

CITY OF NORWICH
JOINT MEETING of the
PUBLIC SAFETY / PUBLIC WORKS and
FINANCE/PERSONNEL COMMITTEES
March 3, 2020

Present:

Mayor Shawn Sastri
Ald. Matthew Caldwell
Ald. Brian Doliver
Ald. Nancy Allaire
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
DPW Superintendent Edward Pepe
Youth Bureau Director Robert Mason
Fire Chief Jan Papelino
Police Chief Rodney Marsh
EMO A Jones
Deputy City Clerk Agnes Eaton

Supervisor Robert M. Jeffrey

Media Representative: Catherine Sasso, The Evening Sun

Absent

Supervisor James McNeil

Ald. Jeffrey called the joint meeting of the Public Works/Public Safety and Finance/Personnel Committees to order at 6:33 p.m. at the Council Chambers.

Approval of Minutes – Ald. Zieno **moved** to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2020 meeting. Seconded by Ald. Caldwell, approved ayes all.

Correspondence

- ◆ **NHS Request for Ambulance at Commencement** - Ald. Kays-Biviano **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve the request from NHS for ambulance presence at Commencement on Saturday, June 27, 2020. Seconded by Ald. Caldwell, approved ayes all.
- ◆ **Norwich/Oxford Little League Parade** - Ald. Kays-Biviano **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve the request from the Norwich/Oxford Little League for Police assistance with the parade on Saturday, April 25, 2020 beginning at 9:30 a.m. The parade will begin from TOPS parking lot, proceed down East Main St. to Midland Dr. and ending at the ball fields at the High School. Seconded by Ald. Zieno, approved ayes all.
- ◆ **Dollars for Scholars Bottle Drive** – Ald. Zieno **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve the request from Dollars for Scholars for use of the Firehouse on Sunday, May 3, 2020 from 9 a.m. – noon for a bottle drive. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano, approved ayes all

Department Head Reports

EMO

FEMA Reimbursement - Halloween Flood – A Jones reported the flood of October 31 and November 1, 2020 was declared a Federal Disaster and they have been working with the State to recoup costs associated with the flood which are estimated to be around \$20,000. FEMA pays 75% with NYS paying 12.5% 04 25% which has not been determined at this time. He is working with J. Papelino and E. Pepe as they have not been through this process before. FEMA's process has changed, requiring the municipality to do the paperwork and then FEMA will check it over.

Community Response Team – A Jones reported that this group originated at the United Methodist Church and will be a response team concentrating their efforts on post disaster cleanup such as after a flood. This will be under the auspices of Community Organization Active in Disasters (COAD). Currently there is a joint

COAD with Delaware and Otsego Counties and this group would like to join those Counties instead of creating their own separate COAD.

Flood Mitigation Committee – A Jones reported that the Mayor had set up a meeting for March 19th. Jones will have presentations for the group to help them understand the subject better. He felt there are many misconceptions regarding flood mitigation – for example, it’s not as simple as dredging the creek which will not fix the problem. Solutions are not cheap, but the committee will explore all options. He referenced speaking with Soil and Water groups, as well as seeing a presentation from the City of Ithaca who also has creeks running through their City. Ald. Zieno thought the money received from FEMA could be used towards flood mitigation, perhaps for a study. Jones stated that the County is renewing their flood mitigation plan. Each municipality is required to have a mitigation plan. The County takes on the planning and then each municipality signs on to the plan. It is a year-long process requiring hiring a consultant.

Finance Department

Unredeemed Tax Properties – D. DuFour distributed a list of properties taken for unpaid taxes. She asked if RFP’s could be started on the 4 vacant properties and it was decided RFP’s could begin. She stated the eviction process has begun for the 2 occupied properties the City recently took title to. It was discussed that there was some interest in 83 S. Broad St. as well as sending letters of interest to the neighbors of the vacant lot on Miller St. as the lot is too small to be built upon.

