

City of Norwich, Department of Finance

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

Minutes

Finance/Personnel Committee Meeting of February 5, 2008

Ald. Walter Schermerhorn presided at the meeting of the Finance/Personnel Committee held at 6:00 PM on February 5, 2008, in the Common Council Chambers at One Court Plaza.

Present:

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

Absent:

None

Also Present:

Director of Finance William Roberts
Human Resources Director Deborah DeForest
DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson
Police/Fire Chief Joseph Angelino
Ald. Terry Bresina
Ald. John Deierlein
Ald. Robert Carey
Deputy City Clerk Brian Drake
Community Dev. Specialist Todd Dreyer
Mayor Joseph Maiurano

Call to Order

The meeting was held in the Council Chambers at One Court Plaza and called to order at 6:07 p.m. by Ald. Schermerhorn.

Approval of Minutes

Ald. Laughlin **moved** to approve the minutes from the meeting of January 10, 2007. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey and duly approved ayes all.

Youth Bureau

None.

Visitors

None.

Public Safety Items

Fire/EMS

Proposed Ambulance Bid Approach Options

Chief Joseph Angelino explained the various options for replacing an ambulance, including removing the "box" of the ambulance and placing it on a new cab and chassis. He explained that the proposed bid specifications will place a time limit on delivery, requiring that a loaner ambulance be provided if a new unit is not ready by a specified deadline, and will include trade-in value for the unit that is to be replaced. He urged the City not to hold on to equipment until it is past its trade-in life, but units should be replaced while still having some value. Ald., Jeffrey raised the issue of wear and tear on City equipment because of the mutual aid agreement and the possibility of units being deployed for mutual aid, leaving City residents unprotected. Chief Angelino clarified that only one mutual aid call would ever be made at one time, and that there was always at least one ambulance available for City use. Ald. Schermerhorn questioned the cost effectiveness of having three ambulances. Chief Angelino explained that it is a daily occurrence that two ambulances are out at once, either on an emergency call or for medical transport, and without a third ambulance the City would be left unprovided for. Also, having three ambulances provided one ambulance for each working shift, thus spreading out the mileage and wear and tear on the units. Ald. Jeffrey raised the issue of the mutual aid agreement with Plymouth, which is not in the fire district and does not pay appropriately for such services. Ald. Schermerhorn questioned whether a used ambulance could be purchased and then its engine be replaced. Chief Angelino responded that this would not be cost effective because ambulance engines are Ford diesel engines designed for performance, not longevity. Ald.

Jeffrey urged that a demo model be purchased with a three-year warranty. Chief Angelino replied that because of a glut of used ambulances, he would ask in the bid specifications for a 10-year warranty. Ald. Laughlin asked the Chief to provide again to the Committee the report on ambulance charges presented last year. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to approve Chief Angelino proceeding with creation and dissemination of bid specifications for an ambulance. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

Appointment of Firefighter

Chief Angelino noted that the retirement of firefighter Gary Cate, with the absence of one firefighter on disability, created a vacancy in the Department. He requested permission to appoint volunteer firefighter Darrell Prindle to fill that vacancy. He noted that Mr. Prindle is a City resident. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to approve the appointment. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

Codes – Codes/Fire Inspection Fees

Chief Angelino reported that the sheer number of scheduled inspections rendered it virtually impossible for the Code Enforcement Officer or the firefighters to fulfill one hundred percent of these obligations. He noted that Oneida has eight full-time inspectors working in two shifts. He pointed out that the County and many other municipalities charge for these inspections, some at an hourly rate, some at a rate based on the square footage of the building to be inspected. He announced that he would present a report on these fees to the Council in the near future. Ald. Laughlin suggested that Social Services and Catholic Charities, agencies that pay a portion of the rent for some clients, should participate in inspecting those properties. Ald. Jeffrey asked about the possibility of a 287g exemption, in regard to illegal aliens. Chief Angelino responded that he will investigate the matter, but the number of illegal aliens in Norwich is so small that it will be a low priority.

Public Works

Amendment to Stearns & Wheeler Conceptual Water Filter Plant Design Contract & Transfer from Capital Reserves (\$8,500 from HR29, Water Repair Reserve) - For Wheeler Avenue Tank

C. Ivarson announced that it would be most cost effective to include the replacement of the water tank on Wheeler Avenue in the conceptual filter plant design being formulated by Stearns & Wheeler. He noted that the tank is a steel tank that has outlived its useful life, and a new tank would be more efficient and safer for the quality of drinking water. The additional cost would be provided for by a transfer of \$8,500 from HR29, Water Repair Reserve. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend the transfer for Council approval. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

Bids - Liquid Chlorine & Sodium Hypochlorite

C. Ivarson reported that bids were received on January 17, 2008, to supply chlorine for the City's wastewater plant. He recommend the low bids received as follows: for 150-pound cylinders, Jones Chemicals Inc. of Merrimack, NH, for \$65.00/cylinder; for Sodium Hydrochlorite, 55 gal. drums, Amrex Chemical Co., Inc., of Binghamton, NY, at \$.98/gal.; and for bulk Sodium Hypochlorite, Slack Chemical Co., Inc., of Carthage, NY, at \$.949/gal. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend the award of these bids to the Council. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

