reduced by the City Manager when it came down to getting to the budget under the Tax Cap.

The City Manager explained that the Commission never had any money before. They requested \$4500, and he cut it down to \$3,000. If they had an expense that was going to exceed the allotment, he would work with them to find the additional funds.

Director Trefethen moved on to the Planning and Community Development budget which is on pages 73-78 in the Proposed Expenditure Plan. The proposed budget is \$322,789. It includes funding for five full-time employees: One Director, one Assistant Director, one Conservation Technician, one Zoning Technician and one Administrative Secretary.

Planning Department activities include providing support to the following Boards and Commissions: Planning, Zoning, Conservation, Technical Review, Minor Site Plan, Special Events/Motorcycle Week and Historic District. Their primary function is advising property owners about regulations – Zoning, Density, Signs, Wetlands, etc. Director Trefethen noted that the past two years have been very busy. They have seen several potential developments and redevelopment opportunities. One is the former State School property, which is up for sale. The last time he checked there have been 35 inquiries on the property.

2021 was a very robust year with permits, with \$48 million dollars plus in permit value. There has also been a steady start in 2022.

There are several large projects starting soon. The three continuing projects are the Elm Street project, the Barton's Motel redevelopment, and Lilac Valley which is split between Province Rd and Old Prescott Hill Rd. The projects starting soon are the Gardens at Winnepesaukee which is on Endicott Street East, and will consist of 87 condominium units. Most of these units will be two bedrooms and single standing. There are a few duplexes, Paugus Woods, which is off of White Oaks Rd., is in the final phase. The project started 13 years ago and will add 40 units. The Province Street project will be a 90 unit apartment complex. The Langley Cove project which consists of 291 units is expected to start with 30 units this year. The Lookout on Endicott Street North next to Cumberland Farms will consist of 49 2 & 3 bedroom condominium units.

Director Trefethen described all of these projects to be on the high end of housing; they will not be classified as affordable housing. The only moderately priced development will be the Lilac Valley units, which are currently set to be rentals, but they could be purchased in the future if they decide to.

One of the major activities that they have going on in the Planning Department is implementing the recommendations in the 2018 Master Plan chapter. They are also working to update other chapters of the Master Plan. An Economic chapter which is about half written and a Natural Resources chapter that is in draft form and is going to the Planning Board for their review. He expects the Natural Resources chapter to be adopted soon. In the Planning Department they have created a

bullet list of things they want to cover within the Facilities chapter. This will be where they stand with their Police, Fire, and DPW facilities.

The Master Plan Steering Committee is continuing to meet.

There are a couple of Zoning Ordinance changes that will be coming forth to the Council. They are with the Planning Board currently for their review.

The Urban Commercial Zone and Performance Zoning District that was created three years ago has been working out very well. Last year they expanded it to include most of the Weirs Beach area.

There were 100 Short-Term Rental permits processed, with 90 permits issued. Director Trefethen needs to discuss updates to the Short-Term Ordinance with the Government Operations and Ordinance Committee. Out of all of the properties that have permits, the Planning Department has not seen one complaint come from any abutters. The complaints they have seen are from the abutters who are next to rentals that do not have a permit. Mayor Hosmer would like to see Short-Term Rental enforcement picked up or expedited before the already permitted owners have to do their renewals.

6.B. Department Budget Presentation

Laconia Fire Department - Chief Kirk Beattie

Chief Beattie introduced his staff that was in attendance with him: Assistant Chief Jay Ellingson and Deputy Chief Jason Bean.

Personnel changes at the Fire Department have included three retirements, five departures and eight new members.

Four firefighters are currently attending or enrolled in paramedic school.

Outstanding performance recognitions have been presented for the Highland St. fire that occurred on April 7, 2021 and the Messer St. fire occurring on April 13, 2021. On June 16, 2022 there were multiple gas odor calls with over 70 gas investigations resulting. On August 12, 2022 there were simultaneous water rescue. One of the calls was for an incident in Paugus Bay and the other at Ahern State Park. Chief Beattie commented that Mutual Aid works very well, particularly in these types of instances.

