

City of Norwich, Department of Finance

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

Minutes

Finance/Personnel Committee Meeting of March 6, 2007

Present:

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

Also Present:

Director of Finance William J. Roberts
Human Resources Director Deborah DeForest
Ald. Terry Bresina
DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson
Police/Fire Chief Joseph Angelino
Code Enforcement Officer Jason Lawrence
EMO A. Jones
Media Representative Jessica Lewis
Deputy Clerk Darlene Colaso

Call to Order

The meeting was held in the Council Chambers at One Court Plaza and called to order at 6:21 p.m. (following a Special Common Council Meeting) by Committee Chair Ald. Schermerhorn.

Approval of Minutes

Ald. Laughlin **moved** to approve the minutes from the regular meeting of February 8, 2007. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey and duly adopted ayes all.

Public Safety Items

Police: School Crossing Guards

Chief Angelino briefly discussed the status of the school crossing guards and commended their efforts during the inclement weather. He also wanted to let the Committee know that they are continuing to track the number of children crossing on a daily basis.

Fire: Filling Fire Department Vacancy, Fire Assistants/Bunk-Men, & Overtime Scheduling

Angelino reported on some observations of his 7-months at the Fire Department. He explained that Council is going to have to fill the Fire Chief position in the near future, likely a current fire fighter, which will create a vacancy to be filled. He has some structure recommendations, which he will be passing along to the Council in the near future. The Mayor commented that much more dialog than usual is occurring and that decisions are being made. He believes filling the vacancy is crucial to the proper operation of the fire department.

Ald. Jeffrey asked if the vacancy is going to be filled and Angelino responded that eventually the city will need a permanent person in-charge of the fire department. Ald. Jeffrey asked what the average per fire fighter cost with overtime and benefits is and DeForest replied \$100,008.26. Ald. Jeffrey asked if the city is paying overtime, is the city also paying benefits over and above the salary with overtime, and DeForest replied yes. Roberts and DeForest concurred that the state retirement and payroll tax percentages apply to all payroll, both regular and overtime pay. A brief discussion ensued and then moved to the ambulance services and whether or not Superior was still able to take over the transport services currently being handled by the city's fire department. Ald. Jeffrey wanted to know whether or not the city is breaking even on the transports. Ald. Jeffrey's concern is that the city is soft-billing. He does not believe the taxpayers should be bearing the burden of any losses whatsoever. Angelino commented that the correspondence to First Transit (filed last month) addressed this issue and that now all the transports the city provides are critical-care, life-saving transports. Another brief discussion ensued as to costs and Roberts commented that you have to look at the aggregate end-result. Ald. Laughlin inquired about costs and Roberts indicated that the city is really breaking even on the transports.

Prior to moving forward, Ald. Laughlin inquired about the lights being on all night in the fire house and Angelino responded that those are stairwell lights, which cannot be turned off. He also explained that the third floor often looks lit, as the ladder well illuminates the top floor with the lights that are on in the different lower floors. Ivarson indicated that there is no lighting on the third floor.

Fire: Declaring Equipment Surplus

Angelino explained that this item was referred from the Public Safety/Public Works Committee and detailed the specific equipment, which he would like to have deemed surplus.

Community & Economic Development Projects & Funds

Ald. Jeffrey inquired as to the status of the Planning and Community Development Specialist's activities and whether or not there are any grants in the works. Mayor Maiurano gave a brief update of the grants currently being worked on, also mentioning that the state put an additional \$1,000,000 into the RETORE NY Program.

Public Works & Engineering Items

Stearns & Wheler Engineering Design Proposal – New Water Filtration Plant - \$39,000

Ivarson reported briefly that this item is the conceptual design proposal for the new filter plant, which will ultimately allow the city to pursue further funding options and/or low cost loans.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend this to full Council. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin and duly adopted ayes all.

Bids – Liquid Chlorine & Sodium Hypochlorite

Ivarson said that the bids will be separated and would be awarded to three different supply companies, as the bids were very close. He reported that the sodium hypochlorite drum portion would be awarded to Amrex Chemical, the liquid chlorine cylinders portion would be awarded to JCI Jones Chemicals, and the sodium hypochlorite bulk liquid would be awarded to Slack Chemical Co.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to approve awarding the bids and forward to full Council. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin and duly adopted ayes all

Meeting with U.S. Representative Michael Arcuri – Funding Water & Wastewater Projects

There was a meeting between Congressman Arcuri and city officials, which included Mayor Maiurano, Bill Roberts, Chief Joseph Angelino, and DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson. Ivarson stated that Arcuri is very aware of the issues facing New York State municipalities and that he offered referral contacts in Washington D.C. Roberts added that Arcuri mentioned that he is on the Subcommittee for Water Resources. Mayor Maiurano commented that the City of Norwich was the first to approach Arcuri and that we are number one on his list.

