City of Norwich, Department of Finance

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

Minutes
Finance/Personnel Committee Meeting of January 31, 2006

Present:	Also Present:
Ald. Maiurano	Mayor Robert Raphael
Ald. Schermerhorn	Director of Finance, William J. Roberts
Ald. Jeffrey	Human Resources Director, Deborah DeForest
	Fire Chief, John Tighe
	Acting Police Chief, Murray Roach
	Ald. Abraham
	Ald. Bresina
	EMO A. Jones
	Deputy Clerk Darlene Colaso

Absent:

Call To Order:

The meeting was held in the Council chambers at One Court Plaza and called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Ald. Maiurano.

Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting of January 4, 2006:

Ald. Schermerhorn **moved** to approve the minutes from the regular meeting of January 4, 2006. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey, and duly adopted ayes all.

Youth Bureau Items: (none)

Community & Economic Development Projects & Funds:

Designation of City Labor Standards Compliance Officer (per GOSC Review)

W. Roberts reported that the reviewer (i.e., auditor) for the Governor's Office for Small Cities recently finished reviewing the Museum District and Cortland Street grants. We received a favorable review with a minor technicality and that is on any capital projects using grant funds, we need to have someone designated as the compliance officer. So overall, the only item to remedy is to designate a City Labor Standards Compliance Officer. This is someone who will verify the correct wage rates and ensure we are in compliance for specific projects. W. Roberts, in speaking with Bill Tompkins of Shelter Planning, determined that it would be best to have the Superintendent of Public Works act as the interim officer until there was someone in Community Development.

Ald. Maiurano **moved** to recommend the resolution designating the Superintendent of Public Works as City Labor Standards Compliance Officer. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn and duly adopted, ayes all.

Prior to the vote, Ald. Jeffrey expressed concern over the change-over from Carl Ivarson to the Community Development person. Ivarson indicated that he thinks this responsibility needs to stay in Community Development, stating that when we hire someone he will assist in getting the person up to speed (comparing the state rates with what the contractor is actually paying the person doing the work, etc.). It was decided that C. Ivarson will be the Officer designee for the two existing completed grants, since he was the one who actually reviewed those projects. There was a brief discussion regarding possible upcoming grants. W. Roberts added our prompt affirmative response to the auditor's concerns reflects positively on us.

Shared Municipal Services Incentive Grant Program (Dept. of State)

Ald. Mauriano introduced this program stating that we have been active in trying to obtain a grant to consolidate and share services. W. Roberts distributed a hand-out which gave a brief description of the Shared Municipal Services Incentive (SMSI) Award Program, explaining that this was in addition to the State Aid to Cities incentive and could bring in additional state aid to the City of Norwich, Town of Norwich, and Town of North Norwich. The lead agency in actually completing the grant application would be through the Chamber of Commerce. Liz Buntz will actually be serving as the lead contact person. What this will help pay for are the funds to hire, and I believe it's the Center for Governmental Research (CGR) out of Rochester, which has a long established reputation for doing excellent work researching and strategizing for municipalities. They look at what we're already sharing and see what other opportunities exist. W. Roberts believes it could even lead to the consolidation of government. He stated what they're going to research is pretty wide open.

What's required, per the Department of State, for local municipalities is to adopt resolution in support or in favor of this collaboration, so that it can be incorporated as part of an application package. The application's already bee submitted with adequate information. This piece is committed with the resolution to be submitted by March 14the 2006.

