

COMMON COUNCIL

Work Session
March 13, 2001

Mayor Robert Raphael presided at a work session of the Common Council held at 7 PM on March 13, 2001, at One Court Plaza.

Present:

Mayor Robert Raphael
Ald. Gary Clark
Ald. Patrick McNeil
Ald. Robert Rabinowitz
Ald. Jeffrey Thornton
Ald. Sharon Jeffer
Ald. Joseph Biviano

Also:

Director of Finance William Roberts
Human Resources Director Deborah DeForest
CD Director/Clerk Joseph Serbin
Police Chief Joseph Angelino
DPW Supt. Carl Ivarson
Asst. Engineer Asa Allison
Fire Chief John Tighe
Asst. Police Chief Murray Roach
B.I.D. Administrator Melissa Downey
EMO A. Jones
City Supervisor Linda Natoli
Deputy Clerk Donna Russell

Revenue Enhancement – Ald. Clark reported that the Revenue Enhancement Ad Hoc Committee has been looking into the utility franchises and billing. He introduced Michael Caton of Computel Consultants, Earlville, NY. Mr. Caton said his company, in business for the past 10 to 12 years, is a utility billing analysis service with expertise in utility tariffs. He explained that his company would review the City's utility bills, identify what is being billed and verify that the City is being charged correctly. He said he has worked with about 150 municipalities across the state and noted one area of great inaccuracy seems to be in street light billing. Mr. Caton stated that his company works on a contingency basis and is paid only in the event that there is success in recovering monies for the municipality. If there is success in recovering monies, 50 percent of the money refunded would go to Computel and it was noted that future savings would not be included in the refund.

B.I.D. Update -- Melissa Downey, B.I.D. Administrator, updated the Council on a grant application for East and West Parks. She explained that the B.I.D. and Chenango County have submitted a cooperative grant to the Council of the Arts for a master plan study of East and West Parks. Ms. Downey requested the Common Council provide a letter of support for the study. The Clerk was directed to prepare a motion authorizing such for the next Council meeting.

Change Order for Asbestos Abatement -- Ald. Rabinowitz moved to approve a change order to the Asbestos Abatement project in the amount of \$15,000. Seconded by Ald. McNeil and duly adopted, ayes all on a roll call vote, 6-0.

Development of Agenda for March 20, 2001

1. Call To Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Invocation
4. Approval of minutes of the regular meeting of the regular meeting of February 20, 2001 and the work session of March 13, 2001
5. Public Hearing
6. Small Cities Grant Application for Housing Rehabilitation in the Cortland Street target area
7. Open Forum
8. Bids
 - ◆ Dump Truck With Plow
9. Correspondence
 - ◆ Request approval to hold the annual Little League Parade on April 28, 2001
 - ◆ Request approval to hold a Dairy Day Parade on May 19, 2001
 - ◆ Notification from Adelphia Cable of increase in cable rates
10. Department, Board and Commission Reports
 - ◆ Emergency Management Office monthly report for December 2000/January 2001
 - ◆ Historian monthly report for February 2001
 - ◆ Police Department monthly report for February 2001
 - ◆ Public Works/Water System monthly report for February 2001
 - ◆ Records Management monthly report for February 2001
 - ◆ Youth Bureau monthly report for February 2001
 - ◆ Civil Service Commission minutes of January 25, 2001
 - ◆ Parks Commission minutes of February 12, 2001
 - ◆ Water Commission minutes of February 21, 2001
11. Ward and Committee Reports
 - ◆ Finance Committee meeting of March 6, 2001
 - ◆ Public Safety Committee meeting of February 27, 2001
 - ◆ Public Works Committee meeting of February 22, 2001
12. Old Business
13. New Business

Award of Bids

- ◆ Filter Media
- ◆ Gas Chlorination Equipment
- ◆ Dump Truck with Plow

Resolutions

- ◆ Res - Award Police Justice Department Grant
- ◆ Res - Auth Professional Services for Design and Bidding Services
- ◆ Res - Auth Transfer for Water Meters
- ◆ Res - Auth Transfer for Government Access Channel Equipment

14. Payment of Bills

15. Adjournment

NYCOM's State of the Cities Report -- Mayor Raphael reported that he recently attended a mayor's conference in Albany relative to the State of the Cities and received a copy of the special report prepared by the New York State Conference of Mayors and Municipal Officials. He noted that the State officials are aware of the problems Norwich and other cities are experiencing. He distributed copies of NYCOM's special report on the State of the Cities.

