

CITY OF NORWICH
JOINT MEETING of the
PUBLIC SAFETY / PUBLIC WORKS and
FINANCE/PERSONNEL COMMITTEES
August 7, 2019

Present:

Mayor Christine Carnrike
Ald. Matthew Caldwell
Ald. Linda Kays-Biviano
Ald. David Zieno
Ald. Robert D. Jeffrey

Also:

Director of Finance/City Clerk Dee DuFour
Director of Human Resources Lynn Murray
Fire Chief Jan Papelino
Police Chief Rodney Marsh
EMO A Jones
City Attorney Steve Natoli
Deputy City Clerk Agnes Eaton

Supervisor Robert M. Jeffrey arrived 7:40 approx.

Media Representative: Shawn McGrath

Absent

Supervisor James McNeil

Ald. Caldwell called the joint meeting of the Public Works/Public Safety and Finance/Personnel Committees to order at 6:37 p.m. at the Council Chambers.

Approval of Minutes – Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to approve the minutes of the July 2, 2019 meeting. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano, approved ayes all.

Guest Speakers –

Matt Beckwith, County Fire Coordinator - Deed transfer of Fire Training Center to County – Mr. Beckwith explained to the Committee the history of the Fire Training Center. The land has been leased for \$1 from the City since the 1960's and the structures have been built by the County. The lack of ownership by the County prohibits them from applying for Grants in order to improve the Training Facilities. Two years ago an agreement was being worked on and the terms were 99% agreed upon. Items being discussed were use of the driveway, removing the septic system and hooking into the City sewer system, and water usage. The County agreed to create an entrance off of Prentice St. and hook into the City sewer system. The current agreement provides for 500,000 gallons of water usage to the County at no charge and then be billed for anything above 500,000 gallons. However, it was not determined how that could or would be metered and he stated his concerns over attaching a meter to the hydrant. It had been determined previously by the former DPW Superintendent and Beckwith that water usage would not even come close to the 500,000 gallons. His suggestion is to do a "best estimate" by determining the flow rate from the hydrant and the size of the engine that's hooked up to it. J. Papelino reported there is a meter on the line, so that should not be an issue. However, the issue is with those purchasing bulk water. A calculation could be done from the metered line reading and the bulk purchaser's meter readings. A Jones and Mr. Beckwith stated the facility will no be locked with the City retaining access to it. It was stated that no Fire Department will be using the facility for water to fill pools with. That would follow the procedures for bulk water purchasing. Ald. Caldwell **moved** to recommend the Common Council authorize the Mayor to sign a contract for the deed transfer to the County, removing the 500,000 gallon limit for the purpose of Fire Training and making it an unlimited number of gallons. Seconded by Ald. Zieno, approved ayes all.

Chris Sprague, Parks Commission Chairperson

- ◆ Playground Equipment for Greenway Park – C. Sprague reported that a \$15,000 grant from the Follet Foundation has been received for the replacement of the playground equipment in Greenway Park which had to be removed due to the installation of the Baker Dog Park. He would like to know if the City can match the grant funds or if he should continue his search for additional grants. He stated that the remaining funds from Chobani (administered through United Way) will be used to finish the Fit Path map signage. The remaining \$5,000 plus another \$4,000 from the budget will replace a toddler size piece equipment for Greenway Park which will cost \$30,000. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend the Common Council match the \$15,000 funds. Seconded by Ald. Caldwell, approved ayes all. C. Sprague thought it would be a good idea for Parks to do a plan similar to a Capital Improvements plan to replace equipment since many pieces are from the 1960's.
- ◆ North Broad St. Sidewalk Project – C. Sprague stated that the DOT proposed a sidewalk all the way down to Pires Flowers, but Parks had originally planned for additional sidewalk long enough to reach Park property and

then build a path through the woods and into the Borden Ave. Skate Facility, then adding a crosswalk to Weiler Park. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve a letter of support for a study of the project. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano approved ayes all.

