

CITY OF NORWICH
JOINT MEETING of the
PUBLIC SAFETY / PUBLIC WORKS and
FINANCE/PERSONNEL COMMITTEES
October 6, 2015

Present:

Ald. Bryan McCracken
Ald. Brian Doliver
Ald. John Deierlein
Ald. Walter Schermerhorn
Ald. Kecia Funaro-Burton (arr. 6:08 p.m.)
Ald. Thomas LoPiccolo

Also:

City Chamberlain/City Clerk John Zielinski
Director of Human Resources Deborah DeForest
EMO A. Jones
Finance Administrative Office Manager Dee DuFour
Youth Bureau Director Robert Mason
DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson
Police Chief Rodney Marsh
Fire Chief Tracy Chawgo
Community Development Specialist Todd Dreyer
Deputy City Clerk Brian Drake

Absent:

None

Ald. Brian Doliver 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.

Minutes Ald. Deierlein **moved** to approve the minutes of the September 1, 2015 Joint Committees meeting. Seconded by Ald. LoPiccolo, approved ayes all.

Correspondence Ald. McCracken **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve a request for a curb cut from Nicole L. Mias at 7 Maydole Street, pending approval of the DPW Superintendent. Seconded by Ald. Deierlein, approved ayes all.

Department Head Reports

Police City Chamberlain John Zielinski requested the Committees to consider charging an hourly fee for police services at special events. He suggests a rate of \$60/hour, which includes fuel, vehicle, and benefits costs. Such a rate would be put into place starting in 2016. Ald. McCracken asked how many events require police presence. Police Chief Rodney Marsh there are approximately 30 such events throughout the year. This does not include school events, which the Department contracts for directly with the School District. Overtime costs for events in 2015 has totaled approximately \$21,000, which includes one unanticipated event. Some events already pay for police services. Ald. Schermerhorn stated it is not unreasonable to charge for these services, and taxpayers should not be expected to pay for special events. Chief Marsh noted that whether an event pays or not, police coverage will obviously be required. Director of Human Resources Deborah DeForest noted this will mean that if an event does not or cannot pay for police coverage, the Council will have to decide whether it should deny permission for that event to take place. Ald. Deierlein asked Chief Marsh to prepare a report for the Common Council meeting showing police coverage broken down by each event and the number of hours required. Ald. LoPiccolo asked if the Fire Department should also charge for coverage of events. Fire Chief Tracy Chawgo noted that the County Fair requests dedicated ambulance coverage, and the Department averages less than 100 hours of overtime for such coverage in a year. Ald. McCracken **moved** that this be discussed at the October Common Council meeting. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn, approved ayes all.

Codes Code Enforcement Officer Jason Lawrence presented a request from the Zoning Board of Appeals that the Joint Committees direct the Planning Commission to research whether the current Code is appropriate regarding signs in residential districts. The Zoning Board has heard an increasing number of requests for variances and such research would clarify the matter. The Committees discussed the issue and concurred that the Planning Commission should investigate the current Code as regards signs in residential districts.

DPW

Old & New Filter Plants DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson reported that several parts at the old filter plant, including a flow meter and valves, have broken down and need to be replaced. This will be an expenditure of \$5,435 plus shipping costs, to be paid for by the Water Fund. Ald. Schermerhorn **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve the expenditure for replacement parts at the filter plant. Seconded by Ald. Deierlein, approved ayes all.

Manpower C. Ivarson reminded the Committees that there are four vacant positions in the DPW. Two are paid for from the General Fund, two from the water system. He does not at this time have sufficient manpower to plow streets. He noted that these positions being vacant has saved the City approximately \$40,000. The only full-time employee at the wastewater plant will be on medical leave starting next week. He commented on the recent spending and hiring freeze, and pointed out there is no reason not to hire for the water system, as it is financially sound. All DPW employees except for two in the water system are used for snow removal. He also noted that a worker with a Grade 3 license must be hired before his own retirement to comply with State regulations. D. DeForest stated that is a difficult position to fill because of a lack of qualified people throughout New York State, and many other communities are having the same difficulty. C. Ivarson stated several employees have been trained, but have failed to pass the Grade 3 examination, which only has a 17% pass rate.

NYSEG Street Paving C. Ivarson reported that the City will be paving 14 streets in 2016 (the norm is four streets). Seven of those will be covered by CHIPS funding, with NYSEG paying approximately \$230,000. He has requested a letter from NYSEG formally agreeing to paying these costs. He requested that funds received from NYSEG for this year's paving, approximately \$34,000, be transferred to the currently unfunded infrastructure reserves. J. Zielinski agreed that this was proper to do.

Water Projects C. Ivarson asked if the Notice to Proceed had been sent out for the Wheeler Avenue Water Storage Tank Replacement project. J. Zielinski replied that it would go out the next day. C. Ivarson said the contractor will have 330 days from receipt of the Notice to Proceed to complete the project, with a \$500/day penalty after that deadline. Regarding the filter plant project, the DEC has added a requirement for filtering backwash that will cost approximately \$278,000. This will be paid for from the contingency for that project. The new plant will be in the same footprint as the old plant.

