

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

Present:

Mayor Brian Doliver
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
Director of Human Resources Lynn Murray
Youth Bureau Director Anthony Testani
Fire Chief Jan Papelino
Police Chief Reuben Roach
EMO Stephen Cady
Community Development Director Erik Scrivener
Deputy City Clerk Agnes Eaton

Absent

Supervisor James McNeil
Ald. Eric Warren

Ald. Jeffrey called the joint meeting of the Public Works/Public Safety and Finance/Personnel Committees to order at 6:32 p.m. at the Council Chambers.

Approval of Minutes – Ald. Gee **moved** to approve the minutes of the June 4, 2024 meeting. Seconded by Ald. Loomis, approved ayes all.

Correspondence

Fireman's Parade – Ald. Allaire **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve a request from the Chenango County Agricultural Society for Police and Fire Police assistance for the Fireman's Parade on Tuesday, August 7, 2024 beginning at 7:00 p.m. from the Norwich High School, down Midland Dr. and continuing on East Main St. to the Fairground entrance. Seconded by Ald. Zieno, approved ayes all.

Department Head Reports

EMO

Boil Water Notice – S. Cady gave a description to events that led to the Boil Water notice on Wednesday, June 19 by the Department of Public Health and the reverse 911 (Hyper Reach) call was issued. Complicating things was the fact that it was a Federal holiday and very few people were in their office. All major TV and radio news stations and papers were notified. With a heat advisory and temperatures into the 90's, a State of Emergency was issued. In total 11 pallets of water had been obtained for distribution for a total of around 19,000 bottles of water. Contact with schools, nursing homes, the hospital and others were done. The Boil Water notice was lifted Friday, June 21 around 6:00 p.m. He reported that Hyper Reach attempted to reach 2,871 landline phone numbers. Confirmed contact was to 1,610 landline numbers. The discrepancy in the numbers is due to those lines that have auto-attendants, and those who no longer have landlines. Those with cell numbers must sign up the notifications. Emails were also sent. Cady clarified that the water was never contaminated – this was a precautionary measure only. The debrief of the Boil Water Notice from E. Pepe is attached at the end of these minutes.

DPW

Designate GHD as Engineer for WWTP upgrades – Ald. Zieno **moved** to approve GHD as the Engineer for the WWTP upgrades. Seconded by Ald. Allaire, approved ayes all.

Street Paving Update/Change Order – E. Pepe had requested to add the paving project the following streets: Birdsall (from Brown to E. Main), Griffin, Ross, W. Midland, Westcott, and Sheldon (Adelaide to dead end).

The Committee also added the end of Sheldon to the dead end. Ald. Zieno **moved** to approve the added streets. Seconded by Ald. Allaire, approved ayes all.

Ald. Allaire questioned the method of pavement of the end of Sheldon to the dead end. She previously had asked about paving the part of Wales which is currently unpaved where resident's homes are and the possibility of finally getting it paved.

Police Department

Current Staffing– R. Roach reported on staffing, saying that 2 Officers are back – 1 from Military leave and 1 from FMLA. This leaves the department down 4 - 2 are in the Academy and 2 others are out on Comp.

Policing Efforts – R. Roach reported on various policing efforts: the Drug Task Force has had 3 meetings so far with top advisors in the area working on homelessness; they have towed 6 gas-powered minibikes since the last meeting, saying they have become a nuisance. Also being addressed when manpower permits are bicycles ridden on sidewalks; the Citizen's Police Academy target launch is August. The last Citizen's Police Academy was last done in the 90's. An application process will be created with the end result of 10-15 civilians that will meet once a week for 3 or 4 weeks. Chief Roach said there is a misconception about Loitering Laws. He said the only time an arrest can be made is if the person(s) have a controlled substance. They cannot be arrested for standing someplace. However, they do request them to move along and 99% of the time they do move along. Camping, however, is against City Ordinance and they can be ticketed.

