

CITY OF NORWICH
JOINT MEETING of the
PUBLIC SAFETY / PUBLIC WORKS and
FINANCE/PERSONNEL COMMITTEES
January 2, 2024

Present:

Mayor Brian Doliver
Ald. Eric Warren
Ald. Fred Gee
Ald. Nancy Allaire
Ald. William Loomis
Ald. David Zieno
Ald. Robert D. Jeffrey

Supervisor Robert M. Jeffrey

Also:

Director of Finance/City Clerk Dee DuFour
DPW Superintendent Edward Pepe
Youth Bureau Director Anthony Testani
Fire Chief Jan Papelino arrived 6:52
Police Chief Rodney Marsh
Community Development Director Erik Scrivener
City Attorney Stephanie Hanrahan
Deputy City Clerk Agnes Eaton

Media Representative: Sarah Genter, The Evening Sun

Absent

Supervisor James McNeil

Ald. Jeffrey called the joint meeting of the Public Works/Public Safety and Finance/Personnel Committees to order at 6:48 p.m. at the Council Chambers.

Approval of Minutes – Ald. Warren **moved** to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2023 meeting. Seconded by Ald. Loomis, approved ayes all.

Department Head Reports

DPW

2024 Street Paving and Grinding – E. Pepe reported that the streets slated for paving this year are Beebe, Birdsall, Chenango, Conkey, Coombes, Davis, Delaware Sq., Francis, Griffin, Morse, Northrup, Ross, West Midland, Westcott and York, with alternates of Canal, East Park Pl., West Park Pl. and Hale. He asked for permission to go out to bid for paving. Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to approve going to bid for the 2024 paving. Seconded by Ald. Loomis, approved ayes all. Discussion prior to vote: There is no guarantee since it will be based on State funding. Ald. Jeffrey asked what happens if we were to run out of streets to pave. Pepe said we haven't run into that situation but could put more money into crack sealing.

Community Development

Loitering Ordinance – E. Scrivener reported at the request of the Mayor, the Planning Commission has come up with wording for a Loitering Ordinance. He requested a Public Hearing for January. Ald. Loomis **moved** to request the Common Council to set a Public Hearing for February. Seconded by Ald. Warren, approved ayes all. Discussion: Ald. Zieno suggested a revision to the verbiage regarding obstruction of sidewalks. Scrivener said they have looked at other municipal ordinances and they are virtually identical. Regarding enforcement, Chief Roach said that typically these types of Ordinances are to get people to move along. The City Attorney said that if it's tested in Court, it will most likely not go to trial. Most times it is just a civil judgment fine and hurts their credit if not paid, but she can also threaten 15 days in jail as a deterrent. Ald. Loomis asked about encounters regarding loitering to which Chief Roach reported they are daily. In most instances the person or persons move along. Ald. Allaire questioned the difference between panhandling and loitering.

Nuisance Ordinance – E. Scrivener distributed a flow chart to help explain how the Chronic Nuisance Ordinance would work – the Public Nuisance would follow a similar path. Ald. Jeffrey referenced a Binghamton case in which a property owner was assessed fines of up to \$750,000 for 8 different properties and now cannot own property in the City of Binghamton for 15 years. Ald. Loomis said that the number of

properties Binghamton acquired was 18 to 20. E. Scrivener said that is something that could be considered. David Francis, who is part of the working group, said they had looked at eminent domain - it would do nothing to help the rest of the neighborhood. In talking about the Broad St. properties, they estimated that eminent domain would cost about \$1 million. It will be the Ordinance Officer who puts things together as to how it will flow from Codes to the panel, to the attorney, etc. He said currently there is no database of landlords for communication, saying that it affects 63% of our population. The database would be useful to assist in educating landlords that could assist them in making more money. Ald. Allaire asked questions to which Mr. Francis replied that the Nuisance Officer would most likely be a new full-time position and it would be up to the Council to figure out how to fund it. He said the position should be outside of Code Enforcement because Codes isn't working – the process is fractured. The Police Department also shouldn't do it to avoid accusations of overzealousness. Having the Nuisance Officer separate protects both departments. E. Scrivener replied that other municipalities Nuisance Officers are part of Code Enforcement or Chief of Police but ultimately it is up to the Common Council. Francis envisions that after the fourth year, the Nuisance Officer could "step back" and it could become an appointed or volunteer position with the fifth year many of the problems would be solved because you've given the City "teeth". Further discussion ensued regarding no funding in the 2024 for the position, the person hired should know Building Codes and Ordinances because if they didn't they would have to go back to Code Enforcement. The City Attorney said that when going to trial one of the first things established is the credentials/expert knowledge of the person [Nuisance Officer] issuing the ticket. Ald. Loomis questioned if this will hold up in court and suggested sending the Nuisance Ordinance to NYCOM for review. It was requested by the Council to find out what training the Nuisance Officers in other municipalities must have. Ald. Zieno pointed out that our Code Officers already have a great deal of training along with continuing education.

