

**CITY OF LACONIA - CITY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Government Operations and Ordinances Committee**  
**June 3, 2019**  
**7:00 P.M.**

6/3/2019 - Minutes

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Bownes called the meeting to order at the above date and time.

**2. RECORDING SECRETARY**

Cheryl Hebert, City Clerk

**3. ROLL CALL**

City Clerk Hebert took the roll with the following Councilors in attendance: Bruce Cheney, David Bownes, Andrew Hosmer

**4. STAFF IN ATTENDANCE**

Scott Myers, City Manager

**5. GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ORDINANCES (Bownes, Hosmer, Cheney)**

**5.A. Discussion of establishing a Laconia Historic District Commission**

Chairman Bownes expressed that he does not think anyone on this committee as well as the Council does not want to see St. Joseph's church razed.

Councilor Hosmer also echoed Councilor Bownes feelings in regards to the demolition of the church.

Councilor Cheney expressed the need to move expeditiously in order to preserve the church. He would like to see most of the effort be put forth in saving the church not necessarily setting up a Historic District Commission at this time.

The City Manager presented a document to the committee and for the record a list of criteria as to what it would take to establish a Historic District Commission and this document will be available to the public.

Councilor Bownes opened the meeting up to the public.

Tara Shore - She spoke in regards to Councilor Cheney's thoughts on that St. Joseph's and a Historic Commission needing to be separate. She agrees but also stated they are parallel in the sense it could be other historic locations that have the potential to be razed. T. Shore encourages the committee to take another look at the Master Plan and local ordinances as creating a Historic District Commission is not far fetched to what the Master Plan is intending.

Councilor Bownes stated he is not opposed to creating a Historic District Commission and asked T. Shore to look into the Performance Zoning that was just created.

Jane Whitehead (Chair of the Laconia Heritage Commission) - There can be overlapping zones but the goal is for the various zones to work together for the good of the community. The goal of the Historic District is to increase the value of Downtown.

Councilor Bownes noted for the record the proposed Historic District Commission would entail the Railroad Station, the Gale Memorial Library, the Old Tavern, Veteran's Square, and

the Congregational Church.

Pam Clark - President of the Laconia Historical Society - Would like to remind the Council of what happened in the past with the purchase of the Hathaway House in Lakeport and the broken promise of what was going to be done with it.

Peter Spanos - Representative of District 3 - A monument like St. Joseph's Church really tells us about our past and points us to where we are going in the future and for these reasons creating a Historic District will help with the preservation of such buildings for the future.

Karen Sullivan - would like some clarification if establishing a Historic District Commission will help in saving the church.

Councilor Bownes stated if a Historic District Commission was formed any and all demolition or building permits may be denied, which could cause an appeal process to the ZBA and possibly all the way to the Superior Court. Councilor Bownes reviewed the memo from the City Manager dated June 3, 2019, which explains the process in which it would take to form a Historic District Commission. Due to the many steps that need to be taken in order to form the Historic District Commission, Councilor Bownes is afraid this is happening too late to save the church.

Councilor Cheney is concerned with pushing the Historic District Commission it could ignite the Diocese to try and "beat the clock." Councilor Cheney would rather deal directly with the Diocese and come to an accommodation to save the church.

Councilor Hosmer would be shocked if the Diocese of Manchester would respond to the City of Laconia with any answers to what is going to happen to the church. Councilor Hosmer stated that every angle should be taken in order to prevent the demolition of the church.

A discussion was had between Councilor Bownes and Councilor Hosmer regarding the time frames for establishing the Historic District Commission and saving the church.

Pam Clark - spoke of the demolition process within the City and that the City has a right to not approve demolition permits.

Tara Shore - Questioned whether or not meetings could happen on other nights other than their typically scheduled nights in order to speed up the process to form a Historic District Commission. T. Shore reminded the Council that the church may have started this process but there are many other buildings that need to be saved from anything happening to them in the future.

Joyce Donahue, Pleasant Street - Stated that Peter Brunette is the Chair of the Planning Board and he is willing to help with what is needed.

Tom Barker, Lane Road - Spoke in favor of saving the church and the creation of the Historic District Commission.

Jane Wood, Ward 3 - Questioned whether there has been any thought of Eminent Domain.

Catherine Tokarz, Ward 6 - Stated how much she loves Laconia and is willing to do anything she can to make Laconia a better place and is begging the Council to do the right thing.

Jane Whitehead - Ms. Whitehead requests that the form that is brought to the Heritage Commission requesting demolition to have an added line requesting the purpose of the demolition and what would go in the demolished buildings place.

Linda Normandin - Is in support of moving forward to forming the Historic District Commission. Ms. Normandin is also in favor of taking the Church by eminent domain.

Paula Lockland - Stated her most important goal is that St. Joseph's Church be saved.

Dominque Vasquez-Damais, Taylor Street - Stated it is prudent to catch more flies with honey than vinegar.

Joyce Donahue - would also like to thank Councilor Cheney for his efforts.

Councilor Cheney stated his effort is to buy the church, to save the church. This isn't a religious thing for him, it is a historic building that needs to be saved.

Councilor Bownes asked the City Manager to come up with some Ordinance within a timely time frame.

Councilor Hosmer moved to schedule another Government Ordinance and Operation subcommittee meeting in regards to this same topic at 5:00 pm on Tuesday, June 11, 2019, seconded by Councilor Cheney; the **motion passed with all in favor.**

## 6. **Any other business that may come before the Council**

## 7. **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to come before the committee and hearing no objection, Chairman Bownes adjourned the meeting at 7:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Councilor David Bownes, Chairman