

MANAGER'S REPORT
City Council meeting @ 7 p.m.
Tuesday, April 6, 2010

TO: Mayor Walter Ash Jr. and Honorable Members of Belfast City Council

FROM: Joseph J. Slocum, City Manager

DATE: Friday, March 12, 2010

Non-agenda items:

State Shrine Convention

Every 10 years the State Shrine Convention returns to Belfast. It is scheduled to come back to Belfast on June 18, 2011. While this is one year away we need to be thinking and planning for it now. The event should bring as many as five to six hundred people to the City, as well as produce the longest parade we will have in the decade. Mayor Walter Ash is a member of the convention planning committee, and can provide you more details. For those who have family reunions or organized events in the future, they might want to mark the date of June 18, 2011 as the time when the Shrine Convention and parade will be here.

Spring paving of Washington Street parking lot and Cross Street parking lot.

We have budgeted financial resources to repave the Washington Street parking lot and the Cross Street parking lot. This work will involve grinding up the existing cracked pavement and re-laying it down as a base for new pavement. There may be some minor drainage improvements performed at the same time. Once it's paved, of course, the line striping will have to be done. I'm aware that the Council has put on hold many projects relating to the waterfront and downtown area pending the outcome of a new master plan for that part of the City. Nevertheless, the condition of these parking lots is quite poor, and it would be important for us to get in and fix them, and make them fully operational in advance of summer. If there are any concerns about this with the Council, please let me know. Our goal will be to get this done as soon as possible so as to minimize the inconvenience on the downtown business community. Once we have better dates we will do our best to get the word out.

The Town Clock

As most everyone knows, the City of Belfast owns the clock that sits inside of the tower of First Church. The clock has had several problems for quite a few years, and we have been evaluating the proper response to make it fully operational.

Recently, we had an informal discussion that included members of the First Church Congregation, the person who has been helping to maintain the clock for 40 years, a representative from the Belfast Historical Society, a person who has spent their career in the maintenance of time-keeping pieces, and a tower clock specialist.

The subject of our discussion involved the various options to repair the clock. There are a number of present problems with the clock, including the fact that it does not strike hourly, as it is supposed to 24 hours a day. One of the clock faces is in need of new dials, and the operational mechanism itself is somewhat cobbled together by a series of repairs-upon-repairs-upon-repairs, which requires fairly constant tweaking. The clock does not keep perfect time.

The clock does have an interesting history in many ways. According to the Belfast Historical Society, it is the only tower clock in the State of Maine which was manufactured in the State of Maine. It is a simple design made right here in Belfast. The clock and the clock works are not accessible to the public. There are some fairly steep steps, as well as ladders by which one gains access to the actual mechanism.

One of the options promoted by some of the participants in our meeting was to install a modern time-keeping mechanism. Such a mechanism would keep perfect time, insure that the tower bell rings every hour, on the hour 24 hours a day, and nobody in town would notice anything other than the fact that the clock is running properly. All clock faces would be functioning and accurate. Estimate about \$20,000.

The other alternative considered is completely rebuilding the clock mechanism itself. In the words of the clock tower expert, "we don't own these clocks; we're just caretakers of them over time." This would involve a dismantling of the mechanical parts and having them all refurbished at the repair person's shop, and then having them all reinstalled. Estimate - about \$20,000.

The third option discussed was the possibility of doing both. First we would remove the clock mechanism, have it rebuilt, but then have it put on display someplace where people could actually see it function and then place a new, modern time-keeping mechanism inside the tower to keep accurate time and to ring the bells appropriately. Estimate - \$37,000. The bell stays in the tower.

The existing clock has had some updating in the past. In 1976, electric winders were installed by Henry Stover so as to make it unnecessary for the caretaker to crank the heavy stone weights up every three-and-a-half days, as was done for the previous 140 years. Yes, the existing clock is about 175 years old. The clock was originally built by Timothy Chase and Phineas Quimby, who contracted to build the clock after the town fathers were horrified by the high costs of a factory-made clock. The works were designed by the two men and constructed in a small shop at the Head of the Tide. The clock dials, which are 11 feet in diameter, were built by William Frederick, but these have been rebuilt several times through the years. Bob Stover is the current person who maintains the clock in conjunction with his Uncle Henry, who is currently 91. Henry is presently trying to rebuild a broken part of the ringer which is apparently quite a difficult task. Bob has been associated with working on the clock since he was in eighth grade.

