



**TOWN COUNCIL
WORKSHOP
MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 13, 2011**

Mark Lunt, Chair District 1 2012
Lori Pomelow, Vice Chair At Large 2012
Roger Cote, At Large 2011
Michael Bowie, District 2 2012
Roger Bickford, District 2 2013
Fern Larochelle, Jr., At Large 2013
Gina Mason, District 1 2013

CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE TO THE FLAG. The Chairman, Mark Lunt, called the meeting to order and waived the pledge of allegiance to the flag **at 7:00 PM.**

ROLL CALL. Members present were Councilors Mason, Bowie, Larochelle, Cote, Lunt, Pomelow, and Bickford. Also present were Stephen Eldridge, Town Manager; Scott Benson, Economic & Community Development Director; Dorothy Fitzgerald, Budget Advisory Board Member; plus Lisa Ward, James Morreale, Richard Main, and Larry Fillmore in the audience.

OTHER BUSINESS

231 LISBON STREET DISCUSSION

The Council reviewed the tax and lien history for 3 Village Street and 231 Lisbon Street. Mr. Eldridge said that there will be no discharges done until paid in full. He said payments are always put towards the oldest tax bill first.

Councilor Cote said there are a lot of people who don't pay taxes. Councilor Bowie said the difference here is that his are in the lien process.

Councilor Pomelow asked about abatements and Mr. Eldridge said that abatements are only done for the current year.

Councilor Mason said I think if anyone is struggling then they would have made arrangements more quickly, that is what concerns me. Now, as a town we have to come up with \$27,500 to tear a building down that is in total disrepair. I feel bad for people in the economy, but do we have to absorb the cost.

Councilor Bickford said we could stipulate that by June 1 it has to look a little better. Mr. Eldridge said you can attach any stipulation to it. Councilor Mason said I wasn't at the last meeting, but I am curious why he didn't pay the tax and why he didn't set up an arrangement before now. Mr. Eldridge said he had set up an arrangement, but consistently was unable to meet that arrangement.

Councilor Mason asked how do we go about placing restrictions or stipulations regarding cleanup. Mr. Eldridge said Roger Therriault would have to type up a contract.

Councilor Bowie said I think we should ask for payment of all back taxes, including personal property, sewer, and real estate. We should ask that by mid-summer cleanup of the property including the perimeter, paint, or something be completed. He needs to clean up the exterior. I'd like to suggest that the March payment be made on time to show that we've learned our lesson.

Councilor Larochelle said it is not unreasonable to expect him to pay the money that is owed. He said that the property values on Village Street are judged by the houses at that intersection, which is the case with any road. He said many people in the past have spoken to him about taking care of Village Street to make it look better. Unfortunately, the Council has very few tools to make that happen, but it's not unreasonable to have him help with that.

Councilor Lunt said this can help make the area more attractive.

Councilor Bickford said if he stays he needs to come to us quickly if he is having any problems. Communication is the biggest thing.

Councilor Mason suggested a fence be erected to hide debris once the 3 Village Street building is torn down. Mr. Eldridge said technically the town owns the building right now and you are selling it back to him for taxes owed. You can attach any kind of stipulation to that property that you want.

Councilor Mason said other businesses in town have been asked to clean up their properties. A fence would help to neaten up the area so the area is more aesthetically pleasing.

Councilor Lunt said I think we are all in agreement that if he pays back the money he owes and meets the stipulations including the March payment being paid on time, then he can keep the property.

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATION

Mr. Eldridge said that Mr. Benson will walk you through the citizen's sessions held prior to Mr. Benson being hired. Mr. Eldridge pointed out that Lisbon has a study done in 2000 that looked at downtown and revitalization although it has changed considerably, a transportation study that was done by the University of Vermont, and 2 walkability studies that were done by Joan Walton, the transportation planner at AVCOG. All of these studies have been done during your administration, he said.

Mr. Benson said the Comprehensive Plan is your strategic plan for the community. We want to underline that we are not changing the Comprehensive Plan. The Council is setting goals for itself and for the community on an annual basis.

Mr. Benson said this Economic Development study from 2000 tells you to start a Main Street program. We will keep this study in mind, it does age, but it is a little different from the Comprehensive Plan.

In 2008-09, goals were created from visioning sessions to give to Council. The first category is Public Safety, Municipal Services, and Infrastructure. The first goal was to improve municipal services which included electronic payment, office hours, spring cleanups, etc.

Mr. Eldridge said Some of the suggestions have costs associated with them, such as roadside pickup and spring cleanup. Maybe down the road we could look at that, but not now. Costs weren't talked about during the visioning sessions.

