

**City Council Special Meeting
August 16, 2022
Council Chambers
6:00 PM**

COUNCILORS PRESENT

Councilor Beaudoin
Councilor Berlin
Councilor de Geofroy
Councilor Desrochers
Councilor Gilman
Councilor Gray
Councilor Hainey
Councilor Hamann
Councilor Larochelle
Councilor Malone
Deputy Mayor Lachapelle
Mayor Callaghan

OTHERS PRESENT

Blaine Cox, City Manager
Katie Ambrose, Deputy City Manager

COUNCILORS EXCUSED

Councilor Fontneau

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Callaghan called the Special Meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Deputy City Clerk Cassie Givara took a silent roll call attendance. All Councilors were present except for Councilor Fontneau, who was excused.

Mayor Callaghan asked all present to stand and had Councilor Beaudoin lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Resolution to Authorize the City Manager to Enter into an Agreement with the City of Dover and the City of Somersworth to Operate an Emergency Cold Weather Warming Center at 30 Willand Drive in Somersworth from November 2022 through March 2023, to include an Agreement with a Third-Party Organization to Provide Services at the Warming Center first reading and consideration for adoption

Mayor Callaghan read the above resolution. Councilor Lachapelle **MOVED** to **ADOPT**. Councilor Hamann seconded the motion. Mayor Callaghan read a statement in support of the resolution and encouraged Council to vote in favor, as the Councils of both Somersworth and Dover had already done. Mayor Callaghan explained that that when the shelter at 30 Willand Drive in Somersworth was purchased by the City of Dover using federal funding, the intention was always that it would be a stopgap measure for extreme weather sheltering as opposed to a permanent shelter. The property is zoned commercial/industrial, would not pass code for residential use, and could expose the City of Dover to liability if run seasonally. Mayor Callaghan explained that this proposal has been a collaborative effort between the Tri-City's Mayors, City Managers, and County commissioners. He invited Mayor Dana Hilliard of Somersworth, Mayor Bob Carrier of Dover, and County Commissioner George Maglaras to address the Council.

George Maglaras, Chairman of the Strafford County Board of Commissioners, briefly explained the proposal coming before Council and asked Mayor Hilliard to speak about the Willand facility and the potential future plans.

Mayor Hilliard of Somersworth explained that, prior to the establishment of the Willand Warming Center; the Cities relied primarily on faith-based organizations to assist in sheltering and care during extreme cold weather. However, during COVID, due to safety and health restrictions along with lack of volunteers, these organizations were not able to assist to the extent they had in the past. Mayor Hilliard spoke of the Tri-City Task Force on Homelessness, through which the Master Plan for Homelessness was created and adopted by all three City Councils. A primary goal of the Master Plan was the creation of a seasonal warming center. The City of Dover was able to leverage available federal funding during COVID to purchase the Willand property in Somersworth, which was operated as a collaborative effort between the Tri-Cities. Mayor Hilliard spoke of the success experienced during the first year of operations as a seasonal shelter, and the drawbacks of the second winter of operations when the scope was changed to a full-time shelter, which was outside the original spirit of the agreement. This put significant stressors on the City of Somersworth and their first responders. Mayor Hilliard emphasized the need for more long-term solutions.

Mayor Hilliard outlined the three-part plan being proposed: The first part would be constructing a state of the art nursing home facility in Stafford County. The second portion would be repurposing the original assisted-living facility into a transitional homeless shelter offering shelter and wrap-around services. The final portion of the plan, as approved in the Master Plan for Homelessness, is

actively reviewing the Cities' zoning and planning ordinances and encouraging the development of workforce and affordable housing. Mayor Hilliard emphasized that each part of the plan is integral and the proposal will not be successful without all three.

Mayor Carrier spoke about the importance of the Tri-Cities working together with the County to bring the plan to fruition to avoid having to start back at square one, with reliance on faith-based and social service organizations. Following the difficulty that had been experienced by the city of Somersworth after the expansion and extending of services at the Willand facility, the Mayors approached Somersworth to request a return Willand to the extreme weather shelter format for one year while a new homeless shelter is being constructed. Mayor Hilliard reported that the Somersworth City Council committed to operating the use of this extreme weather facility for several years, if needed, acknowledging that a more permanent solution would not be a fast process and that single winter season would likely not be adequate.

Mayor Carrier spoke about the Tri-Cities of the past where boarding houses and rooms for weekly rental were commonplace. He acknowledged the changing laws and regulations, which make operations like this less plausible, but emphasized the need for similar low-income options for those who cannot afford the average rental prices in today's economy.

Commissioner Maglaras addressed Council regarding the aging population of Strafford County and the future needs for this population. He outlined the proposal to come before the Strafford County Delegation in the near future and gave details of the project.

Councilor Hainey referenced a portion of the Willand agreement that states that the facility will be open at the direction of the Tri-City Emergency Management Directors when extreme winter weather is predicted. She asked if "extreme weather" has been defined and if there are specific triggers that would predicate the opening of the shelter. City Manager Cox stated that this criteria is currently being worked on and will be put into the agreement. Councilor Malone spoke about the problems encountered during the first season running the Willand warming center with the facility with lack of committed volunteers and the center not always being open during storms or low temperatures when it would have been expected. She spoke about the potential that defining these triggers within the agreement may help bypass some of these issues and emphasized the importance of such warming centers in reducing mortality of the homeless population.

Councilor Desrochers referenced Commissioner Maglaras' statements about the respect and dignity that needed to be offered to the aging population after a lifetime of contributing to the community. She reminded those listening that the same respect and humanity needed to be afforded to the homeless and those which substance misuse issues, whose lives are equally worthwhile.

The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous roll call vote with Councilors Hainey, Gray, Malone, Gilman, Laroche, de Geofroy, Desrochers, Berlin, Beaudoin, Hamann, Lachapelle, and Mayor Callaghan all voting in favor.

3. Adjournment

Mayor Callaghan **ADJOURNED** the City Council Special Meeting at 6:35 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara
Deputy City Clerk