Discussion before the vote: Ald. Zieno stated that this had been presented at a Traffic Commission meeting and that the DPW Superintendent had concerns of winter maintenance of the sidewalk all the way to Pires, as well as the proximity to the road and the deterioration of the sidewalk due to the road salt. Ald. Zieno said the Traffic Commission did not approve the recommended DOT plan, however C. Sprague was under the impression it had been approved. C. Sprague stated that at this stage the DOT is suggesting the City send a letter of support for a study and then make a more formal proposal. This is not an authorization to do the project. Discussion continued and C. Sprague stated that the Parks and Traffic Commissions have prepared a letter of support from the Council to send to DOT. Ald. Zieno suggested the City do their own “study” in the meantime.

Discussion of Potential Sale of City Owned Property at 1 City Plaza

Ald. Jeffrey thought this is premature, as the costs or estimates to outfit the third floor of the Firehouse; how long would it take; he questioned where Historical Records would go. Ald. Kays-Biviano asked how much was spent (in 1997) on the current City Hall to bring it up to Code. Ald. Jeffrey reported he had asked Patricia Scott, former City Historian, and she had said \$367,000. Mayor Carnrike remarked that in 2015 another \$114,000 was spent to complete work (lighting, walls, ceiling) on the third floor and it still sits vacant. She stated that one of the entities submitting an offer have stated that the front of the building could be utilized for Records Management, which would move them from their current location which is less than desirable. She further stated that the Council should ascertain if they are willing to entertain offers to purchase the building; all other numbers will fall into place. The funds from the sale of the building would be used for building walls for offices – all current furniture will still be used. The Mayor further stated that if there is no consideration from the Council for any sale, they owe it to the public and those interested in purchasing the building for a definitive answer. D. DuFour reported that she has all the numbers she can gather and is waiting for E. Pepe to determine certain construction costs so that a comparison of moving or staying can be done. She stated that the lack of efficiency in the current location should also be a factor. Ald. Zieno likes the idea of saving the taxpayers money and would entertain the idea, but thought the public should have a chance to have input at a Public Hearing. Ald. Kays-Biviano stated that she would support a sale at a fair market value. The assessed value done by a third party and the City Assessor’s opinion was discussed. Ald. Caldwell thought another assessment should be done by a different party, however Ald. Zieno thought we could trust the City Assessor’s judgement. Ald. Caldwell’s opinion is that everything is for sale if it’s a good deal and for the right price. He said that some constituents have expressed their concerns to him regarding moving City Hall. Constituents may or may not be right and he will look at the numbers when making a decision. He presented alternatives such as moving to the County Office Building, leasing the current City Hall building instead of selling, and placing City Offices on the first floor and the Firemen on the third floor. Mayor Carnrike stated there have been six previous offers since 2016 for the building, and for various reasons things never progressed.

Correspondence

As I Am Church – Special Event Designation – Ald. Kays-Biviano **moved** to approve the request from As I Am Church for special event designation for a craft fair being held on Saturday, August 10, 2019 from 9a.m. to 4 p.m. A. Eaton explained that the late request is due to the organization being unaware that they would need a permit to hold this event. In an attempt to make the situation right, the organization came to purchase a permit, but until being approved, a permit could not be issued. Seconded by Ald. Zieno, approved ayes all.

Farm Bureau – Use of Firehouse – J. Papelino reported a request from Bradd Vickers, President of the Chenango County Farm Bureau, for use of the Firehouse to conduct an Agricultural Safety Program on Monday, August 19, 2019 from 2 p.m. – 5 p.m. They will provide the required insurance as well. Due to the timing of the event and the next Common Council meeting, approval is requested tonight. Ald. Zieno **moved** to approve the request for use of the Firehouse. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano, approved ayes all.