Records Management Grant – D. DuFour reported that a grant for Records Management is being applied for and is due on March 13, 2020 and is looking for support from the Council to submit the grant. L. Keckeisen, Grants Coordinator, explained the grant is for \$75,000 which would be used to hire a consultant to perform a Records Management inactive records inventory which would include historical records. The inventory would enable a database to be established, records to be placed in clean boxes and labeled appropriately with its contents and disposition date and for disposition of obsolete records. Consultation with a NYS Archives Specialist has been ongoing since October 2019 with his recommendation to move the records from their current location as soon as possible to avoid further damage to the records. Rental space at The Eaton Center is \$1,500 per month and is intended as a temporary home during the inventory process. During this time, it would allow the City to evaluate a renovation to the old WWTP to move all records from the basement to the first floor. Moving the records and doing the inventory would save time for record retrieval and thereby save money, prevent possible fines from damaged records requested in a FOIL request, as well improve environmental safety to employees. L. Keckeisen stated that if awarded the grant, NYS Archives wants to know the City is committed to maintaining it and we will due our due diligence to giving them a return on their investment. D. DuFour added that part of that commitment is to make sure they are going to be placed in a clean facility and not where they could become damaged again. L. Keckeisen reported that Premiere Mold Inspection and Testing requires the building to be empty in order to do remediation. Ald. Kays-Biviano suggested using the house at 45 Silver St. for Records Management. D. DuFour stated that the Restore NY Grant that built the house will not allow that. The attributes of The Eaton Center as a rental space was discussed as well as the rent as being the only out-of-pocket cost for the City. Once the renovations to the old WWTP were done, they would be moved back to WWTP. E. Pepe stated they would only be moved back if it is the most cost-effective solution. The most cost-effective solution could be to continue to rent at The Eaton Center. Ald. Caldwell stated it took a long time for the records to end up in this condition and it would take a long time to get them out. He felt The Eaton Center was not the answer but did not have an alternate suggestion and thought other options should be looked at. He would support applying for the grant and if it was received, then talk about where they should go. Ald. Doliver stated that applying for the grant has put “our backs to the wall”. He doesn’t care where they go as long as they suffice the grant. D. DuFour stated that they cannot wait to receive the grant before investigating other options as the project must be completed within a certain timeframe with the inventory itself taking approximately 10 months. Ald. Kays-Biviano **moved** to commit the Common Council to the stipulation set forth in the Records Management Grant that the City will follow through on the conditions of the Grant. Seconded by Ald. Doliver, approved ayes all.

Establishing Grievance Day – D. DuFour referenced the details of an email outlining the need to change Grievance Day to the second Wednesday following the fourth Tuesday of May each year. This will still allow the Assessor to get the Tax Roll finalized for this year. This year’s Grievance Day will be Wednesday, June 3rd. Ald. Zieno **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve the change. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey, approved ayes all.

Ald. Caldwell asked D. DuFour if all Annual Vendor permit holders have renewed their licenses. DuFour reported that 3 have renewed and the other, Poppy’s Food Truck, is a new vendor.

2020 Sidewalk Program - Ald. Jeffrey had asked D. DuFour to put together information on the Sidewalk Program which has been distributed to the Committee. Last year's cost to residents was \$32/linear foot. D. DuFour and E. Pepe have determined that the cost can be reduced to \$22/linear foot. Jeffrey stated that last year 15 properties participated in the program and hoped that more may participate this year. He **moved** to recommend the Common Council recommend continuing the program at the \$22/linear foot rate for 2020. Seconded by Ald. Caldwell, approved ayes all. Ald. Kays-Biviano asked if anything can be done for those properties who have slate sidewalks in very bad condition and won't replace their sidewalk. Code Enforcement Officer Amy Donnison stated that we do have a sidewalk ordinance and can be cited, however the ordinance does allow repairs and replacements with the same material as the property currently has if the owner chooses. They are not obligated to switch to concrete. There was discussion of using a grinder to even out sidewalks. Ald. Doliver asked the status of the Sidewalk "districts" the Planning Commission had been investigating and A. Donnison reported that had been tabled last year.

