

**COUNCIL BUDGET SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
May 19, 2008
6:00 P.M.**

MAYOR JEFFREY E. GRAHAM PRESIDING

**PRESENT: COUNCIL MEMBER ROXANNE M. BURNS
 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH M. BUTLER, JR.
 COUNCIL MEMBER PETER L. CLOUGH
 COUNCILMEMBER JEFFREY M. SMITH
 MAYOR GRAHAM**

ALSO PRESENT: CITY MANAGER MARY M. CORRIVEAU

Mayor Graham opened the budget session.

Mrs. Corriveau presented Council with an update for the proposed budget. She proposed a 6.9% (\$238,000) increase in Health Insurance rates, an increase of \$184,000 in costs associated with gasoline and diesel and a reduction of \$21,000 in natural gas costs. In addition, a list of changes in revenues and expenses were given to Council which compensate for the changes made in the proposed spending plan.

Council Member Burns proposed a 25% cut in travel/training accounts across the board.

Mayor Graham agreed with Council Member Burns. He also said that conventions are an area that needs to be scaled back.

Council Member Smith agreed stating that the Fire Chief's convention should be put on hold this year.

Council Member Clough remarked that he has no problem with these cuts. He suggested that the fuel cost be raised to \$200,000 as a safe guard.

Council Member Butler suggested waiting instead of just guessing what the figure might be.

Discussion was held relative to sales tax and franchise fees including Westelcom's payments for running conduit.

Mrs. Corriveau advised that Mr. McWayne has indicated that the Martin Street building will be demolished in this year's budget. Therefore, \$73,800 can be taken out of expenditures for Code Enforcement for the 2008-09 budget.

Discussion was held concerning the VanDuzee Street Warehouses. Council Member Clough asked that Attorney Slye check into what the City could do with the owner of this property.

Attorney Slye responded that he will talk with Mr. McWayne and Attorney Burrows and will get back to Council.

Mayor Graham remarked that shuffles of appropriations are fine but it reflects what we discussed before. It is only accurate to a range.

After reviewing the changes, Council concurred that they agree with the changes as proposed.

Budget session ended at 7:00 p.m. to allow Council to move into the regular Council meeting.

The budget session reconvened at 8:15 p.m.

Clinton Street

Mr. Hauk explained that the proposal for Clinton in 2012-13 is for a full reconstruction from Washington Street to Holcomb Street.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that Clinton was moved out due to priority done by staff.

Council Member Clough asked if Clinton could be paved now.

Mr. Hauk explained that it would have to go into the DPW schedule.

Mayor Graham remarked that he is concerned with the fact that the streets keep getting moved out. He stated that we should hold to a schedule.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that the streets are moved when the funding just isn't there. Priorities change, traffic patterns change and the condition of roads change. If Clinton is put in 2011-12, it has to be designed in 2010-11 and paid for in 2012-13.

Council Member Smith remarked that Western Boulevard is not what Council wants at \$4.6 million.

Mr. Hayes explained that the 200 block of Clinton is in the worst condition. Mill and fill is not a panacea. It would last around 3-4 years until the project could come on line.

Council Member Clough remarked that he would like to see that done.

Council Member Butler asked if Council could get firmer numbers.

Mr. Hayes said that he would get them for Council.

Ice Arena

Council Member Butler remarked that we are committing a lot of money for this and we should have a master plan of where we want the arena to be in 10-15 years. He questioned spending

\$650,000 for roof rehab if the decision is made in the future to expand it. It stated that it all needs to be put in a concise package. Before Council commits money, we need to have a better handle on where we want to be. He asked about the Bernier Carr study.

Mrs. Corriveau advised that the study is not being conducted as of yet. We are still in negotiations with them to do a review and put together a master plan. She anticipates the contract being ready for the June 2nd Council meeting.

Council Member Smith referred to a preliminary design of a second sheet of ice that was prepared when Mr. Hiller was the City Manager. He said that the Watertown Hockey Association and the Figure Skating Association presented their needs a couple of months ago. He questioned why we want someone else to get that information for us and questioned spending money for it, when we already have it. He advised that the revenues generated are about 50% of the expenditures. In addition, we need to take into account the revenues generated at the mall, restaurants and hotels.

Mr. Hayes advised that Dr. Harff had been part of the committee that selected Bernier Carr and understood the two different phases and supported that.

Council Member Smith remarked that the circumstances have changed as now people are raising funds for it.

Mayor Graham asked about the study done by the Town of Watertown.

Mr. Hayes explained that when Mr. Hiller was here, we looked at several ice sheets. Fort Drum became involved. However, they couldn't build it off post. Then the Town of Watertown got involved and it just set there.

