

**COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
CITY OF WATERTOWN  
March 14, 2011  
7:00 P.M.**

**MAYOR JEFFREY E. GRAHAM PRESIDING**

**PRESENT:**           **COUNCIL MEMBER ROXANNE M. BURNS  
COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH M. BUTLER JR.  
COUNCIL MEMBER TERESA R. MACALUSO  
COUNCIL MEMBER JEFFREY M. SMITH  
MAYOR GRAHAM**

**ALSO PRESENT:**   **MARY M. CORRIVEAU, CITY MANAGER**

**City Staff Present: Elliott Nelson, Chief Herman, Gary Pilon, Jim Mills, Gene Hayes, Ken Mix**

**Presentations:**

- 1. Thompson Park Conservancy Aviary Re-Design Proposal  
Richard Gefell, Thompson Park Conservancy Board  
John Wright, Executive Director, Thompson Park Conservancy**

Mr. Gefell addressed the chair explaining that the Conservancy had worked with Steve Yaussi on the new design, who was involved with the design of the current structure. The goal is to create a year-round structure that would make a good first impression when visitors come to the zoo. This is the first building that visitors see and it is important to make the building very presentable as well as functional. The exterior would be glass with cultured stone. There would also be a new entrance for visitors. Along the interior sides would be planting beds close to the edges. They will try to save the tree that is currently in the middle of the structure. The pond will become a concrete slab and the floor will have a quarry tile covering. The entire existing steel should be sandblasted and painted with epoxy. There will be stone veneer on the sides.

Council Member Burns remarked that she is glad to hear Mr. Gefell mention that Mr. Yaussi designed this as he knows that the original structure was built as an aviary.

Mr. Gefell confirmed that this was correct.

Mr. Gefell presented the estimated summary of expenses to the Council. He explained that it would be heated by a gas fire forced air furnace. He also explained that there would be air conditioning for the summer months. However, some panels might be able to be opened for cross ventilation.

Mr. Wright commented that there are trees around the structure for shade and it wouldn't be totally exposed everyday of the year.

Council Member Butler asked what other options might be available rather than the translucent panels.

Mr. Gefell explained that they had toyed with the idea of bringing some of the roof's A frame portion down farther to keep the costs down. However, it wasn't aesthetically pleasing.

Council Member Butler asked who would be doing the demolition.

Mr. Gefell explained that nothing had been decided yet as they are just numbers from independent commercial contractors.

Mrs. Corriveau commented that this is actually a city-owned facility.

Mayor Graham asked if things such as electric could be done by our crews.

Mrs. Corriveau responded that it would depend on the scope of the work and the schedule of city crews.

Mayor Graham commented that he felt this was a good proposal. He liked the concept, the look of the building and the use of indoor space.

Council Member Burns commended the Conservancy and Mr. Wright for understanding the history of the building and the fact that this is a premier building when you visit the zoo. The translucent panels are important as it is what catches your eye. She stated that she likes the plan and thinks that it is off to a good start.

Council Member Butler commented that panels could be sold to the public, such as the bricks were.

Mrs. Corriveau advised that the City is prohibited from fundraising.

Council Member Butler responded that it could be done by the Conservancy.

Council Member Macaluso asked how much it would cost to tear down the existing building.

Mr. Wright commented that when you retrofit a building, it can actually cost more per sq. footage. He also suggested that it makes sense to put options on a design that could be added on later.

Council Member Macaluso asked about the condition of the structural steel.

Mr. Gefell responded that from what he has seen, it is structurally sound.

Mayor Graham asked if we would be stepping on any other zoo fundraising activities being planned.

Mr. Gefell responded that from a board's prospective, they aren't that far in their plans at this time.

Council Member Burns asked if this would be any different than the fund raising that was done for the aviary in the past or when the public contributed to the otter exhibit.

Mr. Wright advised that they would have to discuss all of this with Mrs. Corriveau.

Council Member Burns advised that some of us had already donated money to the aviary in the past.

Mayor Graham asked if this funding could fall under the tourism account. He also asked about the availability of state grants.

Mrs. Corriveau remarked that the zoo is definitely a tourist attraction. She asked Mr. Mix to address the grant question.

Mr. Mix explained that it would be tough to get grant funding for this type of project and explained the lengthy timeline that would be involved in the application process.

Mayor Graham advised that the tourism fund monies have increased as a result of more hotels being built in the area and suggested that these funds be used for this project.

Council Member Smith stated that he supported it.

Council Member Burns commented that she also supports a commitment to move forward with the project.

