

COMMON COUNCIL

Special Meeting
November 4, 2015

In the absence of Mayor Joseph Maiurano, Ald. John Deierlein presided at a special meeting of the Common Council held at 6 PM on November 4, 2015, in the Common Council Chambers at One Court Plaza.

Present:

Ald. Bryan McCracken
Ald. Brian Doliver
Ald. John Deierlein
Ald. Walter Schermerhorn
Ald. Kecia Funaro-Burton
Ald. Thomas LoPiccolo
Supervisor Robert Jeffrey

Also:

City Chamberlain/City Clerk John Zielinski
Director of Human Resources Deborah DeForest
Fire Chief Tracy Chawgo
Deputy City Chamberlain Dee DuFour
Police Chief Rodney Marsh
Assistant Police Chief Scott Burlison
Deputy City Clerk Brian Drake
Community Development Specialist Todd Dreyer
DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson
EMO A. Jones
Media Representative Shawn Magrath

Absent:

Mayor Joseph Maiurano
Supervisor James McNeil

Call to Order

The meeting of the Common Council was called to order by Ald. Schermerhorn at 6:01 p.m.

Public Hearing Ald. Deierlein opened the public hearing on Proposed Local Law No. (A) of 2015 – Overriding Property Tax Cap at 6:03 p.m.

Robert Jeffrey, 17 York Street, noted COLA for Social Security will not be going up in 2016. He stated that higher taxes mean less investment. The City is competing against other locations for residents and businesses. Raising property taxes lowers the equalization rate, which was 73% in 2011 and is now 65-67%. He stated he should have spoken up two years ago when the City began using unappropriated reserves to keep property tax increases low. He noted that the City Charter provides for a strong Council and weak mayor; it is up to the Common Council to control costs. Now the City is in crisis, revenues have been overestimated. Large contributions to the Retirement System mandated by the State have started to drop. He urged the City to look at reduction of payroll, and stated his opinion that most employees don't reside in the City. He said the Fire Department is the largest part of the budget and the population of Chenango County is projected to fall.

Matthew Caldwell, 24 Locust Street, noted that it is stated the property tax cap for 2016 will be 0.73%, not 2%. If this is accurate, it is unrealistic to expect the City to stay below that. If the City managed to remain below that, \$1,000 in current taxes would go up \$7.30 and he might receive that back as a rebate from the State, which he can live without. However, he believes it is fair that the City give some idea of what the property tax increase will be.

David Zieno, 19 Maydole Street, said the property tax cap was enacted because New York State is one of the hardest for taxes. Senior citizens complain that they can't afford their current property taxes, and Medicare will be going up next year. Some have said they plan on moving. Also, Ward 5 is in a flood zone; if property taxes are \$300 a month and flood insurance is \$300 a month, that's as much as a mortgage payment. He urged the City to consider every possible cut. The City is not in the same financial position it was in years ago and is not much larger than some towns. It therefore may not be able to afford to offer the same services it has, which the towns do not have to offer.

Bob Nassar, Norwich Tire, said that things are tough, spending is out of control and needs to be brought under control. The City will turn into a ghost town. He has heard rumors of double-digit tax increases.

Christine Carnrike, 15 South Broad Street, said whatever is done, the public needs to be made aware. The City needs to be honest with residents and to make clear what services it provides and their costs. The City government needs to be more transparent.

Hearing no further comments, Ald. Deierlein declared the public hearing closed at 6:18 p.m.

Ald. McCracken said he was opposed to bringing this law forward before a proposed budget has been presented. The City is not being transparent. He stated his belief that in prior years only 16% to 21% of municipalities in New York passed a law to override the property tax cap. He will not vote in favor of the law.

Adjournment

Ald. Schermerhorn **moved** to adjourn at 6:20 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Doliver, accepted ayes all.