Appointments of Earl Monroe and William Kirkland to MEO1 Positions

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend Council approval of the appointment of Earl Monroe and William Kirkland to MEO 1 positions with the Department of Public Works. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

Temporary Summer Help - DPW

As requested by the Finance/Personnel Committee, C. Ivarson asked approval for the hiring of eight temporary summer employees, two groundskeepers, one Wastewater Treatment Plant groundskeeper, and five Highway Division workers. Ald. Jeffrey asked what the total cost of such summer employees would be to the City. C. Ivarson replied that it would cost approximately \$6,000. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend the Council approve hiring temporary summer help for the DPW. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

CHIP

C. Ivarson reported that CHIP funds for street paving were down 3% from 2007. Because of this cut, there would be a shortfall in available funds for necessary repaving in 2008. Either the funds must be provided from other line items or Front Street would not be repaved in 2008. Ald. Jeffrey noted that a pothole is developing on

Front Street. He asked if money could be drawn from the contingency fund. C. Iverson suggested that the Council wait until bids are received to determine what the final amounts needed will be. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to proceed with bids for repaving all scheduled streets. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

Miscellaneous Items

Non-Unit Compensation Schedule

Human Resources Director Deborah DeForest presented reports on non-union compensation at various comparable municipalities throughout the State with other financial data. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend Council approval of a cost-of-living increase of 3% for Non-Unit employees. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

Grandfathering of Health Insurance Eligibility Change

Finance Director William Roberts noted that Resolution #111-2007 affected only one employee, and requested that the change required by that resolution be modified to affect only new employees. The Committee noted that this contradicted the intent of the resolution. Ald. Jeffrey stated his opinion that the position of Historian (the position affected by the resolution) was not a revenue-generating position and was not critical to the City. Ald. Jeffrey then **moved** to reject this proposed change. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

Norwich City Band Facilities & Supplemental Funding Request

W. Roberts presented to the Committee a letter from Lee Wilhelm, Business Manager of the Norwich City Band, requesting the use of the Gazebo Bandstand in East Main Street Park for six consecutive Friday evenings beginning on July 11 and ending August 15, and requesting an additional appropriation of \$670 to supplement an Arts Council Decentralization Grant and City Budget funds already appropriated. Ald. Jeffrey asked about the consequences if the \$670 were not approved. W. Roberts explained that the band might be forced to cut back on the number of performances it gives. Ald. Laughlin asked if the set-up for the band required overtime pay for DPW employees. C. Iverson said that was not the case. Community Planning Specialist Todd Dreyer noted that the band includes 50 or more performers, and its performances are extremely well attended. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend Council approval of the transfer. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all. W. Roberts remarked that the money would be transferred from A7550.4100 – Celebrations.

Temporary Summer Help – Finance Office

W. Roberts reported that the temporary summer position contemplated would cost approximately \$4,000, included in the current budget, and that the person considered for the temporary summer position has worked in the office the last four years and has been so well trained that she can actually assist customers. This person has provided invaluable service in helping organize the finance office and keep it current in its filing and work. Ald. Jeffrey asked how many weeks the position was scheduled for. W. Roberts answered that the position is for 12 weeks over the summer as well as two weeks over the winter holiday break, for a total of approximately 14 weeks. The hourly pay rate is \$7.15. Ald. Jeffrey asked how this compared with the temporary summer employees for the DPW. After calculating the number of employees and hours to be worked, W. Roberts showed the total cost for the DPW's workers (excluding those under the Water budget) would be approximately \$11,000. W. Roberts noted that if this person will not be available, no other person would be considered for the position. Ald. Laughlin **moved** to recommend Council approval for the hiring of temporary summer help for the Finance Office. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn, duly approved 2-0, with Ald. Jeffrey abstaining.

2007 Budget Transfer from Contingency – MultiMed Billing Fees

W. Roberts presented a required budget transfer to pay contractually obligated fees to MultiMed. He noted that revenues, though final numbers are not yet available, were higher than anticipated by over \$120,000, providing more than enough funds for the proposed transfer of \$8,788.22. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend Council approval of the transfer of \$8,788.22 to cover MultiMed Billing Fees. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

Final 2007 Budget Transfers to Close Out Year

W. Roberts reported that, as is normal when closing out the 2007 budget, funds must be transferred from some line items to cover others. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend Council approval of transfers to close out the year. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

Executive Session

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to enter executive session at 7:05 p.m. to discuss (a) the employment history of particular individuals; and (b) labor contract negotiations. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to exit executive session at 7:45 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin, duly approved ayes all.

Discussion:

Budget Planning and Economic Development

The Committee and other Council members discussed the importance of cost containment and alternative revenues (other than property taxes) as part of an overall two-pronged approach to fiscal strategy. Mayor Maiurano reported that he has been extremely busy pursuing business development in the City, and projected a positive outlook going forward.

Adjournment

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to adjourn at 8:00 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn, duly approved ayes all.

Next Finance/Personnel Committee Meeting – March 4, 2008