

MINUTES
**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS/
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING**
Meeting of Thursday, March 28, 2024 – 11 a.m.
Conference Room A, Gorham Municipal Center

Present: Councilor Phillip Gagnon – Chairman, and Councilors Lou Simms and Virginia Wilder Cross.

Also Present: Town Manager Ephrem Paraschak; Superintendent Heather Perry; Director of Community Development Thomas Poirier; Public Works Director Terry Deering; Recreation Director Cynthia Hazelton; Town Engineer Charles Norton and Executive Assistant Jessica Hughes.

1. Consideration of the minutes of the February 29, 2024 meeting.

A motion was MADE by Councilor Wilder Cross, SECONDED by Councilor Simms, and VOTED to accept the minutes of the February 29, 2024 meeting. Unanimous vote.

2. Current Business

A. Signage for Town properties

Recreation Director Cynthia Hazelton referred to a handout distributed at the meeting reflecting possible signage designs for the Preble Street Common.

Mrs. Hazelton recommended transitioning all Town signs to granite since it is more durable than wood or other signs.

The committee members agreed that a granite sign would be good. They asked staff to proceed with getting a quote for a couple of concepts.

A discussion ensued regarding the design with chains or rope between granite posts.

Mrs. Hazelton said that she would bring back quotes at the next meeting.

B. Provide a framework for the review and possible revisions to the Chick Master Plan and report back to the Town Council with a recommendation (referred on December 6, 2022).

Staff advised that materials are not ready for review at this meeting and they anticipate having them ready for the next meeting.

C. Review the Little Falls Master Plan, explore current and future capital improvements for the Little Falls Recreation Area and Little Falls Community Center, consult with community groups and stakeholders for input, and take into account grant funding for parking area light improvements, and how best to incorporate them into the site, and make recommendations for changes to the Town Council (referred on February 7, 2023).

Councilor Wilder Cross said we should keep in mind the value of the building whether we decide to rent it to a business or whether we keep it use it is our own property to rent out.

3. Items Referred for Future Meetings/Action

- A. Review and discuss staff recommendations on roadways for discontinuance and send back to the Town Council for action (referred on June 6, 2023).

Town Manager Ephrem Paraschak said that this will be an ongoing item. He said that we have to get legal opinion on how to determine the existence of some of these roadways, which will probably be time consuming.

- B. Work with staff to evaluate options for a site planning study of 80 Huston Road and bring back recommendations to the Town Council for review (referred August 1, 2023).

Public Works Director Terry Deering said that Sebago Technics is working on a wetland study and that staff are trying to weigh options. He said that moving forward, if we want to do an actual plan for that facility, Sebago Technics or whoever will put the plan together, it is going to need funding.

- C. Explore current and future economic development programs (referred on February 7, 2023).

The committee said that it would be better if the Economic Development Director Kevin Jensen were in attendance.

Councilor Gagnon asked if there was anything new regarding USM and its parking situation.

A discussion ensued regarding there being a new monthly rate of \$3 that allows the passholder to park as much as they want for three dollars.

Mrs. Hazelton said that as the Town's representative to USM parking committee, she said there are many different people on the committee. She said that USM has a three-year contract and that the university's goal is to make the transportation and parking portion of their budget self-sufficient. She said they have two parking garages and they are trying to balance the cost of Portland parking based on the entire university system.

Mrs. Hazelton added that the university has over 500 vendors for facilities maintenance and if they don't have license plates on record with the university, they will be issued a parking ticket.

Councilor Simms suggested having an informational event to help residents purchase annual parking permits.

A discussion ensued regarding the university's parking contract.

Mrs. Hazelton said that the university can control the "honk" app and they are searching for a new app and may likely use the "passport" app.

A discussion ensued regarding people already ticketed, and the use of parking lots at USM Gorham campus on weekends.

Councilor Simms said that free parking is expensive, and that surface parking produces no property tax revenues. He added that parking is a huge part of the challenge. He said we can do a better job at letting people know where public parking is.

Mr. Paraschak said that we have public parking everywhere and we need to make it safer with pedestrian improvements.

A discussion ensued regarding parking in the Village.

Councilor Wilder Cross said she was very happy that this item is on the agenda and she recommended not letting it fall away.

Regarding the turnpike spur, Councilor Gagnon asked how we are going to capture vacationers, attract people to Town to local businesses, and target economic development.

Councilor Gagnon asked if Mr. Jensen could attend the next meeting. He would like for Mr. Jensen to discuss:

- Resources he will need
- Business Exchange or event and the practical steps for a Business Exchange event
- Business networking
- 5-year plan with the turnpike spur
- Food truck Thursdays

Director of Community Development Tom Poirier said that Mr. Jensen will take the lead from the plan that the Town's Economic Development Steering Committee and the RFP provides. He said the Town has a RFP for wayfinding signs to which Mr. Paraschak said the Town has money in the budget for these signs.

Councilor Gagnon said he is interested in Mr. Jensen's thoughts.

Mr. Poirier said the Town identifies where they want to accomplish growth and what they want to do, then staff takes that plan and implements it, which is what happens under the Master Plan process.

Mr. Paraschak said one thing that hasn't been explored that we've talked about at the staff level is when the Turnpike is built, there will be a change in travel patterns, not just from commuters, but from tourism; it'll be quicker to go through that area to western regions on vacation, typically something that Mainers haven't seen in the past, and we haven't been able to capture because people go to the 302 corridor, then Gray and so on, so forth. He added that's going to be a different conversation that we'll be having as part of the plan and part of our planning process.

Superintendent Heather Perry said the School department has gone through a RFQ process and we've brought on board a consultant to work with them on the capital construction project applications for the department. She said they will be putting forward three applications, one for Village Elementary, one for Narragansett and one for the high school. She said there's going to be a lot of work that's going to be done between now and August 30, 2024. She further said

that she is working on a more in-depth demographic study for enrollment studies so that we can include that as part of our application process.

D. Business Exchange

Councilor Wilder Cross shared that the Business Exchange was held in the late winter/early spring so folks who are suffering with cabin fever could get out on a Saturday and see people again and get a bite to eat, see what they could buy, which was also a chance for businesses to share new products or services.

Councilor Gagnon said he would support exploring a March marketplace event again and that it should fall under the purview of Economic Development Director Kevin Jensen.

Councilor Wilder Cross said it should involve Mrs. Hazelton, too.

Councilor Simms said to make sure to reach out to local businesses to maximize engagement. He added that the event would help improve the Town's relationship with USM. He asked if there were any spaces where an event could be held to which Mrs. Hazelton said the Gorham Sports Complex.

Councilor Gagnon said that Council Chairperson Phillips could invite USM to come to a Town Council meeting. He said that he would reach out to Council Chairperson Phillips to start the discussion.

D. Other Business

No items were discussed.

E. Schedule next meeting and discuss agenda items for next meeting.

The next regular meeting will take place on April 25, 2024 at 11am. The items for discussion on the agenda will be as follows:

- A. Signage for Town properties
- B. Provide a framework for the review and possible revisions to the Chick Master Plan and report back to the Town Council with a recommendation (referred on December 6, 2022).
- C. Explore current and future economic development programs (referred on February 7, 2023).
- D. Business Exchange

4. Adjourn.

There being no further business, a motion was MADE by Councilor Wilder Cross and SECONDED by Councilor Simms and VOTED to adjourn. Time of adjournment: 11:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Hughes, Executive Assistant