

COMMON COUNCIL

January 31, 1995

Mayor Biviano presided at a special meeting of the Common Council held at 7 pm on January 31, 1995, at the Higley Building.

Present:

Mayor Joseph Biviano
Ald. George Carnrike
Ald. Patrick McNeil
Ald. Robert Rabinowitz
Ald. Barbara Schermerhorn
Ald. Sam Symonds
Ald. Charles Angelino

Also:

Deputy CD Director Casey Jones
Fire Chief Timothy Ashcraft
Asst. Fire Chief Graydon Titus
Asst. Fire Chief Stanley Brightman
Jim Williams

Mayor Biviano introduced Jim Williams of the Norwich Volunteer Firemen's Association for a presentation in regard to building a new fire station from a source other than the tax base. Mr. Williams explained that a volunteer committee consisting of Asst. Fire Chiefs Titus and Brightman, Bob Handy, Wayne Emmons, Ralph Barbarossa, Gene Yesko, Wayne Law, Andy Pratt, Chief Ashcraft, Leroy Burlingame, Tom Grady, Tim Christophersen, Tom Whitmore and himself sees a new fire station as a critical need in retaining the people that the department has and for recruiting new people. He also noted the training facility is inadequate. He stated that a fire station needs to be one that people are proud of. Mr. Williams said the present fire station served its purpose at one time but does not meet the needs of the department today. He indicated the present structure does not make an attractive station for the community. He explained the Norwich Volunteer Firemen's Association, Inc., is proposing that construction be done by a means other than the tax base. As 33% of the City property tax base is tax exempt, it is too much of a burden to put on the taxpayers. He said the group thinks it can accomplish the project at less cost than the City could do it. They believe they can do this as a general contract without having to comply with the Wicks Law. The organization is a not for profit corporation. The Norwich Volunteer Fire Department founded the NVFA in the late 1970s for the purpose of owning property. The City is currently paying for the operation and maintenance of the Sheldon Street station, the Emergency Squad building and City Hall and they are by no means energy efficient. By combining these into one it would be a cost savings. The Committee has met on five occasions and the fire department is aware of it. The NVFA has retained an attorney who understands fire service. They would like to organize a pledge campaign. The group will be coming back to the Council as they move through the project. A location needs to be determined which will be mutually agreeable to everyone. An architectural engineer will be needed and the Committee suggested using the City's engineer. The group needs to determine what we absolutely need. A sufficient means exists within this community through a pledge method to raise the entire cost to construct the facility. The group will be looking to the City to be a tenant to lease space for City apparatus.

Mayor Biviano said the City welcomes this partnership and is willing to explore this.

Mr. Williams said his Committee will go forward and keep the City informed. The group needs to be able to tell those they contact that the City has been informed about the project.

Ald. Carnrike said the Public Safety Committee has discussed the criteria for a new fire station. He compared calls over the years and said the price per call is killing the City. Ald. Carnrike said the City needs to look into the heat and utility costs for Department buildings because currently they are in with the municipal buildings account. The Council wants to look at the whole picture before it gets into a major fund drive. Asst. Chief Titus said looking at the price per call is not realistic. Mr. Wil-

liams said that you have a paid department that responds to every call and are backed up by volunteers. The City doesn't have the types of responses from volunteers that it used to. Ald. Rabinowitz said when one looks at the budget it does not represent the whole cost. The level of service must remain at the level that it is currently. Ald. Carnrike noted the only way to keep the level of service is by volunteer efforts. Mr. Williams noted that one nice thing about this is that the non profit property owners could help with the effort. He said that people would rather give to this rather than have the cost added to their tax bill. Mayor Biviano said the non profit agencies do not pay taxes but they use the services. Ald. Angelino said the City does need a fire station. Ald. McNeil asked if this is associated with a fire district. Mr. Williams said this is being addressed by the Oversight Committee and noted that they are two different groups.

Ald. McNeil asked that the Council be copied on minutes of the Committee meetings.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.