

City of Norwich, Department of Finance

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

Minutes

Finance/Personnel Committee Meeting of November 9, 2006

Present:

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

Also Present:

Mayor Joseph Maiurano
Ald. Suzanne Williams (6:15 p.m.)
Ald. Terry Bresina
Director of Finance, William J. Roberts
Human Resources Director, Deborah DeForest
Police/Fire Chief Joseph Angelino
DPW Superintendent Carl Ivarson
Youth Bureau Director Bob Mason
Code Enforcement Officer Jason Lawrence
Planning & CD Specialist Todd Dreyer
Deputy Clerk Darlene Colaso

Call To Order:

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

Approval of Minutes:

Ald. Laughlin moved to approve the minutes from the regular meeting of October 3, 2006. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey and duly adopted ayes all.

Youth Bureau Items: Renewal Contracts With Towns for 2007 Youth Recreation Services

Youth Bureau Director Bob Mason reported that the rates for the renewal contracts with the towns for 2007 youth recreation services remain the same. Mason reminded the committee that there was a 10% increase in the 2006 contract, so there is no proposed increase for 2007.

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

Prior to the vote, Ald. Jeffrey wanted to confirm that this was at no cost to the city and Mason replied that it actually brings in ~\$11,000 in revenues.

Community & Economic Development Projects & Funds

Canal Walk Signs Access Agreement and Expenditure of Grant Funds

Dreyer reported that a few years ago the city received 2 grants in the neighborhood of ~\$5000 for this canal walk sign project, which refers to four podium style signs (very similar to what's currently in front of the City Hall watchtower). He noted that three would be placed on VFW property, and one of the signs would be situated on East Main Street in front of the cannon; with the other two situated on property along Lackawana Avenue (also owned by the VFW), and the fourth sign would be situated by the City Court. Officers of the VFW have reviewed the access agreement, which would allow the signs for 30 years at \$1 consideration. The signs would be installed by the City of Norwich Department of Public Works workers. Dreyer added that there will be a resolution ready for work session and a copy of the agreement will be in Council members' packages.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to forward this onto the full Common Council for next week's work session. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin and duly adopted ayes all.

Official Support and Co-Application for Grant to Redesign East and West Parks

Dreyer reported that this project has been in the works for several years through the Friends of the Park group. That group was able to commission a master plan along with concept drawings, which was finished in 2004. Dreyer reported that the next step is preparation of construction level drawings specifications and bid documents. Dreyer found a communities grant and the local contribution is 10%. They have been able to secure some interest from NBT Bank for the estimated \$10,000 contribution (on a \$100,000 project estimate), who is willing to put up the entire share amount.

Ald. Schermerhorn asked about the plans and Dreyer stated that it was to redesign East & West Parks Dreyer reviewed by Saratoga Associates. Dreyer said that there would be new sidewalks, with new electrical system, the master plan proposes a sprinkler system and that it would involve some new landscaping. Dreyer added that one of the primary changes to East Park would be a new band shell and also as part of that, public restrooms. Ald. Jeffrey commented that he likes what was done and complimented Eric Larsen, of Friends of the Park, who also spoke, commenting that they beat up the plans quite a bit to come to this final plan. Larsen stated that the goal is to rebuild the gazebo to look like the 1900-1920 original gazebo. A brief discussion ensued as to proposed changes. The bottom line is that it is going to look and work better, and will likely get more events downtown. Larsen commented that the restrooms would not be open unless the group utilizing the park signs the keys out and takes responsibility for the restrooms.

Dreyer said that what they'd be looking for at work session is for the city to work as co-applicant, with the County acting as the main applicant. He added that there would be no financial obligation from city. Ald. Jeffrey inquired as to when the application was due and Dreyer responded Friday the 17th of November. Ald. Jeffrey asked if the selection is going to be done by State before end of the year and Dreyer said that that was not likely. Dreyer also wanted to stress that there is no commitment needed by city or county at this point, other than to approve the application. Ald. Jeffrey asked if they could we include a recommendation by Senator Libbous? Mayor Maiurano said that he will call Libbous.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to forward this request to full Council and recommend adoption at the upcoming work session. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin and duly adopted ayes all.

Prior to the vote, HR Director Deborah DeForest requested that language be added indicating that this will be at no cost to the city.

