

City of Norwich
Finance/Personnel Committee Meeting
January 24, 2017

Ald. Caldwell presided at the meeting of the Finance/Personnel Committee held at 6:30 PM on January 24, 2017, in the Council Chambers.

Present:

Ald. Matthew Caldwell
Ald. Walter Schermerhorn
Ald. David Zieno

Absent

None

Also:

City Chamberlain/City Clerk Dee DuFour
Director of Human Resources Deborah DeForest
Fire Chief Tracy Chawgo
Police Chief Rodney Marsh
DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson
Code Enforcement Officer Jason Lawrence
Youth Bureau Director Robert Mason
Mayor Christine Carnrike
Ald. Doliver

Call to Order

The meeting was held in the Council Chambers at One Court Plaza and called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Ald. Caldwell.

Personnel Related Objectives

DPW Superintendent position for 2018 - There are only 11 more months with Carl Ivarson. A decision needs to be made whether the position stays as it is or to split the position and have one on the water side and another on the DPW side. A decision needs to be made soon and not wait until September to start looking for someone.

WWTP Operator rate of pay - There is an issue with the lack of staffing. Previously discussed was the rate of pay being too low. The positions are for Operator and Lead Operator. Also open is the position of Lab Tech. C. Ivarson reported that the Binghamton-Johnson City plant is also a Grade 3 Plant and their Operator pay starts at \$46,000-\$48,000 up to \$52,000-\$54,000 per year and that is only for Waste Water. The City of Norwich Operators do Water, Waste Water, Mechanical and Electrical. Discussion of doing surveys of rates of pay for Operators who do a similar scope of work was discussed. C. Ivarson will order the AWWA survey and should be here within a week. Ald. Zieno asked C. Ivarson if he had any suggestions regarding the Superintendent position. C. Ivarson responded that it should remain the same. Right now his salary comes from the Water System. If the position were split, funds would need to come from the General Fund, which would be \$50-\$60,000 resulting in a property tax increase. He does have some people interested in the position.

Finance Department structure and software changes - Ald. Caldwell stated since the departure of J. Zielinski there is a "band aid" on the situation to keep moving forward with discussion of which direction to go and how. There are civil service components and the potential new software purchase that may affect number of staff needed. This should be a high priority for 2017. Discussion of the possible software purchase from Edmunds and Associates included the fact that it would be compatible with the new meters that C. Ivarson has delayed in purchasing to ensure they would be compatible with the new software. The new meters would eliminate the need for meters to be read individually. The money for those meters is already on the Waste Water side. The software will also accept credit and debit cards as well as online payments. It does not have a vehicle maintenance module however. Discussion of the software purchase from USTI was discussed. This cannot be re-sold because it is a licensed product. C. Ivarson stated that there is zero automation or software in DPW and is very much needed to track vehicle and building maintenance and repairs. DPW software will be brought to the April Joint Committee meeting for further discussion. Ald. Zieno asked D. DuFour for a structural overview of the Finance Department for the next Fin/Per meeting.

Firefighter positions, job descriptions - There are two retirements - one taking place January 25, 2017 and the other at the end of February 2017. Another employee is out with an injury. Ald. Caldwell stated that there are many more EMS calls than fire calls and the BLS and ALS positions should be looked at. Ald. Caldwell stated that there are many qualified people that work throughout the County willing to work part time. This would save money on benefits by not hiring a full time civil service position. Ald. Schermerhorn stated this would be an issue with contract obligations with the bargaining unit and there is a stipulation as to how many part time hours you can use. T. Chawgo stated that due to the low staffing it is getting difficult to schedule shifts. In addition, if

a vacant position is not filled within 90 days, funding for that position is lost. D. DeForest stated that the civil service test is in March with a 120 day turnaround. Appointments from the civil service list would not be done until July. She reported that she called Albany regarding provisional hires. There is no one on the current civil service list that meets the necessary requirements. T. Chawgo will be discussing Captain's promotions at the February Joint Committee meeting.

