

**Manager's Report
City Council Meeting
Tuesday, February 16, 2010
City Hall at 7 p.m.**

TO: Mayor Walter Ash Jr. and Members of Belfast City Council
FROM: Joseph J. Slocum, City Manager
DATE: Friday, February 12, 2010

City Hall will be closed for Presidents' Day on Monday, February 15, 2010.

Agenda Items:

10.B Discussion and possible action on a new application from James and Laurie Todd for a pawnbroker's license, at 26 Searsport Avenue.

This is an unusual type of request because under State law the Council is expected to make a judgment before approving such a request that the applicants for such a license is of "good moral character". I have asked the City Attorney to come to the meeting to assist you with fulfilling that responsibility.

10.C Request from The Game Loft to close High Street from Main Street to Pendleton Street on Saturday, August 28th from 5p to 9p.

There is a hand out in your packet with some details and Game Loft Representatives will be there to explain it further. Essentially they wish to put on a free- open to the public street dance in conjunction with a historical review of the 1960's. Based upon the success of Belfast Summer Nights, I would think this could be quite an event.

10.D Update from the Gateway One Committee regarding the MDOT 21-community transportation project.

When Council last looked at this in November the municipalities were coming together to attempt to write up inter municipal agreements that would define the rights and obligations of the member municipalities. Gateway 1 is a DOT sponsored effort to get communities to work together to come to common understandings, goals and actions that will help with more uniform planning along a twenty-one town corridor from Brunswick to Prospect. The devil is always in the details as to what all of this will really mean for Belfast and our representatives have asked for an opportunity to bring you an update on those details. There is a hand out in your packet that Belfast representatives: Steve Ryan and Diane Allmayer-Beck will address with you at the meeting.

10.E Discussion and possible action to a request from the Energy and Climate Committee to support proposed State legislation. (LD1717)

This is a proposed bill that provides funding for energy efficiency. There is information on the request and the proposed bill in your packet. Members of the committee will be present to explain their request and respond to questions.

10.F Update on a City proposal to seek proposals from consulting firms with the proper credentials to assist the City with updating its Downtown and Waterfront Plan. (City Planner)

For the benefit of the public, I reprint a portion of my Manager's Report from January 5th as follows:

"The Coastal Walkway Project has caused us to take a hard look at all the small as well as big pieces of present and future activity from the Footbridge to the Boat House. While the walkway is seen by most as a fine and welcome enhancement to this area there are other significant changes that will be coming to this region of the City over the next 10 to 15 years that will have a dramatic impact upon the Waterfront, the Downtown and to the City owned property.

The size of the privately owned area that will change warrants that the City thinks about what it wants. Belfast with its waterfront, cultural and recreational amenities, will continue to attract people who want to visit and to live here. This is not another coastal Town. All of this new development or redevelopment will bring traffic, parking, pedestrian, recreational and cultural activity with it.

The last Waterfront and Downtown Plan was the Renaissance Plan of 1994. At that time the continued presence of the poultry plants was fully anticipated. In the status report of that "Master Plan" for this area done in 2005 it was recognized that many of those recommendations no longer had any viability.

While we are indeed in a quiet period of development... this quiet period could offer the opportunity for the City to update its Master Plan for the Downtown and the Waterfront."

At the last Council meeting, the Council indicated a desire to secure a more comprehensive plan for the future of the Downtown and Waterfront Area before we construct the Coastal Walkway. The Council regrettably understood that this would delay the actual construction of the Walkway from before July 4, 2010 until the following spring of 2011. Wayne Marshall, City Planner, is preparing a memo and a "Request for Proposal" (also known as an RFP) with your packet for your further consideration. Due to unfortunate illness in the Planning Department this week that attachment will get to you later this weekend and we will have it posted on the website on Tuesday. The goal here is to find a qualified consultant who can meet our timelines and who is reasonably priced.

10.G Discussion of a Surplus Policy.

This is an issue the Council has been talking about for some time. I have previously provided quite a bit of information on this subject as recently as in my last Manager's Report.

The only update I can provide is that I presently expect there to be about \$3,976,382 in surplus and as I work on the new 2010-2011 budget I would anticipate a request to spend about \$390,000 from Surplus on various Capital Projects.

10.H Further discussion on FY 2010-11 budget process.

Section 8 of the City Charter calls upon the City Manager to submit a proposed budget compiled from information furnished by the Administrative Officers, Department Heads and Boards. As we work on this budget process I am asking for some additional direction on where we all should be going with this budget.

