

COMMON COUNCIL

June 25, 1996

Mayor Biviano presided at a special meeting of the Common Council held at 7 pm on June 25, 1996, at the Higley Building.

Present:

Mayor Joseph Biviano
Ald. George Carnrike
Ald. Patrick McNeil
Ald. Mat Thall
Ald. Charles Angelino

Absent:

Ald. Robert Rabinowitz
Ald. Barbara Schermerhorn

Also:

Director of Finance/Clerk Brian Haak
Human Resources Director Deb DeForest
Police Chief Robert Mason
Asst. Fire Chief Graydon Titus
Emergency Squad Captain W. Edwards
CD Director David Wagoner
Historian Patricia Scott
Deputy Clerk Donna Russell

Public Hearing -- Mayor Biviano reconvened the public hearing from June 18, 1996 relative to the proposed ordinance amending the Zoning Ordinance map of the City of Norwich.

-- Terry Bresina, 32 Fair Street, said the proposed project concerns every homeowner in the City. It effects the value and integrity of all residential real estate in the City. He said the proposed project will leave a pattern of vacancy in the City. It will siphon tenants away from privately owned rental property. Mr. Bresina questioned why the CHIP study was kept from public scrutiny and no documentation made of the methodology used in the study. He recommended the Council look at methodology used for both Mr. Ingraham's study and the CHIP study and consider the impact of housing vacancies in residential neighborhoods will have on the community. He stated that just as everyone laments a vacant storefront in the downtown, every homeowner should be horrified at the prospect of vacant apartments in his neighborhood. Mr. Bresina said if subsidized housing is necessary, why not provide the same long-term, low-interest financing to the owners of current rental properties who have already made an investment in the community.

-- Barry Cummings, executive director of CHIP, located at 2 Merrill Street, Norwich, reiterated that the CHIP study is available for viewing at his office and the Community Development Office. Mr. Cummings presented correspondence requesting the opportunity to further document the availability of existing one bedroom apartments in the City suitable for elderly or disabled households and asked the Common Council to table the matter until the July 16, 1996 Common Council meeting.

-- Richard Ingraham, West Main Street, said the report has nothing to do with Norwich. It was written in Virginia by someone who has never seen Norwich. He said he has contacted several agencies and officials including Farmers Home Administration, Senator Moynihan, Congressman Boehlert and Tom Brokaw of NBC News regarding the situation. Mr. Ingraham referred to the additional ten percent occupancy from out of town and indicated that as we go to a geriatric community, the number of ambulance runs will increase. Mr. Ingraham referred to a letter from the West Main Street School Senior Citizen project noting that the project has four vacancies at this time with two more expected shortly. He indicated Midland Apartments currently has over 20 vacancies. Mr. Ingraham noted he did not look specifically for one bedroom first floor vacant apartments. He stated that no one has established a need for a 32 unit apartment project. Ald. Carnrike referenced Dr. MacLeod's statement about a senior citizen living in his car. Mr. Ingraham said he inquired about that situation and was told it was due not to lack of housing, but to a lack of money.

When asked about the subsidies, Mr. Cummings explained that the subsidy does not go with the tenant, it stays with the apartment.

Mr. Ingraham said high vacancies are being experienced in Sherburne and Oxford as well. He stated that the area does not have a housing problem, it has a rental assistance problem.

Deb Sanderson, Norwich, said she is the Director of the Agency on Aging, and she has worked with senior citizens for the past 10 years. She stated that the senior citizens who really need this type of housing are the ones that cannot come to this meeting. She explained that there are senior citizens that her agency delivers meals to that do not leave their apartments and see no one other than the delivery person. She indicated there are some very needy people in our community and noted the majority of low income senior citizens are women.

Leslie Dopkin, Norwich, stated she serves on the Board of CHIP and believes there is a need for elderly housing, especially subsidized housing. She said she is upset by the atmosphere of this meeting and said CHIP is not saying that there are not apartments existing, but that the purpose of this is to provide affordable housing to the elderly. She said CHIP does not build houses where it is not wanted. She also noted that the firm from Virginia that prepared the study is a reputable company. Ms. Dopkin stated that CHIP has nothing to gain from this except to accomplish its mission to provide affordable housing to the elderly and handicapped.

-- Ald. McNeil moved to table the matter until the July 16, 1996 Common Council meeting in order that the figures presented may be verified and the Norwich Housing Authority can verify the waiting list in the City of Norwich. Seconded by Ald. Thall and duly adopted, ayes all on a roll call vote, 4-0.

Board of Health -- Mayor Biviano, as Chairman of the Board of Health, asked if Mr. Felldin was present. As Mr. Felldin was not present, there was no cause for the Board of Health to meet.

SARA Grant Award -- Mayor Biviano reported that the City has been awarded a grant in the amount of \$12,347 to continue the inventory of the City's records.

Executive Session -- Ald. McNeil moved to go into executive session at 7:50 pm to discuss the sale of property where the price may be affected and contract negotiations. Seconded by Ald. Thall and duly adopted, ayes all.

-- Ald. McNeil moved to go out of executive session at 8:20 pm. Seconded by Ald. Carnrike and duly adopted, ayes all.

RESOLUTION #79 - 1996. APPROVING LABOR AGREEMENT WITH CSEA

Ald. Angelino introduced the following and moved its adoption:

WHEREAS, the Mayor and the Civil Service Employees Association have reached a tentative agreement on a new three-year labor agreement for 1996, 1997 and 1998; and

WHEREAS, the Norwich Unit of such Association has ratified such Agreement; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Common Council does hereby approve an agreement with the Norwich Unit of the Civil Service Employees Association for the period of January 1, 1996, through December 31, 1998.

Seconded by Ald. McNeil and duly adopted, ayes all on a roll call vote, 4-0.

Adjournment -- Ald. Carnrike moved to adjourn at 8:22 pm. Seconded by Ald. Thall and duly adopted, ayes all.