Mayor Graham asked if the engineer could compute what supplemental heating needs would be for the building.

Mr. Gefell stated that this could be done.

Council concurred to have the Conservancy move forward with finalizing the building plans.

## **2. Town of Hounsfield Water Service Request** **Timothy Scee, Town of Supervisor**

Timothy Scee was joined by Jeff Kinney, Water Superintendent and Todd Farrington, Council Member.

Mr. Scee explained that Sackets Harbor doesn't have the capacity to provide the water for the Town of Hounsfield's newly formed Water District #5. This district will benefit the region and

county as it will provide service to the airport and commercial and residential areas. The water connect is already located near BOCES. Mr. Scee also advised that there are long range plans for Water District #6. Maps of the districts were provided to the Council.

Mayor Graham commented that obviously the City has sufficient quantities of water and the hookups are already done. He advised that the Town of Hounsfield is the same as the Town of Watertown and should pay the same amount.

Council Member Smith commented that the rate for outside users should be the City rate plus 20% as there should be a benefit for living in the City. He also commented that one town shouldn't have any better rate than another.

Mrs. Corriveau responded that we had discussed about putting the Town of Watertown on notice that Council wished to talk about rate increase with the next contract. She asked if Council Member Smith was suggesting 120% to the Town of Hounsfield.

Council Member Smith stated that it should have been that before.

Mayor Graham suggested that they pay what the Town of Watertown pays and then their rate goes up when the Town of Watertown goes up.

Mrs. Corriveau advised that the language can be worked out in the contract. She commented that Mr. Pilon has always said that like users should be charged the same amounts.

Mr. Pilon advised that he had been advised in the past that if this were done, it would withstand a court challenge.

Council Member Burns remarked that this makes sense. She also commented that she echoes what Council Member Smith said and she supports selling at the same rate to both towns.

Mrs. Corriveau advised that in essence, we are charging a premium as a City user would be paying less with the same volume. She remarked that about a month ago, she gave Council copies of the most recent NYCOM study on how municipalities across the state handle their water rates. There are many different methods used.

Council Member Butler remarked that we are constrained by the agreement with the Town of Watertown as the contract was late.

Mrs. Corriveau responded that the sewer contract was late, not the water contract.

Council concurred to sell water to the Town of Hounsfield, linked to the Town of Watertown rates.

Mrs. Corriveau stated that the Town of Hounsfield would want to be a party at the table for the rate negotiations.

Council Member Smith remarked that when the rates are changed, it should be put in the Charter like the sewer rates.

Mr. Pilon advised that the sewer rates are in the Code as are the water rates.

**3. Bond Refunding**  
**James Mills, City Comptroller**

Mr. Mills explained that current interest rates for municipal debt have created an opportunity for the City to refinance \$8,575,000 of outstanding debt. The refunding calculation prepared by the City's financial advisor projects an estimated minimum budget savings of \$346,441 over the life of the bond issue. If the City is able to obtain bond insurance for the new debt, the savings could be as high as \$606,793. He recommended that the savings be transferred to the capital projects to buy down Riggs Avenue and not borrow for it.

Council Member Butler asked what the insurance would reduce the rate by.

Mr. Mills will have that answer at Monday's meeting.

Council Member Butler and Mr. Mills discussed which bonds are callable and which are not. Mr. Mills explained that the numbers are crunched every year.

Council Member Butler remarked that we are \$4 to \$5 million dollars ahead.

Mrs. Corriveau remarked that this is not the case if you are looking at retirement rates.

Council Member Butler responded that if you look at the 5 year projections, it is way off on what the fund balance would be.

Mayor Graham remarked that we have a certain threshold we don't bond over. However, that could be raised.

Council Member Butler commented that he would like to see the debt service go down to 8 or 9.

Council Member Burns commented that the bond refunding is good news.

Mrs. Corriveau advised that they wanted Council to understand this before it comes to Council for a vote.

Council Member Butler asked if the City had any others within the next few years that will be coming up. He stated that they should see what opportunities are out there. He questioned one week to make a decision on \$8 million and asked if this had to be voted on next week.

Council Member Macaluso responded that Mr. Mills is on a deadline.

Mayor Graham commented that fund balance decisions on tax relief and debt relief are kind of weighty issues for one week.

Mr. Mills recommended moving forward.

Mrs. Corriveau reviewed the fact that over the past few years, we have been buying down debt.

**Discussion Item:**

**1. City Clerk Selection Process**

Mrs. Corriveau advised that this position will require the successful candidate to be appointed Deputy City Clerk during the training process. This has been approved by the State Civil Service Commission.

