

CITY OF NORWICH
JOINT MEETING of the
PUBLIC SAFETY / PUBLIC WORKS and
FINANCE/PERSONNEL COMMITTEES
February 3, 2015

Present:

Ald. Bryan McCracken
Ald. Brian Doliver
Ald. John Deierlein
Ald. Walter Schermerhorn
Ald. Paul Laughlin
Ald. Thomas LoPiccolo

Absent:

None

Also:

Director of Finance/City Clerk William Roberts
Human Resources Director Deborah DeForest
Mayor Joseph Maiurano
EMO A. Jones
Fire Chief Tracy Chawgo
Police Chief Rodney Marsh
Youth Bureau Director Robert Mason
DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson
Code Enforcement Officer/Fire Marshall Jason Lawrence
Deputy City Clerk Brian Drake

Ald. Walt Schermerhorn called the joint meeting of the Public Works/Public Safety and Finance/Personnel Committees to order at 6:00 p.m. at the Council Chambers.

Approval of Minutes

Ald. LoPiccolo **moved** to approve the minutes of the Joint Committee meeting of January 6, 2015. Seconded by Ald. Deierlein, approved ayes all.

Correspondence

Police Chief Rodney Marsh informed the Committees that, as was done in 2014, a motion will be presented to approve all major events that take place on Routes 12 or 23 in order to comply with State DOT requirements for preapproval.

Department Head Reports

Human Resources

Filling Finance Director Position Director of Human Resources Deborah DeForest informed the Committees that more time is needed to present the Mayor's report on the Director of Finance position. This will be given at the Common Council meeting on February 17.

Filling Police Officer Position D. DeForest reported that a candidate has been selected for the police officer vacancy. No lateral transfers were available; the candidate, Alicia Woodard of Norwich, NY, may be approved at the February Common Council meeting and sworn in so that she can begin training on March 16. Training will be for six months at the Academy and she will assume duties in October. Ald. Laughlin **moved** to recommend Council appoint Alicia Woodard of Norwich, NY, as police officer. Seconded by Ald. LoPiccolo, approved ayes all.

Filling Firefighter Position D. DeForest noted that a vacancy exists in the Fire Department as of November 1, 2014. Because of recommendations by the City's labor attorney, the position could not be filled during a 90-day period to comply with contract requirements. Director of Finance William Roberts stated that the position is budgeted to be filled as of June 1, 2015. Fire Chief Tracy Chawgo stated that because of unpaid salary for that period and contractual requirements, there would be a \$3,000 shortfall if the position is filled now, but that the Department is busy, having answered 340 calls in January, which is higher than usual. Ald. Doliver asked for transport costs. Chief Chawgo stated he will provide that report soon. Ald. Doliver asked that the report be given before any decision is made to fill the vacancy. Ald. McCracken said that just because something has been budgeted does not mean funds need to be spent. He believes it would be more responsible to wait to fill the vacancy in June. Ald. Deierlein suggested the discussion be postponed until a later meeting. Ald. McCracken **moved** to postpone discussion until the Common Council meeting. Seconded by Ald. Deierlein, approved ayes all.

EMO EMO A. Jones reported that the Southern Tier East Regional Planning Board was awarded a grant to stage Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) in Chenango County. This is a U.S. military healthcare exercise that will take place at the Norwich High School for ten days in July beginning the Monday after Gus Macker weekend. Military personnel will be housed at the Middle School. The exercise hopes to see up to 700 individuals per day for medical, dental, vision, and veterinary services. Residents of other communities will be bussed in to Norwich for the exercise, which should boost local sales. Chenango County will provide volunteers and security for the exercise.

Fire Department

2014 Training Hours Chief Chawgo reported that in 2012 the Department revamped its training requirements for active volunteers based on age, longevity, and other factors. This includes OSHA training, Human Resources, etc. In 2014 volunteers trained a total of 3,460.75 hours, with man hours of 1,290. Several individuals have not completed training, and are suspended until such completion.

Ambulance Rates Chief Chawgo reported that the Mayor, W. Roberts, and he met with a representative of MultiMed regarding the rates the City charges for ambulance services. The rates had fallen below the customary rates for the area; Chief Chawgo presented that proposed rate increases that match the City of Oneonta's. Advance notice of 90 days is required for the Towns serviced by the City. Ald. Deierlein **moved** to recommend Council approve rate increases for ambulance services. Seconded by Ald. LoPiccolo, approved ayes all. Chief Chawgo also noted that requests have been made for a dedicated standby ambulance at various events. He is investigating standby rates so that taxpayers are not paying for this service to private events. Ald. McCracken asked about ambulance rate surcharges for non-residents. Chief Chawgo said that the services are broken down by the client's home zip code, so that City residents are not charged the surcharge. The software used does not easily allow breaking out Town residents from that group.

