

CITY OF NORWICH
JOINT MEETING of the
PUBLIC SAFETY / PUBLIC WORKS and
FINANCE/PERSONNEL COMMITTEES
June 1, 2021

Present:

Mayor Shawn Sastri
Ald. Matthew Caldwell
Ald. Brian Doliver
Ald. Nancy Allaire
Ald. Linda Kays-Biviano
Ald. David Zieno
Ald. Robert D. Jeffrey

Supervisor Robert M. 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
EMO Trainee Stephen Cady
Deputy City Clerk Agnes Eaton

Media Representative: none

Absent

Supervisor James McNeil

Ald. Jeffrey called the joint meeting of the Public Works/Public Safety and Finance/Personnel Committees to order at 6:30 p.m. at the Council Chambers.

Approval of Minutes – Ald. Kays-Biviano **moved** to approve the minutes of the May 4, 2021 meeting. Seconded by Ald. Caldwell, approved ayes all.

Fire Department

Ambulance Status – J. Papelino reported that all 4 ambulances are in service and working well.

FD Truck Maintenance - J. Papelino reported that the pumps on the fire trucks are undergoing service. #233 be needing additional work. The costs of service are distributed between the volunteer company and the City. #237 ladder truck also needs additional work.

EMS Calls Outside CON – J. Papelino reported EMS service activated 19 times for service outside the CON (Certificate of Need) in the last 2 weeks including 6 to Oxford, 3 to McDonough, 3 to New Berlin with the remainders to other municipalities.

Replace Retiring Firefighter – J. Papelino reported that Captain Gray is retiring in October and requested to fill the Captain's position pending results of the Civil Service test. He stated that having a full staff makes a big difference in keeping the amount of overtime in check. There will be 2 academies starting in September and would like to be ready to send someone as soon as there is an eligible list. Ald. Caldwell **moved** to approve refilling the Captain's position. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano, approved ayes all.

Code Enforcement

Occupied Properties – J. Papelino reported on the various city-owned properties that are still occupied. The City is accruing costs with these properties, one in particular is \$2,500 in water bills. August 31, 2021 is currently the last day for the moratorium on evictions. D. DuFour stated the City Attorney will be transferring the properties into the City's name and will begin the eviction process.

Lawns - J. Papelino reported that more than 35 lawns have been mowed so far. This includes city-owned residential properties as well as those in violation. Approximately 70 doorhangers had been distributed.

Ald. Jeffrey asked if the tree at 29 Division, which is city-owned, could be cut back or trimmed and the garbage that has accumulated be removed.

Inspections - J. Papelino reported that rental inspections are continuing, as well as those done at Chenango Memorial and the construction on Hale and Birdsall Streets. Chentronics flood plain proposal will be going out to bid and Opportunities for Chenango will be turning their garage into offices and a training area. Notices for 22 vehicles were issued with 20 being resolved.

DPW

S. Broad/E. Main Water Main Replacement – E. Pepe reported he has been looking for fund for water main replacements. He has applied to Senator Schumer’s office for funds and is waiting for a response. He will also be contacting the USDA which requires an engineer to design the project. He requested authorization for RFP’s for engineering services. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to authorize RFP’s for engineering services for the water main project. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano, approved ayes all. The City will most likely have to match funds and the stimulus money being received could be used for this project. Short term financing will probably be needed as well. E. Pepe said he is in bi-weekly contact with the D.O.T. Disruption for the Gus Macker tournament will try to be worked around as well.

Water Main Replacement Project (Local streets) – E. Pepe reported additional streets he is seeking funding for, slated for what he called phase II of water main replacements, were Adams, American, Brown Ave., Brown St., Conkey, Elm, Auburn, Mechanic, Prospect, Rowley, Silver and W. Midland Dr. He applied for a \$150,000 ARC grant with a \$150,000 City match. USDA, CFA, and other funding will be explored. The cost of the project is estimated between \$10 – \$12 million.

Water Meter Grant – E. Pepe reported a \$1 million grant was received for the water meter replacement project. The next step will be to contract with EFC, put the project out to bid, award the bid and begin constructing the project. He will be meeting this week with EFC to go over documents and will be in contract by October.

Mini Excavator Bid – E. Pepe reported there were five bids received for the mini excavator with Alta Construction of Syracuse, NY being the low bidder and who he is recommending to award the bid to for \$69,995. Funds will be coming from HR28 Water Equipment and HR42 Sewer Equipment. Ald. Kays-Biviano **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve awarding the bid to Alta Construction for \$69,995. Seconded by Ald. Caldwell, approved ayes all.