Mrs. Dutton advised that hiring locally is what she would like to see happen and didn't really see the need to advertise on the national level. She stated that she feels it is very important for the individual to have strong community relation capabilities due to the fact that the office is an "information center." The individual would also need to know the community to help them do the duties of City Historian. She stated that she would also like to see someone who has had government experience, although that may not be possible due to time constraints.

Council asked that the applications be sent to the City Clerk and that she prepare the notices for the local media.

**2. Crows**

Mayor Graham advised that he had spoken with Mayor Quill of Auburn about the crow problem. Mayor Quill advised him that Auburn had their public works crews trained and now they take care of the crow problem each year.

Mrs. Corriveau remarked that this is why we have had our people work with USDA in an effort to take over the job in the future.

**3. Library**

Mayor Graham referred to Council's recent meeting with the library board. He stated that the board wants to be open 7 days a week and they had questions about who can and can't fund raise. He also mentioned the funds that the library has exclusive control over and remarked that he believed some of those funds were used for legal expenses in the past.

Mrs. Corriveau commented that there are quite a bit of those funds over at the library. She commented that some may have been used to pay legal fees for the removal of an executive director. However, those fees are not under the City.

Mayor Graham remarked that he would like to see the budget impact if we were to accommodate the 7 day request.

Council Member Smith stated that we don't have to hire new individuals. He suggested using volunteers for those days that the library isn't open now and sitting down with the union to discuss it.

Mrs. Corriveau commented that she hasn't received anything from the Council to present to the union. She also advised that the cost to be open 7 days would increase the budget by approximately \$152,000.

Council Member Burns questioned a way to be open when we are usually closed and how to staff it. A minimal staff could oversee the library with an agreement that if an individual need to speak to a reference librarian, for example, they would need to come back during the regular hours. She commented that we could open the doors, but not provide the same function as during the week.

Mayor Graham commented that there is a need for supervision and accountable people. It is a large building with a lot of young people in it.

Council Member Burns responded that she has to believe that we have staff that are responsible and could provide supervision, coupled with volunteers.

Mrs. Corriveau commented that the library is the one organization in the City that has asked for a 25% increase in staffing at a point when we ask other department to make do with less.

Council Member Butler remarked that it is a minimum standard to have it open 7 days a week. The library is one of the best resources in the City and is a quality of life issue.

Council Member Macaluso suggested a pilot program to see if it is worth hiring 3 more people.

Council Member Burns responded that the library conducts surveys all the time and this is what the studies show that people want.

Mrs. Corriveau advised that the surveys showed that 16% of the customers wanted it open 7 days. The remaining 84% didn't have a problem with the current hours.

Council concurred that Mrs. Corriveau should negotiate with the union on this matter.

Council Member Macaluso remarked that she would go along with the library being open on Saturday, but not on Sunday.

Mayor Graham responded that the library is open on Saturday. He stated that 7 days is a worthy goal. If Council feels that it isn't affordable, it should be discussed during the budget process. He stated that he doesn't want to diminish what they do.

Mrs. Corriveau remarked that she plans to leave the staffing as is between now and the adoption of budget. If the library comes up with a plan, it can be looked at.

Mayor Graham commented that if it is the goal of the Council to get it opened 7 days, then Mrs. Corriveau's job is to assess the staffing needs.

Mrs. Corriveau responded that she doesn't know if she can assess that.

Mayor Graham advised that he would also like to know how much money the library has in those other funds and whether or not they are restricted or unrestricted.

Council Member Burns suggested that Mrs. Corriveau find out where the library is coming from and then give a recommendation to Council.

Mrs. Corriveau remarked that she can put it in as a supplemental budget request. However, she told the Library Director that she didn't see how this could be increased when she met with her to discuss the library's budget. She also commented that it would be nice to have all the library funds run through the City. Then we would know where it comes from and where it goes.

Mayor Graham commented that there needs to be more transparency with these funds.

Mrs. Corriveau advised that she had asked Mr. Mills to talk with Steve Bolton about how things are processed and about running them through the City's books.

**The following Communications/Reports were reviewed by Council:**

1. Community Action Planning Council Funding Request 2011-2012  
City Manager Mary M. Corriveau, March 10, 2011
2. Fire Department False Alarm Update Report  
Fire Chief Dale C. Herman, February 11, 2011
3. Sherman Street School Parking Complaint  
Chief Joseph J. Goss, February 25, 2011
4. City Manager Update Report, March 2011

Work session adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

**Donna M. Dutton**  
**City Clerk**