

City of Norwich
Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
Norwich City Court

January 21, 2013
7:00 PM

Present: D. DeForest, L. Bunce, M. Stewart, S. Prentice, H. Graves

Absent: R. Mirabito,

Staff: T. Dreyer, A. Donnison

Also Present: Mayor J. Maiurano

I. Call to Order:

Vice-Chair D. DeForest called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM. S. Prentice made a motion to accept the minutes of October 22, 2012, seconded by L. Bunce. Ayes all.

D. DeForest stated that there are 2 new members on the Planning Commission. Kathy Campbell has been appointed a regular member and Jason Miller has been appointed as an alternate member.

II. Comprehensive Plan Regional Issues Review:

Todd Dreyer distributed copies of draft proposed revisions of the Regional Issues portion of the Comprehensive Plan as part of the ongoing project to update the plan section by section. T. Dreyer stated that at the time the decision was made to review this section he did not realize it was only pages long – that however does not reduce its significance to the plan. A lot has changed in the area since the 2003 Plan was adopted. A few of the changes are: the NYS &W Railroad has declared a suspension of service through the city, the Empire Zone is now defunct, there has been additional extensions of water and sewer service to the Town of Norwich, NYS Route 12 has undergone some substantial improvements – most of that has been in the southern part of the county.

The state should be reaching a decision soon regarding hydrofracking. Whatever the decision is it will have an impact on the city. The city could benefit from businesses that are ancillary to fracking. M. Stewart noted that the City owns a fair amount of property that is located outside of the city limits may have natural gas under it and asked if the state approves drilling would it be on the city's agenda to pursue this to use for municipal purposes and to increase revenue. Mayor Maiurano stated that of course the city would look into it if and when the state approves drilling as we would want to utilize any benefit there would be. D. DeForest inquired about the seismic test results that were done in the area to confirm the location of gas in the Chenango Lake area as well property near the WWTP. Mayor Maiurano stated that yes, these tests confirmed there is gas located on city property in those areas. S. Grippaldi noted that you can go online and view a comprehensive map that shows this area all the way down into

Pennsylvania showing the area that is rich in gas. M. Stewart stated she read an article where a school tapped into this gas and is using it to heat their school as well as using the revenue to offset their tax base and hopes that if New York State moves forward with approving drilling that the City of Norwich will be able to take advantage of these rich resources.

T. Dreyer stated that the State has made grants available to study the cost efficiency on municipalities consolidating and sharing services. In these economic tough times more and more municipalities are investigating this as a way to save money.

In regards to transportation T. Dreyer noted that the more accessible our area is the better the chances of development are. D. DeForest stated that several months ago she heard there was an issue at the airport regarding gas and inquired if anyone knew if that was resolved? T. Dreyer was not sure but would try to find out. M. Stewart noted that the airport used to rely heavily on P & G and that since they have pulled so much of their business out of the area the impact is bound to have an effect on airport business. D. DeForest stated the NY Central Mutual Insurance also had used it in the past but was uncertain how much they used it now.

T. Dreyer stated that shred services, such as fire and ambulance, continue to rise. Also areas such as parks, skating rink and the pool are supported by City taxpayers these facilities are used by residents outside of the city. There are some programs that some of the outlying towns pay a fee to the city so that their residents may participate. S. Grippaldi stated that when his family went to the swimming pool this summer they asked you upon entering for your address because they were tracking who was using the pool most – city residents or other town residents. Mayor Maiurano stated that they had the numbers so they knew how many that went to the pool were from where as well as with other programs but did not have those numbers readily available. Mayor Maiurano also noted that we do get reimbursement from the State for some of our programs. D. DeForest stated that if minimum wage increases it will have a direct impact on our current Youth Bureau activities. M. Stewart stated that in other towns people pay for what Norwich gives for free, such as swimming lessons, tennis lessons, etc.

M. Stewart asked if all the 2010 Census data was available. T Dreyer stated that the data is available and it will be integrated into the demographics section of the comprehensive plan. M. Stewart asked if the city population changed. Mayor Maiurano stated it dropped by approximately 200 and that the majority of the decrease was in the 20 – 40 year old group. H. Graves asked if the population dropped percentage wise for other municipalities in the county as well. Mayor Maiurano stated that he thought the whole county lost about 2,000 overall but wasn't positive. M. Stewart noted that if it was 20 – 40 year olds where the largest drop in population is then we have an aging population here and that access to health care is very important. S. Grippaldi stated that where he lived on Long Island there was a hospital nearby but no one in the area used it due to its bad reputation for care – everyone drove out of their way for another hospital. S. Grippaldi stated when he was in need of a hospital for a family member locals told him not to use Chenango Memorial Hospital but rather he should go to Hamilton or Cooperstown because he would not get adequate care here in Norwich. D. Cassabaugh stated that a lot has changed in the past several years. Chenango Memorial is aware of the poor image they had in the community and has taken steps to improve that. D. DeForest noted that bad experience stories spread more quickly in a small town and stay in the memories longer. D. Cassabaugh also noted that Chenango Memorial has a large Medicaid patient base and is also a medicare dependent hospital and has been operating in the black for the past 8 years. D. Cassabaugh stated that physician recruitment for this area is difficult, hard

to get them to stay in the area which in turn limits some offerings here that other areas have such as expanded evening hours at the walk-in center.

T. Dreyer noted that even though our area has lost many significant employers in past years we are starting to see signs of re-growth. CZ USA, a gun manufacturer is moving into the Borden Avenue facility and will be expanding, Golden Artists will be expanding their business into the former Apple Converting/Norwich Shoe building on Hale Street to name a couple. B. Cummings stated that even though they are not in the City of Norwich, Chobani has made a huge impact and employs many city residents. M. Stewart expressed concern regarding the Chenango Courts taking over additional buildings and taking them off the tax rolls for the purpose of consolidating county court systems because this hurts our tax base. Mayor Maiurano stated that since early 1980's there has been \$31 million taken from our tax base. This encompasses everything from the current Eaton Center – which is taxable but at a significant reduction from when it was a pharmaceutical facility, CWS also owns many parcels, other businesses are simply gone such as Norwich Shoe Company and Bennett Ireland – all of these little things have contributed to that large tax reduction over the years.

H. Graves asked in regards to transportation – will the Railroad ever reopen in this area? Mayor Maiurano stated there is money available to make repairs but there is no railroad operator out there who wishes to utilize it here because there is no business along the section of damaged rails in the area that would make it worthwhile to open the railroad lines. H. Graves stated that busing here is a fixed system – meaning you cannot get to an area east or west of here such as Oneonta. Shortline runs in this area but primarily only travels north and south. T. Dreyer stated that transportation is addressed in the transportations section of the comprehensive plan and can be reviewed again.

T. Dreyer distributed training log sheets to the members and stated that it is NY State Law that members log 4 hours of training annually. There are many options available that would satisfy this other than classroom time and that he would be happy to go over them with members that had an interest.

H. Graves if the list of dates for the 2013 Planning meetings was solid. A. Donnison stated the Planning Commission has always met on the 3rd Monday of the month unless it is a holiday or if there would not be a quorum and the meeting gets canceled. The next scheduled meeting is Monday, February 18, 2013

VI. Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm on a motion made by M. Stewart and seconded by L. Bunce. Ayes all.