

**City Council Workshop  
October 19, 2021  
Council Chambers  
6:51 PM**

**COUNCILORS PRESENT**

Councilor Abbott  
Councilor Bogan  
Councilor Fitzpatrick  
Councilor Hainey  
Councilor Hamann  
Councilor Hunt-Hawkins  
Councilor Hutchinson  
Councilor Jean  
Councilor Lachapelle  
Councilor Rice  
Councilor Walker  
Mayor Lauterborn

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Blaine Cox, City Manager  
Katie Ambrose, Deputy City Manager  
Terence O'Rourke, City Attorney  
Steve Beaudoin, resident  
Tom Kaczynski, resident  
Sandra Keans, resident  
Tim Jones, Frisbee CEO  
Harvey Bernier, former mayor  
Paul Toussaint, Police Chief  
Tim Wilder, Assistant Fire Chief  
Perry Plummer, Interim Fire Chief  
Julian Long, Economic Development  
Chris Miller, Easter Seals

**COUNCILORS ABSENT/EXCUSED**

Councilor Gray (arrived at 8:59 PM)

**Minutes**

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Lauterborn called the workshop meeting to order at 6:51 PM. Deputy City Clerk Cassie Givara had taken a silent roll call prior to the Special Meeting immediately preceding the workshop. All Councilors were present except for Councilor Gray, who was absent. (Councilor Gray arrived at 8:59 PM).

**2. Public Input**

Steve Beaudoin, resident, addressed the Council in regards to his right-to-know request regarding 79-E applications. He also spoke regarding the unsealing of minutes of non-public meetings regarding land purchase.

Tom Kaczynski, resident, spoke about the disbursement of homeless encampments and questioned who holds the financial responsibility for these homeless residents.

Sandy Keans, resident, asked for more details on the proposed 79-E application on the public hearing agenda.

Tim Jones, CEO of Frisbie, introduced himself and gave an overview of his first 100 days at the helm as well as outlining his goals for the future. Councilor Fitzpatrick asked Mr. Jones if there were any plans for the patients who had been discharged from Frisbie's practices without notice after multiple primary care physicians simultaneously resigned. Mr. Jones apologized and acknowledged that the situation could have been managed better. He reported that they are currently now scheduling previously existing patients back into these practices and they do plan to perform an outreach to inform these patients.

### **3. Communications from the City Manager**

City Manager Cox reported that the Arena ice surface floor repairs have been completed and the Arena opened for business the prior Thursday. Mr. Cox praised the Arena staff for their quick work in addressing and fixing the issue in order to return to operations.

City Manager Cox referenced a letter of recognition from Interim Fire Chief Perry Plummer praising C Shift for their efforts and initiative in cleaning and repainting the tool room.

Mr. Cox referenced a profile that had been done in the Journal of the New England Water Works Association on the Rochester Water Department and encouraged Council to read the story.

Councilor Lachapelle inquired how much the ice arena repair had cost. City Manager Cox stated that he did not have the exact figure, but would pass the information on to Council when it becomes available. Mr. Cox also stated that the City had not heard back regarding whether or not the repair will be covered by insurance.

#### **3.1 Adopt-a-Spot certificates**

Mayor Lauterborn read the list of Adopt-a-Spot volunteers and their service areas and City Manager Cox presented the certificates to those who attended.

#### **4. Communications from the Mayor**

##### **4.1 Presentation of Honorary Gavel – former Mayor Harvey Bernier**

Deputy Mayor Walker presented an honorary gavel to former Mayor Harvey Bernier. Former Mayor Bernier addressed the Council and thanked them for the work they do as well as thanking the constituents who attend the meetings and speak at public input.

##### **4.2 Proclamation: World Polio Day, October 25, 2021**

Mayor Lauterborn read the proclamation from the Rotary Club announcing that World Polio Day in October 25, 2021.

#### **5. Discussion: Community Health Coordinator position**

City Manager Cox gave some background on the item. He stated that at the previous Finance Committee meeting, he had given his recommendations on use of the ARPA funding. One of the projects he had suggested including was this Community Health Coordinator position, which would be allocated \$916,000 over the course of a 5-year period.

Deputy City Manager Ambrose presented the proposal for the Community Health Coordinator position and how City Staff envisioned it would work and be structured and funded.

Kimberly Conley, Director of Human Resources, presented data on a similar program in the town of Plymouth, NH and detailed the case study showing the benefits and effects of having this type of program in place.

