

COMMON COUNCIL

December 3, 1996

Mayor Biviano presided at a special meeting of the Common Council held at 7 PM on December 3, 1996, at the Higley Building.

Present:

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

Also:

Director of Finance/Clerk Brian Haak
Human Resources Director Deb DeForest
Fire Chief Stanley Brightman
Asst. Fire Chief Graydon Titus
Asst. Fire Chief Leroy Burlingame
Police Chief Joseph Angelino
Code Enforcement Officer Ed Schuurman
Deputy Clerk Donna Russell

Absent:

Ald. Barbara Schermerhorn

PUBLIC HEARING:

Mayor Biviano opened the public hearing at 7 PM for proposed Local Law No. 3 of 1996, a local law to amend the Charter relative to the Fire Department.

-- Patrick Ford, President of the Norwich Fire Department and Chairman of the Blue Ribbon Committee, thanked the Mayor and Common Council for giving the Fire Department the opportunity to discuss the matter. He stated that although the Blue Ribbon Committee did not totally agree with the implication of the proposal, the majority voted in favor of it. The Committee does feel that the process was rushed and noted that if the law is approved this evening, it does not see the necessity of making a provisional appointment on January 1. Mr. Ford noted the Department has been running in the current manner for many years and doesn't feel six or seven months more should make a difference.

Mayor Biviano said the decision to be made this evening is whether or not to have a full time fire chief and noted it will have no effect on the Fire Department elections. He stated that this is the first step of many in the process.

Ald. McNeil explained that this is the first step in process in that it creates the position of full time Fire Chief. Once the position is created, there will need to be a job description prepared and a civil service test. He noted that a provisional appointment cannot be made until the law has been filed with the Secretary of State.

Mr. Ford said the Blue Ribbon Committee had several meetings with the Human Resources Director relative to qualifications for the position and would like to be involved with that process. Ms. DeForest indicated Civil Service has approved the minimum qualifications that were discussed and noted the Council has not yet reviewed them.

-- Casey Jones, 4 Maydole Street, indicated there are problems with the proposed local law as presented. He said it is his interpretation that the local law would require a mandatory referendum and noted a discrepancy in the proposed local law relative to Section 191.

Mr. Jones said in a community of this size there is a greater need for a Director of Public Safety than for a full time Fire Chief. He feels the Fire Department needs an administrative plan. Mr. Jones suggested there needs to be a broad based analysis of the public safety needs of the community. He questioned the need for a chief and three assistants in comparison to the Police Department noting the Police Department is involved in many more functions than the Fire Department and yet the position of Assistant Police Chief was abolished.

Mayor Biviano indicated there are several reasons for the need of a full time Fire Chief. He explained the Fire Department is the third largest department and the Chief is

responsible for managing an operating budget of \$566,489, which is 17.1% of the City's total operating appropriations. With 17 regular employees and approximately 86 volunteers in the Fire Department, a full time Chief is needed to deal with the daily personnel matters as well as scheduling, training and discipline issues. The Mayor said the Fire Department needs consistent leadership and noted with the current system allowing for yearly turnover of management, the department is unable to develop and implement long range plans and goals. Mayor Biviano stated a full time Fire Chief will provide the City with management which is consistent, available and accountable.

Ald. Rabinowitz noted the City is fortunate that its Public Safety departments have always worked together. He said the issues have been studied and suggested the City move ahead to solve the immediate problems.

There being no further discussion, Mayor Biviano closed the public hearing at 7:30 PM.

RESOLUTION #149 - 1996. ADOPTING LOCAL LAW RELATIVE TO THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Ald. McNeil introduced the following and moved its adoption:

WHEREAS, Local Law No. 3 of 1996, which provides for amending the Charter as it relates to the Fire Department, was introduced on November 19, 1996, before the Common Council; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing has been held on such local law on December 3, 1996; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Local Law No. 3 of 1996, which provides for amending the Charter as it relates to the Fire Department, be and hereby is adopted.

Seconded by Ald. Thall and duly adopted, ayes all on a roll call vote, (5-0).

Adjournment - Ald. Angelino moved to adjourn at 7:32 PM. Seconded by Ald. McNeil and duly adopted, ayes all.