

CITY OF NORWICH
PUBLIC SAFETY / PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

May 22, 2008

Present:

Ald. Bresina, Chairman (arrived 7:07)
Ald. Carey
Ald. Deierlein

Also:

City Clerk/Director of Finance William Roberts
Deputy City Clerk Brian Drake
Police Chief Joseph Angelino
Fire Chief Tracy Chawgo
EMO A Jones
Mayor Joseph Maiurano
Community Development Specialist Todd Dreyer
Ald. Paul Laughlin

Absent:

None

Ald. Carey, in the temporary absence of Committee Chairman Ald. Bresina, called the May meeting of the Public Works/Public Safety Committee to order at 7:04 AM on May 20, 2008, at the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Approval of Minutes

Ald. Deierlein **moved** to approve the minutes of the April 24, 2008 Committee meeting. Seconded by Ald. Carey, duly approved ayes all.

Correspondence

Petition for Curb at Willard Court/South Plymouth Street

Director of Finance William Roberts reported that a group of residents had petitioned to have a curb installed at Willard Court/South Plymouth Street. He explained that the Charter will need to be investigated to verify how costs are allocated between the City and residents. Police Chief Joseph Angelino noted there is also a center island in that neighborhood. Ald. Carey **moved** to have the Charter investigated and revisit the request at the June Public Safety/Public Works Committee meeting. Seconded by Ald. Deierlein, duly approved ayes all.

Curb Cut Request – 54-56 Henry Street

Ald. Bresina reported that Lloyd Warren III has requested a curb cut at 54-56 Henry Street to create two separate and distinct entrances to the adjoining lots. He noted that the portion of the curb in question is already deteriorated. After discussion indicating no unfavorable effects to the City or residents, Ald. Carey **moved** to recommend Council approval of the request for the curb cut at 54-56 Henry Street. Seconded by Ald. Deierlein, duly approved ayes all.

Department Head Reports

Fire Department

Changes in Volunteer EMS Operations

Fire Chief Tracy Chawgo reported that the Fire Department has dissolved the first responder unit, which was redundant.

Ambulance Recovery Fees

Chief Chawgo reported that he had met with a representative of MultiMed, who informed him that some communities have instituted a surcharge for use of emergency medical response services for non-residents. He believes this could be a source of extra revenue for the City. Ald. Carey asked about the City's emergency services agreements with various communities. Chief Chawgo said such a surcharge would not be applicable for residents within the City's certificate of need area. W.

Roberts noted that a non-resident surcharge would also not apply to Medicare- and Medicaid-insured services, and revenues from a surcharge would likely be small. Chief Chawgo confirmed that this would mostly involve responses to car accidents. In response to a concern expressed by Ald. Deierlein, W. Roberts noted that emergency-service costs are not a burden to City taxpayers because revenues from recovery charges are currently balancing the costs, and new, higher rates begin in June. Mayor Maiurano commented that overtime and other costs within the Fire Department have also been greatly reduced. Ald. Carey requested that Chief Chawgo do further study and come up with specific fee amounts for ALS and BLS services to non-residents. Ald. Deierlein **moved** to refer the matter of a non-resident surcharge to the Finance/Personnel Committee. Seconded by Ald. Carey, duly approved ayes all.

Ald. Bresina questioned whether recovery fees take full advantage of current Medicare reimbursements. Chief Chawgo responded that that has been reviewed with Medicare and Blue Cross/Blue Shield. W. Roberts added that Medicare now does annual reviews and updates those reimbursements, and Blue Cross/Blue Shield has also agreed to pay 15% more than the Medicare recovery fee rates.

Retired Fire Engine

Chief Chawgo reminded the Committee that Engine 232 has been retired and is being stripped for equipment and parts. Ald. Carey suggested that the body of the truck could be reclaimed for its steel. He asked about the status of current rolling equipment in the Department. Ald. Deierlein stressed the need for a capital plan that would record the projected life of equipment and set dates for outdated equipment to be sold while still retaining value. Chief Angelino commented that such a plan is in place, but that prior Councils had not seen fit to follow the schedule for replacing outdated equipment. W. Roberts reminded the Committee that the current financial plan sets aside \$30,000 per year for reserves to purchase new equipment, and there will be \$215,000 in reserves at the end of 2008. He suggested the amount set aside each year should be raised.

