

**MINUTES
WORKSHOP
DOVER CITY COUNCIL
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
OCTOBER 27, 1999
7:00 P.M.**

Roll Call: Councilor Reese, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Berry, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Landry, and Mayor Boc were present.

Absent: Councilor Rawding and Mayor Pro Tem Perry.

The Mayor moved the Business Visitation to the first item of discussion.

1. DISCUSSION RE:

A. Business Visitation Survey

The Mayor introduced Beth Thompson. Beth explained the goals of the Business Visitation Program. Beth spoke briefly about the program and introduced John Duclos of the Office of Business and Industrial Development – (OBID).

Mr. Duclos explained the purpose is to develop a dialog with businesses in the State and their office. He stated, one of the things they ask is if businesses will tell them where their market is.

Mr. Duclos stated they are doing well in the overseas outreach market. He stated they have visited 14 companies in the area. Some of these companies are thinking of expanding and some are moving because of small quarters. He stated there is a large need in this state for unskilled labor. Mr. Duclos stated if a company lets OBID know if they are expanding, they make referrals to various agencies. Some companies wanted assistance in employee training.

He stated we must encourage schools to reach out to manufacturing companies. There are a lot of areas in the manufacturing sector that offer a good opportunity for young people.

Mr. Duclos stated public parking and disposal/recycling of waste are the top issues that generate negative responses in speaking with these companies. He stated they will be holding a roundtable discussion with companies. (See Survey results report in folder of 10/27/1999 meeting).

He stated some of the positive things about Dover are: the community size, good local services, and good business environment.

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Mr. Duclos also had asked businesses to rate several location factors. He stated he would like to see the school to work program increased.

The Mayor asked about specifics with complaints in Worker's Compensation.

Mr. Duclos says it will be addressed at the roundtable.

Berry asked that this presentation be given to the School Board – they need to be made aware of it. He also asked about the dissatisfaction with the tax structure. Is this on the state level?

Mr. Duclos stated it's regarding high property taxes.

Schmidt asked about the tax question. Do you follow-up and ask what it is they are dissatisfied with; do you try to get specifics?

Mr. Duclos stated, no and explained the survey.

Landry asked how are 14 manufacturing businesses representative of Dover and is this a significant number?

Beth stated 31 or 32 were asked to participate, but only ½ responded.

Landry asked about these businesses, 5 of the 15 are thinking about moving, is this an alarming amount?

Mr. Duclos stated in most cases it's because of overcrowding. Usually, they relocate within the city or in close vicinity.

Landry stated a lot of employers seem to be trading the same people around. How do you lure people with less skills to fill these manufacturing positions?

Mr. Duclos stated they don't try to recruit unskilled labor. He stated over 30% of the companies are having a hard time recruiting laborers.

Landry says the basic data (in the brochure) about Dover needs to be clarified.

Landry wants to indicate we are open until 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, he wants the

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waste issue referred to the Solid Waste Committee and we do have a Master Plan.

Johnson wished there had been more of a response from businesses.

Schmidt spoke about the education and on-the-job training.

Mr. Duclos stated basically on the job training is from the New Hampshire Job Training Council. If a company has a need for employee training, they can come to OBID and they will assist them.

Berry stated the data on Dover is very well done.

Landry asked, regarding job services, whether manufacturers have a lot to do with the schools to work programs.

Mr. Duclos stated no, we need to urge the manufacturers to do more.

B. Arena

The Mayor introduced Gary Bannon. Gary introduced all the people attending with him. Jeff Bardwell, Lesa Oliver, Bob Walsh, Marty Sullivan, and Ann Mackey of Great Bay Figure Skating Club.

Bob Walsh, Chairman of the Arena Commission says all the commissioners feel very strongly that Dover really needs this.

Gary stated this is a 20 year-old facility. We are at a crossroads. We need to update and expand. They have hired VSC Consultants of Portland, Maine.

Mike Komich of VSC, East Coast associate from South Portland, Maine shared his firm's feasibility study that was performed.

1. Demographics around the proposed location.
2. Review the competitive characteristics of ice facilities in the area.

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3. Assess the intentions of the key users.
4. Project capital requirements, as well as, projected revenue and expenses.

See booklet passed out in 10/27/1999 folder.

Mr. Komich proceeded to state the costs, as well as, the size of the proposed new arena.

The Mayor asked, why do we need 500 seats?

Gary stated we currently seat 500 and 500 can stand during playoffs, tournaments, etc. He also talks about the proposal, stating they will be able to pay back \$3 million. The total project will cost \$3.6 million.

Gary stated they would be able to get ½ of the funding up front. He stated they have offers to fund money and they are also in the process of approaching other businesses and organizations for donations. Gary went on to say that much is needed in the old existing facility. He described the drawings and plans he brought.

Gary stated they have come to the table for CIP bonding. He laid out the timetable – schedule.

The Mayor supports this wholeheartedly. His concern is, the money needed to pay the bond has been inadequate.

Gary had the answers, they are in the red because of energy costs. It costs over \$100,000 per year for electricity for the chillers.

The Mayor asked what would happen if the economy slows down; did the study take this into consideration?

