

**City of Norwich**

One City Plaza  
Norwich, New York 13815  
(607) 334-1230

**Minutes**

**Finance/Personnel Committee Meeting of February 3, 2009**

Ald. Walter Schermerhorn presided at the meeting of the Finance/Personnel Committee held at 6:00 PM on February 3, 2009, in the Council Chambers.

**Present:**

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

**Also Present:**

Director of Finance William Roberts  
Human Resources Director Deborah DeForest  
Mayor Joseph Maiurano  
DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson  
Code Enforcement Officer/Fire Marshall Jason Lawrence  
Community Development Specialist Todd Dreyer  
EMO A. Jones  
Ald. Robert Carey  
Ald. John Deierlein  
Ald. Terry Bresina  
Deputy City Clerk Brian Drake

**Call to Order**

The meeting was held in the Council Chambers at One Court Plaza and called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Ald. Schermerhorn.

**Approval of Minutes**

Ald. Laughlin **moved** to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of January 6, 2009, and the special meeting of January 20, 2009. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey, duly approved ayes all.

Ald. Schermerhorn raised the issues of crows in the city. Ald. Deierlein commented that the Mayor has spoken with the city of Auburn about removing the problem. Community Development Specialist Todd Dreyer reported that the use of a laser pointer had helped drive the crows out of the parks and people with a crow problem might want to try that.

**Community Development**

**Restore New York**

T. Dreyer updated the Committee on the status of the properties to be renovated under the Restore New York grant. The sites have been cleared and are ready for redevelopment. Bids are expected to go out by the end of the week, to be opened in mid-March. Removal of trees at 7 Waite Street has been delayed due to an injury sustained by the contractor awarded the bid. Bids will be considered for both new construction and moving an older house to the new location. Ald. Jeffrey asked about warranties on new construction as a selling feature. T. Dreyer confirmed that was included in the bid specifications. Ald. Schermerhorn asked if there were time constraints on the older house to be moved. T. Dreyer responded there were not.

**Economic Stimulus Package – Transportation Buildings Grant and Safe Routes to School Grant**

T. Dreyer reported that he has spoken with a representative of the State Department of Transportation, who confirmed they were looking for shovel-ready projects to award grant funds once the federal stimulus plan is finalized. Ald. Jeffrey asked if Sen. Libous is still on the Transportation Committee. Ald. Jeffrey also asked about the status of the former Rite-Aid building. T. Dreyer said again that the owners evidently prefer to sell all their old real estate in a single package, not individually. Ald. Jeffrey asked about the empty storefront on South Broad Street and urged Code Enforcement Officer Jason Lawrence to see if the removal of a sign posed a violation of city codes. J. Lawrence replied that he would investigate.

**Public Works & Engineering**

**Screw Pump Bearings**

DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson reported that new screw pump bearings are approximately \$21,000 with four rollers and 16 bearings. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to approve the expenditure (because it exceeds \$10,000). Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

**Septic Inspections**

Director of Finance William Roberts distributed to the Committee a multi-year proposal from Delaware Engineering detailing projected expenditures for required septic inspections at the city's water source. C. Ivarson explained that \$75,000 has been budgeted and approximately \$33,000 would need to be spent in the first year. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend Council

approval of the proposal. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all. Ald. Schermerhorn asked if some year-round residents at Chenango Lake were still opposed to the agreement. C. Ivarson responded that a meeting between the attorneys, judge, and the parties involved had been held and that one party is still opposed to signing the agreement, but because of attorney scheduling no court date can be set before April.

Ald. Jeffrey asked if the large amount of snowfall this winter posed a danger to the roof of City Hall. C. Ivarson replied that the roof is 30 years old and should be repaired or replaced as soon as possible. Contractors have examined the roof and some patching was done in the autumn.

Ald. Jeffrey asked about CHIPS funds. C. Ivarson said CHIPS funding is to be reduced by \$40,000 in the proposed State budget. He expects to hear from the State this month. (NOTE: The final amount will not be known until the legislature adopts the Governor's final budget.)

Ald. Jeffrey then asked about the new streetlight on Hale Street. C. Ivarson said it would be several months before that could be installed. Ald. Jeffrey asked if the number of snowstorms had adversely impacted Department overtime. C. Ivarson said it had not, but salt supplies are low.

## **Miscellaneous Items**

### **Non-Unit Compensation 2009 Schedule**

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to postpone this item without discussion until the March Finance/Personnel Committee meeting. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

### **Year-End 2008 Budget Transfers**

W. Roberts presented the necessary budget transfers to close the 2008 budget, totaling approximately \$150,000 for the General Fund. He explained that this is the routine year-end transfer to lines that end up over budget from lines that end up under budget. The two main over-budget lines are Fire – Personal Services by \$66,000 and Street Maintenance – Personal Services by \$77,000. Ald. Jeffrey expressed strong concerns with the Fire Department amount, stating that it had been indicated that costs had been in line throughout the year. W. Roberts explained that non-operational costs for a retirement benefit payment and retroactive labor contract payment for clothing allowances were paid at the beginning of 2008, totalling approximately \$30,000. He said that this could have been covered by a transfer from the Employee Benefit Liability Reserve (fund balance \$85,000 at 1-1-08), but it was decided not to use those funds and instead preserve the balance if it could be avoided. W. Roberts also said another non-operational cost was the legally required salary continuation for an extended disability of a firefighter, which incurred one more position than budgeted for the year. Director of Human Resources Deborah DeForest pointed out that a reimbursement of approximately \$31,000 is anticipated from Workers' Compensation to cover that. These factors were taken into account when the 2008 Estimated Actual expense was developed in the preparation of the 2009 Budget (which was \$63,253 over budget). The rest of the expense was from illness absence coverage late in the year. W. Roberts said he would prepare an analysis to summarize these effects. Ald. Schermerhorn requested that quarterly reporting be provided during the year to monitor such costs in the future. Ald. Jeffrey then **moved** to recommend Council approval of the transfers. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

### **49 Front Street Surplus Property Declaration**

W. Roberts reminded the Committee that 49 Front Street has not been declared surplus, which must be done before the property can be sold in whole or in part. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend the Common Council set a public hearing for the purpose of declaring 49 Front Street surplus. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

### **Auction of Unredeemed 2007 Tax Sale Properties**

W. Roberts presented a proposed timetable for auction of properties unredeemed from the October 2007 tax sale. Seven additional properties can not be auctioned because they are protected under bankruptcy proceedings. The bids will be opened at 3 p.m. Friday, April 24, 2009, with a provision to redeem by 5 p.m. on Friday, April 3, 2009. Ald. Jeffrey suggested some of the properties would be good candidates for Restore New York grant funds and asked if that program is to be continued. T. Dreyer said that he did not know. Ald. Jeffrey asked about changing the redeem date to sometime in March. W. Roberts said that the date set provided three weeks before bids will be due. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend Council approval of the proposed auction schedule. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

### **Sales Tax Revenues - 2008**

W. Roberts informed the Committee that sales tax revenues for 2008 were \$1,434,000, \$118,000 (9%) higher than projected in the 2008 Budget and \$74,000 (5.4%) higher than revenues for 2007. He noted that December 2008 revenues were lower than December 2007 revenues, as anticipated. The 2009 Budget projects lower sales tax revenues. Ald. Jeffrey reviewed the figures and warned sales tax revenues may be lower in 2009.

## **Executive Session**

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to enter executive session at 6:44 p.m. to discuss pending litigation and the credit history of particular businesses. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to exit executive session at 7:16 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

**Adjournment**

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to adjourn at 7:16 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

*Next Finance/Personnel Committee Meeting – March 3, 2009*