NYSDEC award for Urban and Community Forestry project – E. Scrivener reported the City was awarded \$29,831 through DEC Urban and Community Forest grant. Funds would be for a tree inventory and to create a forest management plan for City-owned trees. Ald. Allaire **moved** to accept the grant award. Seconded by Ald. Zieno, approved ayes all.

Fire Department

Outside CON EMS calls – J. Papelino reported there were 12 calls outside the CON, 10 of which were billable. This is an uptick in calls due to no providers especially Christmas with the City being the only provider in the north end of the county.

Calls for 2023 – J. Papelino reported a total number of calls for 2023 as 3,296. On New Year's Eve they responded to 19 calls.

Professional development plan – J. Papelino reported that with the addition of an MTO more professional development plans are possible. There are a number of professional and volunteer firefighters interested in additional training. They will be offering a Building Code Inspector class so that they will have about 10 persons trained in fire inspections.

Stipend Grant for Volunteers – J. Papelino reported that this is still in the public comment period at the State level. By taking the basic exterior operations class volunteers could receive up to \$1,000; for the interior fire operations class they could get an additional \$1,000; for Fire Officers they could receive \$500. In Norwich 3 people could retroactively qualify for the interior fire operations class stipend. The County covers the cost of the classes and the State issues the stipends to the volunteers.

Code Enforcement

Tax properties – J. Papelino reference a list of potential properties that could be taken by the end of the month. He reported that 20 Barnes is still going through the eviction process with a court date later this month.

Violations – J. Papelino reported there will be 3 properties in Court on Thursday including those on Division and Cortland St.

Ald. Zieno asked if there is a database of landlords. J. Papelino said it is not current. D. DuFour said there is a database in Municipality, but it's only as good as the information the City is given. When the Rental Registration was established about 12 years ago a mass mailing was done to inform landlords and let them know they had to register. Ald. Zieno asked if Code Enforcement could do a monthly report just as other departments do.

Police Department

Outlook for 2024 and Accreditation - R. Roach reported they will be moving toward accreditation. It's a lengthy process and time consuming, but we are currently the only full-time police departments not accredited. It affords a discount on insurance premiums and coverage and is considered best practice to ensure appropriate training of law enforcement personnel. NYS is moving in that direction in the 10 years with full-time agencies needing to be accredited to eligible for grants or funding. He further reported that they had 5,826 complaints in 2023.

Permission to refill the current vacancy – R. Roach reported there is one position vacant and would like to refill the vacancy. From the current Civil Service eligible list there are 3 that are local and 2 from out of the area. Ald. Loomis **moved** to refill the vacant position. Seconded by Ald. Warren. Approved ayes all.

Permission to refill SRO position – R. Roach reported that Officer Clarke has given his letter of intent to retire. Interviews are being held January 8th for a replacement SRO in conjunction with the school district – the appointment of an Officer to SRO would leave a vacant Officer position. The academy in Broome County and Utica start March 25, 2024. Roach requested permission to refill the SRO position. Ald. Zieno **moved** to refill the SRO position. Seconded by Ald. Gee, approved ayes all.

Permission to fill the COPS grant – R. Roach reported that if this position is created, the Federal government would contribute 50% salary and 50% benefits up to \$125,000 over a 5-year period. Once the 3rd year is up the City would be responsible for another 12 months, after which if the cost is deemed unsustainable the position could be dissolved through attrition or layoff. Discussion of advantages for the added position were discussed. Ald. Loomis **moved** to fill a new Officer position to utilize the COPS grant. Seconded by Ald. Jeffrey, approved ayes all.

Adding 3 cell phones to the PD budget plan for the two detectives and Assistant Chief - R. Roach reported that as Chief of Police he is allocated a cell phone. With the extensive cases this summer, he frequently gave this to the detectives. The lack of cell phones is an issue and requests 2 additional cell phones for the detectives and another for Assistant Chief Burlison. Ald. Loomis **moved** to approve the 3 additional cell phones. Seconded by Ald. Warren, approved ayes all.

Adjournment

Ald. Gee **moved** to adjourn the Joint Committee Meeting at 8:34 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Warren, approved ayes all