Re-Appointment of Assessor

Ald. Caldwell stated he has concerns regarding the re-appointment of the Assessor citing complaints from a couple of constituents. He reported that the persons in question had their assessments raised, and although they are not happy with their assessment, they have gotten over that part. Ald. Caldwell stated “they don’t feel like they were treated with dignity when they asked questions and seek information and that’s created a lot of distress in their

lives.” He also stated that he has seen no progress on the revaluation project. D. DuFour reminded Ald. Caldwell that it is the former Assessor who is working on that project, not the current Assessor. She further stated that she has never received or heard of a complaint regarding Lowe. Ald. Zieno suggested talking directly with the Assessor and Mayor Carnrike suggested speaking with the Board of Assessment Review members, saying a decision should not be based on 1 or 2 disgruntled persons. Mayor Carnrike stated she has heard nothing but positive things from the BAR members stating he is professional and works with them and then they are the ones who meet with the taxpayers and Ald. Zieno concurred. It was decided this would continue to the September Joint Committee meeting.

Department Head Reports

Finance Department

- ◆ **2020 Tax Cap** – D. DuFour presented the Committee with information on the tax cap in response to Ald. Caldwell’s questioning. She confirmed what she had already said, that the tax cap for everyone in NYS is the same this year as it was last year which is 2%.

Human Resources

- ◆ **Refill Custodian Position** – L. Murray reported that the Civil Service commission has approved the creation of a Custodian position for the City and she is now requesting permission to fill the position. This is a competitive position that will need to be put into the DPW union. There was discussion of increasing the previously discussed salary as the position duties fall in between the Cleaner and Maintenance Worker. Ald. Caldwell **moved** to approve filling the Custodian position and to bring the salary range to the Common Council. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey, approved ayes all.
- ◆ **Refill Police Officer Position** – L. Murray reported that J. Testani is leaving and asked for permission to re-fill the vacant Police Officer position. Ald. Caldwell moved to refill the position. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey, approved ayes all.
- ◆ **Grant Coordinator Position Update** – L. Murray reported that Lorraine Keckeisen was offered the Grants Coordinator position and will begin in September. This will be on the August Common Council agenda. The position competitive, in the union and starts at \$44,387.
- ◆ **2019 Budget Presentation** – L. Murray presented the Committee with the 2020 Human Resource budget. Discussion ensued regarding the salary. No changes in the ADP costs are expected at this time.

L. Murray reported that a draft of the revised Employee Handbook has been completed. Once the Committee has had a chance to review it, she would like it placed on the agenda for approval so that it can be distributed to employees. She has begun work on updating the roster cards and placing the information in electronic document format. Once completed, the next project will be updating the Job Descriptions. She has spoken to the School, Library and Housing Authority and they agree the descriptions should be updated.

Ald. Caldwell asked about the conversion from a Civil Service Commission to a Personnel Officer. D. DuFour spoke to NYS Civil Service and the job title of the person means nothing; it is the duties the person performs that is important. NYS Civil Service is sending her the exact duties that must be in the job description.

Police Department

- ◆ **Staffing Levels** – R. Marsh reported that currently there are 6 empty positions with another leaving in later August. One Officer is out due to injury which could mean a 9-month recovery. There is a lateral transfer coming in. He has emailed links regarding Police shortages and suggested they Google “Police Officer Shortage in 2019”. He further stated that test results for the upcoming Police exam won’t be received until November or December, the Police Academy attendees will graduate in the Fall of 2020. His concern is that he cannot send 6 officers to the Academy at the same time due to the lack of Field Training Officers who would have to train the new Officers. Chief Marsh would like the Council to consider implementing signing bonuses (as many Departments are doing) to attract Lateral Transfers to help with this situation. He and S. Burlison have been trying to cover the desk as he is concerned about Officer burn-out which is when mistakes can happen. He cited other places have a \$10,000 sign on bonus for certified Officers, saying that getting an additional 1 or 2 Officers would make a huge difference, saving on overtime and training costs. Mayor Carnrike suggested a \$7,500 sign on bonus. Ald. Jeffrey moved to recommend the Common Council implement a

\$7,500 sign on bonus. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano. Ald. Caldwell **moved** to enter executive session at 8:24 p.m. to discuss labor negotiations. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey, approved ayes all.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to exit executive session at 8:34 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Caldwell, approved ayes all.

