

Regular Meeting

These minutes are for the regular meeting of the Beacon City Council, held in the Municipal Center at One Municipal Plaza on March 2, 2020. Please note that the video recording of this meeting is available at <http://www.cityofbeacon.org/>

Council Members Present:

Amber Grant, At Large
George Mansfield, At Large
Terry Nelson, Ward One
Air Rhodes, Ward Two
Jodi McCredo, Ward Three
Dan Aymar-Blair, Ward Four
Lee Kyriacou, Mayor

Council Members Absent:**Also Present:**

Anthony Ruggiero, City Administrator
Nick Ward-Willis, City Attorney

Mayor Kyriacou noted that March is Women's History Month and Irish American History Month

First Opportunity for Public Comments: Each speaker may have one opportunity to speak up to three minutes on any subject matter.

Speakers:

Louis Amoroso Sr.

Mr. Amoroso Sr. said that he is not satisfied with the closing of Beacon Engine. He asked, again, what the City has spent on Beacon Engine during the past 15 years. He said it is a good thing that Beacon is hiring more career firefighters. A fire engine went to Newburgh for mutual aid last week. He asked if Beacon hired the career firefighters so we can provide mutual aid to other areas. He said he thought that mutual aid was only supposed to be used within the county.

Stosh Yankowski

Mr. Yankowski said that on Henry Street from Teller to Veteran's Place there is diagonal parking; if that diagonal parking was extended all the way along Henry Street, more cars would be able to park. The two handicap parking spots on Church Street can be eliminated. He spoke about Royal Carting, saying what should go into the recycling bins. He suggested sending out a flier to Beacon residents instructing people what can be thrown into the recycling bin.

Theresa Kraft

Ms. Kraft said it is in the best interest of Beacon to enforce New York State's home rule. Local governments are afforded several permissions within Article 10, one of which is to provide for the protection and enhancement of the physical and visual environment. She cited the historic Main Street view, saying that the streetscape should be protected. If Beacon is going to model itself as a tourist destination, the city better protect the historic character.

Jeremy Suckow

Mr. Suckow said that the RFP for the vacant parcel on Melio Bettina Place specifically called for a building to be constructed on the parcel. He said that he could have bid more money if he knew he did not have to build a house on the property. The back taxes on the parcel are \$5,000. The last house that Seven and One LLC constructed looks like a track home. If the goal of the RFP was to maximize profit, then the city would have clearly stated that the lot was approved for building without a variance. The requirement for development should not have been included if the city was hoping to maximize the return on the parcel. There were only two bids on the property even though Beacon is the hottest market in Dutchess County.

Community Segment

Dave Church and John Clarke

David Church is the recently retired Director of Planning in Orange County. He and John Clarke, the City of Beacon City Planner, helped to facilitate two recent Community Development Forums at the Memorial Building.

Mr. Church said that the city should be thrilled by the positive, constructive approach that people came to the community development forums with. People were very friendly and courteous.

The issues were wide-ranging however he was surprised about how little came up about zoning. There were several comments within the context of the code for sustainability and environmental criteria. Another common anchor from attendees was that the arts should be a major component of the fabric of Beacon. He said he has some ideas about this and would be happy to continue the discussion. The moratorium did not come up frequently; no one is demanding a moratorium. He is very cautious about moratoria, saying they are used too often.

There was a fair amount of commentary about the use of information and data in decision-making. The role of school and how that relates to the city's programming. Perhaps the water moratorium wasn't clearly presented. There may be a handful of data that may need to be gathered or presented differently.

There was a fair bit of conversation about transportation and access regarding parking, traffic and transit. It seems that the City has done some great work to provide parking. The perception may be worse than the actual parking problem.

The right business mix was a focal point during the forums; whether or not the city should impact the market to manipulate what types of businesses come to town with the goal of serving Beacon residents as well as tourists. Business retention and attraction was also important during the forums. People were questioning whether the City is too focused on attracting big businesses rather than small businesses. There was also discussion of providing capital for small businesses. Another poignant point of discussion was incentivizing businesses in Beacon. Zoning has historically done a very good job of clarifying what is allowed, but a poor job of what should be developed. He suggested expedited review processes when businesses the city needs are applying.

Affordability for residential and commercial space was a big theme throughout the forums. Businesses being priced out due to high rents came up a lot.

He said he is happy to work on the next steps.

John Clarke

Mr. Clarke said that four key themes came up consistently throughout the forums.

1. Main Street commercial rents combined with some big vacancies
2. Job-creating commercial opportunities through zoning
3. Affordable housing for low- and middle-income residents, a ten percent set-aside for affordable housing may not be enough
4. Parking and traffic pains; every successful municipality has this problem.
5. The arts

A new theory being discussed is that affordability should be based on 45 percent of housing and transportation costs, not just 30 percent housing costs. Beacon's affordability costs may actually be lower than people realize. If you live in a compact, walkable transit-oriented place you put out less greenhouse gases in your daily life.

Create affordability in three ways:

1. Subsidize housing (around 600 of those units in Beacon)
2. Local government subsidies such as set asides for affordable housing where private entities provide the housing and the city provides the administrative costs. The City can subsidize housing through the sale of land. There are seven parking locations on and round Main Street that could be used for affordable housing with parking underneath.
3. Satisfy the demand of housing by creating more market-rate housing; this will reduce the pressure to turn low cost housing into expensive housing.

