

January 7, 2020

20-02 Wksp.

Item #1: Roll Call

A Workshop meeting of the Caribou City Council was held 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 7, 2020 in Council Chambers with the following members present: Mayor R. Mark Goughan, Deputy Mayor Thomas Ayer, Joan L. Theriault, Hugh A. Kirkpatrick, and Douglas C. Morrell. Nicole L. Cote and Jody R. Smith were absent and excused.

Dennis L. Marker, City Manager was present.

Department Managers and Staff: Penny Thompson (Tax Assessor), Kenneth G. Murchison (Zoning Administrator), and Christina Kane-Gibson (Events and Marketing).

The Mayor led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item #2: Public Input

- Milo Haney spoke in favor of broadcasting Council meetings on television.
The City Manager stated that the television broadcasting issues were not on the City side, but rather a Spectrum issue.
Mr. Haney questioned why other communities can broadcast and Caribou can't.
There was a brief discussion about the franchise agreement, fees, and the City's PEG channel.
- Wilfred Martin asked if individuals could speak from their seat versus going to the microphone.
The Mayor stated "no".
Mr. Martin commented that Spectrum's contracts are not all the same. Mr. Martin stated that Spectrum should have a standard contract.
Per Mayor's request, the City Clerk will make him a notice to remind people to turn off cell phones.

Item #3: Workshop: Economic Development

a. Definition of Economic Development

The Mayor commented positively about the Department Heads' new "Good to Know" report as compared to the previous Directors' Report. He offered that there is more than one way of doing things. The Mayor carried this analogy to economic development and is the City happy with its current way of handling economic development which probably has been the same since Loring closed. He stated that he is not. The City needs to spend more time looking at the revenue side of the City's Budget and how to make that grow.

The City's Valuation: How do we grow that line on the City's Budget?

The Mayor gave a definition of economic development: The direct investment of time and money into increasing Caribou's taxable valuation.

The Mayor noted under this definition, Thursdays on Sweden isn't economic development but rather community development. He suggested that community development can turn into economic development. Under his definition, the Mayor considers the building of a garage by a homeowner as being economic development. He doesn't see it being economic development if a twenty-five year TIF is given for something that is built.

Dave Corriveau – stated that his is fine with that definition.

Paul Powers – stated he finds it to be a fine line between community and economic development.

The Mayor suggested that the City has a lot of community development projects and very few economic development projects.

Dave Corriveau noted that snowmobile trails are economic development because many individuals come to Caribou and purchase a second home as a base for snowmobiling.

Caribou doesn't have one individual with the title Economic Development Director. Currently the CEO and Events & Marketing Director handle aspects of economic development.

According to Mr. Powers, two Caribou businesses have closed since the first of the year. Further, twenty-five Caribou businesses could close in the next five years because there aren't any succession plans.

Throughout each month, City representatives are visiting businesses to see what their concerns are.

Councilor Morrell read a letter he wrote and was published in the Aroostook Republican in 2008. (Exhibit A)

Wilfred Martin stated that Caribou doesn't have economic stability and hasn't had it since Loring. He commented that the only industries that come and stay are those associated with farming and wood.

Dave Corriveau stated the economic development is a fulltime job.

Councilor Theriault commented that amenities attract people. The City needs to market itself as welcoming. Councilor Kirkpatrick commented about his own decision to return to Caribou and that he hasn't regretted it. Marketing needs to reach those individuals that want to return.

Jay Kamm questioned whether marketing is a function of the City Council. Council needs to work on the City's infrastructure and get that in place.

Councilor Ayer wonders how the City can keep people of his generation here. The City's "Certified Business Friendly" annoy him because he doesn't believe Caribou to be business

friendly. He noted the City's Chapter 13 is being rewritten to make it easier to do business here. He stressed the rewrite will be done this year.