Ald. Jeffrey withdrew his motion for a sign on bonus. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to have Chief Marsh, Director of Human Resources and the Director of Finance to negotiate with the PBA on the issue of a signing bonus. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano, approved ayes all.

Chief Marsh also requested the City modify the Police policy regarding tattoos and facial hair in an attempt to attract persons who would qualify for Police Officer positions but do not meet the no tattoos or facial hair policy. There would still be restrictions such as no tattoos on the neck, face, hands or head and the tattoos cannot be offensive. Facial hair would have a restriction as to length, etc. Chief Marsh stated that he also included in his email articles of other Departments which are doing the same thing. Discussion ensued regarding what is now the 21st Century and the culture has changed and decided this management policy can change with it.

Fire Department

- ◆ **Town of Norwich for Fire Contract** – J. Papelino reported there is a Town meeting next Monday. The City has made a counter proposal and hope this will be resolved next week.
- ◆ **2019 Fire Inspections** – J. Papelino informed the Committee that Fire Inspection will begin in case there are any questions or comments by residents or businesses.
- ◆ **July 28, 2109- 15 Call Day** – J. Papelino reported that on July 28, 2019 one shift responded to 15 calls, 7 of which were 2nd and 3rd calls. That means there was an ambulance out and another call came in at the same time. There were 2 Fire calls at the same time. One of those calls being at CIT which took a while since it was a rooftop unit and the security of the facility making things more difficult. He stated there has been a large increase in 2nd and 3rd calls.
- ◆ **County EMS Meeting** – J. Papelino reported there was a meeting on Monday and some progress is being made. He referenced Columbia County and what they are doing with their EMS services. An online webinar was recorded and sent to each member of the EMS Committee. The next meeting will be September 9, 2019.
- ◆ **Ambulance 2393** – J. Papelino reported that ambulance 2393 has a significant engine issue with a quote coming back from Matthew's at \$7,400. It became apparent that repairs would be an additional \$3,200 and Matthew's suggested a new long block at a cost of \$14,000 at the most, but would be like a new engine with a 3-year warranty. There is over 100,000 miles on the motor, so the decision was made to purchase the long block. There was discussion of the replacement of this ambulance within the next few years.
- ◆ **Year-to-date Overtime** – J. Papelino reported that as of August 2nd \$80,000 of the \$125,000 budgeted for overtime has been used. He stated they are down a Firefighter and June, July and August are heavy vacation months, and he is doing his best to keep the overtime down. Barring any injuries, he is estimating that overtime for the year will be near \$160,000. The results from the Firefighter Civil Service exam have not been received yet. Ald. Zieno asked if Papelino could provide a breakdown of what the overtime is covering ie: vacation coverage, injuries etc. Ald. Jeffrey asked if shifts could be shuffled to keep down overtime and Papelino said there is not much he can do in that respect. Vacation time has to be used or it is lost per the contract.
- ◆ **2019 Budget Presentation** – J. Papelino presented a draft of the 2020 Fire budget. Increases included a less than 1% in Personal Services, Fire Equipment, Employee Physicals, Contracted Services, Clothing and Ambulance Fuel. Reductions included Ambulance Equipment, Laundry Services, and Fire Fuel. He is still hoping to increase use of Fire Assistant hours. Ald. Jeffrey asked if \$150,000 was approved, would he make that mark? Chief Papelino remarked that he has no way of knowing, saying that if 2 people leave employment or injuries occur, no. If he

hadn't had a Firefighter leave, he would have hit the budgeted amount. He reported that Sherburne is paying Basic EMT's \$19 per hour and Sidney pays a Paramedic with no experience \$22 per hour and with experience \$25 per hour, making it difficult to recruit here. Ald. Caldwell stated he does not like getting to the end of the year and having to do a big transfer to cover overtime and asked that the Chief keep them apprised of the overtime so they are not taken by surprise. J. Papelino reminded the Council that he already gives them a monthly report with that information. Ald. Zieno pointed out that if there is an increase in call level, then there should be an increase in revenue as well and the true picture may not be seen until year end.