He said he thinks the City should work with developers to provide more than a 10 percent set aside for affordable housing. Further, the City should not restrict the market to the point where housing prices increase.

Councilmember Rhodes and Mansfield thanked the attendees of the forums.

Council Reports

Councilmember Dan Aymar-Blair

Mr. Aymar-Blair thanked the attendees of the forums, saying that about 150 people attended. He proposed that the Council hear from Citizens Climate Lobby about the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act at a future workshop.

He said he would like to take up viewsheds soon.

Councilmember Aymar-Blair said that the City could work with the library to set up a census station at the farmers market. The City could also create some public signage to promote the census.

Councilmember Air Rhodes

Mx. Rhodes spoke about the coronavirus telling the public to wash their hands, avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth. The Councilmember said cover your mouth, clean surfaces such as cell phones, stay home when you are sick. NY State Coronavirus hotline is 1 888 364 3065. People can visit

health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus. The Councilmember reassured the public that the City is on top of the issue.

Councilmember Terry Nelson

Mr. Nelson thanked those attended the forums. He thanked those who came to his office hours. He will not be holding office hours this month. The Councilmember thanked everyone who supported Underground Beacon; the comic book store will not be closing.

He asked where the “Welcome to Beacon” sign has gone near the train station.

He advised the public to observe the speed limit and drive safely.

Councilmember Mansfield

The “Welcome to Beacon” sign by the train station has been removed over the past few days. It was allowed to be there for the last 11 years thanks to generous private property owners. He suggested putting that sign back up on City property. He thanked everyone who was involved in the project over the years.

Councilmember Amber Grant

Ms. Grant thanked all of the forum attendees and the people who responded to the Sustainable Beacon survey.

Councilmember Jodi McCredo

Ms. McCredo thanked all of the forum attendees. She reminded the public that elections for the Board of Trustees of the Howland Public Library will be held on April 30th; residents have until March 30th to petition to be one of the Trustees.

This week is Music in Our School Week. On Tuesday, March 3rd at 7 pm the choruses from Rombout and Beacon High School will perform at 7 pm and on March 5th the bands from Beacon High and Rombout will perform at 7 pm. The Parade of Green will be March 14th.

She would like to discuss placing the Welcome to Beacon sign on public property.

Mayor Kyriacou

Mayor Kyriacou said that the Census is coming on April 1st. He encouraged everyone to ensure they are counted.

He said that the forums correctly focused on Main Street access. The Council should focus on the historic overlay and four floors. The most poignant thing he heard at the forums was that living in an historic home was a privilege. There is still some work to do to finish up the transition zone.

Anthony Ruggiero, City Administrator

He said that the city received \$160,000 for the Wilkes Street Pathway in Community Development Block Grant money. The city received \$6,750 from Division of Criminal Justice for a new fingerprint and live scan machine for the Police Department. The city will be participating in a conference call about the coronavirus that Dutchess County has organized.

Local Laws and Resolutions

1. Resolution Approving a License Agreement Between the City of Beacon and Things You Love Events, LLC.

2. Resolution Approving an Amended 2020 City of Beacon Council Meeting Schedule

- Councilmember Grant made a motion to combine and vote on the approval of Resolutions 1 and 2 in a Consent Agenda
- Second by Councilmember McCrede
- Motion and Resolutions pass 7 – 0

City Council Meeting Minutes February 3, 2020

City Council Meeting Minutes February 18, 2020

- Motion to Approve Council Minutes from February 3rd and 18th by Councilmember Grant
- Second by Councilmember McCrede
- Motion passes 7 - 0

Second Opportunity for Public Comment

Arthur Camins

Mr. Camins said that one of the reasons for the economic gap between whites and non-whites has historically been property ownership which in part is determined by exclusionary government policy. His own homeownership would not have been possible if not for the generous help of a relative. This topic should be part of the conversation.

Regarding speeding, he said the no one speeds in Cold Spring because Cold Spring Police are notorious for giving speeding tickets.

He encouraged the Council to think about how the City can encourage developers to get the work done quickly when they are using scaffolding on Main Street sidewalks.

Carinda Swann

Ms. Swann thanked the Council for the forums, she thought that it was such a civil, welcome and open feeling. People had plenty of time to speak.

Stosh Yankowski

Mr. Yankowski suggested working with Royal Carting, the Post Office and Sustainable Beacon to put out recycling fliers. He suggested that an inventory should be done on the available residential and retail spaces in Beacon.

Ed Benevente

380 Main Street

Mr. Benevente thanked the Council for the forums, saying it was a great format. It was especially nice to have it

on the weekends. It was great to hear other peoples' questions.

Regarding the historic designation, he does not want to be included on the historic designation until further clarification on the benefits and limitations.

Mayor Kyriacou

Mayor Kyriacou said that the 2008 housing crash and the loss of the middle class in the United States are still impacting housing starts nationally. Further, the next generation wants to live in cities and that is increasing housing demand. Zoning has been more of the same and now that we need more apartments, it's hard to get the zoning to go with those demands especially in suburban single-family home areas. There is one community that has leapfrogged popularity in the region, and that is Beacon. In some respects, that's a good thing. In some ways, it is not. Simply building and increasing the supply of housing is not going to bring the price of housing down; Beacon is far too popular.

Next Council Workshop: March 9, 2020

Next Council Meeting: March 16, 2020

Motion to Adjourn

- Motion to Adjourn by Councilmember Nelson
- Second by Councilmember Aymar-Blair
- Motion passes 7 – 0