Councilor Rice stated that he supported this program and thought it would be beneficial to the City of Rochester; however, he inquired if the public had been invited to share feedback on the use of the ARPA funds. He suggested that there should be a public hearing or forum to allow the public to weigh-in on how this funding should be allocated. He asked the City Manager to look into this suggestion. Councilor Rice asked if the Similar program in Plymouth which had been presented was a County program and asked if the data presented took into consideration the amount of people served. Ms. Conley answered that the program was a County initiative, but

stated that the data is driven by the amount of individuals working within the program. Councilor Rice expressed concern that people from other communities would enter Rochester and trigger a police call, which would be handled through this program before the individual returns to their City of origin. He stated that this should be a regional effort as opposed to Rochester carrying the financial burden for caring for residents from other communities.

Deputy City Manager Ambrose stated that the data displayed was used to present a success story; however, it was not an apples to apples comparison and Rochester would be developing their own program based on their needs and circumstances. Director Conley clarified that this program is geared towards individuals whom the police department is being called to frequently; an isolated incident from a non-resident would not trigger a call out from this position. City Manager Cox stated that regardless of their City of origin, if an individual is in crisis in Rochester, the call will be handled by the Rochester police department. He requested that Police Chief Toussaint speak regarding the matter.

Chief Toussaint said that the way the police department is currently responding to these crises' is not working. He reiterated that the police are not the agency best suited to deal with mental health or substance misuse crises; however, in the current system they are the agency that is always contacted for service. He gave background on these issues and their coexisting conditions, which may cause repeat police call outs. Chief Toussaint stated that these individuals are not being jailed for the issues that the police are called out for; most often, they are being released shortly thereafter and the recidivism rate is high. However, each contact takes a police officer off the street for a great deal of time. It is a drain on police resources, and it is ultimately not solving the issue when there are multiple agencies available who could better serve this population. He said that the proposed position would be a point of contact for these individuals to help them navigate the available resources and assist them in getting the help they need.

Chief Toussaint addressed the concern regarding the position only being funded for 5 years. He said that the person hired would know the position was grant-funded and would have those 5 years to prove the need for the position and the success of the program. He emphasized that even if the position is not a success, the process that is occurring now is not working and there needs to be steps taken to make improvements.

Councilor Walker expressed support for the position and said it was definitely needed; however he said he did not agree with using grant funds with defined expirations to fund a position. He said he would support putting

the position in the next fiscal year budget. Councilor Walker said that if it was funded with a grant, when the grant funds run out the position's salary would affect the tax cap for that fiscal year when the City needs to fund it themselves.

Councilor Hainey asked if the proposed position would need to be filled by a social worker or if they had determined the prerequisites for application. Director Conley said that the decision had been made that the person filling the position would not need a degree in social work because they would have City welfare and social workers as a resource, and having such a requirement may preclude some people with relevant qualifications from being able to apply.

Councilor Hainey asked if the person filling this position would go out on calls with police officers. Ms. Conley said that on a case-by-case basis, a plain clothed police officer might go out on calls with the health coordinator for safety or support. Councilor Hunt-Hawkins spoke in support of the position and spoke of her own experiences with this vulnerable population and the need for this type of resource to offer follow up and ongoing support.

Councilor Hutchinson asked if this proposed program was similar to LEAD (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion) and if it would attempt pre-booking diversion for police calls. Chief Toussaint said that this is not a diversion program and that if charges are warranted when the police are called out for these individuals; the charges will still be filed. However, in some circumstances even if there are charges brought forward, the resource can still be offered to get the individual needed assistance.

City Manager Cox stated that they envision the Community Health Coordinator position being embedded in the welfare department and he invited Welfare Director Todd Marsh to come forward and speak. Director Marsh clarified that the welfare department had not initiated the development of this position, but rather was contacted to give input and to assist in making the position successful. He spoke about how he envisioned the position working and how it would work in coordination with the welfare department's existing resources.

Councilor Rice asked Chief Toussaint if the town of Plymouth, which had been the subject of the case study presented, had noticed a decrease in crime rates upon initiation of this program. Ms. Conley stated that the data was not focused on the affect this program had on crime rates; however, they have reported an apparent reduction in particular types of crime. Chief Toussaint elaborated on the types of calls which would benefit from this position and the dangers involved in police responding to these repeated

calls.

Councilor Hutchinson asked what immediate services this position could provide to individuals if the position was not filled by a social worker. Chief Toussaint outlined the support services to which the police department currently refers. He said that the drawback is that these organizations have regular daytime business hours, whereas this position would be able to operate and start assistance outside of these limited hours.