HOME Program Update

Dreyer stated that currently, there are 18 properties actively involved in this grant program. He added that last week he received an impact letter on historic resources from SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office). He said that landlords wanting to put on new siding and/or installing new windows often do not fly well with SHPO, however at least ½ of the properties SHPO did not have a problem with, which happily surprised Dreyer. Dreyer added that he and Code Enforcement Officer Jason Lawrence have performed inspections on eight of those properties and that preliminary write-ups on some of those properties are complete. Once those are tweaked a little bit, they can have lead inspections done, and shortly after that, they can go out to bid. He said that unless there's interior work to be done, he anticipates most work would be started in the spring.

Ald. Jeffrey wanted to confirm that the HOME program is oriented toward low income property owners. Dreyer stated that this has been problematic for two reasons, one is that the rents are required to be very low (which knocks a lot of properties out of the game), and also income verification is an issue (which means that if someone has a job at a fast food restaurant making minimum wage, they are also above the income levels). Dreyer stated that it's very strict.

Ald. Jeffrey initiated a brief discussion regarding the application process. Dreyer mentioned that Judy Wingate Wade verified income levels for several potential tenants, and they were just slightly over the acceptable income levels to be eligible for the grant. Ald. Jeffrey reiterated his opinion that the city is very successful in catering to a lot of the low-income population and that the city neighborhoods reflect that. He said that we need to look at rebuilding our neighborhoods, and overall, believes this program is not in the best interests of the City of Norwich. Mayor Maiurano commented that had the city known then, what they know now, they would not have applied for this grant: Unfortunately, the city is stuck with it at this point.

Ald. Jeffrey asked if any of the funds could be utilized to fix up the properties the city takes back during the tax sales and Dreyer stated that under this program, no.

Public Safety Items

Police: SPCA 2007 Annual Agreement

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to forward this request to full Council and recommend adoption, contingent upon no major changes. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin and duly adopted ayes all.

Fire (no items)

EMO (no items)

Public Works & Engineering Items

Filling of Vacancy in WWTP Lead Operator Position

Ivarson reported that there is a vacancy in the lead operator position, as the former lead operator who was out on worker's compensation for the last 20+ months has finally relinquished his resignation.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to fill this vacancy. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin and duly adopted ayes all.

Prior to the vote, Ald. Jeffrey confirmed where the advertising funds were coming from and Ivarson confirmed that they were coming out of the water and wastewater budgets.

Old Business

Third Floor – Alderman's Room

DeForest laid out the proposed third floor City Hall plans and Ald. Jeffrey commented that he believes that this is the first time he is seeing them. A discussion ensued as to whether or not an Aldermen's/Conference room should be added. Mayor Maiurano commented that he wanted to have open space next to the Mayor's office and Ald. Jeffrey concurred, saying that he's never even used the Aldermen's Room and added that it's a complete waste of money.

DeForest stated that it does not matter if the alderman's room is in or out, it's \$375,000 to do the project. Mayor Maiurano debated that and interjected that he wants to see something in writing from Delaware engineering, before committing to anything.

Bill Roberts, Director of Finance/City Clerk stated that another issue that arose was whether the funds were available. Roberts said they have around \$275,000 remaining from fire house and police station projects. So the bottom line is that there is currently ~\$275,000 remaining for this project. In the meantime, Roberts added that from sale of real property we're scheduled to put \$125,000 into the Municipal Buildings Capital Reserves. Roberts said that while they might be able to come up with the total to cover the cost, they wouldn't have much left afterwards. He will need to do a detailed analysis to verify. (NOTE: A subsequent analysis indicated a shortfall of \$77,825 after fully depleting the Capital Reserves.)

Ald. Jeffrey asked Ivarson what the roof replacement would cost and Ivarson replied \$140,000. Ivarson commented that once you sell the current City Hall building that money would go into the Capital Reserves. A brief discussion ensued as to the viability of moving City Hall offices. Roberts said that until the current City Hall building was sold, Capital Reserves would be brought down very low. Ivarson added that timing is on your side, as you can do the bidding in the fall, and stay in the current building. Jeffrey asked how long of a life does the current City Hall building roof have left? Ivarson stated 2-3 years on the outside. Ald. Schermerhorn asked what the cost to keep roof in livable condition for 2-3 years? Ivarson stated that \$15,000 to \$20,000 would cover it. A brief discussion ensued as to viability of the project. Ald. Jeffrey said that with all due respect to DeForest and Roberts, he doesn't have any problem with them contributing to the layout and functionality, however his concern is having someone in charge who knows about price, etc. over the cost to repair the roof and the hit the Capital Reserves. Mayor continued to express concern about the cost and asked if anything regarding cost has been received in writing. DeForest stated that she received an email regarding the cost. Ivarson said that you can't have a cost until you decide what 99% of your design is going to be and it won't happen if you change the design every other week.

