

City of Norwich
Finance/Personnel Committee Meeting
November 4, 2009

Ald. Walter Schermerhorn presided at the meeting of the Finance/Personnel Committee held at 6:00 PM on November 4, 2009, in the Council Chambers.

Present:

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

Also:

Clerk/Director of Finance William Roberts
Director of Human Resources Deborah DeForest
Fire Chief Tracy Chawgo
Police Chief Joseph Angelino
DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson
Deputy City Clerk Brian Drake
Community Development Specialist Todd Dreyer
Mayor Joseph Maiurano
Ald. John Deierlein
Ald. Robert Carey
Ald. Terry Bresina
Code Enforcement Officer Jason Lawrence
Youth Bureau Director Robert Mason

Absent
None

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 regular meeting of October 1, 2009. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.

Public Safety

Ald. Jeffrey asked if properties that have been the subject of drug raids or search warrants could be shut down for a year. He stated that residents are worried about drug activities in the area. Code Enforcement Officer Jason Lawrence stated that he and Police Chief Joseph Angelino have been investigating point systems as used in other municipalities. Ald. Laughlin asked if such sanctions would not be punishing a landlord for tenants' activities. Ald. Jeffrey said this would force landlords to screen prospective tenants. Chief Angelino said the problem is absentee landlords. The owner of the site of a recent drug raid was discussed. Ald. Jeffrey requested that sanctions be addressed in 2010.

Fire

Restoration of Old Engine No. 234

As was requested at a prior meeting, Fire Chief Tracy Chawgo has investigated restoring old Engine No. 234. Several companies are preparing quotes for the necessary work.

Communication Equipment

Chief Chawgo reminded the Committee that the County is phasing in a new band frequency for radio communications, and the Fire Department's current equipment will be obsolete by 2013. He will probably purchase new equipment in stages over that time period. Ald. Schermerhorn asked if the price of such equipment would be paid out of Capital Reserves. Director of Finance William Roberts confirmed that it would be transferred from the General Fund Capital Reserves.

Ald. Jeffrey asked about budget projections for the Fire Department. W. Roberts said that results will be favorable for revenues and expenditures and will allow early payment of State retirement contributions in December.

Community & Economic Development Projects & Funds

Arts Council Grant Application

Community Development Specialist Todd Dreyer reported that an application for a grant from the Arts Council is due December 3. A grant of \$3,800 was sought in 2009 for the BID Lunch in the Park program and the City Band, of which \$2,000 was received. As previously agreed with BID, the lower amount was divided proportionately among the programs under the grant. This application will seek funds for the City Band, BID Lunch in the Park, and Youth Bureau Dance Classes. The amount being sought this year is \$3,550. Ald. Schermerhorn asked that the City apply for \$3,800. The Committee concurred.

Local Historic Preservation Law

T. Dreyer reported that the Historical Preservation Committee has prepared a draft law regarding designation of historical properties in the City, which will be presented to the Council in January 2010. Mayor Maiurano commented that the Committee will be present at the January meeting to answer questions about the proposed law, which has been forwarded to the aldermen for study. Ald. Schermerhorn expressed concern that any proposed law not limit development opportunities.

Ald. Jeffrey asked about development opportunities for a derelict property at State and Mitchell Streets. He stated that the City has created enough low-income housing and the area needs a boost. Ald. Schermerhorn remarked that someone has been renovating those buildings, that three are now occupied, and other properties are being renovated or kept up well. The specific property in question was sold at tax auction and is now in private hands. He expressed his conviction that private property is the responsibility of the property owners and taxpayer money should not be used for improvements. Ald. Jeffrey said if improvements are not made, the property will wind up delinquent for property taxes again.

Ald. Jeffrey asked about the disposition of the old Rite-Aid building. T. Dreyer said he has heard nothing new.

Ald. Jeffrey asked about funds available in the rental rehabilitation program. T. Dreyer replied that three properties in the program are completed and approximately half of the \$400,000 allocated has been used.

Ald. Jeffrey asked about the construction of three houses under the Restore New York II program. T. Dreyer said that one house may be slightly behind schedule but not excessively. Ald. Jeffrey stated his belief that the bid contracts required the houses be completed within 90 days. T. Dreyer responded that he was not aware of a firm completion date required in the contracts, but that construction was required to be started within 15 days after notice of award was signed and returned to the City, and the contractors did fulfill that requirement. [**Note:** No completion time was specified in the contracts; while all the contractors estimated completion within 120 days, no commitment was made for completion within a definite time frame.] Ald. Jeffrey asked if buyers have been found for the remaining two houses. T. Dreyer said that buyers have not been found yet, but the City has been granted a six-month extension on the grant contract. Ald. Jeffrey spoke about the Federal tax benefit of closing on a first-time home purchase before December. W. Roberts noted that bills are being considered by Congress to extend that deadline to April of 2010. Ald. Jeffrey expressed concern that the City will be paying heating expenses in the houses if they are not finished and sold before winter.

Public Works & Engineering

WWTP Screw Pumps and Reduction Gears

DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson reported that one screw pump was repaired under warranty and is back in operation. A second pump is being evaluated for repairs. The third has been re-welded and will be an emergency-only pump. He is investigating submersible pumps and including the screw pumps under the RBCs project. Meanwhile, he is renting two emergency pumps.

Raw Water Supply to Natural Gas Drillers

C. Ivarson asked for a rate increase for raw water supplied to gas drillers. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend Council approve a raw water rate increase from \$0.0067/gal to \$0.0075/gallon. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.

Miscellaneous Items

Ald. Jeffrey asked if the early payment of State retirement contributions can be made in December. W. Roberts replied that a portion of the cost was budgeted, and repeated that favorable revenues and expenditures in the overall General Fund budget will allow early payment of the full amount. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend Council approve payment in December of State retirement contributions. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.

Executive Session

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to enter executive session at 6:42 p.m. to discuss labor contract negotiations. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to exit executive session at 7:06 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.

Adjournment

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to adjourn at 7:06 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, approved ayes all.