Ald. Jeffrey asked whether the City would be responsible for a matching amount of funds and W. Roberts said the participants would be responsible for a 10% match, and the grand total per application is $100,000, which would be something less than the $10,000 maximum match for the grant - of which we would pay only a portion of this (split with the Town of Norwich and the Town of North Norwich). W. Roberts noted that we would use Community Development programming funds to come up with our share. Ald. Maiurano added that each municipality would approve their respective portion. He also stated that one of the things that we've been working on for the past few years is that we need a study to bring out everyone's concerns and to ensure this (geographical) area and the taxpayers will benefit from this program, stating that we need to act on the facts (once determined). The Mayor noted that there's a supposition that if the City and the town get together that taxes will go up dramatically, and there's nothing to verify this one way or the other. There's been discussion on a fire district, a water authority, etc. He added that we have very few chips on the table and we need to make sure our interests are safe-guarded in the process. The main thing is that we don't know what an independent study would show. Ald. Jeffrey inquired as the to the $10,000 and asked if it would be coming out of Community Development funds. The Mayor answered that we'd be paying a share of that and W. Roberts stated that it would be proportional to our involvement (not to exceed $10,000). Ald. Jeffrey asked if the Town of Norwich and the Town of North Norwich are on board with this.

Carl Ivarson added that he believes the department heads need to sit down with Council members and explain how this impacts all the departments. He believes that every Council member should know exactly what's going on and how their actions can impact every department (Fire, Water, Sewer, Storm, Human Resources, etc.). Ivarson believes that the Department Heads have been hit with and are familiar with all the consolidation issues that no one wants to talk about. Ald. Maiurano encouraged the new Council members, and the Council as a whole, to get briefed (by the department heads) and make decisions based on facts. The Mayor believes a special meeting will be in order, due to the details involved and make sure everyone's on the same page. There was a brief discussion about the study itself, with Ald. Schermerhorn expressing reservations about that process.

Ald. Schermerhorn **moved** to recommend bringing the resolution supporting the application, designating the lead contact person, and utilizing community development funds for the match, to the full Council. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey and duly adopted, ayes all.

Hosbach Trail Survey

C. Ivarson gave some background about this survey, stating that about a year ago we submitted a request to SHPPO (State Historic Preservation and Parks) so as not to have to survey the park property for a walkway down on Jamba Farms, which is at the wastewater treatment plant. It took a year for them to get back to us and the attorney said no, that we had to proceed with the survey. Ivarson reported that he went out and got three quotes. He stated he can just survey the creek line or the river line and then mathematically figure out how much is 50 feet and put the metes and bounds in there. I have three quotes: One from Weisenbach for $2475, one from Rhinevalt for a little over $4000, and another one at $14,600. His recommendation is that we go with the Weissenbach proposal for $2475. He noted that before a decision is made, this is for a $37,000 grant. As soon as we accept this, however, he noted that once we start to get reimbursed, the changes will be permanent. If we subsequently try to modify that 50' section involved, we will be subject to several agencies approval, as SHPPO will have total control over changes. We have almost 300 acres down there, by the way, this is only going to take up 32 (acres). The Mayor said that if we then wanted to put a boat lane down there, Ivarson reported that we'd have to go through SHPPO, Corps of Engineers and the Fisheries. Ivarson suggests we go for it. It's $37,000.

The $37,000 was supposed to be for bridge embankments. I think they would cost a little bit more. The bridge itself, 4 years ago, was $99,000: We know that right now that same rate is $120,000 – which by the way, we have no money for. Ald. Jeffrey said, so if we approve this, then we won't really have the money to complete the Hosbach Trail. Ivarson stated, no, there are volunteers (from The Place and Headwaters youth Conservation Corps [HYCC]) who will complete the Hosbach Trail. Ivarson said that if he cuts the trail 8' wide, this fall people can walk around that area. We'll see how it goes. Ivarson said there are other walking bridges that need to be worked on and if we get the $37,000, we can do that. The Mayor added that if we wanted to make changes to this 50' area close to the river, we'd have to go through the DEC anyway. He stated that we're not doing anything different then. Ivarson stated the reason for the buffer was for the farmer not to get used to cutting corn all the way out to the river. We already have a 50' buffer already in place right now: This simply gives us money to be able to do other things. There was a brief discussion about the trail with Ivarson noting that we maintain a 1-mile walking trail two times per year already (they cut the grass with the hedgehog twice per year). The Mayor noted that this was not going to be paved or anything like that and Ivarson responded no, as it gets flooded every year anyway. Ald. Jeffrey asked if this was something we have to put money towards and W. Roberts and C. Ivarson responded that we do not.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to bring the Hosbach Trail Survey issue before the full Council. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn and duly adopted, ayes all.