Fire Department

False Fire Alarm Ordinance – J. Papelino explained there have been a couple properties which have had recurring false alarms, one as many as 15 times. He distributed a proposed False Alarm Ordinance which on the 5th occurrence a fee would be issued. Ald. Doliver reported that he spoke with Chief Marsh regarding a similar situation with false security alarms and thought a similar ordinance for the Police Department should be implemented. Ald. Zieno moved to forward the False Alarm Ordinance to the Common Council to set the Public Hearing. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey, approved ayes all.

Fire Department Staffing – J. Papelino stated that last month, per FLSA law, people can work up to 348 hours a month. He indicated several employees had come close to that mark in February [indicating that had there been a major incident such as a fire, firefighters would go over 348 hours]. Working that many hours and forcing 2-3 people every week to work in order to cover a shift takes a toll on employees. Full staffing is needed or overtime is going to be "horrendous". Ald. Caldwell was interested in options being discussed and acknowledged the additional stressors that pertain to those providing public safety services.

Medicare supplemental payments – J. Papelino referenced an email received from United NY Ambulance stating that they are trying a different approach this year by asking for 5 suggestions to send back to the committee that the Governor has set up. An example given was to have ambulances take patients to an available urgent care facility instead of an Emergency Room.

Vision's Credit Union – J. Papelino acknowledged receipt of a donation of \$785 from Vision's Credit Union through their "Blue Jean Friday" program which was placed in the equipment reserve fund.

Code Enforcement

45 Silver St. - J. Papelino reported that A. Donnison has shown 45 Silver twice in the last week, but no offer has been received.

McDonald's Upgrade – J. Papelino reported that McDonald's renovations will include upgrades to the bathrooms and the front counter area as well as upgrades to the building itself.

Mirabito's Fuel Offices – J. Papelino reported that Mirabito's Fuel Office will be moving from Mitchell St. to Hale St. The trucks from Mitchell St. will now be operating from Sherburne.

Women's Health Center – J. Papelino reported that Certificate of Occupancy has been issued and they will be moving into the offices in the Eaton Center. Chenango Memorial delivered a series of plans for the next phase of renovation.

NYS Building Code Update – J. Papelino reported that new building code updates will take affect May 12, 2020. One of the changes will be the regulation of mobile food trucks by the State. Any type of smoke, oil mist and the like are now regulated and must be inspected. Another change will be the necessity for a Crowd Manager for events over a given number of people. Organizers must now have such a person or persons to inform attendees what to do and where to go in case of an emergency during their event. Both of these changes

may impact many of the events held within the City. A. Donnison stated there are always exceptions but must wait until the new NYS Code Book is released. Regarding the food trucks, she stated that any production of grease vapor will now be required to a suppression system and ventilation system in place and will be issued an operating permit. There will be no transition period – May 12, 2020 they will take effect. Unknown at this time is if a food truck (driven) and a food trailer (hailed) will both be affected. Ald. Zieno thought perhaps those recurring event organizers should be notified ahead of time. A. Donnison reported that the County is aware of these changes as well.

Ald. Jeffrey thanked the Fire Department for their response on Birdsall St. as well as for giving the NHS Wrestlers a Welcome Home from the NYS Wrestling Championships.

Human Resources

Refill Firefighter Position – L. Murray stated there is a vacancy in the Fire Department and requested permission to refill it. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to refill the Firefighter position. Seconded by Ald. Caldwell, approved ayes all.

DPW

Surplus List – E. Pepe distributed a list of items he would like to declare surplus in order to dispose of them. Some of the items date back to the 1970's. Ald. Doliver **moved** to recommend the Common Council declare them surplus and authorize their disposal. Seconded by Ald. Caldwell, approved ayes all.