There was discussion about what additional equipment could be obtained for the Police Department to improve efficiency and safety. R. Roach said that with the Tech grant they could look at FLOCK cameras to be placed around the City. He also said that 300-plus law enforcement offices got the same grant and with us being a smaller community it is proving hard to get someone here is challenging. The hiring process and timeline was discussed. Another Police Officer Civil Service test will be given in September with results taking a couple of months, after which interviews and testing would be done. Roach said that there is a low recruitment rate for most law enforcement agencies. Discussion of a civilian on the P.D. desk was discussed briefly. If CAP Court functioned correctly, it would help with not tying up an Officer. Phones currently are being rolled over at 11 p.m. to the Sheriff's Office. Mayor Doliver would like to see that moved to 9 p.m. in order to get an Officer out on the street. Supervisor Jeffrey said that the Police Chief has the authority to allow other authorities to come in, however they are also experiencing low recruitment issues. Mayor Doliver pointed out that the other day the Police Department had made 13 arrests before noon – they are doing their job. We're not going to be able to arrest our way out of this situation. Mayor Doliver reported that through his research of Police Departments similar in size to Norwich, on average there are 16 officers – we have 21.

Youth Bureau

Transfer for Parks Masterplan – A. Testani asked for a transfer of \$5,000 from Park Capital Reserves for the creation of a Masterplan for City parks which will allow for the application to certain grants. Ald. Loomis **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve the transfer. Seconded by Ald. Allaire, approved ayes all.

Transfer for Pickleball Court Striping and Nets - A. Testani for a transfer of \$47,030 from Skatepark Reserves for the Striping of Pickleball Courts and nets. Ald. Loomis **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve the transfer. Seconded by Ald. Gee, approved ayes all.

Community Development

Brownfield Opportunity Area Application – E. Scrivener asked for approval of application to the Brownfield Opportunity Area Program grants. The total requested will be \$180,000 which is 90% of the total project. Therefore a 10% match will make the total amount \$200,000. Ald. Allaire **moved** to approve the application to the BOA program. Seconded by Ald. Loomis, approved ayes all. The acres that are added are mostly in the Northeast part of the City.

E. Scrivener reported at a meeting with B.I.D., they are moving forward with replace the B.I.D. district lights by retrofitting them.

Human Resources

Rights of Employees to Express Breast Milk Policy – L. Murray presented the NYS revised Rights of Employees to Express Breast Milk Policy. Ald. Loomis **moved** to recommend the Common Council to approve the updated policy. Seconded by Ald. Allaire approved ayes all.

Finance

Update Investment Policy – D. DuFour presented the proposed updated investment policy due to moving some funds into a NYCLASS investment account. Also, the policy has not been updated since 1996. Ald. Zieno **moved** to recommend the Common Council approve the updated Investment Policy. Seconded by Ald. Loomis approved 5 – 0 with Ald. Jeffrey abstaining.

NYCLASS – Ald. Zieno **moved** to recommend approval for using NYCLASS as an investment account which is only for Public Sector investors. Seconded by Ald. Loomis, approved 5 – 0 with Ald. Jeffrey abstaining.

Cap on Delinquent Tax Interest – D. DuFour reported that due to a new NYS bill passed in both houses and awaiting the Governor's signature, there is now a cap on interest that can be collected on delinquent tax properties. The cap will be whatever the Prime rate is, currently at 8.5%, and will remain at that rate for 5 years and will change every subsequent 5-year period. This represents a significant revenue change for the City. As written, the bill is only for owner-occupied residential dwellings, not vacant property. There is currently no way to determine which individual properties are owner-occupied. In addition, when ascertaining the tax rate at the beginning of the 5-year period, it will be difficult get tax bills printed with the appropriate rate in a timely fashion. She will be working on the changes necessary and bring them at a later date.

Updating Capital Equipment Plans – D. DuFour reported that the Capital Equipment Plan that was done in 2019 has become outdated and needs updating, particularly with the newly purchased equipment.

Fire Department

Outside CON EMS Calls – J. Papelino reported 7 calls outside the CON – 7 of them billable.