Plow Truck Bid – E. Pepe reported there were two bids received for the two plow trucks and recommended awarding to the low bidder, Ferarrio Ford of Elmira, NY, at \$84,807 each for a total of \$169,614. Funds will come from HR26 Highway Equipment. Ald. Caldwell **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve awarding the bid to Ferarrio Ford for \$169,614. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano, approved ayes all. Delivery of the trucks by December is hopeful due to the microchip shortage.

Street Repaving – Touring Route Money – E. Pepe reported that new this year from the State is Touring Route Money available for paving which is similar to C.H.I.P.S. For the City, this would be Route 23 covering Rexford St., Pleasant St. and Plymouth St. He is looking to add Rexford to the paving schedule this year in order to use the \$378,797.38 in Touring Route funds, which would require a change order to the contractor awarded the 2021 paving bid. Friends of the Museum District will be contacted for any effects to their project. When asked about the effect of the change order to DPW, Pepe stated that the DPW is pushed to the limit right now. He stated that the Touring Route money should be used first, as the C.H.I.P.S. money can be rolled over to next year if necessary. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend the Common Council add Rexford St. to the 2021 paving schedule. Seconded by Ald. Zieno, approved ayes all.

Pickleball – E. Pepe reported he received an estimate of \$1,200 for painting pickleball lines on the southeast tennis court. There was discussion of doing just the lines, buying permanently placed nets or renting nets out, the existence of school district and YMCA pickleball courts. Also discussed was the feasibility of creating a new designated court for pickleball, it’s location and planning for construction in subsequent budgets with an estimated cost of between \$50,000 - \$100,000. Discussion of organizations fundraising for the construction similar to the skate park and dog park was also discussed. No action for painting lines was taken and the consensus was to address a permanent solution in the budget.

Responding to questions asked, E. Pepe said there is currently not a schedule for stump removal of trees removed by the City; the area between the street and the curb where street signs exist is the responsibility of the property owner to mow and trim around; he will investigate the NYSEDA Clean Energy Program for any available funds.

Police Department

Patrol Car for 2021 – R. Marsh reported that the new car from last year will not be here until August due to the economy, therefore he would like approval to go to bid now for this year's new patrol car to avoid any additional delays. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to approve going to bid for the patrol car. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano, approved ayes all.

Computer for Patrol Car for 2020 – R. Marsh received a quote for the new computer for the 2020 patrol car and is requesting a transfer of \$7,954.28 left over from the U.S. Marshal seizure account to his equipment line. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve the transfer. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano, approved ayes all.

CAB Recommendations – R. Marsh asked reviewed two of the CAB staffing recommendations with the Committee – a Secretary II with a full-time starting wage of \$15.88 and the Dog Control/Parking position with a full-time starting wage of \$13.46. The positions are union and non-union respectively with the Secretary II position already having been created. Ald. Jeffrey questioned the feasibility of the Dog Control/Parking position if the Court is not doing anything with the tickets. R. Marsh added that this position would also put up barricades and temporary No Parking signs when needed such as for special events. There was discussion of the positions being part-time instead of full-time, as well as the money not being in the 2021 budget. Ald. Jeffrey pointed out that adding the two positions would create a tax increase above the 2% tax cap. Ald. Caldwell asked if the Dog Control position could also handle other animal issues and Marsh stated that there is an additional license that would be needed through the DEC to do so. R. Marsh said that the Secretary II would assist in the mandated DEMS process which will relieve him of much of those duties. Arrests are up by 115 from last year so far. Ald. Caldwell **moved** to approve filling the Secretary II in the Police Department at the full-time entry rate as soon as a person can be found. Seconded by Ald. Doliver. Ald. Zieno felt the position should be discussed for next year's budget and Aids. Allaire and Jeffrey questioned where funds were coming from in this year's budget. Ald. Zieno said by hiring now, the position is effectively added to next year's budget and he would like to see the budget prior to adding positions. Ald. Caldwell amended his motion that the position be filled no sooner than June 15, 2021. Ald. Doliver seconded, approved 4 – 1 with Ald. Kays-Biviano abstaining and Ald. Zieno voting nay.

Ald. Zieno remarked that he does not see any speeding tickets being issued according to the monthly Police report. R. Marsh stated they have made 76 arrests in one month and 79 in a previous month, making speeding tickets not the top priority. He further reported that the four new Officers were not yet radar-certified, however have now become trained with the other two will be within the next month or two. The amount of hours officers spend in the station doing DEMS is also a factor. Aids. Zieno and Caldwell hope that adding the Secretary II position will help with the situation.