Fire Station Horn

Chief Chawgo announced that the firehouse horn should be back in working order by the end of June. Cost of repairs is expected to be approximately \$2,000, which the fire companies will cover. He noted that having a working horn is important to warn citizens of dangers and to reach those firefighters not accessible by pager. The current plan is to have blasts for fire calls, disasters, and at noon. Chief Angelino asked if there could be a blast for curfew. Chief Chawgo said that was possible.

2½% Loan Approval

Chief Chawgo announced that the City's application for a low-interest loan from the NYS Department of State Emergency Services Revolving Loan Program has been approved. The new vehicle to be purchased with these funds will replace two or even three vehicles, resulting in less equipment and lower maintenance expenses. Ald. Carey asked about specifications for the proposed new vehicle. Chief Chawgo explained that he will likely bid for a similar truck to the last one purchased in an effort to standardize equipment. Mayor Maiurano noted that the veteran firefighters were instrumental in making the Fire Department more efficient. Ald. Deierlein repeated his request that a plan be prepared to project useful life and replacement of equipment.

Police Department

Ald. Carey questioned Chief Angelino as to whether there was evidence of increased illicit drug use in the City. He cited as a concern the used hypodermic syringes found in the wastewater system. Chief Angelino explained that while there may be some increased heroin usage in the community, the syringes being found are flushable diabetic syringes.

Ald. Carey then raised the issue of so-called "Section 8" housing of non-Chenango residents, which appears to be increasing. Chief Angelino noted that this is why he has stressed strengthening the Code

Enforcement Department as the most effective way of dealing with substandard rental housing. The Mayor remarked that he and Chief Angelino at least once a week ride with the Code Enforcement Officer in order to be assess the current status of properties, and urged the Committee members to do so as well. Ald. Carey expressed his opinion that, as many of these tenants and landlords receive financial assistance from the County, the City must work with the County to mitigate the problem. W. Roberts reminded the Committee that the two City Supervisors sit on the County Board and should be brought in to the discussion. Ald. Carey stated that economic development in the City must be an important focus in order to attract productive citizens as residents. The Mayor remarked that, though there was initial resistance to the Rental Registration, responsible landlords are now seeing it as a positive development and a vital method of keeping track of landlords who do not maintain their properties adequately, and the City should continue such initiatives to improve living conditions for City residents.

Code Enforcement

Fee for Temporary License for Electricians

Ald. Laughlin, who sits on the Electrical Board, reported that the Electrical Board had recommended lowering the fee for a temporary license from \$500 to \$175 in order to be in line with fees charged by other communities. The matter was brought to the Finance/Personnel Committee and referred by them to the Public Safety/Public Works Committee. Ald. Carey **moved** to recommend Council approval of the revised fee. Seconded by Ald. Deierlein, duly approved ayes all.

EMO

Flood Buyout

EMO A. Jones reported that the State has provided \$15 million in its budget for flood buyout of damaged properties in the Southern Tier, of which approximately \$275,000 is allocated to Chenango County. A property owner at 22 Prentice Street has expressed interest in the program, as the property was damaged beyond repair during the 2006 flood. It is not yet clear if buyout properties will be owned by the State or local municipalities, but buyout properties will need to be used for one of several "green" purposes, either as open space, wetlands, flood mitigation, or recreation. There would be no financial burden to City taxpayers. Community Development Specialist Todd Dreyer asked if funds from this buyout would be available for demolition. A. Jones responded that all demolition costs and rehabilitation of the buyout property for its designated purpose would be covered from buyout funds, as well as payoff of any outstanding mortgage debt.