Wilfred Martin disagreed with Councilor Ayer. He offered that Caribou is doing its best to be business friendly. He suggested that Caribou needs to "sell" to others what is already here in Caribou.

b. Blight and how it relates to Economic Development

The Mayor explained his reasons for wanting to focus the Council's time and energy on increasing the City's valuation through a blight free community. Last April a committee was formed, chaired by Paul Camping, to study blight. They researched, studied, and prepared a five step quick plan to fight blight. The Mayor offered that Caribou is going to follow that plan.

c. Members of the new Blight Working Group

The Mayor and Council are forming a Blight Commission that is to meet four times. The Commission is tasked to identify the tools that are necessary to fight blight; such as, ordinances and eminent domain.

Blight Commission Members:

Facilitator: City Manager Dennis Marker

Members: John Swanberg, Ken Murchison, Paul Camping, Penny Thompson, and Phil Cyr

They are tasked to complete and file a report in April.

The Mayor stated that a Land Bank is going to be created.

Caribou resident Wilfred Martin commented that Caribou already has the tools to fight blight.

d. Business Friendly with Caribou's Business Community

The Mayor wants to hold a ribbon cutting for County AG. Councilor Morrell suggested returning the \$100 the business has paid for a sign permit. In the future, the Mayor wants the City to look at the sign ordinance.

Item #4: Adjournment

Motion made T. Ayer, seconded by D. Morrell, to adjourn the meeting at 7:23 p.m.

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

Regular City Council Meeting, Monday, January 13, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

Regular City Council Meeting, Monday, January 27, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

Jayne R. Farrin, Secretary

Economic Development, What Does it Mean to You?

Here is what it means to me: *"The efforts put forward to induce, encourage, stimulate and support business growth within our community, which in return creates increased living standards"*. We all realize the driving force or backbone of any community is small business, and with business growth will come new housing starts, and new citizens, along with increased tax dollars.

Some folks feel that Caribou is now a bedroom community, and that's not necessarily a bad thing, but I personally have not given up on Caribou being a business community as well. Some folks feel that we are destined to be a government service center and maybe someday we might just be, but currently I still see Caribou as a viable business community. Government service centers are fine, but remember, they are at the mercy of the very government that put them into a community, and they can be plucked out as quickly as they were put here. Now I realize *"talk is cheap, it takes money to buy a jug"* and my jug money is invested right here in Caribou in the form of business.

So, when I sit through a budget workshop and the only budget the majority is willing to cut is the CCC&I, (*Caribou's economic development arm*) the very entity tasked with the thankless job of trying to expand the business base in Caribou, it leaves me to wonder if the majority understands business at all. Why would anyone with business common sense cut our only link that's dedicated to Caribou's business expansion and growth and not cut a dime of the cities' municipal departments annual budgets, the very budgets that create the majority of the tax burden in Caribou?

Now some feel that having wellness centers, children's museums, and performing arts centers are necessary in order to grow a community, but I personally disagree; these places complement a community, and are nice to have, but they don't pay the bills. If times were good and money was an abundant commodity within our community, then even I would say lets splurge a little on ourselves. But in my business eye I don't see an abundance of anything right now. Times are tough and I believe that it is going to get worse before we start to see better economic times again.

With that being said, I ask you, as prudent taxpayers, should we continue to splurge on the feel good community things, or should we redirect these types of expenditures into an all-out assault on economic development for the city of Caribou through our economic arm (CCC&I)? We are not going to get economic growth in these very competitive industries unless we fully fund it. Communities across the US are starving for economic growth. We, as a community, have to give people a reason to start a business in Caribou or to move an existing business here, and in my experience it is going to take a financial edge along with a simple and easy procedure in dealing with our city office. So where do you, the taxpayer, think our money is better spent: in more inflated municipal growth, or in the private sector thru business growth?

In closing, if you think that the "feel good things" are the way to grow the community, then I would encourage you to go to the Caribou high school and speak to the '08 graduating class and explain to them why they should stay here in Caribou. Is it because we have the "feel good amenities", or is it because we are a nice "bedroom community"? If we, as a community, cannot offer good jobs, decent pay, and health benefits for these or future graduates to stay here and start a family, a business, or build a home and grow, then they will naturally migrate to where they can get what they need.

Welder Doug Morrell
Caribou City Councilor