The Fire Department spent 1,900 hours vaccinating the public for Covid-19. These vaccinations included first responder organizations, home-bound residents, staff at Laconia School District. The Department had over 70 transports to the hospital; transports added approximately 40 minutes for decontamination for any possible exposures.

Overdose responses are trending upwards. There are four recovery coaches in-house at the Fire Department.

Inspections are increasing, causing a backup in completing them.

The Department received almost 2,000 calls while another incident was occurring last year.

Some grant acceptance and pending applications include AFG, SAFER, and Walmart.

Chief Beattie presented a CIP update to the Council. Engine 5 is now complete and in service. The Weirs station renovation is complete. A utility pickup truck has been on order since August, 2021. The breathing apparatus is now complete and in service. The apparatus fits very well and is much more ergonomic.

FY 2022/2023 Capital Requests include a forestry vehicle, an EMS Deputy car, and specialty EMS equipment. Future critical capital needs include Ladder 2 and Engine 2, and Boat 1. A committee has been formed to try and find alternative funding for these items.

FY 2022/2023 salary/operational adjustments include \$25,000 toward coverage for off-duty training, \$12,000 towards a sign-on incentive, a \$3,000 increase in the maintenance station repair line, a \$5,000 increase in funding for four additional firefighters beginning January 1, 2023, and to staff a paramedic

Councilor Soucy asked if there is always an ambulance in the Weirs. Chief Beattie answered there is, but it is not staffed. Depending on the call, the Department will take the appropriate vehicle. Councilor Soucy is concerned about the response time in the Weirs area and the north end of Laconia.

Councilor Cheney commented about the paramedic response unit. He feels this is a great idea, and he will strongly support it. He thinks this will help save money over the long run.

6.C. Department Budget Presentation

Finance Director Glenn Smith went over the following budgets: Finance, General Fund Revenues, Welfare, Anticipated grants, TIF Districts, Personnel, Purchasing, Tax, IT and Welfare.

Director Smith gave an overview of the Finance Office and personnel changes that have occurred.

Councilor Lipman thanked Jon Gardner for all of the great work he has done for the City over the years.

Director Smith listed accomplishments during FY 2022. He presented highlights for FY 2023.

Councilor Lipman asked when was the last time the City went out to bid for the Audit. Director Smith answered that typically it goes out to bid every five years. Councilor Lipman would like to see the Council involved in that process.

Director Smith listed FY 2023 priorities which include IT security enhancement, returning to full staff, upgrade of recruitment offers, review of fixed assets, and adjustments to post-Covid welfare.

Councilor Lipman asked about the transfer from the Health Stabilization Account. Director Smith answered it was \$120,000; he believes it is currently at \$170,000 or \$180,000 now.

Mayor Hosmer asked about the Weirs TIF balance being in the negative. Director Smith and City Manager Myers explained the deficit. Mayor Hosmer asked what area the Weirs TIF District covers. City Manager Myers answered there is a map of all TIF districts included on the website.

Councilor Cheney commented on the IT department's security. There is an IT Incident Response Team with an outside consultant and Primex.

6.D. Department Budget Presentation

City Manager Scott Myers presented the Administration budget. He discussed the budgets for the City Manager's office, capital and capital outlay (to be bonded as placeholders) non-departmental expenses, administration special items and Assessing. City Manager Myers explained that assessing services are contracted with Whitney Consulting Group.

City Manager Myers continued to explain items related to revenue (shared revenues, Meals & Rooms Tax), motor vehicle registration fees, and the commercial hauling tipping fee. He noted that

parking kiosk revenues need to be amended.

In response to a question from Councilor Soucy, City Manager Myers explained the formula and how it is calculated for PILOT payments.

City Manager Myers concluded his presentation with information about legal costs, records, elections and porta-potties.

7. Any other business that may come before the Council

8. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Hosmer adjourned the meeting at 9:16 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Katie Gargano, City Clerk