Ambulance 2394 replacement – J. Papelino reported that ambulance #2394 is 21 years old Ford and is currently out of service. He would like approval to purchase another ambulance which is a demo model for \$349,337.52. If purchasing a new one, the wait time would be 18-36 months. Ald. Loomis moved to approve the purchase of the demo model ambulance. Seconded by Ald. Allaire, approved ayes all.

Staffing – J. Papelino reported they are down 2 employees with Captain Franklin retired and 1 out on medical. They do have a Civil Service list to review. The MTO Captain will fill Captain Franklin's spot on a regular shift.

Gus Macker - J. Papelino reported they are preparing for Gus Macker weekend. Roads will be closed at 7 a.m. on Friday.

Code Enforcement

Tax properties status - J. Papelino reported that the C-box at 20 Barnes will be removed, the grass will be mowed and pictures will be taken so the RFP can go out and have an Open House. The owner of 30 Henry is currently in a nursing home, but still has a lot of stuff that needs to be removed. As soon as the items are removed the RFP will be done with the stipulation that the garage must be torn down.

Rental inspections – J. Papelino suggested sending a letter to landlords about the increase in the fine for not having an inspection done. Ald. Jeffrey concurred.

Code numbers – J. Papelino reported 119 phone calls; 65 walk-ins; 97 correspondence; 17 permits; 85 complaints; 29 red tags; 3 rental inspections.

Contracted Services – J. Papelino reported that their Contracted Services budget line of \$9,000 is well overbudget due to the excessive amount of trash removal from properties that has been done. Currently expenses are at \$14,671.

Hiring Code Officer for 2025 Budget – Ald. Jeffrey inquired about any interest by the Committee in adding another Code Officer in the 2025 budget. Ald. Loomis felt it should be considered. Ald. Gee said the budget would not be severely affected due to the part-time nature of the employee and making up the difference would be minimal to which Ald. Zieno pointed out that the part-time nature of the position is not intended to be forever. Ald. Jeffrey suggested entertaining another part-time Code Officer for the end of 2024 to 2025 until a full-time Code Officer could be hired. Ald. Allaire was not ready to discuss it until speaking with J. Papelino. Papelino felt he should speak with staff before making a determination.

Discussion of the perceived reactivity of Code Enforcement and some of the issues of why it is perceived that way took place.

Ald. Jeffrey **moved** to advertise for a part-time Code Enforcement Officer to see if there is an interest. Seconded by Ald. Loomis, approved ayes all.

The Human Resource Director asked for clarification on the timing and number of employees at a given time.

Ald. Loomis **moved** to enter executive session at 8:34 p.m. to discuss the employment history of a particular individual. Seconded by Ald. Gee, approved ayes all.

Ald. Zieno **moved** to exit executive session at 8:41 p.m.

Other Items

Traffic Commission recommendation- One Handicapped Parking spot added to West Main between N. Broad and Court St. – Mayor Doliver received a request from a constituent living in the Mason Temple building to make one parking spot a handicap spot on West Main between N. Broad and Court St. which he sent to the Traffic Commission. He feels that the location would not be conducive due to the precarious nature of turning left onto W. Main from Court St. Ald. Zieno disagreed, saying there is enough room to add a spot. Ald. Gee said that there is ample parking allotted in the back of the building, however the constituents felt uncomfortable walking to the parking. Ald. Jeffrey pointed out that they still would not be able to park there overnight during winter months. Ald. Zieno said the couple is already using a parking spot, but felt another parking space could be added and dedicated to handicap parking. Mayor Doliver felt that if we are thinking about adding an additional parking space this should be sent back to the Traffic Commission due to the number of accidents he has seen there. Ald. Loomis **moved** to send the issue back to the Traffic Commission. Seconded by Ald. Allaire, approved ayes all.