Rolling Stock/Equipment C. Ivarson reported that the Department has only one large truck plow for snow removal and it is 25 years old. Sooner rather than later it will need to be replaced. He will need a truck for infrastructure repairs and requested to go to bid for such a truck, to be paid for from the Wastewater Fund, which has approximately \$415,000 in reserves. Ald. Deierlein asked if C. Ivarson has a plan for replacing rolling stock. C. Ivarson replied that he has presented such a plan to the Council at least ten times but it has never been funded. J. Zielinski stated he will ask Department Heads to present him with an equipment wish list for capital budgetary planning, to be paid for through bonding. C. Ivarson remarked that DPW has had to cut services already, and that a lift at the wastewater plant, which hauls large waste, has broken, with a cost of replacement of \$4,500 plus shipping. Chains must also be replaced at a cost of approximately \$2,500 plus shipping. Regarding the screw pumps (for which the Department paid approximately \$450,000 each), the roller cages have been found to be improperly manufactured and the company is working on a repair. After these repairs have been completed, he will request reimbursement for the rollers and bearings that they replaced at the City's cost of approximately \$14,000. Ald. McCracken **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve a transfer from reserves to cover the costs of a new lift and chains. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn, approved ayes all.

Finance

Ambulance Recovery Fees J. Zielinski reported that he has investigated contracting with a collections agency, Simons Agency, to collect unpaid ambulance fees. He noted that in 2014 approximately \$70,000 of ambulance recovery fees were written off (with total revenues of approximately \$673,381), and that with more aggressive collection perhaps 50% of those unpaid fees may be collected. The Committees discussed the possibility of charging municipalities for the unpaid private debt of their residents, but this was determined not to be legal. Ald. Deierlein **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve the engagement of Simons Agency for ambulance recovery fee collection. Seconded by Ald. McCracken, approved ayes all.

Transfer for Paint Rebate Program J. Zielinski reported that the Paint Rebate program, approved through 2018, was underfunded for 2015 and approximately \$5,000 must be transferred to cover rebates to residents. Ald. McCracken **moved** to recommend the Common Council authorize the transfer of funds to cover Paint Rebate program costs. Seconded by Ald. Doliver, approved ayes all.

Financial Advisory Services J. Zielinski reported that the City's agreement with Municipal Solutions, Inc., for financial advisory services in bonding and other matters has recently expired. He has investigated other options and proposed that Fiscal Advisors offers better services with a more advantageous fee structure. He remarked that the bond anticipatory note for the filter plant project, which has been delayed, will need to be re-issued in March of 2016, and the City could save approximately \$1,500 in fees by moving to Fiscal Advisors. C. Ivarson stated that USDA-RD would have to approve such a change of advisors for contracts with USDA-RD. J. Zielinski replied that Fiscal

Advisors already works with USDA-RD. Ald. Deierlein stated he knows both firms and Fiscal Advisors is bigger with more clients and consequently lower fees. J. Zielinski stated there is no retainer, the firm is paid for the work it does. Ald. Funaro-Burton asked if its fees would go up in the near future. J. Zielinski said he would check. Ald. Deierlein **moved** to recommend the Common Council authorize entering into an agreement with Fiscal Advisors for financial advisory services. Seconded by Ald. LoPiccolo, approved ayes all.

Energy Supply Contracts J. Zielinski reported he has an opportunity to lock in prices for electricity supply now for a term starting in November of 2016. Current rates have gone from 5.3¢/KwH to 7.1¢/KwH. C. Iverson noted that the power to enter into energy supply contracts has already been granted by the Council to the Mayor, DPW Superintendent and Director of Finance because of the need to act quickly to lock in rates.

2016 Contract with Chenango SPCA Deputy City Clerk Brian Drake reported that the Chenango SPCA has sent the 2016 contract for dog services. The contract has no substantial changes in language or fees from prior years and is being reviewed by the City Attorney. Ald. Schermerhorn **moved** to recommend the Common Council authorize renewing the contract with the Chenango SPCA for 2016. Seconded by Ald. Doliver, approved ayes all.

CHIP Inc. PILOT J. Zielinski reported he received a letter from Chenango Housing Improvement Program, Inc. regarding their inability to make the Payment In Lieu of Taxes, which was agreed to in 1999 in exchange for tax exempt status from the City Assessor. Ald. Schermerhorn noted they have had difficulties making the payment in the past. The payment is approximately \$9,300. The Committees requested J. Zielinski contact them asking them to honor their commitment.

Local Law to Override Tax Levy Cap J. Zielinski reported that the Common Council should pass a local law to override the State-imposed property tax cap before the 2016 budget is adopted. Ald. Doliver stated it makes sense to pass the law in case the levy must exceed the State property tax cap (for 2016, ____%). Ald. Deierlein **moved** to recommend the Common Council received a proposed local law to override the tax cap and set a public hearing. Seconded by Ald. Doliver, approved ayes all.

Other Items The Committees agreed to move the dates for the November and December Joint Committees meetings to November 4 and December 2, because the regularly scheduled dates fall on Election Day and the date of NBT Bank's Holiday Party.

J. Zielinski proposed a budget hearing be set. After discussion, it was determined that special meetings for discussion of the budget will be determined at a later date.

Executive Session Ald. Deierlein **moved** to enter executive session at 7:29 p.m. to discuss the employment history of particular individuals and to discuss the sale of real property where price may be affected.

Ald. Doliver **moved** to exit executive session at 9:21 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Deierlein, approved ayes all.

Adjournment

Ald. McCracken **moved** to adjourn the meeting at 9:22 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn, approved ayes all.