



Lowell City Council

Regular Meeting Minutes

Michael Q. Geary
City Clerk

Date: January 28, 2020

Time: 6:30 PM

Location: City Council Chamber, 375 Merrimack Street, 2nd Floor, Lowell, MA

1. ROLL CALL

Roll Call showed 9 present.

M. Leahy presiding.

C. Conway requested moment of silence in darkened chamber for Henry Cheetham. C. Rourke requested moment of silence in darkened chamber for Mary McGovern. C. Mercier requested moment of silence in darkened chamber for Police Officer Katherine Thyne. M. Leahy requested moment of silence in darkened chamber for Gerald Cohen.

2. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

2.1. Presentation - Fru NKimbeng of a gift to City Council from the City of Bamenda in Cameroon.

In City Council, M. Leahy introduced his assistant, Karonika Brown. Mr. NKimbeng presented gift to Council to recognize support for Bamenda, Lowell's Sister City.

3. CITY CLERK

3.1. Minutes of City Council Meeting January 21st, for acceptance.

In City Council, minutes read, **Motion** "To accept and place on file" by C. Nuon, seconded by C. Samaras. So voted.

4. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY MANAGER

4.1. Motion Responses.

In City Council, **Motion** "To accept and place on file" by C. Mercier, seconded by C. Rourke. So voted.



A) Motion Response - Smith Baker Center – C. Noun noted the detailed report and the work being done on the project and commented that a performance center may be best use of the property. C. Conway noted he toured the property and that there needs to be a complete clean-up of it so that it can be presented in the best light. C. Elliott noted the Blue Ribbon Committee he formed some time ago and noted the longer the building is empty the more expensive rehab will cost. C. Elliott questioned if Community Preservation money could be used on the project and if a new Request for Proposal would be needed. Manager Donoghue commented on the RFP noting the Coalition for Better Acre (CBA) was the only responder. Diane Tradd (DPD) commented on the positions of developers in the City and noted the department would continue working with them. C. Samaras noted the building has been abandoned for many years and has many restrictions. Manager Donoghue noted all options were open for the site.

B) Motion Response - Billerica St – C. Elliott noted it was a cut through street in need of signage.

C) Motion Response - VFW over Beaver Brook Bridge Update – C. Elliott noted there was a schedule in place.

D) Motion Response - LPD Wellness Programs for First Responders – C. Conway commented on the programs and the need to support personnel. Supt. Richardson (LPD) commented on the services for Officer Thyne and how the City would handle it. Supt. Richardson noted the importance of the programs and their success and further noted the help given by outside vendors. Chief Winward (LFD) commented on programs and how they are improved through time and that there is special emphasis for veterans on the force in terms of mental and physical health. C. Elliott noted the need to protect the public safety personnel.

E) Motion Response-Process to Change Charter to Allow Residents to Vote and Elect Mayor – C. Elliott commented on the process outlined in the report. **Motion** to refer matter to Elections SC by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Mercier. So voted. C. Samaras noted that a referendum should be before the voters and that a position of Strong Mayor should be explored as well. C. Mercier noted the report. **Motion** by C. Mercier, seconded by C. Elliott to include Rules SC as part of the process. So voted. C. Elliott commented that a ballot question is not needed and to have people vote is quite simple. C. Samaras noted people should have a voice. C. Elliott noted it Strong Mayor is favored then motion should be put on to address that. C. Conway noted prior request for ballot questions.

F) Motion Response - Update on Employee Incentive Program – C. Conway



commented on program and its success. Manager Donoghue noted vote to re-establish program and fund same. **Motion** to suspend rules and take Item #4.4 out of order to establish committee by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Conway. So voted.

G) Motion Response - Status of 246.1 Market St. – C. Elliott noted the prospects were good for the property. Manager Donoghue commented on history of the property and that new owners have applied for permits.

H) Motion Response - Update to the Master Plan – C. Nuon noted the detailed report commenting the ability to go out to the public for input with various meetings. Manager Donoghue noted all materials and notices are done in several languages.

I) Motion Response - Building Permitting – C. Elliott noted electronic process is encouraging and recognized efforts of all involved. C. Nuon noted importance of updating systems and that the benefits outweigh the costs. C. Conway commented on the need to integrate technology.

J) Motion Response - Abatement Process – C. Nuon commented on importance of knowing the process through planned informational sessions in the community.

C. Mercier recognized the updated lists for Boards and Commissions from the Manager's Office.

4.2. Informational Reports

K) Informational Report - FY2021 Budget Update – Conor Baldwin (CFO) updated City and School Budgets in terms of final State Budget numbers indicating a substantial increase in Chapter 70 money for the schools. C. Elliott noted increased budget for schools but voiced concerns for Charter School reimbursements. **Motion** by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Conway to refer matter to Finance SC. So voted. C. Mercier requested costs associated with children who are schooled outside of the system.