Request for Resolution Supporting Change to NYS Sex Offender Registration Act

W. Roberts chose to bring this up at this committee, as he felt it was a Community Development issue. He reported that there was a statewide movement to modify the NYS Sex Offender Registration Act, adding the City of Batavia has a good basic format resolution in support that we could utilize (handout was distributed). The resolution calls upon the Governor to prohibit Level 2 and 3 Sex Offenders from living within 1/2 mile of a school (or any facility where children congregate). The mayor suggested that this be brought before the Public Safety/Works Committee and Bill concurred that that committee should review as well. Ald. Jeffrey concurred with Roberts that this is a Community Development concern and said that he supports a resolution in support of the state law. Murray Roach added that his department is very active in Sex Offender registration and that currently there are only two or three inside City limits.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend bringing the resolution before the full Council for approval. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn and duly adopted, ayes all.

Public Safety Items:

Plans to Go to Bid for New Ambulance

Chief Tighe reported that the 1992 ambulance currently in service needs replacing. The money is available in the budgeted Capital Reserves account. He stated that it will take approximately 6 months to procure the right vehicle, even though they lucked out once before in purchasing a stock vehicle which met the department's needs. He stated that they do not need demonstrators with all the extra options, they need a work horse. Their cost estimate for the new vehicle is $120,000. He added that Binghamton and Schenectady are currently leasing vehicles and he said he would like to explore the possibility of leasing as an option (versus outright purchasing), but that we should still go forward with the bid process. W. Roberts said he would perform a lease versus buy analysis. The Mayor inquired as to why we were replacing this vehicle and Tighe explained that it was worn out, it's a maintenance issue: The cooling system is weak (there is a requirement that the cooling system be kept under 70-degrees) and is out-of service a lot during the warmer months. He added that they were paying an exorbitant amount of money to maintain this vehicle, as it is overworked. Ald. Jeffrey asked if a demonstrator is a viable option and Chief Tighe stated that we really don't need all the extras. He added that the bid specs will be the same as for the existing ambulances to simplify the process and to keep part replacement costs down.

Ald. Schermerhorn **moved** to recommend going out to bid for a new ambulance. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey and duly adopted, ayes all.

Public Works & Engineering Items:

Replacement of 1984 Ford Flushing Truck

C. Ivarson reported that the flushing truck is by far the most important vehicle the City has, as it is the truck that flushes the sewers. Because the City is so flat, the flusher helps the solids move through the pipes to keep from getting blockages. We get a lot of blockages. The current 22-year-old flusher is totally worn-out and needs approximately $12,000 in repairs right now (two rear-ends have been replaced within the past four years, it has a transmission that's been in there since 1984, etc.). In order to be effective and more efficient, we need a truck with a very short wheel-base, due to our narrow streets. The funds will come from Capital Reserves and we currently have almost $600,000 in the budget. The flusher truck will cost approximately $150,000-175,000, however we need to do some research to see if we can find one with a shorter wheel base in order to meet our needs. We need one with a 1500 gallon tank with the options we want on the back like a power flusher, and a central vacuum so it's picking up all the grease instead of sending it down the road. This is likely to take 4-5 months to get and Ivarson wanted to note that the Public Works / Public Safety Committee approved going out to bid.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend going out to bid for a new waste flusher truck. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn and duly adopted, ayes all.

Prior to continuing on with the Agenda (as written), C. Ivarson asked to move onto budget transfers and revisit the meter reader position later in the agenda.