The clock is obviously a very significant community asset. It's fascinating that in 2010, we still wrestle with whether we will use the old mechanism or a more modern, more reliable mechanism as we approach the work of the future.

One difference between continuing to work with the old is to pay the cost of annual inspections and availability of people qualified to do his work. Its about \$700 to have a refurbished clock re-checked

and adjusted twice a year and there is a real question about the future availability of those willing and capable of servicing the old clock.

I do note that we have historically replaced equipment when parts, suppliers or qualified technicians were no longer available.

This is an issue that should not sneak up on us so I wanted to provide everyone with some time (no pun intended) to think about it. In the next couple of weeks, I will privately poll the members of the discussion group to see what their thoughts are about a recommendation. I do note that in our discussions there was one clear recommendation to update the mechanism so that it required far less attention in the future and offered more reliability. I will try to get pictures of this mechanism so that everyone can get a better handle on what we are talking about. Once I have those positions, I will report back to you and seek your guidance in which course we should take. The work would likely take about six months

Agenda items:

10B. Consideration of a request by Mark Leathers, dba, Little Man's Taxi/Shuffle, to operate three additional taxicabs in the City.

Attached in your packet is a memo from City Clerk Roberta Fogg providing additional information on this request. Essentially, Little Man's Taxi operates today with one vehicle, and now seeks permission to add three more.

10C. Consideration of a request from Coastal Mountain Land Trust for a 5K walk and a 10K race on Belfast streets and roads.

The event starts at Waterfall Arts and would end at the Footbridge. This event would require two additional police officers to accompany the runners and walkers, with an extra EMT on duty as well. It is my understanding that they have agreed to pay the costs of providing the extra police officers and the EMT. Coastal Mountain Land Trust does a lot of wonderful things for Belfast and the entire region. I recommend support for this application.

10D. An update on the status of the Gateway 1 Project and consideration of the request to approve a Gateway Implementation Grant through use of MDOT funds.

You have two attachments on this agenda item. The first comes from Steve Drake, who is one of Belfast's representatives to the Gateway 1 Project. Steve will advise that the final draft agreement, which will explain the inter-local agreement between all of the participating municipalities, will be ready for municipal review in early summer. However, the length of the start-up period for this project, which was previously scheduled to end at the end of 2010, is going to be extended to at least June 30, 2011. The City had previously authorized me to sign a start-up agreement, which now will need to be amended to allow for the start-up period to run to at least June 30, 2011, and possibly for four additional months, if that is deemed necessary by the interim Steering Committee.

The devil is in the details, they say, and I'm sure that's why they need the extra time to conclude the start-up period.

The second attachment on this matter comes from City Planner Wayne Marshall, who is requesting that the Council entertain a grant application to use MDOT Gateway 1 Implementation funds to assist with the identification of road access points on Searsport Avenue from the bridge to the Searsport line that meet state standards. The idea here is to have pre-approved access points to assist property owners in their plans for development of their property. Presently, a property owner can't get a use permit without getting an access permit from the state, who will only respond on a property-by-property basis as that property is proposed to be developed. The goal here would be to know in advance where those access points can be, so that property owners can approach the development of their property with greater understanding and efficiency.

10E. Discussion and possible action on Parks and Recreation Commission request to accept the Healthy Waldo County Mini Grant, and approve a Wise Kid Outdoor Program.

In January, the Council authorized the Parks and Recreation Commission to apply for grants to help with the nutritional needs of children in our community. One of the grant applications was successful in the amount of \$1,500 from the Healthy Waldo County Mini Grant Program. The Parks and Recreation Commission, in conjunction with the Friends of Belfast Parks, propose to present a summer day camp program for up to 30 Waldo County children during the summer of 2010. These are children from six to 11 years old. Parks and Recreation Director Jim Bell has prepared a long memo for your consideration, which further explains how this program will work. My understanding is that there is no City dollars involved in this particular program. You will see a preliminary budget outlined in the materials. Jim Bell will be at the Council meeting to further explain this in detail. We are making arrangements to contact our insurance carrier to see whether or not there will be insurance-related costs to cover a camp for 30 children ages six to 11. We should have an answer by your meeting.