Councilor Walker expressed concern that if those applying for the Health Coordinator position knew there was an end-date for funding the position, they may not receive the best candidates for the job. He reiterated that it would work better as a budget-funded position. Chief Toussaint stated that there are many people working in grant-funded positions and, in fact, they often work harder to provide the data to justify that their position is necessary. The Chief also emphasized that the City is not obligated to fund the position once the grant runs out. If they determine the position was not successful or worthwhile, they can choose to end it.

Councilor Fitzpatrick expressed his support for the position and the need for action in helping these individuals in ways the police department is not able. He stated his support regardless of how it was funded.

City Manager Cox urged Council separate the funding issue from the program. He said that if the Councilor supports the creation of the Community Health Coordinator position and opts to move forward, the City can handle finding the funding.

Councilor Walker suggested funding the position with ARPA funds through the next budget cycle at which point the salary can be added as a budget item for Council to vote on. Councilor Rice speculated on the possibility of a new Council opting not to fund the position through the budget and the ramifications of that potential decision if the position is funded temporarily with ARPA funds.

Mayor Lauterborn requested that Council continue to review the options and the discussion will be brought back at the Regular City Council meeting in November for a final decision.

## **6. Discussion: Redistricting**

Councilor Walker gave a brief overview of the proposed changes. He said that there had been adjustments to some wards, but the population of

each ward is balanced and within 1% of each other ward. He stated that there is a census block which passes directly through a neighborhood, which does not make a good boundary line; so to make it balance there would take a lot of reworking and it would cause a difference of over 3% population difference per ward.

Mayor Lauterborn asked what the next steps in the process would be. Councilor Walker stated that after the public hearing this evening, the Council would vote for the boundary line changes at the November Regular meeting. Upon approval by Council, it will be submitted to the State, who have requested the decision by November 20, 2021.

Councilor Rice clarified that due to the timeline of the Election taking place prior to the redistricting, if a Councilor were displaced into a different ward upon the change taking effect that they would carry out the entirety of their term upon election. The new districts will take effect in 2023 for councilors in that situation.

## **7. Presentation: Ambulance Service Committee**

Councilor Walker said that the previous Mayor had formed an ad hoc committee to determine what the options would be if Frisbie discontinued their ambulance service contract with the City. The Committee reviewed the current contract as well as putting together a study of staffing, equipment and costs of what a City-funded ambulance service would entail.

Councilor Walker stated that the current contract with Frisbie offers comprehensive, high-end services which includes trained paramedics who travel to calls with each ambulance. Councilor Walker invited Assistant Chief Wilder to present the city-funded ambulance service option.

Assistant Chief Wilder introduced interim Fire Chief Perry Plummer, who introduced himself to Council and said he would be available for the next several months in the interim position.

Assistant Chief Wilder gave an overview of the current staffing configuration and schedule between the two Rochester Fire stations. He also outlined the current Frisbie staffing and schedule. He then presented a proposal for City-funded ambulance service and how the staffing would be configured and split between the two stations. This proposal would require an additional 4 personnel per shift. Assistant Chief Wilder explained that it is not possible to do an apples to apples comparison due to the different services providers, scheduling, and criteria. However, he gave a detailed overview of

the cost of each and the potential cost savings of establishing a city-funded ambulance service which receives revenue from paramedic intercepts. He gave a budget overview of all the items and services which would be included. He additionally gave a cost analysis of the difference between the program with new ambulances and equipment versus used equipment. Assistant Chief Wilder details the billing models which may be utilized as well as statistics on fire-based EMS from several other local communities.

Councilor Abbott asked if there would be enough storage capacity to house the equipment, personnel, and vehicles. Assistant Chief Wilder confirmed there was space available and this would not be an issue. Councilor Abbott asked what the average service life would be for an ambulance. Assistant Chief Wilder stated that the average life is 7 – 10 years.

Councilor Abbott asked for more information on billing and percentage of money which remains uncollected for ambulance service. Chief Plummer estimated that the collection rate is in the 75% range and gave an overview of the way billing is handled and that his data was already figured into the model presented.

Councilor Bogan asked how many communities in NH had full time fire departments without ambulance service. Deputy Chief Wheeler responded that in NH, it is just Rochester, Manchester, Nashua, Somersworth, and Claremont without ambulance service.

