

MANAGER'S REPORT

City Council Meeting

Tuesday, November 16, 2010

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

FROM: Joseph J. Slocum, City Manager

DATE: Friday, November 12, 2010

Non-Agenda Items:

I recommend that the City give serious consideration to having only one polling place- at a school. I understand that this is not traditional but the reality is that this is one City and Cities far larger than ours have one polling place.

Why do this?

1. Coordination of the event – it is far easier to one run dinner in one place than three different dinners in 3 different places. Management and monitoring of the election itself can all be done in one place.
2. Parking amenities- Schools have lots of great parking and they have more lighting for the safety of voters. There are some tough places to walk at some of the voting locations- particularly in the dark.
3. Consistency between election workers and support for election workers. It is hard to find people who will give up so much of their time and much easier to coordinate all of those people if they are all in the same place.

I think we used to have a polling place in every Ward but with voters voting for candidates in all Wards, a single location reinforces that we are all one place and we get to vote on every candidate. The former City Clerk wanted to do this and after watching the process so intently this year I completely understand why.

Agenda items:

10-B Request from New Year's By The Bay to conduct their 14th annual New Year's Eve Celebration at City locations in keeping with past practices

Mary Mortier will be at the meeting to offer additional comments on this year's exciting chem-free celebration of music, dance, art, food and fun. This is a non-profit sponsored event with a lot of local business and community support. This jewel of an event runs on a shoestring and produces the most warm and refreshing New Year's experience in the State.

10-C Request by the City Manager to restructure the City's lease with the Belfast Maskers.

We have previously agreed to extend the Belfast Masker's lease to October of 2012 and to reduce the replacement value of the building based upon its experienced condition.

Recently, I became aware that the water meter running to the Maskers Theatre is also the supplier of water to Thompson's Wharf. Furthermore, it appears that the outdoor water spigots have been "accessed" by people washing nearby boats, trailers etc.

The water charges paid by the Maskers over the last several years have been in excess of what they should have been. The building we know is small and the only use of water is really related to restrooms. With 4 performances a year there it's difficult to believe that the toilets were flushed over 2,500 times. I'm attaching to this packet an outline of actual water charges for this meter over the last several years. There is no doubt in my mind that Thompson's wharf uses a significant amount of water and yet is apparently not paying for any of it. Since the City owns and operates Thompson's Wharf the obligation to have paid for this water belongs to the City.

The appropriate thing to do is to have the Maskers remove or close off their outside spigots so that area boat washers do not use it. Secondly, we should only charge the minimum rate as set by the Water District since this is not a building that sees daily use and the use that it does see is limited.

Rather than provide the Maskers with an uncertain rebate I would suggest we forgo the collection of December 2010 rent as a settlement for their payment of water fees that would otherwise belong to the City for its operation of Thompson's Wharf. This amount would be \$600.00 to cover what could have been a \$1,000 payment over the last 3 years.

We are also looking into separate meters and the possibility of leaks. We will update you on that at the meeting.

10 D Appoint a Board of Assessment and Review

The Council recently met with the former members of this Board and discussed the limited number of times they have been called upon to review an assessments over the years. The terms of the existing board members have expired. Under State law they continue in service until reappointment or replacement.

We recommend that the City reappoint the Board and create a good record of whose term expires when. By Charter each of the three full board members has a three-year term. These are supposed to be staggered so that one of them is reappointed every year. There are also two alternates whose terms are one year each.

We recommend a simple lottery to select the terms of the 3 Full members so that we can get back onto a staggered timetable.

Biff Atlas, Dana Keane and Roy Rogers are the full time members. The first name drawn would get a three-year term, the second a two-year term and the last a one-year term

As for the alternates, Mary Dutch and Mike Hogan we recommend we appoint them each a 1 year term commencing November 16, 2010.

10 E Consideration of a request by Em Bee Cleaners to have the City apply to the State's Brownfield Grant Pool to do a Brownfield's assessment at the Em Bee Cleaner location on High Street

You may recall that the City applied to the federal government to secure a pool of funds with which to do Brownfield assessments for property owners here in Belfast. The purpose of the program is to supply the funds to property owners who are interested in doing an environmental assessment on their property in order to help facilitate its economic re-development. We have not yet heard on whether we will indeed secure that Grant.

The State, however, has its own pool of grant funds received from the federal government for such purposes. There is a mechanism by which the City, on behalf of a private Belfast property owner, can apply to use the State pool of funds to do the same type of environmental assessment.

We have been in contact with representatives of Em Bee Cleaners and they are most interested in securing this assessment to help facilitate the future economic re-development of their property.

We ask for your permission for the City to apply to the State so that we can use the State's funds and get this assessment done. The only cost to the City would be our time in filling out the application and in some administrative support should that application be approved.

10-F Consideration of a request to apply for a Harbor Technical Assistance Planning Grant

We are in the midst of an update to our Master Waterfront and Downtown Plan. This plan will only take that process to a certain level of detail. There is an opportunity to secure a planning grant that can add to that detail and provide the Harbormaster, the Harbor Committee and the Council with additional information to help with decision making in the years ahead.

There is a 20% cash or kind match requirement that we believe will be met by the existing City expenditures on the Master Plan. There should be no additional cash outlay from the City should we secure this \$20,000 Technical Assistance Planning Grant. Examples of detail could be mapping, measurements etc.

10 G Request by the City Manager to conduct an executive session to discuss legal rights, litigation etc. with the City attorney under 1 MRSA (6) (E). and economic development under 1 MRSA (6) (C).

PLEASE NOTE: If time permits Council may decide to conduct a work session to discuss Council Goal for 2011 after the meeting.

That is the end of this Report. Have a safe and enjoyable weekend. Habitat for Humanity is working through a local church with tons of donors and tons of help to build a family their first home. That should tell us all what kind of wonderful place this is.