NIMS/ICS Training

A. Jones explained that a National Incident Management System (NIMS) was put in place by the federal government following the terrorist attacks of 2001; in order to receive certain types of federal funding, a community must be NIMS compliant. The City is responsible for its own training and reporting. A. Jones has drafted a training plan for City employees. He will be attending a NIMS executive briefing with the County in August regarding potential emergencies and encouraged Council members to attend.

Hazard Analysis/Updated City Emergency Plan

A. Jones stated the City's Emergency Plan, previously done in 2001, will be updated following an analysis of potential emergency situations to the City. Ald. Bresina asked if any software is available to evaluate emergency preparedness. A. Jones replied that the department performs tabletop exercises and training exercises.

River/Stream Gauge Update

A. Jones reported that he will be meeting with the DOT in the next week to review plans for placement of river and stream gauges, and distributed photos of the proposed locations and units.

DPW

Curb Damage – Maple and Hayes Streets

Ald. Carey stated that the curb at Maple and Hayes Streets was damaged by City snow plows during the winter, which also damaged the sidewalk. The property owner is preparing to repair the sidewalk and the contractor suggested that the City should repair the curb at the same time. He said he would contact DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson regarding this request.

Other Items

TEP Grant/Third-Floor Renovations

Ald. Carey reviewed the debate regarding a move of City offices from City Hall to the 3rd floor of the firehouse. He expressed his belief that the move could be positive financially, although the emotional attachment of City residents to City Hall as a historic building emblematic of Norwich is also an important factor. Ald. Deierlein agreed that if the difference in financial impact between the various options is negligible, he would be pleased to keep City offices in the current City Hall. T. Dreyer reported that he is prepared to file an application for a grant from the Transportation Enhancements Program (TEP) for funds to make repairs and renovations to City Hall. The program was very successful last year and will likely be more competitive this year, but railroad renovations are looked on favorably. He noted that the program requires a pro-rated payback if the City does not retain possession for the full useful life of the renovations, generally supposed to be 10-12 years. Mayor Maiurano commented that if future administrations should decide to move from City Hall, the renovated building may be more marketable. Ald. Carey asked if accepting TEP funds involved SHPO approvals for renovations. T. Dreyer confirmed that SHPO would have final approval on all renovations. Ald. Carey **moved** to recommend the Finance/Personnel Committee approve applying for a TEP grant, and asked that a cost comparison of remaining in City Hall as opposed to moving to the firehouse be presented at that time as well. Seconded by Ald. Deierlein, duly approved ayes all.

Natural Gas Exploration and Development

Mayor Maiurano noted that Ald. Bresina is involved in exploring possible solar-energy options for the City, and asked Ald. Deierlein to join the effort to explore the possibility of City properties as sites for gas exploration. He remarked that the DEC is involved in natural gas exploration to ensure that water and air quality are protected. Ald. Deierlein reported that citizens in Broome County have been able to negotiate very favorable contracts with natural-gas exploration companies by forming a coalition for improved bargaining. The Mayor stated that a coalition is already being formed. He said that very favorable areas have already been earmarked and the City has 225 acres of land with some potential. W. Roberts commented that revenues would go to the Water system and perhaps to Wastewater as well.

Solar Energy

Mayor Maiurano reported that he has been investigating the possibility of harnessing solar energy for the firehouse, street lighting, and other City facilities in an effort to reduce operating expenses.

Designation of South Broad Street Park for Vendors

Ald. Carey asked about progress on designating South Broad Street Park as a site for vendors. Deputy City Clerk Brian Drake responded that, because the park is leased by the City from the Mt. Hope Cemetery Association, the Association must approve such a change in use. He sent a formal request to the Association, which is meeting in May, and is awaiting their response.

Change in Meeting Date for June

Ald. Bresina requested that the June meeting for the Committee be changed from June 26 to June 19. The Committee agreed to the request.

Adjournment

Ald. Carey **moved** to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 AM. Seconded by Ald. Deierlein, duly approved ayes all.