Safer Grant Chief Chawgo reported that he will be applying for a Safer Grant, which would provide coverage of the salary and benefits of a new firefighter for a two-year period (this cannot be applied to the firefighter position discussed above). He noted that in 2017 six firefighters will be eligible for retirement, and he believes three are planning to retire. He wants to hire at least three new firefighters now. He is also planning to switch to a five-man shift from a four-man shift, which may cut overtime costs. He noted it is becoming difficult to find trained paramedics.

Insurance Rating Chief Chawgo reported that he met with an ISO representative. The City had not been rated since 1987. The results were good, with the Department remaining at 4 in the City and 9 in the Town. He will be working to improve those numbers, as a 1-point improvement translates to an 8% - 15% improvement in insurance costs for local businesses.

DPW

Light Tower DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson reported that he will be purchasing a used light tower for night maintenance work. A new tower costs approximately \$12,000; he will purchase a used tower for \$3,000. This is a budgeted expense.

Trash Pump C. Ivarson reported he will be purchasing a 4-inch trash pump for improved pumping. This will be a used pump costing approximately \$2,000, and is a budgeted expense.

Flow Management Plan – Third Year C. Ivarson reported that this will be the third year for the flow management plan, consisting of cleaning and video-inspecting sewer lines as mandated by the DEC. Engineering costs will be approximately \$13,000, with an additional cost for the inspections. This is a budgeted expense.

Finance

Extension of Delinquent Tax Redemption W. Roberts reported that the City has for many years extended the deadline for redemption of delinquent tax properties. This benefits the City by reducing the number of foreclosures the City must undertake and increases revenues. Ald. McCracken asked what percentage of delinquent properties pays during the extended redemption period. W. Roberts replied that more than 50% of delinquent properties are usually redeemed. There are nine delinquent properties this year. Ald. McCracken asked how property owners are notified of delinquency. W. Roberts responded that they are notified by registered mail, with notices on the doors of properties; also, not just property owners but all parties of interest (banks, mortgage companies, etc.) are also notified. Mayor Maiurano stated he also personally calls each property owner. Ald. Deierlein asked about additional costs to the City. W. Roberts explained that all additional costs, such as advertising costs, are added to the penalties. Ald. Laughlin **moved** to recommend Council extend the period for redemption of tax delinquent properties. Seconded by Ald. Deierlein, approved ayes all.

Property Tax Software System W. Roberts reported that the City has investigated software upgrades to calculate and recover property taxes. A satisfactory proposal has been received from ATC for such a program, which will save a great deal of time in the Finance Department and automate the process. The Department investigated such software seven years ago, but prices were prohibitive at the time; now the price has dropped significantly and the product has been greatly improved. Cost will be \$19,000 for the first year, including installation and training, with annual costs of \$4,000 for maintenance. He will distribute the information on the software to the Council before the February Council meeting. Ald. McCracken **moved** to recommend Council authorize entering into a contract for a property tax software system. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all. Ald. McCracken asked if the software includes electronic payment capabilities. W. Roberts stated it did, allowing credit/debit card and online payments.

Other Items

Traffic Commission Ald. Doliver stated the Traffic Commission is reviewing proposed revisions to the Traffic Ordinance.

Designation of Electronic Records as Official Records – Finance Office Records Management Officer Brian Drake reported that State Archives allows the designation of electronic records as official records for archive purposes. Such a designation for the Finance Office will eliminate enormous amounts of paper records and speed record recovery. Because of proposed changes to the Finance Office accounting software, a motion will be presented for the Common Council to designate electronic Finance records as official records, and the Department's retention schedule will be developed to designate precisely which records within that designation are best handled electronically or kept as paper records. B. Drake noted that following this designation, other departments' records (many of which are already managed electronically) can be reviewed for similar designation. Ald. McCracken **moved** to recommend Council approve the designation of Finance Department electronic records as official records. Seconded by Ald. LoPiccolo, approved ayes all.

Executive Session

Ald. McCracken **moved** to enter into executive session at 6:58 p.m. to discuss the financial history of a particular corporation. Seconded by Ald. Deierlein, approved ayes all.

Ald. Deierlein **moved** to exit executive session at 7:58 p.m. Seconded by Ald. LoPiccolo, approved ayes all.

Adjournment

Ald. Deierlein **moved** to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 p.m. Seconded by Ald. McCracken, approved ayes all.