Code Enforcement

- ◆ **45 Silver St. Update** – Mayor Carnrike said she has contacted 2 companies to clean the floors. One can do the floors either next week or the following week. J. Papelino said once that is complete, staging of the house will be done and an Open House will be scheduled. There have been a few inquiries about the property.
- ◆ **RFP- 65 Silver St. and 33 Pleasant St.** - J. Papelino reported that RFP's for 65 Silver and 33 Pleasant have been sent out. Ald. Jeffrey asked about the status of 9-11 Grove Ave. sale. City Attorney Steven Natoli said he does not at this time, saying the purchaser has not contacted him. Natoli said if the purchaser does not want to continue he needs him to state so in writing. Ald. Zieno stated there have been other inquiries and if the time has expired then new a RFP should be put out. It was stated that there is a contract, and even though it has not been executed, there is no time is of the essence clause. The City Attorney and Director of Finance will continue in attempts to contact the purchaser. S. Natoli stated that going forward there will be a time is of the essence clause.
- ◆ **Screening Garbage From the Street** – Ald. Jeffrey stated he takes issue with multi-family properties especially on Westcott, Griffin and Clinton Sts. He stated that the Code says garbage must be screened from the street and would like to mandate that those with repeat garbage complaints be required to screen it. Chief Papelino said he will have the Ordinance Inspection Officer begin to look for garbage visible from the street.

Ald. Zieno asked about the property at 52 Sheldon St. which the City had taken for taxes. D. DuFour stated there had been 1 RFP received and has since been withdrawn. J. Papelino reported that the laws have changed as of June making the eviction process take up to a year and making any occupied property much more difficult to deal with.

Ald. Kays-Biviano asked if there were any updates on 33 Mitchell St. Mayor Carnrike has reached out to the owner and would like to sit down and discuss what his intentions are. She stated it would be the wrong message for a property owner to let their property fall into disrepair and then expect the taxpayers to pay to demolish the property. She also reached out to the Engineer as she feels he overstated the state of the building since not one more brick has fallen and he did not actually enter the building for inspection.

- ◆ **2019 Budget Presentation** – J. Papelino presented the draft of the 2020 Code Enforcement budget. Highlights of the budget include a Personal Services increase by 2%, with decreases in Equipment, Contracted Services, Telephone and Other. There was discussion of a purchase of a wide format printer/copier/scanner for approximately \$8,900, as the current one in Codes cannot update the firmware to work with the server. Also discussed was the status of the wide format printer located at the WWTP and if that could be used instead of making a new purchase. The status of the one located at the WWTP is unknown as E. Pepe has never used it. J. Papelino stated he would investigate to see if it was functioning and ask E. Pepe when he returned if they will use the machine. Ald. Jeffrey felt there is need for another Code Officer and **moved** that funds for it be added to the budget, whether that be a full or part time position. Seconded by Ald. Caldwell. Ald. Caldwell contemplated whether the City should let the County enforce NYS building codes and the City could enforce City Ordinances. It was pointed out that the Ordinance Inspector was only hired in January of 2019 and Mayor Carnrike reminded the Committee that with the addition of the Grant Coordinator beginning in September, A. Donnison will no longer need to take care of those Zoning and Planning duties. It was decided to put money into Contingency rather than creating and funding a position that may or may not be needed. Ald. Zieno stated whether in Contingency or in a Personal Services line,

the effect on the taxpayer would be the same and he is not in favor of it. Ald. Jeffrey withdrew his motion and went on record saying he feels there is a need for another Codes Officer. The subject will be moved for discussion to the September Joint Committee meeting.

