

COMMON COUNCIL

Special Meeting
December 9, 2014

Mayor Joseph Maiurano presided at a special meeting of the Common Council held at 6:00 PM on December 9, 2014, the Council Chambers at One Court Plaza.

Present:

Ald. Brian Doliver
Ald. John Deierlein
Ald. Walter Schermerhorn
Ald. Paul Laughlin
Ald. Thomas LoPiccolo
Mayor Joseph Maiurano

Also:

Director of Finance/City Clerk William Roberts
Human Resources Director Deborah DeForest
Police Chief Joseph Angelino
Fire Chief Tracy Chawgo
Assistant Police Chief Rodney Marsh
DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson
EMO A. Jones
Code Enforcement Officer/Fire Marshall Jason Lawrence
Deputy City Clerk Brian Drake
Media Representative Shawn Magrath
City Attorney Patrick Flanagan

Absent:

Ald. Bryan McCracken
Supervisor James McNeil
Supervisor Robert Jeffrey

Call to Order

The meeting of the Common Council was called to order by Mayor Maiurano at 6:00 p.m.

Public Hearing – Proposed Local Law No. (A) of 2014 – Tax Levy Override

Mayor Maiurano opened a public hearing on Proposed Local Law No. (A) of 2014 regarding the State-imposed property tax cap. There were no comments.

Public Hearing – Tentative 2015 Budget

Mayor Maiurano opened a public hearing on the tentative 2015 budget at 6:01 p.m.

Carl Ivarson, Superintendent of the Department of Public Works, presented a table showing the complete payroll for all DPW employees under the General Fund. He explained that several line items under the DPW had been slashed in the tentative 2015 budget, based on workers' compensation absences and several positions being vacant. However, it is imprudent to presume further absences would occur in 2015 and to cut his Department's budget by almost \$50,000 would necessitate either eliminating two positions or having a deficit at the end of the year. When he started, the Department had over 30 employees; there are now only 21 employees. He has diminished the workforce and increased productivity, but cannot provide all the necessary services with such a diminished workforce. He noted that he has only one mechanic to maintain over 100 vehicles. This means he must send much work out to private mechanics. If the cuts remain in the budget, he will have to eliminate two positions or make substantial cuts to services.

Bob Nasser stated that to raise taxes over 5% sends a bad message while trying to get businesses to locate in Norwich. He understands the economic problems with providing services, but with such tax increases only nonprofits will locate here, which further decreases tax revenues.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Maiurano closed the public hearing at 6:08 p.m.

Adjournment

Ald. Doliver **moved** to adjourn at 6:08 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Deierlein, accepted ayes all.

Ald. LoPiccolo **moved** to reconvene the meeting at 6:20 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Deierlein, approved ayes all.

Ald. Deierlein asked C. Ivarson to further explain the payroll information he had distributed. C. Ivarson stated that DPW employees' time is divided among various line items in the General Fund budget according to their various duties. The report he presented showed base pay, not including overtime, standby, call-out, etc. An important point is that the total payroll must be preserved; shifting pay from one line item to another would have no impact on the total figures. He noted that the salary for the second mechanic had been saved because the individual hired for that position did not remain, and that in 2012 the main mechanic was out all year on workers compensation, while legally the position could only be filled temporarily for six months.

Director of Finance William Roberts stated that C. Ivarson's information was correct. The proposed decrease in the budget was predicated on the pattern of the last four years, where payroll was lower than budgeted because of absences and

unfilled vacancies. He noted that the figures C. Ivarson presented did not include \$5,000 for Parks. If the \$55,000 were to be added back to the budget, the property tax increase would be 7.27% instead of 5.39%.

C. Ivarson proposed removing \$16,000 from the equipment line, as the \$26,000 budgeted would not allow him to make any major purchases. He noted that sending out mechanic work costs from \$70 - \$80/hour extra, so maintenance expenses would increase significantly. Ald. Doliver asked how high maintenance expenses are. C. Ivarson replied that he wouldn't know till year-end, but that it was likely higher than the \$32,000 starting salary for a new mechanic. W. Roberts said that restoring the \$55,000 cut and decreasing equipment by \$16,000 would mean a 6.73% property tax increase. Ald. LoPiccolo asked about decreasing the street tree management line. W. Roberts reminded him that lowering payroll in one line item does not decrease total payroll. C. Ivarson proposed removing \$5,000 from street tree management, noting that the City has not been able to afford contracted tree-removal services the last two years. He noted that the DPW has decreased staff and compromised in many areas, and suggested other departments be examined. Ald. Doliver suggested having other departments pay for the maintenance they receive from the DPW. W. Roberts said this would not change the budget as all those costs fall under the General Fund. Ald. Laughlin suggested cutting the sidewalk restoration program. W. Roberts stated that would also remove the revenue received from participating homeowners, which would negate any savings. C. Ivarson suggested that in 2016 CHIPS funding might be used for sidewalks instead of street paving. He will investigate whether that is possible.

W. Roberts said that if the changes suggested are to be made to the tentative budget, the Council will need to make a motion to revise the budget as received. City Attorney Patrick Flanagan explained that the Council could decide to adjourn the meeting before making a decision, or could decide to modify the tentative budget immediately.

Ald. Deierlein asked about reductions in the total assessed property values in the City. W. Roberts explained that those values are determined from the final assessment rolls, which are released in July of each year, and so are not current.

The Common Council decided to have a discussion period at the regularly scheduled Council meeting on December 16, 2014, before voting on the budget.

Ald. Deierlein **moved** to adjourn at 6:46 p.m. Seconded by Ald. LoPiccolo, approved ayes all.