

City Council Workshop
July 27, 2015
6:30 P.M.
City Council Chambers

Councilors Present

Linda Cohen, Mayor
Brad Fox
Thomas Blake
Patricia Smith
Maxine Beecher

Councilors Absent

Melissa Linscott
Claude Morgan

Staff Present

Jim Gailey, City Manager

MINUTES

Mayor Cohen opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance. She reminded folks that members of the public are invited to comment on each item as it comes before the Council for a period of no more than two (2) minutes. All questions or concerns would be made through the Chair and if they wished to address the City Council they would be asked to please raise their hand and upon being recognized would state their name and address for the records.

- 1. Open Space Discussion – Continued**
- 2. Proposed Charter Amendments**
- 3. School Board Resignation – Discussion**

1.Open Space Discussion – Continued: Jim Gailey, City Manager explained that this item was brought forward for further discussion City-owned Open Space, in particularly the development of next steps. This topic was discussed at the July 13, 2015 workshop. I have included the material from that workshop. At the workshop the City Council felt that a committee should be established to work through the extensive list of city owned open space parcels. The Committee would be tasked with review of each parcel and making a recommendation on whether the City should preserve the open space in perpetuity. The Council also discussed what preservation methods are available to preserve the parcels. Possible tasks by the Committee:

- Review each parcel and provide a recommendation of whether to:
 - Preserve
 - Reserve
 - Release
- Review and recommend method of preservation
 - Conservation Easement(s)
 - Deed Restriction

Open Space Zoning District
Other

Public Comment Opened:

Adam Lansend South Portland discussed possibly prioritizing parcels.

Russell Lunt Brigham Street felt that it was great that South Portland owned all of this land.

Thea Smaes 47 Everett Street agreed and was thankful that this is being worked on.

Alex Taylor 63 Willard Street has an interest in being part of the committee and added that her grandfather Hinckley had done wonderful work within the city. She further discussed the possible creation of a dog park in the future rather than just the beach.

Cindy Chrome 33 Myrtle Ave./Land Trust was also interested in helping to work on this project and was thankful on the choice of helping to protect these open space parcels. She asked about 3rd party easements.

Public Comment Closed:

Councilor Smith felt that this would be an appropriate task for the Conservation Commission to help work on this as it is part of their mission along with the Land Trust and citizens as well. She discussed the Open Space Committee that began in 2001 and items that they had included back then:

1. Long term strategy
2. Look at yearly to review
3. Volunteering of people

She agreed that this was great work done by the City Manager and added that neighborhood groups may become involved and further discussed an Open Space Zone as she liked this idea as well. She added that there is a need to protect and preserve the city but discussed the adoption of language different from this such as “enhance, facilitate and encourage”.

Councilor Beecher agreed that this is all important and agreed with having the Conservation Commission look at this task as that is what they do along with consulting with the Land Trust. She felt that holding a public forum once it goes through the commission with a charter of what to do moving ahead.

Jim Gailey explained that there are no private offers for land right now and would not be until this process was completed except for the Armory, and Public Works (current facility).

Councilor Blake agreed with Councilor Smith on working with public and private groups on this project. He further discussed the 2001 Open Space plan and felt that this could be used along with a new one that will be created today. He felt that there is a huge issue here today and wanted to see this work years ago when it started but it did not for very long. He further discussed private and public groups working on a philosophy and involving all aspects within the goals of the group. He further discussed the goals of the Conservation Commission, wetlands and the work load that they currently have as well as taking on anything new.

Councilor Fox thanked Councilors Smith and Blake for asking this item to be looked into and getting it rolled out. He liked the dog idea and agreed to support a plan to be worked on.

Mayor Cohen felt that she did not want to form yet another committee but felt in this case it would be needed. She further discussed other groups that were in existence already and added that the Conservation Commission would be one to meet and look at other groups to become involved with this. She further discussed larger public meetings and holding them district wide as well.

Councilor Smith liked the idea of including the whole district and felt that this type of project will require time and money to have it done well and added that maybe adding consultants might be the way to go . She further discussed Land Bank funds as well.