DPW

◆ Water Treatment Plant Update – No update

- ◆ **Grant Received from NYS Lead Service Line Replacement** – D. DuFour reported the grant is for water service line replacement for residential customers who may still have lead pipes from the street to the home which must have been built before 1939 to qualify. DPW can test for a lead service by the customer calling us to set up an appointment. The City needs to decide whether City personnel will replace the line or if the customer should hire a plumber and then would be 100% reimbursed for the expenditure. It was determined that the easiest would be to have the homeowner to hire their own contractor and then be reimbursed.
- ◆ **2019 Sidewalk Program Update** – D. DuFour reported there are 17 homeowners who have applied for the program. Ald. Kays-Biviano was asked why it is allowed for a particular property to create a sidewalk from blacktop. D. DuFour explained the blacktop sidewalk was already existing and they are making a repair. If they were to replace it, then they would be required to replace it with appropriate materials. Ald. Jeffrey referenced Sherburne, stating the municipality replaces the sidewalks through a grant program they have applied to. He thought for 2020 that is something that should be looked into.
- ◆ **2019 Street Paving Update** – Mayor Carnrike was given the Notice to Proceed on July 31st. A. Eaton reported that they will begin work on August 12th and be done by the end of August.
- ◆ **Curb Cut on Hale/Prentice Street** – Ald. Jeffrey explained the request is from NYSEG for a curb cut on Prentice St. to have access from the road. NYSEG is leasing land from Curtis Lumber for about 1 year for a junction for a project taking place from Oxford, through Norwich and beyond. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to send to the Common Council the curb cut request. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano, approved ayes all. Ald. Zieno stated that NYSEG does not respond to tree trimming concerns and is proposing a 20% delivery charge increase. Ald. Jeffrey expressed displeasure with the current LED Street Light upgrades taking so long. Ald. Zieno **moved** to send a letter to NYSEG in objection to the delivery charge rate increase. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey, approved ayes all.

Other Items

- ◆ **LED Street Light Referral to Senator Fred Akshar and Assemblyman Cliff Crouch** – Ald. Jeffrey stated it has been 1 ½ years since making the agreement with NYSEG and fears this will not happen until 2021. He felt a letter to Senator Akshar and Rep. Crouch may help to move things along. It seems we are now being “punished” for being innovative and forward thinking for changing over to the LED lights with the proposed delivery charge rate increase. Ald. Jeffrey moved to contact the Senator and Assemblyman to take action with NYSEG. Seconded by Ald. Caldwell, approved ayes all.
- ◆ **DOT Crosswalk Upgrades** – Ald. Jeffrey stated the DOT is ready to go, however there is one issue. The red “pavers” in the current crosswalks are not ADA compliant. Replacing the “pavers” with a similar but compliant material is \$60,000 or they could find an alternative material but that would delay the project. Common Council approval is not needed. Ald. Caldwell thought B.I.D. should be informed as they were involved in the “paver” installation. Ald. Jeffrey disputed that, saying it was a City project back in 2004. The consensus of the Committee was public safety come first and to go ahead without the red “pavers”.
- ◆ **EMS Fee Schedule** – J. Papelino explained that the EMS fee schedule had to be clarified with the items that are not charged for. Explanation of those call responses that at not charged for was discussed. Ald. Jeffrey asked if this is for the contracted coverage area. J. Papelino confirmed it was. Ald. Jeffrey was fine with this if Mutual Aid calls (excluding DOA) were not included in the “no charge fee schedule”. J. Papelino will investigate how many of those calls would have historically been affected. Ald. Jeffrey moved to recommend the Common Council approve the Fee Schedule for the EMS contracted areas. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano, approved ayes all.
- ◆ **2020 Non-unit Compensation Schedule** – Ald. Caldwell distributed a proposed non-unit compensation schedule to the Committee. He reported D. DuFour had put some numbers together for a couple different scenarios. Looking at 2019, the inflation rate, looking at the Fed Funds rate and what is happening with China, the indications are that the economy is slowing, his recommendation for 2020 is for a 2% increase with the exception of the Youth Bureau

Director making it more than 2% at \$25,000. Ald. Caldwell **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve the proposed non-unit compensation schedule. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey, approved ayes all.

Executive Session – Ald. Caldwell **moved** to enter executive session at 10:10 p.m. to discuss the history of a particular individual. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey, approved ayes all.

Ald. Zieno **moved** to exit executive session at 10:22 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano, approved ayes all.

Adjournment

Ald. Zieno **moved** to adjourn the Joint Committee Meeting at 10:22 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano, approved ayes all.