10F. Discussion and possible action on a request by Parks and Recreation Commission to transfer money from the general parks reserve account to a capital project account for several projects they would like to do this spring.

The City Council met with the Parks and Recreation Commission at a work session on Tuesday, March 23 here at Belfast City Hall. At that time there were discussions with commission members about certain projects that they would like to get done this spring. Jim Bell, Director of Parks and Recreation, has attached in your packet a list of the items they would like to do. There is approximately \$50,500 in a general reserve maintenance account for the parks. These reserves cannot be expended without specific Council authority. Mr. Bell, on behalf of the Parks and Recreation Commission, is asking the City permission to use up to \$9,500 of this money to do the following:

- install an outside electrical breaker box at French and Webb so there can be outside access during an outside event,

- install new underground electric and new lighting at the Muck and an outside water spigot at the French and Webb Building in Heritage Park. We need a motion to use up to \$9,500 from parks reserves to a capital project that will complete these three items of parks work.

10G. Second reading and final adoption of proposed amendments to the City Code of Ordinances to allow rural affordable housing developments consistent with the adopted future land use sections of the Belfast Comprehensive Plan.

City Planner Wayne Marshall has an attachment, which includes the actual language of the amendments. Essentially, this change will allow for more affordable housing to be developed on smaller parcels of property. Initially we hope that Habitat for Humanity will be able to develop more than one home on a lot formerly zoned for one home.

10H. Discussion and action on approval of change orders recommended by the City Manager for the Federal Stimulus Wastewater Treatment Project.

The City received large grants last year as part of the Federal stimulus effort, to assist us with upgrading our existing plant facility on Front Street as well as rebuilding several deteriorated sewer lines in the City. I'm attaching to this report a list of various change orders and the amounts of money involved that I have recommended as this project has progressed. It is appropriate to have the City Council approve these recommended change orders. All change orders have kept the project within budget and resources. They require no additional City dollars or expense.

They are from the following two Projects combined under the one federal Stimulus grant:

1. Waste Water Treatment Plant (Front Street) Peak Flow Upgrade
 - a. \$60,605 for increased charge for Ledge removal. The Contract provided for this contingency and yet we hit far more ledge than we expected. This price was negotiated back and forth over a period of months. We did not pay the full amount demanded.
 - b. Multiple small Change Orders totaling \$51,563. These are outlined on an attachment for Oliver Associates, our engineer and cover a broad variety of items. One will now include a Chlorine storage tank which is safer than carting around 55 gallon drums all the time. If you have questions on this list I will be glad to address them at the meeting.
1. Under Road Sewer System improvements
 - a. \$3,297 for some additional paving

I do note two other things about this project.

To do some of this work we have had to empty the metal tanks where our cleaning processes all take place. This revealed a lot of corrosion in the metal which was never anticipated. We will likely be coming back to the Council seeking further change order to seal over these holes and corrosion. It could cost as

much as \$150,000 but we do believe there will be enough money unspent in this project to cover this. Bids were lower than expected and the Feds are not looking for us to return money to them.

I have two full boxes representing about 8-9,000 pieces of paper relating to this project alone. While I can't quote from memory I have reviewed every bit of this and approved it as we have gone along. Our engineers prepare almost all of it. This is what we have to do to comply with Federal and State grant requirements. Administering these projects takes real time. Time that competes with time desired for more popular issues. I mention this in hopes that we can all start with more realistic expectations of what can be done and how soon. I hear comments sometime that things are not getting done fast enough. Unfortunately, the truth is that the vast bulk of our work is outside and away from Council agendas.

10I. Discussion and possible action on a request for proposal that will be forwarded to web site consultants to help the City develop a new web site.

Everyone supports the development of the new web site for the City. We have spent some time listening and cultivating input, and have drafted an RFP to entice a high quality overhaul of our web site. In general we want the site to work extremely well for our residents but we also want it to be incredibly attractive and user-friendly for our visitors.