Councilor Mason said these visioning session ideas came from the community, not the Council. She said that costs were not addressed.

Mr. Eldridge mentioned that some communities have a spring cleanup day where citizens bring their large items such as a sofa or refrigerator to the transfer station. Councilor Larochelle and Councilor Bickford discussed the cost of a cleanup day.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Dorothy Fitzgerald said the town could try an electronics drop-off day where a company pays the town to collect these items.

Mr. Benson said the second goal was to improve infrastructure. The first objective under this goal was to improve the MTM Center. The second objective was to improve the walking trail, and then to investigate parking accessibility and signage. Signage is often the cheapest and easiest way to start a revitalization effort. We have not yet done that, but we will soon. Looking at parking does not mean

expansion, but quantifying what exists. Another objective concerned development of roads, water, sewer, power, and without these it is difficult to develop property. The last objectives included utilizing Capital Avenue as an entrance to the high school, improving downtown aesthetics, and other considerations.

Mr. Benson said the next area under the heading of Economic and Community Development addressed goals including improving the rail service, to continue Smart Growth Development, establish the creative economy, and revitalize the Route 9 corridor.

Mr. Benson said our Route 9 corridor is one of the best things about Lisbon. Other goals were to expand river utilization, redevelop the Campus Avenue building, develop the Worumbo Mill, to utilize the river, improve promotion of public transportation, explore green energy options, and create a marketing and advertising campaign. He said we absolutely need to do this and we can start by crystallizing our story. Also, it suggested we improve the image of Lisbon, maintain and improve beautification efforts, downtown revitalization, and improve working relationships with all town entities. Mr. Benson said we have really good working relationships in the town office and outside.

Mr. Benson said under Parks and Recreation, goals included camping in Beaver Park and expansion of activities within the park. Also, suggestions indicated Lisbon should create a destination arts park, which is beginning to happen at the MTM pavilion.

Mr. Benson said under the heading of Agriculture/Housing/Land Use suggested goals include creating more elderly housing, a farmer's market, investigating agricultural opportunities, and a growth management plan. He said people are looking for local food. The land here offers us the opportunity to reinvent ourselves.

Mr. Benson said under Education and Culture, goals included improving school and community involvement, creating a larger library facility, create a downtown historical district, investigate grant possibilities for the Moxie building, along with working with the Historical Society on digital preservation and adding buildings to the historical register.

Mr. Benson said how do we take these ideas and create an action plan to bring them into reality. We won the community planning grant from the CDGB program in 2009. However, we didn't get to that as quickly as we wanted. This document we generated for \$10,000 can be used to build that momentum to get us rolling with an action plan. Lisbon should not expect that the \$10,000 would have bought us a master plan, but this document can contribute to the community in a positive way. The idea here was to summarize the things our residents and businesses wanted and to match them with the resources needed in order to move them forward into actual improvements and programs. Section 1 introduces that visioning process and what came out of it. It then adds cautionary notes on what can happen if you don't plan growth.

Mr. Benson said what is being proposed in this report can be applied to any area of the community that you decide to apply it to. The key is that the desire on your part will be met by those businesses and residents. We are there to create partnerships. If the Village wants and the Village does for itself and applies some of these tools and practices, then the Village will see results. Mr. Benson said this document is not intended to apply only to Lisbon Falls. Lisbon Falls can be used as an example to show how to move forward.

Section 2 introduces organization, design, promotion, that continues to resonate in this community. If the people do not respond, then there is little we will be able to do. He said if we can create a structure and move forward, then we have a road map to do it. If our enthusiasm is met by theirs, then we will be successful.

Councilor Larochelle said much of our success will depend on volunteers. He said in the past the Economic Development person has been criticized for getting involved with things like the Thanksgiving Dinner, but really the only way to make this happen is for the community to get involved. We have some of these tools, but the volunteers make it happen. Mr. Benson agreed. He said business owners are focused on their businesses, but they also have to have the passion to work together.

Mr. Benson encouraged the Councilors to use this document to focus on ideas. He said the consultants summarized a short list of significant projects: Worumbo Mill, Campus Avenue development combined with the MTM Center, Main Street, and pedestrian linkages with the trail system.

Mr. Benson said the final section offers future considerations, such as parking, sidewalks, etc. He said great progress was made in 2009 with the Main Street Network program. He said the accolades were great but real progress has been minimal. Lisbon has only one volunteer, Ross Cunningham, who is still involved. He said the Moxie Festival was a good Main Street program. All the things that go into that program are in the Moxie Festival, but it is only focused on 3 days. Mr. Benson said he is a big believer in the Moxie Festival and is reluctant to take people away from that festival to work on the Main Street efforts.