Budget Transfers for Increased Utilities Costs – General Fund Municipal Buildings (Total $31,900)

C. Ivarson put in $142,000 in last year's budget in utilities. That was cut to $131,000 and we are currently in the red by $31,900. We also took on two additional buildings and one building we haven't received any utility reimbursement on. W. Roberts wanted to note that this is due to the inflated energy costs and C. Ivarson is talking about the 2005 budget. In order to meet these utility bills, we needed to do budget changes. W. Roberts did a budget analysis to see where the money from other lines could help (some of it is within municipal buildings: $11,000 contingency account, $4000 street lighting, $8000 sidewalk materials & supplies on the 2005 budget).

Ald. Schermerhorn expressed concern about moving budget money around compromising the budget process. W. Roberts acknowledged that if we were a private business this would certainly be a cause for concern, however with municipalities every dollar must be authorized under an appropriation, which you do in your original budget. As a requirement of government, you have to move the legal appropriation from that appropriation into that account line.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend performing the budget transfers. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn and duly adopted, ayes all.

Financing of Third Floor Renovations for City Offices

C. Ivarson reported that the 3rd floor has the HVAC and the electrical installed, and mens & women's restrooms put in, and he wants to know if the Committee is interested in moving forward with converting the third floor to accommodate the City administrative offices as originally planned. Ivarson reported that as of now the costs involve putting in a grid for the ceiling, the lighting, insulation and sheetrock at about $125,000 ($100,000 for general and electrical contractor and $22-25,000 for engineering). He added that anything over $20,000 we have to go out to bid for. Upon completion of the mentioned items we will need people to physically move the offices, and we will also need someone to handle the floor layout. He stated if you don't spend the money on the third floor, you'll have to spend it on City Hall (heating system, new roof, etc.). We're looking at $250,000 in expenditures on either side and it's time for a decision.

Ald. Maiurano said that the original plan was to move City Hall to the third floor and he believes we should continue to move in that direction. Ald. Jeffrey asked about putting the renovations out to bid. C. Ivarson responded that we couldn't do that with municipal government, because in this case, we need to have the money set aside prior to going out to bid to pay for that bid. W. Roberts discussed other kinds of costs that are concerned, primarily debt service and the high costs associated with the state retirement system. The recent real property sales of the property auctioned off last November ($645,000), and after we pay the expenses, most of those funds have to go toward debt service

It was discussed that the Elk's Club proceeds would have to go into the debt service. What Bill's found so far is that the origin of the City's ownership in the Elk's Club was funded through Community Development funds, and those funds will likely have to go back into Community Development. He's going to have Bill Tompkins research this first to make certain, but he believes it will have to go toward debt service. In the meantime, the municipals buildings capital reserves, after we withdraw funds to pay for what Carl first mentioned, which was authorized by the Council last year ($95,000 for HVAC and $20,000 for engineering) which was further modified by $50,000 for a change order by the general contractor once he got actual cost estimates, which leaves us about $80,000 left from the Capital Reserves account for municipal buildings. And based on allocating funds this year a large portion of this would come from the sale of buildings such as the East Main Street school. His projections would be for the end of this year, about $200,000. So following through on what Carl just outlined, W. Roberts if you take another $125,000, your bringing it down to a very minimal level with the other municipal building. C. Ivarson said you have to be looking for other revenue areas.

Ald. Jeffrey had reservations about making that kind of decision just now. C. Ivarson reported that there is a third floor sitting vacant at 68-degrees with 5800 sq ft sitting vacant (more than we have at City Hall right now). Ald. Jeffrey said that he's not disagreeing that it has to happen, but he feels there are too many unknowns at this time as far as revenues, property sales, etc. He thought it was too premature for a decision at this time. W. Roberts added that the fiscal aspects of this require a commitment on the part of City Hall. C. Ivarson said that if you're not going to use it, it should be rented out or utilized in some way, not just sitting there vacant. He added that he would like to be able to call in some contractor's and get some firm prices. Ald. Jeffrey wanted to confirm that we weren't committing.

