

Joint Meeting

COMMON COUNCIL
TOWN OF NORWICH
TOWN OF NORTH NORWICH
FIRE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

March 6, 1996

A joint meeting of the Common Council, the Town of Norwich, the Town of North Norwich and the Fire Oversight Committee was held at 7 pm on March 6, 1996, at the Higley Building.

Present:

Mayor Joseph Biviano
Ald. George Carnrike
Ald. Robert Rabinowitz
Ald. Barbara Schermerhorn
Ald. Mat Thall
Ald. Charles Angelino

Russell Mosher
Fire Chief Mark Rice
Asst. Fire Chief Graydon Titus
Asst. Fire Chief Stan Brightman
Director of Finance/Clerk Brian Haak
Deputy Clerk Donna Russell

Also:

Adolph Chiarino, Town of Norwich
John Baker
Lane Anderson
Jim Williams
Tom Grady
Richard McNulty
Eugene Yesko
Steve Benenati
Charles Brooks
Richard Phillips
Bill Roberts

Ald. Carnrike opened the meeting at 7:10 pm and noted Bill Young, an attorney with the NYS Association of Fire Districts was present to answer questions.

There was clarification made regarding the minutes of the February 7, 1996 meeting, the last paragraph of the first page referenced debt limit - Mr. Williams noted it should be referred to as "spending limit" rather than debt limit.

Ald. Carnrike reported the appraiser has proposed a fee of \$600 for 12 pieces of equipment and 12 cents per mile for approximately 40 miles from Barneveld.

There was discussion regarding the steps to forming a Fire District. Mr. Young noted Article 11A addresses a town and village forming a district, but it does not address a city and town. He said to form a joint fire district between the City and the Towns, special legislation is needed. Mr. Young said the Comptroller suggested the parties get a specific local ruling rather than a statewide and noted the local assemblyman would need to support it.

Jim Williams asked if approval by the County Board of Supervisors is required prior to the final approval by the City and Towns. Mr. Young said that is not required. He said after the Town Boards and the Common Council hold public hearings and pass resolutions to approve the District, the approval would be subject to a public referendum. He said before obtaining the special legislation required, a certain commitment should be made from the towns and city that they are studying the matter and have been for several years and that they are also discussing it with their assemblyman.

Mayor Biviano said the City is concerned about the bond limit and keeping the debt limit as low as possible. Mr. Young noted there would be a reserve fund which could be spent only through referendum. There was much discussion regarding establishing lower spending limits. Mr. Young said it has been his experience that the Fire Districts are quite conservative in their spending as most members of the boards are residents of the area.

Mayor Biviano raised another concern relative to the equalization rate and one assessor. The Mayor said it would seem that there should be one assessor for the entire district. Mr. Young said there are districts that have different assessors within it. Mayor Biviano noted, relative the equalization rate, there is quite a difference in the rate and questioned what effect it would have on the district. Mr. Williams said he feels that we can move forward with the Fire District concept without settling the equalization rate issue. The Mayor said he did not agree that it could be done.

Supervisor Chiarino said the Town of Norwich has looked into using one assessor and found that the County is not interested in going to a "one assessor" system. Mr. Williams said if there is concern, the governing bodies of the Fire District can look into the equalization rate. There was discussion relative to the Intermunicipal Agreement and the EDZ. Mr. Williams suggested that a resolution be passed to reflect that the EDZ will not be affected by the rate for the Fire District.

Regarding fire equipment, Mr. Young said it is the opinion of the Comptroller that the owner can sell it, give it or do whatever can be worked out within the municipality. He noted that whatever action is taken, it should put in the form of a resolution.

There was discussion relative to surplus monies. Ald. Carnrike asked what would become of the fire equipment reserve fund. It was agreed that the reserve would not be discussed until after the appraisal is completed. Mr. Williams noted the original resolution establishing the reserve will probably determine what can be done with the money.

Fire Chief Rice commented that it should be kept in mind when the appraisal of the fire equipment comes in that in addition to the current value of the equipment, what is it worth to the district if they had to purchase it new. Bill Roberts noted that the City taxpayers should not have to contribute for equipment that they have already paid for. He also stated that if the Fire District is dissolved, the City should not be left with less than it had originally. Mr. Young said that it could be included in the resolution.

Representatives from the Town of Norwich held a brief caucus.

Supervisor Chiarino said the members discussed the matter and are all in agreement that they would be willing to look at the equipment reserve money to buy out the town's shares once the appraisal is done. The group also said they are open to the "one assessor" concept although it is not in the control of the Town Board. There would have to be an election to repeal the three person assessors. He said the Board would discuss the matter with the Municipal Cooperation Committee. Mayor Biviãno noted that the City would use the Town's assessor. Mr. Williams noted that cooperative assessing districts should be looked at between the Towns and the City. He also suggested the Real Property Tax Law should be looked at.

Regarding paid firefighters, Mr. Mosher said he believes a public hearing would have to be held to allow the district to have paid firefighters. The Mayor asked what the status of the firefighters union contract would be should the Fire District be formed. Mr. Young said the District would have to take the contract.

In closing, Ald. Carnrike said the group would meet after the appraisal of the fire equipment is completed and the Municipal Cooperation Committee has met.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.