

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING/WORKSHOP
DOVER CITY COUNCIL
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
FEBRUARY 4, 2004 @ 7:00 PM

WORKSHOP:

Those present: Mayor Myers, Mayor Pro Tem Hindle, Councilors DeDe, Colwell-Ellis, Keays, Mayberry, Perry, Trefethen and City Manager Beecher. Councilor Reese was absent.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Councilor DeDe led the Pledge.

2. Ordinance #02-01/14/2004, Chapter 109, Fire Prevention and Life Safety, Section 109-29A- Reimbursement Costs Pursuant to RSA 153:A:24; Driving While Intoxicated Accidents and other Criminal Acts. Sponsored by Mayor Scott Myers, by Request.

The City Manager asked Chief Plummer to come forward and explain the proposed fire ordinance. Chief Plummer stated he is here to share information and not as an advocate of the ordinance. He showed us a power point presentation supporting this ordinance. (see council folder 2/4/2004). He stated there are no communities in NH currently doing this, neighboring states have some form of this program though. This was a challenge for his department to look at things in a different way and they have tried to be innovative as the past City Council has asked them to cut costs and this is one way they are attempting to do this by increasing revenues.

He feels this will help reduce tax increases in the future. He told the City Council this is your ordinance, not mine.

He mentioned one Level 4 accident that they had responded to a few years ago that closed the road for 6 or 8 hours that cost the Fire Department \$2500. He then explained the reason they would be charging for house fires. He also explained that 90 percent of what they bill for ambulance charges are paid for with medical insurance.

The ability to pay will not play into this, they will respond to all calls and he feels his staff is the best in the State. Will insurance pay for these costs; he feels insurance will pay about 95 percent of this fee because there is a clause in home owners insurance policies that say they will pay up to \$500 for a service charge. With regards to car insurance, he has talked to one company and they say they would pay but there is no guarantee; these are uncharted waters. This is what other people are doing. The only way they would know if an insurance company would pay is to pass this law. If adopted this ordinance would bring in about \$100,000 per year with about 70 percent being from motor vehicle accidents. His goal tonight is to share information to see if this is something we want to pursue and to see if it will save tax dollars. There are concerns out there, and people are afraid.

DeDe stated on page 2 (of the handout) on Business A and Business B, there is a judgment call on that one. The size of the fire would decide if we bill or not Chief Plummer says. This is determined by the time it takes to extinguish it, etc. The Chief says when there is a small fire, it is judged by the first person on the scene. DeDe had several questions about this issue starting on page 3 regarding an accident involving a vehicle.

Mayberry thanked the Chief for presenting the proposal; he asked the percentage of accidents from folks in the City of Dover vs. out of town people. Chief Plummer will get the information. Mayberry wants to know the percentage of vehicles that involve a commercial vehicle, Chief Plummer says very small.

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Councilor Perry asked him about hazardous materials, the Chief explained if there is that type of materials involved the costs are recoverable. The money comes back into the general fund for these items. Perry wondered if we charge for lock outs, false alarms and nuisance calls. The Chief says if a security system malfunctions, they come out at no charge, then they have so many days to fix the alarm system. These fees are tied to tying a crew up and they are mandatory fees.

The City Manager jumped in and says to put this into perspective when we call a firefighter back or get extra help, this costs a total of \$326,000 per year for call backs, and it would offset the costs of this ordinance. They could set up a special revenue fund with this money which would take away some of the expenses of fire equipment.

Keays asked are we the first City in the State of NH to do this. The Chief says yes. Keays says in NH you don't have to have insurance on your automobile; will this be a problem. Chief Plummer says we have no contract with any insurance company. We would bill the people and if you have insurance, you would send the bill to them, if not you would pay it. Keays feels we will be having a toll gate at both ends of the City; you will have to pay to come in and pay to go out. He hopes the people fill this room next week.

Hindle has a question re the presentation on page 4, he would like a pie chart to explain this issue better.

The Mayor thanked the Chief for coming up with ideas. He then asked about the ambulance fees and do we adjust them currently. Chief Plummer says we adjust only when Medicare adjusts theirs.