Councilor Cote said people are enthused about the MTM Center and will support their programs.

Mr. Eldridge said that the Main Street program's success has to come from the business community. The business community has to be an active participant for the program to work.

Councilor Cote said that the Village is not interested in what happens in the Falls and won't get involved. Mr. Benson said the Village needs to lead the way, but the conversations that he has had with residents there have not led to sustained contacts.

Councilor Mason said we can't put businesses in the Village if they don't want to be there, but we can help get the area cleaned up like we are doing with this property tonight. There have been many businesses looking at Graziano's and if the area is more aesthetically pleasing that will help the draw to that area.

Mr. Eldridge said people who drive through Lisbon want to know what is going on; they can see something is happening here. Mr. Benson said you do have some leverage here. Whoever buys the Worumbo Mill will come to the Planning Board. That is the system that we've set up to positively influence what we want to see in the community. The same goes for Graziano's when it sells.

Councilor Cote said we need to look at the dams. The trail would look very different without water if the dam was ever taken out.

Councilor Mason said aesthetics will always draw people. A beautiful landscape will always draw people. If you don't have neat, clean businesses and sidewalks, people don't want to come. I wish every business in town could be like Bonneau's. They have flowers outside and they have taken the time to present their business the best they can.

Councilor Bickford said Lisbon has something that Lisbon Falls does not and that is Dragon Cement, which will be a big draw in a few years.

Councilor Larochelle said he saw the Wright Pierce drawings of the entrance to this new development, which is overwhelming. People will see that and want to have their business there. The grand entrance is going to be substantial. Businesses will ask to be a part of this development when they see the entranceway. Mr. Eldridge said we have many nice businesses invested in the community in the Lisbon area.

Mr. Benson said realistically the Village is "tired". We all recognize that. I think it is important to send the message that this is your government to direct as you desire.

Councilor Cote said he remembered all the businesses that used to be in the Village when he was a child. It used to be a tight community. There used to be street dances held there and all kinds of things going on.

Councilor Mason said that was the product of what the people made it; if the people aren't willing to make that again, who is going to do it? It is amazing what hanging an American flag on your building, putting a pot of flowers outside the door, and a nice sign out front will do for your business.

Councilor Larochelle said if we end up with 300 people working in that new park, then you have 300 people that need to go out to eat lunch and if you are close to that downtown area and there is a really good place to eat, then you are going to go there. There is potential here to rebuild that part of our community. People in that area should be embracing what he is doing there.

Councilor Cote said people used to work in-town at the mill so they traveled to work at the mill and back home, staying within the community, but now 90% of us leave town to go to work early in the morning and don't return until supper, so it's hard to get support for businesses when people leave for the day and on weekends, too.

Mr. Benson said that's true. We looked at that data and it said we have roughly 4,400 employees out of all of our residents and only 1,800 jobs here so that is why the value of projects like this park is so important to Lisbon, because it brings more people into the community. The tax base in this town is heavily residential and I don't believe we will find many folks in town who will want that condition to persist.

Councilor Larochelle said it is important to direct TIF's so that they benefit us. These TIFs are not just a tax incentive for that person/business, but it is an opportunity for us to take these funds and invest them back into our community. We are located in a nice central spot, 15 minutes from Brunswick, 15 minutes from Lewiston, and a half hour north and south from Portland and Augusta, but if you drive around to check out our neighborhoods, schools, and what not, they have to be inviting for someone to want to relocate here too. The idea of hanging flower pots on Village Street, to someone driving by, gives the look of a community that wants to prosper.

Mr. Benson said I am a hometown guy, brought up down the street, and I have been in a lot of other places in Maine, but I have to say that we have a lot going for us here in Lisbon that translates right down into the business community and the many great institutions.

Mr. Benson said when I first decided to interview here in Lisbon I rode around and noticed that we have no shovel ready projects here to be developed. If something big was to happen, and why couldn't it happen because we have a workforce close by in Lewiston, Auburn, Bath, Brunswick, and our own area in Lisbon to draw from. There is no bigger project that would make a bigger impact than creating some shovel ready developable land. We are blessed to have such good people, like Steve and Scott Kelly who are trying to do all this good stuff.

Councilor Cote said he and his wife went into Chummy's for breakfast on Saturday and on Sunday went down to Boots and Buckles. He said, I am going to tell you what, breakfast was much better here at Chummy's. The atmosphere was nice and we really enjoyed it.

Councilor Mason said that's what it is all about, patronizing our own local businesses.

ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 8:45 PM.

Twila D. Lycette, Council Secretary
Town Clerk, Lifetime CCM/MMC

Date Approved: _____

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