L) Informational Report - HCID Update – Manager Donoghue provided updates regarding Justice Center; Lord Overpass; and garage construction. Ms. Tradd noted garage was under budget and on time. C. Elliott questioned route of construction trucks to the site. Consultant for garage project commented on issues involved and noted all traffic plans and routes are flexible. Manager Donoghue noted concerns for some truck routes into the City. C. Elliott noted best options must be used. Natasha Vance (Transportation Engineer) described the trucks and the possible routes available in the City. Manager Donoghue noted any plan needs to be flexible. M. Leahy questioned night deliveries. C. Rourke noted congestion on suggested routes. C. Chau suggested using various routes into the City. C. Mercier commented on night deliveries. **Motion** by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Drinkwater to refer matter to Finance SC. So voted.



M) Informational Report - Polling Location Change Notice – Manager Donoghue commented on issues in some polling locations and the need for other sites. Elliott Veloso (Elections) noted the changes and the approval by the Elections Commission. Atty. Veloso noted that City Hall would be site for early voting. M. Leahy commented on available parking at each location. C. Mercier supported the change in location.

N) Informational - Accelerated Repair Program Update – Manager introduced Alex Magee from her office to make presentation entitled “Accelerated Repair Program”. Mr. Magee commented on following topics: program specifics; projects; City’s part; evaluations; final steps; results; and future applications. C. Elliott noted favorable reimbursement by the State. Mr. Baldwin outlined debt service of loan. Manager Donoghue noted all new systems will be in the buildings resulting in cost savings. C. Conway commented on the need for the repairs and replacements. C. Conway questioned education plan during construction. M. Leahy noted the need to keep sites safe and clean and also secure warranties for work being done. Mr. Magee noted that all projects are under strict MSBA guidelines.

Motion to suspend rules by C. Mercier, seconded by C. Elliott to discuss Sullivan School. So voted. C. Mercier noted she received information regarding a serious bullying issue at the Sullivan School. C. Elliott commented that issue needs immediate attention.

4.3. Communication-Accept resignation of Melissa Desroches from Board of Parks.

In City Council, **Motion** “To accept and place on file” by C. Conway, seconded by C. Drinkwater. So voted.

4.4. Communication-Appoint Mary Callery, Conor Baldwin and Allison Lamey to Suggestion Award Board.

In City Council, read, **Motion** to adopt by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Mercier. Adopted per Roll Call vote 9 yeas. So voted.

4.5. Communication - City Manager request Out of State Travel (1) LPD; (1) HHS.

In City Council, read, **Motion** to adopt by C. Samaras, seconded by C. Mercier. Adopted per Roll Call vote 9 yeas. So voted.



5. VOTES FROM THE CITY MANAGER

5.1. Vote-Accept Easements from Centennial Island Hydroelectric Co. pertaining to the Concord River Greenway Project.

In City Council, Read twice, full reading waived with no objections. **Motion** to adopt by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Mercier. Adopted per Roll Call vote 8 yeas, 1 absent (C. Samaras). So voted.

5.2. Vote-Accept Easements from Related Stirling Bay, LLC pertaining to Concord River Greenway Project.

In City Council, Read twice, full reading waived with no objections. **Motion** to adopt by C. Conway, seconded by C. Chau. Adopted per Roll Call vote 8 yeas, 1 absent (C. Samaras). So voted.

5.3. Vote-To freeze new petitions for timed, free, on street parking spaces until parking study is completed.

In City Council, Read twice, full reading waived with no objections. **Motion** to adopt by C. Rourke, seconded by C. Elliott. Adopted per Roll Call vote 9 yeas. So voted. C. Elliott questioned time frame for freeze. Manager Donoghue noted it was not applicable to handicap parking sign requests. Ms. Vance commented on some solutions to issues in the City.

6. ORDERS FROM THE CITY MANAGER

6.1. Loan Order-Accelerated Repairs to various school buildings.

In City Council, Given 1st Reading, **Motion** to refer to public hearing on February 11, 2020 at 7PM by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Drinkwater. So voted.

7. ORDINANCES FROM THE CITY MANAGER

7.1. Ordinance-Amend Ch. 9 Create Art. XIV entitled Community Preservation Committee.

In City Council, Given 1st Reading, **Motion** to refer to public hearing on February 11, 2020 at 7PM by C. Drinkwater, seconded by C. Conway. So voted.

8. REPORTS (SUB/COMMITTEE, IF ANY)

In City Council, **Motion** to accept 2020 – 2021 City Council subcommittees by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Drinkwater. So voted.