Records Management – D. DuFour explained that the Mayor, A. Eaton and herself have discussed the need for an inventory. A person cannot be hired to do an inventory in the present location due to the status of the building. We cannot move forward without doing an inventory. About 4 years ago it was proposed to move the records to the Eaton Center for the inventory and move forward from that point. There is about \$68,000 saved for a records inventory. We propose to use some of that money to move the records and rental space. In March we would then apply for an inventory grant done by a specific person who is well versed in the very competitive records management grant process. If the grant is received and the inventory is done, the next step would be to apply for another grant to scan records, further eliminating the need for physical storage space. If the issue continues to be ignored, the records being stored continue to get damaged. We are looking for a consensus to see if we should move forward. It was determined by the Committee that something should finally be done and wholeheartedly agreed to move forward.

Term Limits – Mayor Doliver has done some research on term limits of elected officials. He has not seen smaller communities that do term limits, however some larger communities do have them. He looked back in the City's history with a Mayor serving on average 5 years with only a couple serving longer. Those serving as Alderpersons have served up to 12 years. His recommendation would be to have term limits for the Mayor of 5 consecutive terms which would be 10 years and for Council members, 4 consecutive terms which is 16 years. Discussion of changing the Mayoral term to 4 years was mentioned. Pros and cons of term limits was also briefly discussed as well as the effect of having a City Manager. Mayor Doliver said that with a City Manager the City Charter would have to be changed completely. He suggested starting with term limits first. Ald. Allaire felt more research was needed. Ald. Zieno suggested a separate group to study this. Ald. Jeffrey suggested sending it to Planning since they already look at Ordinances. Ald. Loomis **moved** to send term limits to Planning. Seconded by Ald. Zieno, approved ayes all.

Deer Committee - N. Allaire distributed the results of the Deer Committee. The results will be posted to the City website. The committee was comprised of 4 City residents and 2 non-residents. After several meetings and after the poor results of the Deer Survey that was out for 6 weeks and receiving only 181 responses of which 156 were Norwich residents. In reviewing results, the Committee determined there was not enough response to continue.

Camping Ordinance – Ald. Jeffrey explained that a change in the Camping Ordinance would be needed to include all Publicly-owned property and not just City-owned property. This would cover East and West Parks which is not City-owned. Ald. Allaire **moved** to recommend setting a Public Hearing for the August Common Council for the Camping Ordinance changes. Seconded by Ald. Loomis, approved ayes all.

Adjournment

Ald. Zieno **moved** to adjourn the Joint Committee Meeting at 9:17 p.m. Seconded by Ald. Allaire, approved ayes all.

Debrief on the Boil water last week

Last Tuesday evening 6/18/24, around 5:30 pm, the chlorine pump that feeds chlorine into the well water tripped off. It could have been a power surge, but for whatever reason, the pump was tripped off and we had to reset it. Simultaneously, our notification system did not properly notify us of the issue. We normally get phone calls and texts over and over until the problem is resolved, but that did not happen. Early Wednesday morning, the operator discovered the battery backup that our communications system was plugged into was not working. He also saw that the chlorine at the well was zero and so he immediately turned the chlorine pump back on at around 5:30 am.

If you put unchlorinated water into the system for more than 4 hours, you have to issue a boil water advisory. The water was NOT contaminated in any way. Its just precautionary because there was no disinfection. We notified DOH as soon as they opened and then they issued the boil water advisory.

The regulations stipulate that we take 2 sets of bacteriological samples 24 hours apart and everything needs to be negative for bacteria before the advisory can be lifted. We took 11 samples on Wednesday afternoon, and then 24 hours later 11 samples on Thursday afternoon. The 11 sample locations are spread through out the City and Town to get a good representation of the water in the system. Just fyi, we take 11 bacteria samples every month as routine. It takes at least 24 hours to get the results back because you have to wait for any bacteria to grow. I found out Thursday evening that the first round sample results were all negative, and I found out Friday evening around 6pm that the second round sample results were also all negative, so the advisory was lifted.

2 things helped us in this situation.

1. We were flushing hydrants during the evening of Tuesday so some of that water that was unchlorinated was also being flushed out right a way.
2. We all should recognize the high quality of our source water in the wells. This shows how important it is to have a really high quality source water that is unpolluted. We have tested the wells for bacteria before and they are negative. They are also below the regulatory limits for the PFAS compounds that have been in the news lately. You should all know that we are very lucky to have such clean source water.