Committee Reports

- Internal Analysis Committee -- Mayor Raphael reported that in conjunction with the Revenue Enhancement Ad Hoc Committee he recently created, he is now creating an Internal Analysis Ad Hoc Committee to look at day to day operations of the City and ways to save money internally. The new committee and the Revenue Enhancement Committee are subcommittees that would report to the Finance Committee. The Mayor appointed the following aldermen to the committee: Ald. McNeil as Chair, Ald. Biviano and Ald. Jeffer.
- Finance Committee – Ald. Rabinowitz reviewed the items discussed at the last that the Finance Committee including the Community Contribution Program, B.I.D. Streetscape Issues, 2001 salary rates update, Justice Department Police reimbursement grant, Public Works Department bids and Brown Street sanitary sewer project, donations for the Government Access Channel and proposed tariff and franchise audit services.
- Personnel Committee – Ald. McNeil reported the Personnel Committee did not meet in March due to inclement weather. He stated that he did meet with a group of concerned citizens about the City's increased tax rate. He indicated that the Director of Finance has compiled a worksheet showing increases due to the building projects. He said he would like each department to take a look at their budget and make a commitment to hold their budget to no more than a 3 1/2 percent increase each year for the next three years. Ald. McNeil said he does not want to cut services. Ald. Biviano concurred. Ald. Rabinowitz referred to the lack of revenue sharing by the State.

-- Ald. Clark moved that the department heads be directed to work with the Finance Director and Finance Committee to develop two scenarios for the 2002 budget, one with a zero tax levy increase and one with an increase of not more than 3 1/2 percent. Seconded by Ald. McNeil and duly adopted, ayes all on a roll call vote, 6-0.

- Public Safety Committee – Ald. Jeffer reported the Public Safety Committee reviewed several items including the progress of the Fire Department renovation, a request from the Pennysaver for parking, renewal of the SPCA contract, an update on the weather plan and the new fire truck.
- Public Works Committee – Ald. Biviano reported the Public Works Committee discussed the cold water meter program, sewer line replacement and the water distribution system upgrade.

Taxpayers Concerns -- Mayor Raphael stated that with approximately 60 residents in the audience, he would allow this time for comments from the public.

Jay Joyce, 11 Newton Avenue, said that although he feels it is a tough job to do, the 32 percent tax rate increase was unacceptable and the City should cut spending. He expressed concern about projected spending for the next five to 10 years and said the direction must be turned around. Mr. Joyce feels the City needs to look at all avenues for reducing expenses.

Faye Anderson, business and property owner in the City of Norwich, raised many of the same concerns as Mr. Joyce and stated that if her business is hit with a 32 percent increase, she has to make hard decisions. She suggested the Mayor appoint citizens to serve on its committees to provide some assistance dealing with spending, revenues and cuts. Ms. Anderson volunteered her assistance to the City.

Edward Morano, 21 Miller Street, stated that the 32 percent increase is not a welcome increase. He suggested the Council toughen their attitude and consider reducing some services, personnel and benefits if needed.

Mayor Raphael stated the Council would consider the comments made by the residents. He indicated that the reduction in State revenue sharing has had a negative impact on the City over the past years. The Council is continuing efforts to restore the revenue sharing.

Adjournment – Ald. McNeil moved to adjourn at 8 PM. Seconded by Ald. Biviano and duly adopted, ayes all.