RBC Broken Shaft – E. Pepe reported that an RBC is broken and will cost approximately \$25,000 and will come from Waste Water Reserves. With the broken RBC they are down in treatment capacity. Ald. Caldwell **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve the purchase and transfer of funds. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano, approved ayes all.

E. Pepe reported the flushing of Dead Ends will commence this week.

Ald. Caldwell reported he had attended a B.I.D. meeting and was told that in the past the City DPW has refinished the steel benches and garbage cans. E. Pepe stated that they are not City property and staffing levels will make doing so difficult. Ald. Caldwell will check with the City Attorney to see if it is possible if not City owned and if it is, then options could be looked at.

Other Items

Animal Control – Ald. Kays-Biviano related 2 recent incidents with skunks and thought that the City needed an Animal Control Officer. She stated the 2 incidents resulted rabies shots to the victims which cost the County \$13,000. If the City had an Animal Control Officer that could have captured the skunk, it would have saved the County \$13,000 for the rabies shots that were given. Ald. Caldwell thought it was worth a discussion of how to do it, not whether we should have one. L. Murray reported there currently is no job description for City Animal Control Officer, but research has begun on the associated costs. R. Marsh stated that if this were to be done, the position would also encompass the duties of dog control and parking as well as animal control which requires a separate license from the DEC. R. Mason reported that in the mid '90's when there was a skunk and racoon problem in the City, a certified wildlife removal person had been hired and the situation was taken care of within 2 years. This allowed the situation to be taken care of while not adding additional City staff. Ald. Allaire asked if there was a possibility of having a liaison between City Police and the DEC. A Jones stated that DEC does not catch animals. He stated that the reason there are no Animal Control Officers in the County is because then you potentially "open Pandora's box" for cats, taking them to the SPCA and incurring those costs. Ald. Doliver asked for a quote on wildlife removal. R. Marsh stated that they had an up-to-date list from the Chenango County Health Department received after these 2 recent incidents. Ald. Caldwell asked if a wildlife removal specialist would also take care of the crow problem. A Jones reported that noise is the best deterrent. There was discussion of the previous efforts in past years. The P.A. system that had been used was turned over to B.I.D. Ald. Doliver reported that Guernsey Library had purchased a small noise maker that goes off intermittently and it has been very effective. Ald. Doliver said investigation into the options should continue, but that a professional should be hired in the meantime. L. Murray will continue to work on the position. D. DuFour pointed out that this is an unbudgeted position with the salary being \$27,561 - \$36,484 without benefits which would add about \$16,000. She asked if the County has a position similar to an Animal Control Officer. Ald. Caldwell thought they did and the position is called Public Health Sanitarian which takes care of rabid animals. D. DuFour wondered if this would be a duplication of services. Ald. Jeffrey thought it was worth a call to Isiah Sutton at the Department of Health.

Term Limits – Ald. Zieno stated that term limits seemed to be a topic his constituents wanted to talk about for local elected officials and wondered if there was in interest in pursuing the matter. There was discussion of the pros and cons of term limits. Also discussed was whether the 2-year term of Mayor was too short and questioned whether it should be changed to a 4-year term. D. DuFour stated that the change of terms would require a referendum. Ald. Kays-Biviano thought the Mayor should be full-time and not part-time. Ald. Zieno also received feedback from those who had concerns that term limits would force out those officials who have been effective. He thought that City employees should give feedback as well. He will talk to the City Attorney. Ald. Doliver also thought that raises for Alderpersons and the Mayor should also be looked at since there have been none since 1994.

Executive Session – Ald. Caldwell **moved** to enter executive session at 8:20 p.m. to discuss contract negotiations and the employment history of a particular individual. Seconded by Ald. Allaire, approved ayes all.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to exit executive session at 9:30 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Allaire, approved ayes all.

Adjournment

Ald. Kays-Biviano **moved** to adjourn the Joint Committee Meeting at 9:30 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Doliver, approved ayes all