Colwell-Ellis asked what measures are taken to collect a charge. Chief Plummer explained they bill three times, then it goes to the City Attorneys office for them to try and collect it.

3. Ordinance #03-01/14/2004, Chapter 109, Fire Prevention and Life Safety, Section 109-33, Public Safety Amplification System Required in Large Facilities. Sponsored by Mayor Scott Myers, by Request.

The Fire Chief explained about the radio amplification system. When he puts a firefighter in a building, he needs to be able to contact them at all times and their current system does not go thru cement walls etc. This ordinance would only be for new construction, this is a safety factor for the firefighter and for the new building owner. Trefethen asks who pays for the new equipment in a newly constructed building. The Chief says the owner would have to pay and the amount would be \$1500 – \$2000.

DeDe asked is this the same type of system that would enhance cell phone usage. The chief says no; this is for repeaters that have no influence on cell phones.

4. Setting of the Property Tax Exemption Levels and Criteria for Elderly, Blind, Disabled and Deaf for Fiscal Year 2005. Sponsored by Mayor Pro Tem Jason Hindle and Councilor Matt Mayberry.

The City Manager asked Jeff to speak and explain what the resolution does. Jeff explained it establishes and adjusts the exemption levels for the blind, disabled and deaf. The reason they are increased is because the assessed value is going up. The basis for this is the single family home.

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The tax rate impact of this issue is ten cents; that is ½ of 1 percent of the tax rate and would average 22 dollars annually on a single family home. On page 4 of the supporting documentation, we are in the same area as Concord, Londonderry, Manchester and Nashua and we are a little higher on our income levels. For the blind and disabled we are very generous. He read the comparison levels throughout the state.

Perry asked about the blind, deaf and disabled and is that only the owner or any person that lives in the structure, Jeff says the resident is blind or disabled; they have to be the owner of the property. And this is all statutory and governed by the legislature that went thru and re-did these regulations. Is there any way a person that meets all this criteria and is a renter can qualify. The City Manager says there are no statutory regulations on renters.

DeDe commented that an attorney complained he would have to pay more taxes if this was passed but the assessed valuations that some seniors have is really a heavy burden for them, this is the right thing to do. He is in favor of this resolution.

DeDe wondered if this includes condos. Jeff says yes and it also includes mobile homes. The income levels can be changed locally and there would probably be an additional 20 – 22 people that this would involve in the City. Its 8 if you left it and 10 cents if you adjust the levels.

5. Discussion Re: Tolend Road Landfill – John Peltonen

The City Manager called on John Peltonen to speak on the Tolend Road landfill, he explained John is also helping us with the dredge project therefore he has two things to update us on.

Tolend Landfill: Peltonen has a power point presentation. Peltonen explained the ROD remedy saying they had an agreement with the EPA to complete the design of the ROD remedy and that is now complete. The EPA looked at the study and asked them to do a feasibility study since there is an aerobic trench, they were also asked to treat the plume that is in line with the Bellamy Reservoir; he then pointed out these items on a map of the landfill. He stated the City, Textron and 6 or 8 others were responsible parties. The City's share is fixed at 42 percent. The pre-design study would be complete by 2006, with the alternate design estimated at a cost to the City of 12 million dollars and that is where we are with the landfill. We should be on the road to amending the ROD this year. DeDe asked what happens to these contaminants in the swale or swell.

Trefethen asked the cost. Peltonen explained it will be 11-13 million to construct the trench and once it is up and running it will be about two million for 30 years; our cost would be about \$40,000 per year. It is then backfilled with a porous media.

Colwell-Ellis asked about the hot spots and if the contaminant does breakdown, and how long will it take.

Dredging of the Cocheco River:

Peltonen says we are going to get the River dredged. The Army Corp and Mayberry have met with the congressional delegation and were able to get this project started. There is 2.7 miles of river within the navigational channel, the Army Corp estimates 75,000 cubic yards for their portion. He showed a slide of the dredge location. He explained that one of the parties involved in the remediation is PSNH and they have so many yards that they need to take out of the river. They have agreed to take 15-20000 yards The Army Corp has to do some incidental dredging in the area as well. This is good for us as it allows us to pick and choose how deep the landing area will be. They have an agreement in principal and it will be on paper once they get the Army Corp to agreement.