Ald. Maiurano said, as Council members, we need to take a hard look at the pros and cons of moving or staying. He reiterated that at 68-degrees with no heat on, it's very comfortable & will definitely save heating costs. Ald. Maiurano said either way you have to spend money.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to recommend to table financing of the third floor renovations until the March meeting. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn and duly adopted, ayes all.

Water Meter Reader

C. Ivarson reported that as of today, he was currently down 6 people in public works. It's getting to the point where he is going to have trouble handling a big snow-storm. He reported on the status of the six employees. He stated that we filed in-house, under the rules & regulations, for a water system maintainer/meter reader, but there was only one applicant and nothing came of it. C. Ivarson is requesting that we go outside the City to hire for a water system/meter reader. Ald. Jeffrey inquired as to whether or not this was budgeted. C. Ivarson replied that all the openings discussed tonight are budgeted and that we've already saved a lot of money since they've been vacant.

Ald. Maiurano **moved** to recommend going outside the local area to advertise for the meter reader position. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn and duly adopted, ayes all.

Refilling of Mechanic's Position

C. Ivarson reported that a person left today for failing to follow City policy. We now have a mechanic's position in the highway garage. Ald. Jeffrey asked if this was a union position and what would happen if we didn't hire someone. Ivarson reported that a mechanic is crucial and he cannot function without one. Ald. Jeffrey asked if there could be any ramifications of this person leaving and D. DeForest said that she feel confident that they can fill the position without any recourse. Worst case scenario and we have to lay the new employee off , but I don't think it will come to that. Now with the new regulations under the CDL guidelines, once you lose the license for a year, there's no more getting special provisions for driving to work.

Ald. Schermerhorn **moved** to recommend advertising to refill the mechanic's position. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey and duly adopted, ayes all.

Prior to the vote, C. Ivarson reiterated that is was crucial that the Human Resources Director be allowed to recruit outside the local area, stating that he would hope the City would give her the funds to do that. Ivarson said they actually lowered the standards of this job to recruit someone. It can be charged to the sewer fund for this one position. He stated that he has three trainees working for him right now adding that if he were gone, there is no one who can legally operate the water plants.

Ald. Jeffrey asked how much it would cost to go outside the area. D. DeForest said that is should be reasonable. A brief discussion ensued regarding the areas they might be able to recruit prospective employees. C. Ivarson added that last year, we even offered a $10,000 signing bonus, however most applicants are looking for a salary in the $60,000-70,000 range. Ivarson stated this was a very big problem, not just in NYS but nationally. Ald. Jeffrey asked if anyone in-house could be trained. Ivarson said no, added that the test for this position has a 47% pass-rate. A brief discussion ensued as to the viability of recruiting qualified help. Ivarson said we should spend the resources to try and hire someone.

Non-Unit Compensation Schedule

W. Roberts handed out the City of Norwich "Proposed Non-Unit Employee Compensation Schedule for Fiscal Year 2006" (see attached) and proceeded to point out the highlighted areas for 2006 proposed schedule along with a 2005 schedule to show what was adopted last year. He explained the sections and salary grades. He noted that in grades 12-35, what it represents is a 3% adjustment over last year's rates. He said that's what the budget for 2006 has been based on (those numbers were actually in the budget). The second section, grades 4-11, you notice that 2006 has no rates listed, as we need to determine what rates should be proposed. We need to do a little more analysis because of the effective wage compression due to the minimum wage change. Minimum wage in 2005 was $6.00 and in 2006 it's already gone up to $6.75. If you just essentially increase those rates in that block, you end up with rate compression. D. DeForest added that what you end up with is our part-time summer help making more than our permanent, regular full-time help. There was a brief discussion on salaries and D. DeForest stated that the money is in the budget and it's primarily an issue of adopting the schedule. Ald. Maiurano added that this was budgeted and as far as he's concerned, it's something we need to pass. He added that it's an item that comes up every year and we need to show our support for the hard-working City employees. He said supporting this is a statement of our support for the department heads and it's support we should be giving them.