Old Business

Correspondence: Peter & Pamela Mennis – Storm Water Runoff

Ivarson reported that he is still researching the matter and that, currently, there is no new update.

2007 Non-Unit Employee Compensation Schedule

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to forward the 2007 Non-Unit Employee Compensation Schedule to the full Council and to have this on the March agenda. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin and duly adopted ayes all.

EAP Program

DeForest briefly reminded the committee that this is an employee assistance program, which offers increased employee benefits at a very low cost.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to forward the proposed EAP Program to the full Council. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin and duly adopted ayes all.

New Business

Filling Account Clerk II Vacancy – Finance Department

Roberts reported that notice was received from the Account Clerk II and that he is in need of filling the position as soon as possible.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to approve filling the vacancy. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin and duly adopted ayes all.

Prior to the vote, DeForest asked that they be allowed to fill an additional vacancy, should someone within the department be promoted into the Account Clerk position. She said that this would streamline the time line for ensuring a full staff for Director of Finance Roberts. Ald. Jeffrey, with Ald. Schermerhorn concurring, said that he wants DeForest to go ahead and fill the Account Clerk II vacancy, and if that creates another vacancy, she should return for approval to fill that position.

Year-End 2006 Budget Transfers

Roberts said that these are the annual year-end budget transfers for 2006. He said that this is transferring budget appropriation amounts from one line to another line. A brief discussion ensued as to whether this was all the transfers and Roberts detailed out some of the specific transfers needed. Ivarson noted that he has some seemingly complicated transfers.

Ald. Jeffrey asked a question regarding the adopted 2007 budget, and a brief discussion ensued as to the 2006 fire department overtime line item.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to approve the budget transfers and recommend this to the full Council. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin and duly adopted ayes all

City Charter Resident Requirement for Commissions & Boards

Roberts said that this is a topic that has come up for discussion. Basically, he reported that there are some individuals who do not live in the city, but who own substantial property in the city, by virtue of their business, or otherwise; they are very much interested and involved in the city.

Ald. Schermerhorn said that he does not believe that the scope should be narrowed down to requiring the person to be a city resident, as he believes you exclude expertise this way. Roberts said that he believes you would at least want to have something written in there to require that the person have a defined stake in the community in order to serve. Roberts said that there are a lot of ways you can go about this. Ald. Jeffrey said that he believes the person must have significant ties to the city. He said that what he'd like to see is that the person is registered to vote in the city.

Ivarson said that he believes that while it can often be difficult the right city resident to serve on a commission or board, what you do not want is a majority of non-residents sitting on city boards and commissions. A brief discussion ensued.

The general consensus was that there are concerns over ensuring that any potential board or commission members have a stake in the community, whether it is a business owner or what have you. Ald. Schermerhorn said that if you narrow the criteria to being an actual resident of the City you limit the expertise that could be brought to the group.

Ald. Jeffrey said that if the person lives outside the city and the Mayor wants to appoint them, that perhaps the Council should have final approval of the appointment. Another brief discussion ensued.

Abandoned Shopping Carts

Ald. Jeffrey expressed great concern over the number of abandoned shopping carts that are being left carelessly on top of snow banks (which are now melting). He said he is concerned about the safety-issues associated with these carts, but, moreover, he said they are any eyesore.

Angelino said that the store does not want anyone arrested, so it's a difficult situation. A brief discussion ensued and the committee discussed different remedies. Angelino said that he will speak with the P&C Manager again. Ald. Jeffrey said that people who are looking to invest in our community are driving around on the city streets and seeing this type of eyesore. He added that every one of the ones he has seen abandoned is right in front of a multi-family dwelling.

Ivarson suggested passing an ordinance prohibiting removing shopping carts from the grocery store area would cause a fine. Angelino said that it's a nuisance issue, unfortunately it is not a top priority.

Adjournment

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to approve adjourn at 7:23 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn and duly adopted ayes all.