

## **MANAGER'S REPORT**

Belfast City Council Meeting

Tuesday, January 18, 2011

7:00 P.M.

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

**FROM:** Joseph J. Slocum, City Manager

**DATE:** Friday, January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011

### **Agenda items:**

#### **10-B Introduction of the new owners of the Stinson property with a general discussion of their overall future plans.**

By the time you read this report we anticipate that a group of Maine boat building and repair businesses will have come together and formed a partnership that will purchase the Stinson property on Front Street. The property will be turned into a World Class boat yard that hopes to specialize on large-scale vessels. We want to welcome these new investors to the Belfast business community and develop a general sense of the work ahead to help put their business plan in place. This is really exciting news for the community, it preserves the working waterfront's historical character, promises to bring new year-round, full-time jobs that pay living wages and supports the sustainability of Belfast's authentic character as a true Maine coastal community.

In the months ahead there will be many further discussions, reviews and requests for a broad variety of approvals that will involve City staff, City Boards and Committees and the Council itself. The property is under an existing contract zoning agreement that will require substantial amendment. The City should expect a significant amount of time will be needed to address this project in the next 6 months.

#### **10-C Discussion and possible approval of the terms of a three-year agreement for the City owned concession facility at Belfast City Park.**

The City issued requests for proposals to operate the City owned concession building in City Park. In response to the advertisement we received two inquiries. The Parks Commission has reviewed them and has made a recommendation to work with one-party under terms and conditions which are attached in your packet. Essentially this is a three-year agreement calling for rental payments of \$200 per month with the cost of utilities waived in exchange for weekend maintenance of the Park restrooms.

It appears that we have a vendor whom we believe will maintain good communication and interaction with City staff responsible for the Park. The only provision I do not see reflected in these terms and conditions has to do with the pricing of food. In the past the City has had some say to make sure there was reasonably priced food items available at the concession facility so that the broadest possible

spectrum of Belfast residents could afford to buy something there. I think that it's a good idea to have some say in the pricing of food items to make sure this will continue to happen. Jim Bell Parks and Recreation Director and a representative of the Commission will be available to answer questions at the meeting.

**10-D Request from the Coastal Fine Art Alliance of Maine (CFAAM) to use Heritage Park for a Fine Art display and sale on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of 2011.**

The Coastal Fine Art Alliance of Maine is a non-profit entity that seeks to promote Maine artists and the sale of their work. They would like to occupy a good portion of Heritage Park for a three-day art sale in the first week of August. They will sell 35 booths at a rate of \$130 per booth. They extensively advertise this event, which consumes most of the revenue raised. They asked to use the City Park for this event and pledged to make some type of contribution to the City or Chamber of Commerce. They have insurance and hope to have some music. They will be providing security and will largely operate during daylight hours for these three days. Attached in your packet is a memo from Jim Bell, Parks and Recreation Director, dated January 10th with more information on this group. They apparently run these art sales in other Maine communities. The Parks and Recreation Commission supported this event at their meeting on January 13th.

This is the first non Belfast-based entity asking permission to occupy a City Park for their event. This is different than the Celtic celebration, the Harbor Festival, the Maskers events, or Arts in the Park. Belfast is blessed with incredible waterfront facilities and the City has to look at this request as opening up these facilities to non Belfast-based entity's for functions.

**10-E Discussion and possible authorization for the Belfast Maskers to construct and maintain a stage for their use at Steamboat Landing from June 20<sup>th</sup> 2011 to August 10, 2011.**

I almost did not put this on the agenda because of the failure of City staff to get the complete picture to me so that I could submit it to you for your full consideration. The Masker's should not have their request further delayed by the lack of staff communication. I apologize to all for this and will fix it directly. Months ago the Maskers asked to again set up a stage on Steamboat Landing for their use this summer. I think it covers more weeks than last year. The Commission wanted to discuss this with them and yesterday I found out that the Commission supported this request 3 approved, 2 opposed. I have no information on the Maskers willingness to let the stage be used for Non- Masker events at Steamboat Landing. Last year during the Celtic Celebration stage maintenance did create some concerns with simultaneous events.

**10-F Discussion and possible approval of a three-year contract with the Camden Rockport Animal Rescue League for stray animal management.**

On June 30, 2011 the City's long-term arrangement with Town Line Animal Shelter will come to close. For decades Town Line Animal Shelter has provided the City with wonderful support services for the care and adoption of stray dogs and cats.

