

COMMON COUNCIL
Special Work Session
November 4 2004

Mayor Robert Raphael presided at a special budget development work session of the Common Council held at 7 PM on November 4, 2004, at One Court Plaza.

Present:

Mayor Robert Raphael
Ald. A. Anthony Abraham
Ald. Jeffrey Thornton
Ald. Joseph Maiurano
Ald. Joseph Biviano

Also:

Director of Finance/Clerk William Roberts
Police Chief Joseph Angelino
Human Resource Director Deborah DeForest
Public Works Superintendent Carl Ivarson
Youth Bureau Director Robert Mason
Fire Chief John Tighe

Absent:

Ald. James Cushman
Ald. Suzanne Williams

Deputy Clerk Donna Philippone

Mayor Raphael called the meeting to order at 7 PM and reminded Council about the change in the November meeting schedule.

Ald. Thornton stated that he did not feel the Common Council should discuss cutting positions without the full Council being present.

Ald. Biviano stated he would like to talk about the reserves. He said he received the requested schedule from Public Works but did not receive the information from the other departments.

Ald. Abraham indicated that last week it was suggested that each Council member bring something in writing regarding proposed cuts. He presented his recommendations as follows: it has been discussed previously and should be investigated as to the possibility of events paying for the services they receive from the City; those with outstanding debts to the City should be called in to meet with the Finance Committee to make arrangements for payment; the agreement with the Town to hook the last 20 properties up to water service be completed; the closing of the Police Station at night would put an additional officer on the street and reduce overtime costs.

Ald. Biviano indicated that if the trial nighttime closing of the Police Station were successful, he would like to see the dispatcher take the calls all day and hire a civilian to man the desk. Chief Angelino noted that the Sheriff's Department would not be able to dispatch for the City before 11 PM. Ald. Maiurano asked if there would be a cost associated with the transition. Chief Angelino said the telephone will cost about \$420 per year and he estimates added security for the Station at night would be approximately \$1,200.

Ald. Thornton referred to the options that were put on the table for Council for discussion including: does the City want a full time Fire Chief, a part time Fire Chief or one Public Safety Manager to oversee both Fire and Police Departments. Discussion ensued. Ald. Thornton said he would like to gather information on the option of a Public Safety Manager and report his findings in a couple of weeks. Mayor Raphael said he contacted NYCOM and was told that the City would still need to have a Police Chief. Ald. Maiurano said he did not feel that two weeks was a sufficient amount of time to study something like this and suggested that it be sent to the Personnel and Public Safety Committees for review. Ald. Thornton said he would be gathering information for the purpose of Council discussion and noted he is neither for nor against it.

Ald. Biviano said the Council cannot keep raising taxes and some tough decisions need to be made. Mayor Raphael stated that most of the departments have been reduced to the bare bone and if there aren't enough people to do the work, that won't be a savings to the taxpayers. Ald. Biviano said in response to the suggestion that vacancies in the Community Development office have been detrimental to growth, that there was no need to add people on to that department as the work has been outsourced to Shelter Planning. He added that the Mayor should be bringing business into the City. Ald. Biviano further stated that he did not believe the City should be paying \$80,000 (with benefits) for a Personnel Director and noted that businesses like NBT and Unison don't pay that much for that type of position.

Ald. Maiurano agreed that the City needs to increase the reserves, however, the draft budget is a bare boned budget and any further cuts would affect services to the public. He suggested the following cost saving measures: change the charter relative to the tax sales certificates; streamline, restructure and cross-train city personnel; be in the know about what's happening in the business community; cut man hours at the Skating Facility in order to keep the Police Station open at night; have volunteers run the youth programs and/or pay a stipend to those workers; cut the aldermen's salary by 10 percent; to look closer at the labor attorney's contract that was approved in haste as it may not be very cost efficient; sell the transportation building and the East Main Street school building to get the properties back on the tax rolls; develop a fees for services program; reduce street lighting by turning out some of the street lights in the City; look at the outstanding loans. Ald. Maiurano said there are things happening in Norwich and we need a City Salesman to sell Norwich.

Ald. Abraham asked if the occupants of the East Main Street School have given notice that they are leaving. The Mayor said he has a tentative date of April, 2005. Ald. Abraham stated, regarding the vote to hire the labor attorney, that he did not make his decision in haste. Ald. Maiurano asked why the HR Director was not allowed to go into the executive session to provide some explanation regarding the labor proposal. He indicated that he would like the Council to look at the matter again.

Ald. Biviano said with regard to the replacement of vehicles, that he would like a report from Police and Fire similar to one presented by DPW. He also stated that if the City would follow a vehicle replacement schedule it would keep maintenance costs down. Ald. Biviano said the City is not receiving its fair share of general purpose aid.

Ald. Biviano moved to go into executive session at 8:30 PM to discuss the employment of a particular corporation, pending litigation and the sale of property where the price may be affected. Seconded by Ald. Maiurano and duly adopted, 3-1 (Ald. Thornton). Ald. Thornton argued that the executive session should be held with the full Council present and the others concurred. The motion was withdrawn.

Ald. Maiurano moved to adjourn at 8:32 PM. Seconded by Ald. Abraham and duly adopted, ayes all.