Ald. Caldwell questioned the height of the All-Way Stop signs on Locust St. saying they seem high and many driver's don't see them and wondered if they could be lowered. R. Marsh would check on the specifications on the signs.

Finance Department

Capital Reserve Transfer – Lead Line Replacement Project – D. DuFour reported that a Capital Project for the Lead Line Replacement Project and a transfer of \$500,000 from Capital Reserve into the Capital Project to pay for the project upfront as grant funds are on a reimbursement basis. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve the transfer of funds into the Capital Project. Seconded by Ald. Caldwell, approved ayes all.

Other Capital Reserve Transfers – D. DuFour distributed information regarding her recommendations for transferring leftover funds to Reserves after 2020 has been closed out. Included in the information was an idea of what future projects the funds could be used for such as renovations at City Hall, paving of City-owned parking lots, body cams, Police radios, Police car, ambulance replacement, power stretchers, auto pulse, fire engine replacement, new trucks for DPW, and skate park resurfacing. Transfers into Water and Sewer reserves are not earmarked for any particular projects. Ald. Caldwell **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve the transfers. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey, approved ayes all.

Occupancy Tax – D. DuFour reported information gathered by her research on Occupancy Tax saying the tax must be authorized by the NYS Legislature in order to amend a NYS Tax Law. Currently Chenango County has a 4% Occupancy Tax which was authorized by NYS in 2019 and began collecting in 2021. Their revenue for 2020 was budgeted for \$40,000 with an actual of \$40,232 and \$61,421 is budgeted for 2021. There are 57

Counties in NY and 46 of them have an occupancy tax of between 3% and 5%. Approximately 25 municipalities that collect occupancy tax, most of them downstate areas. Closer to Norwich, Cortland and Ithaca have an occupancy tax. There are an estimated 13 businesses within the City the tax would affect. Based on a 1% tax would result in an estimated \$15,000 revenue per year. The local government is responsible for the enforcement, collection, issuance of certificate of authority, and processing returns. Discussion included the cost of staff to collect \$15,000, the perception of adding the tax, the possible high overhead to collect a low return, and the difficulty in enforcement. Ald. Zieno stated that the tax burden would not be on residents, but on visitors and suggested charging 2% and many concurred that 1% was not enough. With the legislative session ending June 10th, it was decided to leave this for a later discussion.

Sales Tax History – D. DuFour distributed five years of sales tax history as requested. To date, this year is up 14.6% over last year. The City is on target to hit the 2021 budgeted amount.

Ald. Caldwell said dog licensing fees have not changed in nine years and wondered how many licenses there were. D. DuFour stated that the number of licenses has gone down drastically and estimated that revenue is about half of what is used to be. She felt it was a good time to review the fee schedule and will add it to the July Joint Committee agenda.

Ald. Caldwell said several years ago he had a curb cut request approved but did not have the work done and wondered if he needed to make another request. As it was previously approved, E. Pepe would take a look at it but another request was not needed.

Other Items

Sign Ordinance – Political Signs – A. Donnison distributed a draft of a proposed Ordinance change regarding political signs to be in line with the Supreme Court ruling concerning political signs. The Ordinance states that signs cannot be placed in the City's right of way between the curb and sidewalk. This was questioned and A. Donnison explained that since the number of signs cannot be regulated, having 15 signs in the right of way could cause an obstruction of view making it a safety hazard. Ald. Caldwell **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve the proposed Ordinance change with the "not in the City right of way" removed. Seconded by Ald. Kays-Biviano, approved ayes all.

Ald. Jeffrey asked if the Committee would consider taking funds in the 2021 budget from a discontinued position to fund another Code Enforcement Officer. He felt that the duties currently being done by a Code Enforcement officer for Planning and Zoning could be handed off. He was not looking for a vote tonight, just something to think about. Ald. Caldwell agreed, stating that the position should be focused on Ordinance Inspection so others can focus on the more technical stuff. Ald. Caldwell asked A. Donnison if he is going in the right direction with his thoughts. A. Donnison felt that a position more like Todd Dreyer held (Planning and Community Development Specialist) would be of help, then perhaps a part time Ordinance Inspector could be added. Discussion included the increased Code violations and that when the moratorium on evictions ended, things would get even worse.

Executive Session – Ald. Caldwell **moved** to enter executive session at 8:46 p.m. to discuss the employment history of a particular individual. Seconded by Ald. Doliver, approved ayes all.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to exit executive session at 9:24 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Caldwell, approved ayes all.

Adjournment

Ald. Kays-Biviano **moved** to adjourn the Joint Committee Meeting at 9:29 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Caldwell, approved ayes all