Mayor Graham remarked that the Town did do research.

Council Member Burns asked where the Town was on this issue. She remarked that if they are moving forward with building an arena, the City needs to know.

Council Member Smith didn't think that they were building a second sheet of ice.

Mayor Graham remarked that a needs assessment has been provided by people who want it done. If it is going to be forced as part of this budget, it is one thing to approve the arena work, but it is another thing to say we want a second sheet of ice. He also commented that if we spend \$50,000 without certainty of moving ahead, the taxpayers will be mad.

Council Member Butler remarked that the City does that all the time. We paid \$25,000 for a study to put a stop sign at Holcomb and Mullin Streets, when Council knew that a stop sign was needed. We spent \$86,000 on Gaffney Drive and we don't know how much more it is going to cost. He also remarked that \$650,000 is a big commitment for the arena roof without the Bernier Carr report and asked why we were doing that.

Mrs. Corriveau responded that it is being done because the roof is failing.

Council Member Butler commented that he is pro recreation. Economic opportunities would exist if the arena could accommodate more hockey and more shows. He remarked that the facility presently under serves the community with the number of trade shows and DPAO concerts that it can accommodate.

Council Member Burns asked what figures Council Member Smith was proposing to use in the budget.

Council Member Smith said that he would propose \$300,000 instead of \$50,000 and would take the \$50,000 out that was for the Bernier Carr study and would hold off on the roof.

Mrs. Corriveau advised that this just moves the roof project down the road.

Mr. Hayes remarked that one person is talking about a second sheet of ice and another is talking about enhancing the arena system. That is why we need to know exactly what we need.

Mayor Graham remarked that there would be a tremendous debt service for a new facility. He asked about this being requested to be put in the budget by Council Member Smith.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that a study would include discussion with the stakeholders. She remarked that she was not sure that we were in a position to put an RFP out to tell what we want designed.

Council Member Butler remarked that Mr. Hayes is correct and as a Council we have to come together and make it a priority.

Council Member Clough remarked that everyone on the Council is pro recreation. He said that he didn't appreciate having individuals tell his daughter-in-law that he is against recreation when she drops his grandchild off for school. He stated that the issue is that he represents the City taxpayers. He stated that there has been a \$2.2 million deficit projected in the next 5 years, plus a 5% tax increase in each of those years. He questioned who knows the amount of money that can be raised through the fund raising efforts.

Mr. Mills advised Council that under NYS Municipal Law, the probable usefulness of the design project is 5 years and payback would have to occur during that length of time, unless it actually goes to construction.

Mayor Graham remarked that he doesn't think discussion should be limited to "stakeholders". He remarked that he was under the impression that the City told Bernier Carr to do the study and take a look at expansion in the future and with a second sheet of ice being taken into consideration.

Mr. Hayes responded that this is pretty much what the contract is for. He also commented that Bernier Carr is more than competent to do what we have asked them to do.

Council Member Smith asked if the City should have a specialty engineer for looking at a second sheet and utilizing the assets at the existing facility.

Mayor Graham asked the cost of the Bernier Carr study.

Mr. Hayes stated that it would be \$20,000 - \$25,000.

Mayor Graham responded that the Council wants to see the arena in good shape. However, he is not willing to commit \$300,000 for plans. He suggested working with Bernier Carr.

Council Member Smith stated that he is committed to the next step to allow for growth and the addition of a second sheet of ice. He stated that he is willing to invest \$300,000 knowing that the City has partners as opposed to money for putting in trails.

Council Member Burns remarked that staff convinced her that it is imperative that we need to have the study done and it wouldn't be prudent to move ahead without it. She also commented that in fairness to the other residents in the City, we need some clear cut numbers. She stated she would like to see the Bernier Carr study pushed forward as quickly as possible and then move forward with the design.

Council Member Butler remarked that he supports Council Member Smith.

Council Member Clough remarked that he is not for it at this time.

Curbing

Council Member Smith asked why there weren't curbs on all the streets that were being done. He referred to Pawling Street, Marra Drive and Merline Avenue.

Mr. Hayes explained that the water has to go somewhere. He explained that the Engineer determines where the flow goes and the infrastructure that needs to be in place. He explained that he and Mr. Hauk visited the street on Friday and curbs can be installed in the 300 and 400 blocks. Marra Drive is part of the Western Outfall project. He explained that there have to be catch basins for curbing to be on the street. He also advised that one end of Marra Drive has a storm water system. He also advised that Merline Avenue is a private street.

Next Budget Session

Council will hold a budget session on Tuesday, May 27th at 6 p.m.

Budget session ended at 9:55 p.m.

Donna M. Dutton

City Clerk