For the last several months we have been working with the Camden Rockport Animal Rescue League and working to become more of a regional facility. This would help lower costs by having a collection of municipalities participate in supporting these services. We have had a very good experience with this group and would like to enter into a three-year agreement with them so that they can plan ahead with capital projects to expand their services for Belfast and other municipalities in the long-term. In that sense this is a regional collaboration that would result in cost savings to the Belfast taxpayers. A copy of the agreement is attached for your consideration.

#### **10-G Discussion and possible approval of new fees and policies for the Boathouse use.**

In 2008 the City spent a little over \$20,000 maintaining the Boathouse. Our revenue barely covered this out-of-pocket expense. At that time we hired an outside cleaning service to regularly clean it and every year the entire inside of building was re-painted at a rate of about \$27 per hour. Today our budget for the Boathouse is \$13,500 because we now do the painting and maintenance in-house. We have also reduced our utility costs. These numbers do not reflect the massive amounts of staff time involved in managing the facility and in dealing with Boathouse rental management. The event management requires multiple interactions with potential or confirmed event holders. I would estimate that management time to be a minimum of \$10,000 per year. At staff recommendation, in December the Council approved outsourcing the management function to an experienced professional at a flat rate of \$300 per month.

Our next step in this process is to revisit the Boathouse rates. Attached in your packet is the proposed schedule of rental fees for the Belfast Boathouse. These fees are recommended based upon the following principles:

1. The Council wishes to maximize the revenue this popular facility should generate.
2. The Council wishes to provide a discount to Belfast residents, businesses and nonprofits.
3. The facilities will continue to be available for City government functions such as large meetings, presentations, hearings etc.

Before approving specific rates I recommend the Council vote on the following rate related items:

A. I recommend that the Council authorize our Rental Agent the discretion to be flexible with these rates and provide discounts where circumstances suggest they are warranted. For example, if you have an entity that does multiple bookings a year, or someone who books a facility for a time which would otherwise go unrented or where someone historically leaves the place spotless and thereby reduces our overhead maintenance cost- then the rental agent should have the discretion to lower the rates as she deems appropriate. We afford this very same discretion to the Harbor Master as she applies rates on a daily basis. The City does have regular users who book the facility multiple times a year and they should be given a discount.

B. I recommend the Council reaffirm that the Boathouse is not a free public recreation facility. While it has never had this character, we have had several inquiries about using the facility for community ping-

pong events and other senior citizen recreational activities. Some people see this as a big open and available facility. This facility was never designed to be a recreational facility and I am hesitant to recommend that we change its character to be one. City Parks and Recreation Director Jim Bell has learned that the schools can provide ping-pong recreation opportunities for the community.

C. I recommend that every event pay a fee. This will slow down the number of request for free rental requests. Presently certain events have not paid a rental fee:

-New Years by the Bay (One Night)

-Harbor Festival (an entire August weekend)

If the City wants to support these events with no charge rental then the better way of doing this is to literally fund these events with rental money to be paid back to the City. In doing this we are making it clear that there is real City expense as well as real loss of income associated with a free rental. If the City feels strong enough about an event it is better to fund the rental cost than to waive it. Free rent or contributed rent should be the exception and not an expected practice.

D. The new rates will include a cancellation penalty. In the past someone could book an event in prime summer season 2 years in advance and cancel at the last minute with no consequence. We think that is wrong and there should be a penalty for the lost booking. In recent discussions some Council members wanted to refund deposits if they could be replaced by new bookings- dollar for dollar. If that is the will of the body then we would like to clarify that policy with a Council vote.

Finally, we get to the new rates. They are higher. They are not intended to be proportionately the same because they are more based upon multiple considerations. For example we continue to recommend a proportionately higher rate for someone who wants the facility for 12 hours rather than 8. We recognize that these extended rentals are first, rare and second they do require more management time and tend to deliver more maintenance impact. Weekends are prime revenue generating times and the rates are even higher than we suggested before. While this is a reflection on what we think is viable, it is not intended to make the facility the most expensive in town so that we send all inquiries elsewhere. We have attempted to strike a balance between being financially accessible and financially prudent.

City Clerk Denise Beckett and Rental Agent Cindy Harnden will be available to answer your questions with their experience and perspectives on these rates.

#### **10-H Discussion on Meeting Minutes**

#### **10-I Signing of Council Orders and housekeeping items.**

That's it for now. Good News for Belfast this week on the redevelopment of the Stinson Property. It's easy to see what is not perfect but I encourage all to be more optimistic and see what our potential is. Everything we need to build success is here. We will build more of it with confidence and optimism than with mud. Have a safe and enjoyable weekend.