The draft RFP is attached, but will also be posted on the City's web site for any member of the public who wishes to review what we're talking about, and to provide their input back. This request for proposal will be submitted to both local web masters as well as web companies that specialize in servicing municipalities. This is an exciting project with high expectations for success.

10J. Request to authorize the City Clerk to spend up to \$3,100 from the capital projects election equipment account.

The City set aside \$25,000 to purchase new election equipment. We will not be able to fulfill this project until the state decides which type of standard election equipment they will require municipalities to have. However, in the interim, there is a present need for an upgrade several of the election booths, which are broken and dysfunctional. The City Clerk has an attached memo recommending that you authorize her to spend \$3,100 from this election equipment upgrade account for these booths. I support this request.

10K. Request to transfer up to \$1,000 from the finance office equipment capital reserve to the finance office equipment account for the purchase of a new printer.

The finance department maintains a \$1,000 equipment reserve. It sits there precisely because we do not know when equipment will need to be replaced or added. Attached please see memo from the City Treasurer.

10L. Discussion and consideration of possible changes in rate fees for construction and demolition waste at the transfer station.

Our rates of 5.5 cents a pound have been in effect since before 1992, when Steve Roberts first started to work there. More than 90% of this material is visually estimated. It is over two million pounds a year. This "demo" waste as it is commonly called is wood, sheetrock, couches, rugs, old flooring, garden hose, junk plastic etc.

The cost of disposal of "demo" waste is governed by two factors - weight and volume. There is a per-ton disposal cost and a separate fee for hauling. If you have bulky waste it saves you on the per-ton charge but it hurts you on the hauling charge. This is why some transfer stations have special charges for certain items.

When we think of weight we need to remember that a cubic foot of water weighs 62 pounds and yes our open air dumpsters add in weight from rain and snow.

For the 12 month period we reviewed (November 2008 to October 31, 2009) we discovered that we spend over \$40,000 more in disposal cost than we took in for this waste. This does not include labor, utilities, equipment, facility maintenance etc. We ran at a loss in excess of \$40,000.

The problem lies in the daily visual estimation of weight. We are estimating low. About 60% low.

There are two options: Install a scale at \$50,000 to \$70,000 and slow things down a bit at the transfer station while each vehicle is weighed or raise the fees to a level where the underestimate of weight from the eye is off set by the amount per pound we charge.

I do not recommend the investment into scales at this time until we know more about future expansion possibilities on this limited site. Such an infrastructure decision should be part of a larger revaluation of the site which could include getting our dumpsters out of the wet rain and snow.

I think the better course is to adjust our fees both in amount assessed and have some specific charges for certain specific items.

I am attaching a monthly comparison between income and cost. I also have this graphically if you want it at the meeting.

I also attach my demolition summary which concludes with the following recommendation:

0-5lbs - 50 cents

5-10lbs - \$1.00

10 -30lbs \$3.00

30-60lbs \$5.00

60-80lbs \$7.00

80-100lbs \$9.00

I would set single prices for the following items:

Couch - \$15.00

Sofa chair - \$8

Plastic lawn chair - \$3 (light but consumes space causing more disposal trips/cost)

Rugs - (9 X 12) - \$9

Rug Pads - (9X12) - \$5

I recommend these fees go into effect immediately so the taxpayers are not subsidizing individual construction or remodeling projects or individual basement/garage clean outs.

That's my report for this meeting. We are deep into the interviews for an Economic Development Director and the budget process. Yesterday we learned that between our share of State Revenue Sharing and our road assistance money we will be down \$264,000 and \$18,900 respectively. The budget process will be very tough and I am not confident that we can keep the tax rate the same- after reducing it over the last two years. We are also working on a lot of spring work so as to get some construction done before the summer visitors arrive and shopping season increases.

It's supposed to be a beautiful weekend. I hope everyone gets to enjoy some part of it. I especially hope the younger people in Belfast will exercise a little extra spring caution as they get on their bikes or drive cars and trucks. Every spring Maine people see the tragedy that comes from the excitement and distraction that somehow great spring weather inspires. Have fun but please - be safe. Nothing is more important than that. If you know anyone in high school or anyone who has not been on their bike all winter ask them to take extra caution to be safe. That's what people do in a caring community.

That's what we do here.