Ald. Schermerhorn inquired as to whether the chart was incomplete and discussion ensued as to the fact that currently we have regular employees who, with overtime, are making more than their department heads. Ald. Jeffrey stated he wanted time to digest the information. Ald. Schermerhorn stated that it was not out of the ordinary and reminded the members that it's going to be retroactive. Ald. Maiurano he agrees with Ald. Schermerhorn 100% and added that this sends out a positive message and gives a vote of confidence to our department heads. Ald. Jeffrey noted that last year the schedule wasn't approved until October or November and stated that he didn't think it should wait that long, however he still had some reservations. Once Ald. Jeffrey realized it went to the full council he was in agreement.

Ald. Schermerhorn **moved** to recommend the non-unit compensation schedule and bring it before the full Council in February. Seconded by Ald. Maiurano and duly adopted, ayes all.

Additional New Business

Term of Office for Mayor

Ald. Maiurano introduced this topic and asked that it be tabled for the next meeting due to time constraints. He wanted to obtain information at the election office on public referendums and research the current law. The Mayor added that the intent behind this was to get the Mayor and the Aldermen on the same page, noting that currently it's a 2-year term for the Mayor and a 4-year term for the Aldermen. The Mayor thinks everyone should be a 3-year term, or a 2-year term, or a 4-year term.

Refilling Historian / Records Management Part-Time Position

D. DeForest, Director of Human Resources, asked what the committee's thoughts were on refilling the now vacant Historian/Records Management position. She stated there are two titles, but one position. The hours are at 23 per week, stating that 10 hours is performing historian duties and 13 hours is handling records management. Ald. Schermerhorn asked how important the position was to the City? W. Roberts replied that while the position is very important, not hiring at the present time would not have a critical impact on the City. He added if you didn't fill it at all, it would have a critical impact over time. Ald. Maiurano stated that he would like to look at a couple of options and instead of rushing in and filling the position we should take our time and find the right candidate, which can be discussed in executive session.

The consensus was that the refilling of this position would be put on the agenda for the next month. Ald. Jeffrey asked if the county took over the function, would they charge us? D. DeForest answered affirmatively that it was something to look into. The Mayor said that something to consider was the impact of W. Roberts needing items and not being able to get them.

Old Business

Tax Sales Certificates

Ald. Maiurano asked W. Roberts for a time frame for this issue and W. Roberts replied that his plan is to, during the summer months, get a local law enacted to amend Charter and make changes in how we handle tax certificates. W. Roberts stated that he will give the background at the next meeting and it will be an item that will be carried forward to each month's agenda.

Executive Session

Ald. Schermerhorn **moved** that the Committee move in to Executive Session to meet with the Common Council members at 8:25 p.m. to discuss: 1) Matters Affecting Public Safety – Police Department, 2) Employment History of a Particular Individual, and 3) Labor Contract Negotiations. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey and duly adopted, ayes all.

Ald. Abraham **moved** that the Committee come out of Executive Session at 10:00 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Maiurano and duly adopted; ayes all.

Motions

Motion to Approve the Appointment of Police Officer

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to approve the appointment of Chris Rotundo to the position of police officer with an effective date on March 1, 2006 and refer it to the full Council for action. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn and duly adopted; 3-0, on a roll call vote.

Motion to Approve Filling the Vacancy for a Police Officer

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to approve the filling of the vacancy for a police officer due to the retirement in March of 2006 of Robert Wich. Ald. Jeffrey further moved that the candidate to be appointed will be announced at the work session and the committee requests the full Council to take action at the next Council meeting. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn and duly adopted, 3-0, on a roll call vote.

Motion to Approve a New Position of Assistant Police Chief

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to make a recommendation to the full Council to approve a new position of Assistant Police Chief and to promote Dale Smith to the position effective March 1, 2006. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn and duly adopted; 3-0, on a roll call vote.

Adjournment:

Ald. Schermerhorn **moved** to adjourn at 10:10 p.m. seconded by Ald. Jeffrey and duly adopted, ayes all.