The Council will also be addressing the issue of a "Surplus Policy" at this meeting. Surplus is one part of the City's financial picture. The budget is another large part. Every year we may add to surplus from- in part- unspent budget money from the year before. Every year we also spend some surplus money in the following year's budget.

We currently face 3 challenges to keeping the amount of money the City needs to raise from taxpayers from going up.

- 1) Our non-tax revenues are going to decrease causing pressure on property taxes to make up the loss. The current estimated losses are: State Road assistance \$18,000, State Municipal Revenue Sharing \$154,000. If consumers don't spend money we could see losses also in auto excise, harbor fees etc.
- 2) We will have some new expenses: i.e. a new Economic Development Department estimated at \$85-\$90,000 and certainly some increases in existing expenses: heating fuel, road salt, asphalt, health insurance, parts.
- 3) Finally we have citizens, committee members and staff members already jockeying for additional new resources from the City to benefit the programs and services they are passionate about.

Budget policy like surplus policy should be set by the Council as the people's representatives. Before I start to challenge the citizens, our committees and the Department Heads I would like to know – by Council vote-that I am pursuing this process in keeping with the wishes of the Council as a body. Here are my questions:

A. If a motion is made to direct the City Manager to give the same direction and treatment to Departments, Committee's and public groups seeking City funding what is the wish of the Council?

For example if I ask Departments to cut their requests or keep it the same as last years should I be giving that same direction to all outside groups asking for City dollars?

B. If a motion is made to direct the City Manager to investigate and report on other potential sources of funding such as new or increased "User Fees" what is the wish of the Council?

Example:

Our wonderful Belfast Free Library cost City taxpayers about \$500,000 per year. They currently charges non-residents \$15 annually for the privilege of taking something out of the Library. Should we consider increasing this to \$25 to reduce what the Library needs from the City taxpayers?

The City Pool at City Park costs about \$40,000 a year to operate. Should we consider charging either Belfast residents or non-Belfast residents for using the Pool?

It will cost over \$70,000 to re-pave the Washington Street and Cross Street parking lots this year. Apartment buildings that lack parking either have their tenants rent private spaces on private property for \$25 a month or they leave their cars on City lots all year long. Should the City charge tenants who have no place to park a fee like private property owners do?

It cost about \$13,000 a year to maintain the two Walsh Fields. We have two primary users of those facilities: The Little League and the YMCA. Neither pays to use the fields. While Little League is free and serves kids from Swanville, Belfast and Northport- should we ask the towns of Swanville and Northport for a contribution? The YMCA has softball leagues and players pay a fee. Should we ask the players to pay an additional fee to help defray the cost of running these fields?

2010 Little League use is: April 13 to mid-July (1 day a week).

YMCA use is: May 4th to August 29th (4 and ½ days a week).

The City's sewer system is not paid for by taxes but rather by City sewer fees. Nevertheless the City taxpayers pay for all the sewer billing, revenue collection, some inspection cost and labor and equipment cost for all sewer line repairs. Should we charge back the sewer users for these costs?

Not every taxpayer is a user of the sewer system.

Increase parking fines from \$5 to \$15 with a penalty of it going to \$30 if it is not paid within 30 days. We also might consider changing downtown parking from 2 to 3 hours to allow for enough time to shop and eat. Are these initiatives the Council wants to explore?

Each of these areas can hit sensitive spots. I only seek to pursue them if Council is interested in these ideas.

C. If a motion is made to direct the City Manager to draft a proposed budget that does not increase the financial burden on the property tax payer what is the wish of the Council as a body?

D. What should we say to private groups who are seeking funding? For example should we say that Council might reconsider past levels of contribution?

Any guidance you can provide will help clarify my discussions with everyone.

10.I Discussion and action on the City's willingness to consider waiving weight limits on local roads for MDOT repaving of Route 1 from the Northport Towline to the Veterans Memorial Bridge.

The State has a practice of offering potential bidders the option of using posted routes to deliver materials but only if the local government approves this first. As part of this proposal the Contractor must agree to repair any damage they do. The City can say yes or no. The City can say yes but only if the contractor posts a bond to ensure any repair work is done. Bob Richards, our Public Works Director is

not terribly concerned because virtually all of the regional paving facilities are not on local roads and will be able to access the work without bothering them. I suggest we agree but ask the State to require its contractor to post a bond for any damage they cause just in case. Since the State can't tell us what roads if any come into play, I don't think the City should say yes without the protection of a bond.

10.J Further discussion on an Events Center. (Baker)

Councilor Baker has asked that the Council have some additional discussion on where the City is going with this idea.

Well that's about it for now. Nice to see the sun here and the snow somewhere else for a while. Be safe and enjoy your weekend.