

MANAGER'S REPORT

City Council Meeting

Tuesday, July 6, 2010

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

FROM: Joseph J. Slocum, City Manager

DATE: Friday, July 2, 2010

Non Agenda items:

The Belfast Fire Department

On Father's Day I had the unique experience of being within 300 feet of the Masonic Lodge at the intersection of Main and High Street when lightning struck the roof and caught the building on fire.

Within a few minutes the Fire Department was on the scene working with law enforcement to close off the roads and mobilize equipment and fire department personnel. The building was immediately evacuated and the area around the building was secured to keep people safely back from the scene. The roof was on fire and you could clearly see the flames pushing out of the eaves. Firemen from the first truck drew out the hose and knocked down the fire (visibly put it out) from the street 4-stories below. The ladder truck was there almost at the same time and the ladder was elevated just above the rooftop within a minute or two. Two firemen, as protocol, ascended the ladder steadily and swiftly. They carried appropriate gear, safety mechanisms and were equipped with the necessary tools to open up the edge of the roof and inspect the burned-out area.

60-feet below them hose was dispatched and prepared to be transported to the top of the ladder for a proper flushing out of the burned-out area. After final inspection by the Chief and the assistant chiefs the scene was determined to be fire free and the building returned to its normal use.

As I sat and watched every aspect of this response I could not imagine that either Boston or New York could have Fire Departments that could have responded in such an efficient and professional manner. The Belfast Fire Department made this appear as though they actually train for this specific fire every day.

It was impressive to see how well the Fire Department worked as a team. I take this moment to tell the entire community how fortunate we are to have such a dedicated and talented group of people working on our behalf in such a potentially dangerous and consequential crisis. We should all be extremely proud to have such a quality Fire Department. Our taxpayers should remember that Rockland, which is similar in population size, has a full-time department, which cost that City almost \$1 million more a year to

operate. Our collective thanks to all members of the Belfast fire Department for their continued exceptional service to the Belfast.

Old Cemetery Stones need re-pointing and repair.

We are aware of this and hoping to get ahead of the grass to address it. We may get some outside help.

DOT Issues Update:

Wayne Marshall and myself met with two of the three DOT representatives we wanted to meet with last week. Here is a brief update, which we can discuss further at the meeting if you wish.

1. They have agreed to a variety of new signs (some entirely new, some replacement) – 6 large and 3 small – that will help traffic find easy access into the downtown area and to the waterfront. There will be better signage to High Street, Northport Avenue and Main Street. These signs will not be up until the spring of 2011, as they will be incorporated into the new Master Plan for the waterfront and the downtown areas.
2. They have agreed to the permanent placement of three sets of banner posts that will advertise upcoming events in the City. These will be on the East Side of the Veterans Memorial Bridge, at the Jug Handle and out on Route #3 across from the paving company.

Each location will have two tall white 4X4 posts with decorative tops and will be capable of holding three separate banners each. They will be rigged like flag poles for easy installation or removal and we may have Public Works be in charge of their placement to ensure traffic safety.

3. They will consider moving the 35 MPH speed zone notice on the east side of the Veterans Bridge actually out onto the bridge itself to slow people down a bit before they get to the intersection with Swan Lake Avenue. They will also consider putting reduced speeds sign ahead on the west side of the bridge to alert eastern travelers of the upcoming reduction in speed.
4. They will be denying our request to reduce the speed on Swan Lake Avenue from 45 to 35 coming down the hill from across the school. They have done an extensive review, which includes road design, accident reports, actual measurements of traffic speed and flow. They look to see where 85% of the traffic is moving within 10 miles of each other and have concluded that it is posted at the proper safe speed.
5. We looked at the next traffic-calming grant that we have from DOT for the Swan Lake Avenue and Route One area. The State is receptive to extending the sidewalk on the east side of Swan Lake Avenue farther back from the intersection and also moving the crosswalk back farther up onto Swan Lake Avenue so there is better sight distance for pedestrians and vehicles. They also support changing out cross walk lights on route #1 so that they are bigger and separated from the sign face as we have it now.

6. They have agreed that we can put the new path through the island on Route One so someone crossing the road from the intersection with Swan Lake Avenue can proceed across the grass island strip on a side3walk that we will build which will run to Footbridge Road and the Footbridge. They want only one improved path across route #1 so they will not want us to pave another walkway along the old range way, which is closer to the bridge.
7. I was asked if a crosswalk on upper sections of Route #3 would be possible and they said the State does not allow crosswalks on 45mph zones.
8. They would be receptive to powering the speed to 25mph on Northport Avenue but they have to go through their review process and need a letter to initiate this.
9. They were generally supportive of filling in missing sections of sidewalk on the south side of Route #3 between the car dealerships.

