

**MANAGER'S REPORT**  
City Council Meeting  
Tuesday, September 21, 2010

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

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

**DATE: Friday, September 17, 2010**

**Agenda items:**

**10.B Discussion and action on the bid opening for a new ambulance for the Belfast Ambulance and Rescue service.**

The City needs to replace its 2006 ambulance. That vehicle has in excess of 125,000 miles on it. We investigated the possibility of putting a new chassis underneath, and was cost prohibitive. We put the purchase of a new ambulance out to bid and received four responses. Of the four (4) bids submitted, they ranged between \$119,000 and \$140,000. The demands on our ambulances have been increasing over the last five years. We have more and more transports to Portland and to Bangor. The ambulance is a crucial and highly valued service in the community. It more than pays for its cost and accordingly does not need taxpayer dollars to supplement its budget.

Fire Chief Richards has recommended that we not trade in the 2006 ambulance and use it for a backup. I fully concur with that recommendation.

We ask you to accept the bids as submitted and to award the bid to the lowest bidder, Yankee Fire and Rescue. Every year the City sets a certain amount of money aside in a capital reserve account to replace our ambulances when they are in need of replacement. This year we set aside \$60,000. Presently there is over \$155,000 in this account. The cost of this new ambulance will come from this Ambulance Capital Reserve Account.

**10.C Request to accept \$500 as the City share under the Criminal Forfeiture Statute.**

Under certain circumstances the City shares in the proceeds that arise from criminal activity. Recently, the City was notified that we are entitled to receive \$500 as part of this statute. Chief Trafton is requesting City Council authorization to accept this money. This money will be added to the Police Capital Project's Forfeiture account. That account is used to make cash available for use in criminal investigations involving the sale of illegal items. Essentially, we use the proceeds of criminal activity to help stop other criminal activity.

A motion to accept the \$500 under the criminal forfeiture statutes and to direct those monies to be added to the Police Departments Capital Project funds for forfeiture is needed.

**10.D Council appointment of the Code Enforcement Officer.**

Following advertisement, review of numerous applications and interviews we are prepared to recommend to Council the appointment of a new Code Enforcement Officer. I am very pleased to report that this is an experienced individual and we do not want them to give notice to their current employer until they know they have a job with the City. We will bring this individual and their credentials to your meeting to introduce them to you directly.

We will need a motion to name this individual as our next Code Enforcement Officer.

**10.E Update on the Waterfront/Downtown Master Plan and the kickoff meeting of September 23, 2010.**

We have a kickoff meeting with the consultant on this Master Plan on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Wayne Marshall, City Planner, will give you a preview of this meeting along with an overall update on the plan.

**10.F Second reading of the adoption of a local Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Ordinance.**

This ordinance is needed for the City to be able to participate in a federally funded program that will allow property owners to invest today in energy efficiency and weatherization of their homes by taking advantage of a low interest revolving loan program. Under the program the owner can pass on the loan payments to a subsequent buyer.

The idea behind the program is to attract homeowners who are concerned that they will not fully benefit from the energy savings during their time at that residence. If these people feel that the investment will not pay out for them then they tend not to make the investment and let a subsequent owner deal with the energy efficiency of the home.

This program allows the monthly payments to transfer from the original owner to the new owner so that each can share the energy savings today and into the future.

**10.G Consideration of a proposal to modify the City's bidding policy to foster greater support for local businesses. ( Delune)**

Currently the City bid policy requires us to go out to bid on any purchase of goods or services over \$4,000. I note the professional services such as legal or engineering type services are not encompassed within this requirement.

Our policy also indicates that when bids do come in that we allow a preference for local bidders if they are within 5% of the low non-Belfast bidder or \$250 whichever is less. In reality anything under \$5,000 would not go to a local bidder because of the \$250 limit.

Councilor Delune is proposing that we eliminate the \$250 policy and simply have the policy to allow a preference for local bidders if they are within 5% of the lowest non-local bidder. For purposes of this policy local means City of Belfast.

**10.H Discussion and possible action on eliminating paper waste and enhancing productivity. (Delune)**

The City does a lot of printing, much of it is single-sided. For this Council meeting I am submitting your Council packages printed in double-sided fashion for your further consideration.

In speaking with Councilor Delune we identified other municipalities in the State who have gone paperless at the Council level. In essence, each Council member has a laptop computer, provided to them by the City, which is constantly updated just like the web site with Manager's Reports and backup. This eliminates paper altogether unless an individual Councilor requests a paper copy of a particular document printed out for them.

Such a system also offers the advantage of providing to the fingertips of the elected official all of the past information supplied to the Council for quick retrieval. The Councilor not only has the information of the day but direct 24-hour a day 7-days a week file access to a lot of documentation from the past. For example they can be set up so that the Councilor on a Sunday could search under the words "swimming pool" and quickly observe any council action, minutes of committees etc., where a swimming pool was discussed over the previous number of years. This could be a very effective way of assisting in the decision-making process. We wanted to discuss this with Council before looking into this further to see if there is support for the idea.

**10.1 Discussion and possible action on initiating steps to change the Charter by lowering the amount of non budgeted or non-emergency money a Council could spend before conducting a special public hearing. (Delune)**

Article 8 of the City Charter Section 2 says:

"Non budgeted or non emergency appropriations in excess of \$300,000 shall go to a special public hearing for approval.

The City attorney has indicated that what this means is that during the course of the fiscal year if the Council needs to spend \$300,000 or more on something that was not budgeted for or is not for an emergency, then the Council should first conduct a public hearing to allow the community the opportunity to comment on such an expenditure before the Council takes a vote.

On two occasions this past year, the City spent money to buy real estate or real estate easements that were not planned for at the time the budget was adopted.

The City bought a vacant lot to complete its ownership of what most people thought was already part of the Belfast Common (intersection of Front and Miller Streets). The purchase price was less than the \$300,000 threshold called for in the Charter and accordingly I did not schedule a public hearing.

Municipalities spend money every year that they did not foresee spending when the budgets were prepared. Budget estimating can be done more than a year earlier than the point in time where the expenditure issue comes up. From my perspective the City's Charter acknowledges this need and has historically said that only when those expenditures exceed \$300,000 in value should there be a public hearing scheduled prior to a vote on the non-budgeted or non-emergency expenditure.

There was concern over this Charter process and so the Council chose to ignore the requirement when it looked into purchasing the Rail Easement between Penobscot McCrum and the Waldo town line in August. In August, the Council scheduled a public hearing on the matter even though none was required by the Charter. The Council wanted to give the public the opportunity to comment prior to making a decision on the purchase.

Councilor Delune has recommended that we reduce the Charter's \$300,000 threshold to \$150,000. She suggests that this offers the City some financial flexibility but also enhances the public's opportunity to participate in these discussions.

**10.J Update on Economic Development Grant Opportunities and Economic Development discussion.**

We recently provided Councilors a list of potential Economic Development Grants along with a one-page discussion from City Economic Development Director, Thomas Kittredge. We hope to take a few minutes to discuss this information with the Council.

Please understand that we are regularly talking to real people who want to create new businesses in Belfast and the Belfast region. We are also talking with some who are here and want to grow. To do this effectively, the public should understand that these people and businesses want to keep their ideas, plans and interest confidential until they are prepared to make decisions, which would translate into an announcement. To protect these business interests, we do not identify them or illustrate their thinking.

Have a safe and enjoyable weekend.

**Remember the Belfast Rotary is collecting old computers and office equipment at the Public Works Garage Saturday, September 18, 2010 from 9 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The money goes to help with educational scholarships for local kids. They have pick up services if you need them.**