City Personnel Policies - What policies does the City have. By the next Fin/Per meeting could we have a list of the Policies. D. DeForest stated the City has all the required policies with some possible updates needed on a few. Although there are SOP's for Social Media for Fire and Police there is not a City-wide social media policy.

Non-unit compensation schedule - Ald. Caldwell questioned the non-unit compensation schedule being approved after the budget is passed. Also in question were what job titles are in what grade. He called for a simplification of the schedule with fewer grades.

Department Head Handbook - Last July suggestions from Department Heads were requested in terms of the Department Head Handbook. Suggestions were given by some Department Heads but nothing was done with the information.

Department Head Annual Goals and Performance Reviews - Goals need to be shared and planned for. Department Heads should have short and long term goals. What is a departments strength/weakness, how can resources be better utilized, if something doesn't work out is there a Plan B.

Union Negotiations - CSEA Administrative Unit And DPW Unit, Firefighters Union - Discussion of hiring Roy Kotary to represent The City of Norwich with labor negotiations with these unions. Ald. Caldwell stated that instead of hiring someone, there are others that could negotiate such as D. DeForest, The Mayor, or another person.

Property Taxes - C. Ivarson has concerns of the assessments going up for the Water Tank (approximately \$3 million) and the future Filter Plant (\$6.3 million), both of which are in the Town of Norwich. Exemptions for these need to be requested. Exemptions are difficult to get, but if received would last for five years. This, along with a raise in the Leacheate rate, will be put before the Joint Committee at the February meeting.

Police Department Staffing - Mayor Carnrike asked R. Marsh about staffing at the Police Department. There are 3 at the Academy (graduating in May), 1 in "limbo" and another leaving in April. The officer that was retiring in March is now staying until August. Another officer due to retire in September may stay until December. There is currently 1 open position with a possible lateral transfer person interested.

Finance Related Objectives

Stay on Track with Revenue and Expense Lines Throughout the Year – Ald. Caldwell stated that everyone, including the Council needs to keep better track of revenue and expense lines throughout the year.

Seeking New Sources of Funding: Grants etc. – Ald. Caldwell asked if Commerce Chenango could help with this area since Todd Dryer has retired from Community Development. Mayor Carnrike answered not at this time, but that C. Ivarson has secured major funding and she has reached out to legislators.

Review of Budget Layout and Exploring/Implementing a More Transparent Document for 2018 – For the 2018 Budget Ald. Caldwell would like to see a line item budget in order to provide better transparency. The proposed new software would provide that.

A recap to bring to next week's Finance/Personnel Committee Meeting are the AWWA Survey, City Policies, SOP's for each department, employee manuals, and the Policies and Procedures Department Head Manuals.

C. Ivarson informed the Committee that Cuomo and the President have both been speaking about infrastructure. In order to benefit from any large infrastructure project the City must be “shovel ready”. That would include sewer and storm drain replacement and curbs and sidewalks but not streets. Plymouth St. was mentioned as a possible candidate for curbs and sidewalks.

Ald. Caldwell asked D. DuFour for references from current users of the proposed software purchase from Edmunds.

The Mayor asked D. DeForest if the Employee Policy Manual she had dated 1985 was the current manual. D. DeForest responded there is one manual that is City-wide. There are also separate ones for different departments and some policies are negotiated and are not in the City-wide manual.

Ald. Zieno asked about opening up the Fire Department contract regarding the fire assisting hours. D. DeForest cautioned that the contract must be opened before June when the 2018 contract negotiations begin. Ald. Zieno **moved** to take the subject of opening the Fire Contract to the Joint Committee. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn, approved ayes all. Discussion ensued as to whether the Committee wanted Roy Kotary, if his services were engaged, to do this as well as opening up the DPW contract previously approved. It was decided that D. DeForest would have to do this as Mr. Kotary would be unavailable for two weeks and his services have not been approved as yet.

Adjournment

Ald. Zieno **moved** to adjourn at 7:46 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn, approved ayes all.