The current sheet of ice is off at least 3 months per year.

Mr. Komich clarified about the economy if it slows down; growth is continuing in all user groups. However, he feels there is risk in these projects.

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Mr. Komich does not feel there will be a huge downturn in any upcoming recession. People would cut back, but they would cut other household expenses as opposed to their children's recreation.

Berry agrees; parents don't cut what they spend on their kids.

Schmidt stated he sees it as doubling the capacity and will they have excess space if a new arena is built.

Mr. Komich says women's hockey is up and coming, with a need for ice.

Reese asked Gary about how much of this cost is for renovating the existing building.

Gary stated if we need to fix the current building, we will need \$1 million to \$1.5 million. The efficiency of the current building is like a barn.

Reese says it is a better solution to not renovate the existing building, but build a new one that could run 12 months per year?

Gary stated they would not be gaining anything, if they mothball the old and only build the new one.

Landry had questions regarding the study. He asked if Mr. Komich has seen bond commitments from other towns? Landry stated he would feel a lot better if other communities put \$50,000 or so in their CIP bonding for regional growth.

Mr. Komich stated the trend is to get the user groups to make long-term commitments to the project.

Landry stated we characterize this as an enterprise fund, but the fact is, it has an impact on every taxpayer. In other cities are ice arenas run as enterprise funds? Mr. Komich stated Portland's is run as an enterprise fund, the difference is that, it is a 10 year-old building.

Landry asked if the current employees are all paid out of the operating fund.

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Gary says, yes, they are all included in the current operating budget. He stated most of his staff is on a part-time basis.

The real issue for Landry is if a new facility could truly run as an enterprise fund or not. Landry asked about the maintenance costs of \$400,000.

Gary says the roof is bad and the walls are bad. The chiller is the only good thing left at the old building.

Johnson sees this project as putting the enterprise fund in the black.

Gary stated with 2 sheets of ice, we could offer more programs.

Berry feels that the amount of money spent on this study was well spent. He also feels the private partnership they already have is very important. The problems will be parking and traffic flow. He feels the project is long overdue.

Schmidt asked about a triple facility including a soccer floor as opposed to a double facility – a triplex.

This could include soccer – an indoor track – a basketball court – volleyball, etc.

The Mayor thanked everyone regarding their discussion of the arena.

C. Ball Fields

Gary explained the proposed location they have been studying with the consultant. There are 200 some acres around the courthouse. Some land is wetlands; we can't go there and the other is very rough terrain – very steep.

The consultant narrowed it down to behind the courthouse and along County Farm Road.

Berry asked, how many acres are we talking about?

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Gary stated 46 acres and \$80,000 per field if built individually. All together \$500,000 for the fields. \$1 million to \$1.5 million would be the maximum cost. This would include sitework, parking, bathrooms, etc.

Berry asked, are there any strings attached with the county land?

Gary stated he is working with the county on this.

Berry asked about County Farm Road and its need for road improvements.

Pete Lavoie says because of the work schedule there won't be time to fix County Farm Road. This will have to be worked into the CIP.

Johnson stated there is an issue of control of the county land. If this is built for Dover only – it being on county land, it could slip away from Dover very easily.

Gary stated there would be a 20-year lease agreement with the county on the management of the land. We will have protocols in place up front.

Johnson would like to see a lease agreement worked out in detail. The idea of using gravel money for this project is good.

Gary stated the county is looking at putting its in-house labor force (inmates) to work maintaining the building the fields.

Reese stated regarding the length of the lease – 20 years is good. On protocol – does this whole process have to go through county delegations?

Gary says, yes and he is going back to the neighbors in the area, as well, and then to the delegates.

Reese asked whether we have a timetable.

Gary says, yes, they want \$1 million up front in the CIP. The county commission says it's all or nothing.

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Schmidt stated regarding County Farm Road – the road is inadequate for substantial traffic. This is a major concern in terms of safety.

Landry asked Mike Joyal about selling gravel.

Mr. Joyal stated that the sales from gravel would be approximately \$4 million if it were dug comparable to pits around the area.

Landry stated we have gone from cash payment to bonding this project. This is disturbing.

Landry stated regarding the road; there are infrastructure costs outside this project. Safety issues need to be dealt with in detail. Kids riding bikes out to these fields would be dangerous. Landry wants the number of residents versus nonresidents using the fields.

Landry wants to satisfy the neighbors. Landry stated the county might be opening itself up to using these fields. Landry feels the county commissioners could talk to other cities and towns about funding and using these fields.

Berry stated that might be a nice feature. This keeps green space. He feels relatively free labor is great. There are a lot of positives.

The Mayor stated we need fields desperately. The number of kids is enormous in different sports. What is the alternative?

The Mayor stated the road is treacherous. He feels there is money in the sand and gravel money to renovate this road.

Berry asked what is the projected amount of gravel for this fiscal year? He stated Councilor Wilson had asked for money to do ball fields.

Reese asks for 60 – 30 – 10 allocations for the next meeting.

2. Other Business

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3. Adjournment

The Mayor moved to adjourn, seconded by Reese. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Judy Gaouette
CITY CLERK