Another discussion ensued as to the components of the design. The Mayor said that his idea is to move the Mayor's office down to where the Fire Chief's office is currently located. Roberts said that to have the Mayor on the first floor, based on the volume of interactions Roberts has with him, would be terribly inefficient. Mayor Maiurano commented that the Mayor's office is always open for anyone to use. Ivarson said that they need to be thinking a little further ahead than just this current administration. Roberts agreed and added that to have the Mayor on the first floor and have the rest of the staff on the third floor is not efficient. Another brief discussion ensued and the Mayor continued to reiterate that he wanted open space in front of the new Mayor's office. Ivarson said that they need to get plans down to 99% sureness of what they want. He said that the engineer will come up with a price for construction and should be within 10% of the actual costs. Ivarson said that he has no idea what's been spent already. Ivarson and DeForest concurred that

with an Aldermen's room or not, it won't have much of an impact on the price. Ald. Jeffrey stressed that they need pricing. DeForest said that she will get a written price. Ald. Schermerhorn asked if this should be tabled. Roberts said that it should really be moved to full Council for a consensus of what the final design will look like.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to forward this item to full Council for consensus. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin and duly adopted ayes all.

New Business

Miscellaneous Budget Transfers From General Fund Contingency Account

Roberts stated that this year, when we revised the City Charter, they went into a lot of legal research with City Attorney Patrick Flanagan, and they determined when the city sends out legal notices, we need to ensure anyone and everyone is covered. Roberts decided that a paralegal is needed to do all the legal searches at the county, so they're spending more money to do that, but the expense will be incurred by the delinquent property owner (not the city).

- Rebate of Property Tax Interest Adj. For Taxpayer Bankruptcy	\$ 531.60
- Adj. For Flood Debris Removal (to be FEMA reimbursed)	1,927.50
- Lien Searches and Increased Volume of Tax Advertising (to be added to taxes)	8,000.00
Total Transfer From Contingency:	\$10,459.10

Ald. Laughlin **moved** to perform budget transfers from the General Fund Contingency account. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey and duly adopted ayes all.

Ald. Jeffrey clarified that the \$8000 is for more extensive advertising and Roberts added that there is also more extensive legal searches connected with it as well. Roberts said that all of the costs the city incurs, whether for advertising or legal searches or what have you, based on the number of properties is prorated and its added on to the taxes and the cost to redeem those properties. A brief discussion ensued and Roberts said that he believes that it will cost on average ~\$80 extra per property. He said that while they will be spending that money now to get the work done, when those properties come up for sale, the city will recover it.

Budget Transfer From Municipal Buildings Utilities to Postage/Coping Costs (\$2,000)

Roberts stated that in regard to their postage and copy costs this year, he had expected that the costs may go down, as last year there was an increase, which he thought was an anomaly, however it turns out it's more of a norm. He estimated \$16,400 for this year and last year it was \$15,600, but the 2006 budget was only for \$13,800, which they had in past years. He said part is the postal rate increase, but he believes it is a volume issue. So he said he increased the budget by \$2000. Roberts added that the actual cost for utilities for municipal buildings is going to be lower than budgeted. They anticipated quite an increase, but not as much of an increase as originally thought. So there is room to transfer lines from that to postage and copying costs.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to perform budget transfers from Municipal Buildings to Postage/Copying Costs. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin and duly adopted ayes all.

Executive Session: Employment History of Particular Individual

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to go into executive session at 6:56 p.m. to discuss the employment history of a particular individual. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin and duly adopted ayes all.

Prior to going into executive session we called a brief recess to accommodate the special council meeting scheduled immediately following the Finance Personnel Committee meeting.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to go out of executive session at 8:27 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Schermerhorn and duly adopted ayes all.

Adjournment

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to adjourn at 8:27 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Laughlin and duly adopted ayes all.