9. PETITIONS

9.1. Misc. - Andres Rivera request installation of handicap parking sign at 5 Common Avenue.

In City Council, **Motion** to refer to Transportation Engineer for report and recommendation by C. Rourke, seconded by C. Nuon. So voted.

9.2. Misc. - Mark Mello request permission to address Council regarding parking issues on Waite and Chelmsford Streets.

In City Council, **Motion** to refer to Transportation Engineer for report and recommendation by C. Conway, seconded by C. Drinkwater. So voted. Mr. Mello addressed the Council. C. Mercier question location of condos and parking provided. **Motion** by C. Mercier, seconded by C. Rourke to install no parking here to corner sign at the location. So voted.

9.3. Misc. - Charles Kafasis request to address City Council regarding parking issues; including residential parking program.

In City Council, **Motion** to refer to Transportation Engineer for report and recommendation by C. Mercier, seconded by C. Rourke. So voted. Mr. Kafasis addressed the Council. C. Elliott questioned regulations for student parking in the City. Terry Ryan (Parking Director) outlined the program.

10. CITY COUNCIL - MOTIONS

10.1. C. Mercier - Req. City Mgr. provide a report regarding the process of revenue generated by the use of empty lots charging people to park in and around the new court house.

In City Council, seconded by C. Nuon, referred to City Manager. So voted. C. Mercier commented on concern of use of empty lots for parking without permitting.

Motion to suspend rules to allow motion inadvertently left off agenda to be addressed by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Drinkwater. So voted. **“C. Mercier - Req. City Mgr. provide a report regarding where the first allotment of funding under the Community Preservation Act would be used for.”** In City Council, seconded by C. Nuon, referred to City Manager. So voted. C. Mercier noted that sometimes money must be spent to make money. C. Rourke requested list of possible projects. Manager Donoghue noted that there are elderly, income and commercial exemptions in the ordinance. C. Elliott noted that this is money that generates from the Registry of Deeds.



10.2. C. Rourke - Req. City Mgr. update Council regarding status of the Neighborhood Enhancement Enforcement Directive.

In City Council, seconded by C. Conway referred to City Manager. So voted. C. Rourke noted that several properties are in disrepair and owners are not being responsible and should be called to task. Manager Donoghue noted success of prior programs and that it should be reinstated.

10.3. C. Conway - Req. City Mgr. meet with DPW and other departments to explore the feasibility of using a “Chip - Disc” system (A-Tags) that is currently used in New York, Boston, Cambridge and other cities to identify companies that did work for trench repair and other projects.

In City Council, seconded by C. Chau, referred to City Manager. So voted. C. Conway noted the use of the system and its effectiveness in identifying companies.

10.4. C. Elliott - Req. City Mgr. have LPD provide a report regarding the number of response calls/missing persons reports from group homes throughout the City.

In City Council, seconded by C. Mercier, referred to City Manager. So voted. C. Elliott noted the issues persist and that there are a lot of resources being used at these homes.

10.5. C. Samaras - Req. City Mgr. develop traffic management plan and parking solutions for the opening of the new court house.

In City Council, seconded by C. Chau, referred to City Manager. So voted. C. Samaras requested report as to plan and also noted concern with drivers unfamiliar with the City.

10.6. C. Chau - Req. City Mgr. invite Lowell General Hospital to make a presentation to the Council regarding their plans for providing health care services to the citizens of Lowell for the next two years.

In City Council, seconded by C. Drinkwater, referred to City Manager. So voted. C. Chau noted the need for services in the City and also need to know where those services are being provided.

10.7. C. Chau - Req. City Mgr. provide a report regarding the feasibility of holding a South East Asian New Year event at the JFK Plaza in April.



In City Council, seconded by C. Nuon, referred to City Manager. So voted. C. Chau noted that many smaller ethnic groups search for locations regarding celebrations. C. Nuon commented on process for hosting events and their importance in reaching out to community.

10.8. C. Chau - Req. City Mgr. provide an update regarding the status of signage for the area designated as Cambodia Town.

In City Council, seconded by C. Elliott, referred to City Manager. So voted. C. Chau commented on the location and the need for the area to be identified. C. Elliott commented on aging signs on City property in that area. M. Leahy suggested older signs could be refurbished for this purpose.

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS

In City Council, C. Samaras made note of Senator Kennedy office hours in City Hall. Manager Donoghue commented on informational meeting concerning LHS construction. C. Nuon noted that Matt Nelson of the LTC is leaving his position and noted his past efforts.

12. ADJOURNMENT

In City Council, **Motion** to Adjourn C. Rourke, seconded by C. Mercier. So voted.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Michael Q. Geary, City Clerk