10.B Discussion and action on the first reading of amendments to the City's Zoning Ordinance to provide the ability to raise domesticated chickens within the City.

Wayne Marshall, City Planner, will provide an attached memo outlining this proposed language. Essentially the Council has supported the idea of allowing people to raise chickens within the City.

10.C Discussion and action on public works winter salt bid opening.

Attached in your packets is a copy of the actual bids. We ask that you first accept the bid and then award the bid to the lowest bidder. The good news is we are saving about \$4 a ton per bid for salt in this bid over last year.

10.D. Discussion and action on public works striping bid opening.

We ask that you accept the bids we have for striping various roads in Belfast and secondly to award to the lowest bidder.

One thing I do want to note here is that when we rebuilt Waldo Avenue last year it appears that we inadvertently moved the line striping a little closer to the west side of the street where people park. That has made it difficult for people to park along the west side of Waldo Avenue between the High School and Main Street, and still have cars safely pass around those parked vehicles without actually crossing the double yellow line. We've discussed this internally and are prepared to cover over the existing double yellow line so that there is no line between the High School and Main Street. We think the traffic will be able to park on the westerly side of Waldo Avenue and that people will have plenty of

visibility to pass that parked traffic without having to follow a line down the middle of the road. We can discuss this more at the meeting if you have any questions.

10.E Discussion of methods of marking crosswalks.

Councilor Hurley has proposed that we consider changing the way we do crosswalks in Belfast. He has suggested that we use more permanent and more expensive markings so that we don't have to go through the unnecessary labor costs of repainting crosswalks twice a year. I have discussed this with Public Works Director, Bob Richards, and he reports as follows:

There are about 50 crosswalks in Belfast. We generally paint them once a year. In the areas of the school, if the paint appears to be worn, we address those areas a second time to help provide extra protection to the students. But generally we do it once a year and it usually takes three people about two weeks to do this. The cost of the labor is approximately \$1,788. The cost of the paint, 150 gallons at \$16 a gallon is approximately \$2,400. The non-truck and equipment costs are thus \$4,188. Assuming that we do some of the school crosswalks with some touch-ups, let's calculate that out to be somewhere between \$4,200 and \$5,200 a year.

Councilor Hurley suggests that we use a more permanent marking, which is something that comes in a roll and must also be manually placed. A single roll cost \$500 of this material and it is sufficient to do two crosswalks. Hence, if we have 50 crosswalks, it will take 25 rolls at \$500 a roll or \$12,500 in materials alone to do all of the City crosswalks. The labor of about \$1,800 would also be there, as we need to prepare the surface in order to lay this rolled crosswalk out.

Public Works does not feel that we will save money by going to the rolled material. They note that the City grader, which is used on many streets, often peels this stuff right back up. So that it is not a guarantee that you will have multiple years of material down before it has to be replaced. We note that the new material recently placed at the intersection of Swan Lake Avenue and Route 1 is already peeling and wearing away.

This is a judgment call; we'll be pleased to follow whatever mechanism the City wants to follow. If you want to make this change in the next budget year, we feel that we're going to need about \$9,000 more in supplies and expenses, and that may or may not save us money in the following years depending upon your perspective.

10.F Discussion of a request by the Brooks Preservation Society to use the Front Street parking lot on Saturday, September 11, 2010 for their special excursion train.

Obviously September 11 is a big day nationally and locally. Traditionally, local veterans groups and their supporters march back and forth on the Veteran's Memorial Bridge to honor those whose lives were lost, sacrificed and affected by the tragic events of September 11, 2001.

This year, a totally unrelated event is being proposed by the Brooks Preservation Society, who will use the upper bridge as a staging area for running a train on the newly acquired rail corridor belonging to the City. They hope to use the parking lot on Front Street as a place to shuttle passengers back and forth

to the upper bridge area. They expect over 100 passengers on this train. Since we do not have anything else scheduled for that day, I see no reason why not to allow the Brooks Preservation Society to use the Front Street parking lot so that they can shuttle vehicles out to the upper bridge area.

10.G Request by the Cemetery Superintendent to suspend the bid policy and award a contract to Head of the Tide Masonry in the amount of \$5,400 for mausoleum repair.

This is repair that needs to be done. This is a local contractor familiar with the work. We normally have a bid requirement of pursuing a bid in excess of \$4,000. Given the type of work it is, and the local contractor's year-round availability to back it up should there be a problem, I would recommend we suspend our normal bidding process and award this work to Head of the Tide Masonry in Belfast.

That's it for now. 4th of July this weekend. Everyone have fun but be safe and watch out for those who are distracted by the holiday.