Councilor Blake agreed with the ideas of the Conservation Commission along with the Land Trust but not having the Conservation Commission doing it all alone. It may not be all what we would like to see but having it more community based, all encompassed would work better with this. Mayor Cohen suggested that this come back again for discussion, to look at the budget as well as other groups and then come back to workshop in August if possible.

2. Charter Amendments: Susan Mooney, City Clerk explained that this item is brought forward for discussion on whether the Council would like to consider moving two Charter amendments forward for the November 3, 2015 General Election. The first amendment would eliminate district representation requirements for the Board of Assessment Review and the Civil Service Commission. The second amendment would change Election Wardens and Ward Clerks from elected to appointed positions. Both of these Charter amendments were brought to the voters last fall and both initiatives failed;

Board of Assessment Review / Civil Service Commission

Yes 4574

No 5804

Blanks 2086

Elections – Wardens and Ward Clerks

Yes 3844

No 6916

Blanks 1704

The position paper and proposed ordinance amendments from the Order setting the date of the public hearing from last year are attached. There was some speculation that the Charter amendments on the Warden and Ward Clerk appointments might not have passed because of the strike-out, “There shall be one, at least, voting place established in each of the 5 districts.” The intent of striking out that sentence was not to consolidate more polling places, but rather to have Charter language conform to the current Council approved consolidation of Districts Three and Four at the Community Center. I would not recommend consolidating any other locations because I do not believe there to be adequate parking at any of the polling locations to accommodate additional consolidations.

If the Council would like to have these amendments brought forward for consideration again this year, an Order to set the public hearing date should be scheduled for the August 3rd Council Meeting and the Public Hearing set for August 17th.

Public Comment Opened: No Comments

Councilor Fox felt that this was too soon to bring back to the voters and that time needed to pass to be able to educate the public on the issues.

Councilor Beecher felt that these were hard positions to get folks to run for and can sometimes be confusing to people. She asked about presenting this differently, she further discussed prep work to be done on this as well.

Councilor Smith felt that there was no need to put this back on the ballot now but rather educate the public on this first then look at bringing it back to the voters.

Councilor Blake agreed with his fellow Councilors and felt that the South Portland voters are pretty astute in knowing how they vote. He did not feel that this was too critical of an issue and that we can make this work, finding the people to run this and how to do it. He asked about folks from the Rotary, the League of Women Voters and having them help with a search.

Councilor Smith agreed and wondered about this being an incentive for involving kids in our local government process and helping out.

Sue Mooney added that this is a complex position and becoming more of a larger job here but is only once a year which makes it more difficult to find folks. She added that South Portland still remains one of the few communities that still elect Wardens and Ward Clerks.

Mayor Cohen felt that this is an antiquated position that is elected and added that it would have been gone years ago if she had had better advice. She added that the City Clerk has reached out to groups for help on this and the positions have become more administrative in what needs to be done along with changes in the equipment. She felt that it should be put back on the ballot and have this taken care of along with educating people on all of this.

Councilor Blake appreciates the efforts but cannot agree with bringing this back to the voters but suggested increasing the pay scale for these positions and later re-visit the issue going back to the voters.

Sue Mooney discussed an increase in hourly wages and having this on the next meeting agenda.

3. School Board Resignation – Discussion: Mayor Cohen explained that James Gilboy, Board of Education member has submitted his resignation as of August 23, 2015. His term was due to expire on November 30, 2015 but due to his wife accepting a position within the School Department he will need to resign. The Council will need to discuss and decide on how to proceed with this position.

Public Comment Opened:

Russell Lunt Brigham Street felt that they should leave this vacant until the election.

Public Comment Closed:

Councilor Fox, Beecher and Smith all agreed to keep this vacant rather than bringing someone on at this late time.

Councilor Blake also agreed with keeping it vacant and asked about the process here.

Mayor Cohen agreed to keep it vacant as well.

The City Council Workshop Adjourned at 7:30 p.m.