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The City decided last year to build the disposal cell and at the time had hoped the Army Corp could begin last November but they did not have their stuff together by then. The City's cost is 20 percent of the total cost. Our fee will be \$3,390,000. It will cost an average of \$37.67 for every cubic yard that comes out of the river and the cell will hold 90,000 cubic yards.

We will not be losing any money on the cost of the shell. (See charts in folder of 2/4/2004) The City Manager clarified some of these items. PSNH has to pay the full tipping fee, not only are we getting a substantial portion of landing paid, we pay 20 percent of the cost of what the Army Corp takes out. PSNH has picked up some additional costs as well with their contract. We have some contamination where the old public works building was and we are thinking of moving this stuff (not worked out with the Army Corp yet) up to the spoil cell if we have any extra capacity as there are other areas of town they want to move soils from. Perhaps this could be negotiated. We must have parallel agreements with the Army Corp and PSNH as well.

Mayberry wants to acknowledge our congressional delegation in their work with the Army Corp. He also acknowledged John Peltonen, Dean Peschel and Steve Bird as well in their negotiations with the Army Corp.

6. Other

The City Manager called on George Maglaras to give a brief overview of the county finances. The County Commissioners have come to present this year's operating budget. George stated there is a million dollar decrease in taxes and the City pays 27 percent for the County fees so that will be a \$270,000 savings for the City. There have been revenue projections with regards to funding with the Medicaid system and their budget reflects these decreases.

We have a unique relationship in NH with the County and State.

The Mayor wants an update on the new jail; George says they are building a 21 million dollar department of corrections and it will be open by June 1st. They will house other criminals and that will be bringing in revenue. They are excited about the facility; we are changing our whole criminal justice system here in Strafford County. The jail we now have we opened in 1985 with 32 inmates, today we have 170 inmates there, along with that is the expense, we have had a 750 percent increase in the last 20 years. The state prison population has increased 1000 percent here in the State. We can't continue on these types of trends. It has to do with sanctions as it relates to how judges deal with people.

We are also on the forefront in terms of Riverside Rest Home. The State of NH uses the counties taxing ability to raise money for its rest home and revenues have been flat for the past five years. Most medical inflation is running between 9-15 percent per year. But our State has chosen to freeze the rates, the result is an operating deficient because the State has not met its obligation, they need to pump new revenue into the system itself.

The other County operations have been relatively stable

Mayberry thanked George for his presentation.

He asked about the extra revenue that the registry is receiving and is that helping to keep costs down. On the prison he hears about cost overruns; how is the federal prison in Berlin going to affect us. George explained the negotiations going on with the contractor at this time on cost overruns. Also there has been some delay on the construction due to weather. With regards to Berlin that will be for federal inmates, Berlin will have no direct impact on other counties jails. George gave an overview of the prison system in NH.

Mayberry asked has there been any thought on continuing the COAST bus out to the County. George says financing and demand are the issues here and he does not feel it would be cost effective. Mayberry asked about permanent fencing. George says there is no permanent fencing; the exercise yard is physically inside the new building. There is the old way and the new way of doing business; and this is a state of the art facility.

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Mayberry asked do you foresee the County tax decreasing by one million, George says it would be decreasing in Dover by \$270,000, he then explained the County government in NH and how Medicare affects them.

Colwell-Ellis asked about the capacity for the new facility, George says they will have up to 400 inmates, with a planned amount of 330 so we will be able to take in inmates from other states or the federal government with revenue.

John Peltonen wanted to correct something he had said; there are some compounds that are very persistent. They priced it for 30 years but it is actually uncertain how long it will really take.

Mayberry brought up the memo on the Washington Street bridge issue which he explained and how he would like a resolution supporting this bridge as it is a vital part of our economic development. He continued please sign on and make it unanimous.

7. Adjournment

Hindle moved seconded by Trefethen to adjourn at 9:20 PM; all in favor.

JUDY GAQUETTE
CITY CLERK