

City of Norwich
Finance/Personnel Committee Meeting
July 6, 2010

Ald. Walter Schermerhorn presided at the meeting of the Finance/Personnel Committee held at 6:00 PM on July 6, 2010, in the Council Chambers.

Present:

Ald. Walter Schermerhorn
Ald. Paul Laughlin
Ald. Robert Jeffrey

Absent

None

Also:

Clerk/Director of Finance William Roberts
Director of Human Resources Deborah DeForest
Fire Chief Tracy Chawgo
Deputy Police Chief Dale Smith
DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson
Community Planning Specialist Todd Dreyer
Deputy City Clerk Brian Drake
Code Enforcement Officer Jason Lawrence
EMO A. Jones

Call to Order

The meeting was held in the Council Chambers at One Court Plaza and called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Ald. Schermerhorn.

Approval of Minutes

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to approve the minutes of the meeting of June 1, 2010. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.

Public Safety

Police Deputy Police Chief Dale Smith reported that the Police Department currently disposes of impounded vehicles through eBay, an involved process that consumes administrative time. A local automobile franchise has proposed handling auctions of impounded vehicles. The Police Department can set a base price to cover towing and other fees, and after the company auctions the vehicles, the Police Department will receive the full amount of the purchase price, while the company receives a buyer's fee from the purchaser. Ald. Jeffrey asked how many impounded vehicles the Department has. Deputy Chief Smith said that currently the Department has approximately 14 vehicles, and usually obtains seven per year. Ald. Jeffrey asked about selling vehicles for scrap. Deputy Chief Smith replied that the Department has done that in the past. Using this company for auctioning the vehicles would remove a large amount of administrative work from the Department.

Fire/EMS Fire Chief Tracy Chawgo reported that the new communications equipment purchased under a grant requires new antennas. Rather than compromising the firehouse roof, a tower will be erected at the side of the firehouse and bolted to the walls. The grant specifically does not cover erection of a tower, which is estimated to cost approximately \$8,500. He reviewed amounts in equipment reserves. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend the Council transfer \$10,000 to cover costs of a communications tower at the firehouse. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.

Ald. Jeffrey asked that Chief Chawgo pursue applying for other major grants similar in magnitude to the Police Department \$288,000 grant.

Ald. Jeffrey asked about ambulance recovery fees. Chief Chawgo replied that the Department is very busy, responded to twenty or more calls on the weekends. Director of Finance William Roberts noted that while revenues are so far less than last year, he and Chief Chawgo are meeting with MultiMed to review the rate schedule.

Ald. Jeffrey asked about the progress of the draft nuisance abatement ordinance. Code Enforcement Officer Jason Lawrence responded that his department is reviewing the proposed ordinance and preparing statistics.

Ald. Schermerhorn asked if it is true that police cannot use a drug-trained dog at a routine traffic stop. Deputy Chief Smith confirmed that the dog cannot be used for a search without probable cause.

Ald. Jeffrey asked about the old Rite-Aid building. Community Development Specialist Todd Dreyer replied that there has been no news. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to have Community Development Specialist Todd Dreyer investigate a chronic vacant storefront registry. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.

Public Works & Engineering

Cleaner Position DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson reported that three candidates were interviewed for the cleaner position, and recommended George Carnrike III be appointed. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend Council approval of the appointment of George Carnrike III as Cleaner. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.

Mechanic C. Ivarson reported that a second-shift mechanic, who has been on workers compensation for several months, has retired. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to proceed with recruitment for a second-shift mechanic. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.

Firehouse Kitchen/Third Floor of Firehouse and City Hall C. Ivarson reported that two walls in the firehouse kitchen were not sealed and now have mold. The repairs will entail replacement of the interior walls, sealing the exterior walls, and installing a vapor barrier. This can be rolled in with the finishing of the interior of the exterior walls of the third floor of the firehouse and the replacement of the City Hall roof, at a substantial savings in engineering costs. With the additional work in the kitchen the project will still come in within available funds, with an approximate total cost of \$390,000. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** that the matter of the poor construction of the firehouse kitchen be referred to the City Attorney for possible action. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.

Ald. Jeffrey asked that two more no-littering signs be placed at Hale and Birdsall Streets, and East Main and Birdshall Streets.

Ald. Jeffrey asked about maintenance of the railroad tracks. J. Lawrence stated he is sending a letter to the railroad company regarding code violations. The Committee discussed the payments the City makes to the railroad company.

Ald. Jeffrey asked about the work done by NYSEG on Front Street. C. Ivarson replied that NYSEG is contracting out the work and has been told it should begin in October. The work will involve purchase from the City of approximately 5,000-20,000 gallons of water a day. J. Lawrence noted that the site has been fenced off and secured, and will be made green following remediation.

Miscellaneous Items

Early Retirement Incentive Reinsurance Program

Human Resources Director Deborah DeForest reported that a new Federal program is available to the City that would reimburse the City 80% of health insurance claims over \$15,000 by retirees. Reimbursements must be used for health insurance purposes. A requirement is that the City not change to a health plan of lesser coverage or cost. Blue Cross/Blue Shield may charge \$150/hour for submission of claims to the program if administrative work exceeds 20 hours (Blue Cross/Blue Shield has stated that is unlikely for a community of this size). Due to group size and actuarial data, the City could recoup up to \$35,000/year under the four years of the program. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to approve application to the Early Retirement Incentive Reinsurance Program. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.

State Early Retirement Program

D. DeForest reported that the State has instituted an Early Retirement Incentive program which communities may enter into. The program would incentivize early retirement of qualifying employees, causing a lump-sum payment to be made by the City. The Committee decided the program was not beneficial to the City.

Proposed Rate Increase, Blue Cross/Blue Shield

D. DeForest reported that Blue Cross/Blue Shield has proposed a rate increase of 12%. The City will negotiate to bring that lower. The Committee discussed the financial impact of such increase.

Wellness Grant

D. DeForest reported that two Wellness Grants are in development. One is offered by the Federal government for employers who do not currently have a workplace wellness program in place, providing funding for a five-year period beginning in 2011. The second is offered by PERMA for programs and equipment to help prevent workplace injuries.

Executive Session

Ald. Laughlin **moved** to enter executive session at 6:48 p.m. to discuss the sale of real property where price may be affected. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey, approved ayes all.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to exit executive session at 7:05 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.

Motion

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend Council accept the offer of Dennis and Melissa Eaton for the purchase of 7 Waite Street in the amount of \$102,500. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.

Adjournment

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to adjourn at 7:12 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.