Councilor Fitzpatrick inquired if the City would be hiring fire fighters for these ambulance positions. Assistant Chief Wilder responded that there would be cross-training taking place with the firefighters and firefighters would be able to run the ambulances, but to get the program up and running the City would hire eight paramedics. Councilor Fitzpatrick asked if the City had considered a model where the ambulances would be staffed entirely by part-time EMS and paramedics. Chief Plummer responded that there were other communities in the state who had tried this model; however, these communities were struggling to fill per diem schedules and maintain staffing. Chief Plummer detailed what would be involved with training and certifying these various positions and the potential options available for staffing.

City Manager Cox read from the current contract between the City and Frisbie which states that the contract expires December 31 2022, with the City having the ability to extend this contract for five additional one-year terms.

Councilor Rice speculated that with the conservative estimates given on



the expenditures that had been presented, it was possible that the cost to the City might actually be even less than outlined. He also said that having an ambulance in the Gonic area of the City would be a benefit and the call times would be reduced for accidents in the area by having that resource closer.

Councilor Walker clarified that the numbers indicated for paramedic intercepts are variable and not specifically defined because they would be determined by the contracts with neighboring communities for this service, which may or may not be enacted. He also said that overtime of firefighters being utilized for ambulance service would be an expense to take into consideration. He stated that the proposal is beneficial for the City so there is a blueprint in place in case Frisbie does ever decide to discontinue their service; however, he said the current contract with Frisbie is of excellent value to the City and more than sufficient.

Councilor Jean gave some background on why the contract with Frisbie was originally enacted. He suggested it might be beneficial to receive a similar presentation from Frisbie to allow them to detail the differences and variables between their service and the Rochester Fire Department's proposal. Chief Plummer stated that under Frisbie's current contract with the City, the firefighters work well in conjunction with the hospital and their EMTs the firefighters and the hospital staff have a good working relationship.

Councilor Lachapelle clarified that the information presented used current day's costs and pricing; but these costs may be different if the City decided to move forward with this plan a few years down the road.

The total timeline of 14-months until full implementation was discussed. Mayor Lauterborn asked what the next step would be at this time. Councilor Walker agreed with Councilor Jean that Frisbie should be able to present their proposal to Council as well. There is no urgency on a decision; the current contract and service with Frisbie is working well and Frisbie has expressed interest in maintaining the contract long-term. Councilor Rice suggested that Frisbie could address the Council in December. Councilor Hunt-Hawkins said it might make more sense to postpone any presentation until the new Council is seated in January. It was decided that the presentation from Frisbie could be scheduled after the new year.

## **8. Discussion: CDFA Easter Seals Grant Application**

Chris Miller, Easter Seals, addressed Council regarding the development of Champlin Place. He reported that this would be a 65-unit supportive housing facility for low-income seniors in the Rochester area. However they

are also seeking funding for the update and modernizing of the existing Champlin House. Mr. Miller gave a timeline on the meeting schedule and required approvals, which have occurred thus far starting in May 2021 and the parts of the process that still remain in order for construction to begin in April of 2022. Mr. Miller gave a detailed overview of the funding needed for this project and from which organizations and services this money has been obtained.

Mr. Miller said that the CDFA advised Easter Seal that they would need to establish a sponsorship with the City of Rochester and be approved for a CDBG application prior to the CDFA funding being approved. The funds would then come through the City by way of CDBG funding to be used for the Champlin Place project.

Councilor Walker stated that CDFA seemed to want the City of Rochester to manage the allocation of these funds and have oversight of the grant. This allocation would not affect in any way the CDBG funding the City normally receives. Mr. Miller agreed and said the City CDBG funds would not be impacted

Mayor Lauterborn said that there would be a first reading and referral to public hearing at the November 3 City Council meeting followed by the second reading and adoption at the November 16 Special meeting. Julian Long, Grants Manager, stated that he would be in touch with Council regarding the timeline and necessary documentation.

## **9. Department Reports**

No discussion.

## **10. Other**

Mayor Lauterborn reminded Council that the December Regular meeting would take place on the first Wednesday of the month at 6:30 PM rather than Tuesday due to the Municipal Election taking place on first Tuesday of November.

Councilor Gray asked that delinquent taxes be added as a column in the tax department report. City Manager Cox stated that this is in the works currently.

## **11. Non-Public**

**11.1 Non-Public Session – Land, RSA 91-A:3, II (d)**

Mayor Lauterborn announced that there would be no non-public meeting this evening.

**12. Adjournment**

Mayor Lauterborn **ADJOURNED** the City Council Workshop meeting at 9:21 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara  
Deputy City Clerk