

**COUNCIL BUDGET SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
May 27, 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 (arrived at 6:50)**

ALSO PRESENT: CITY MANAGER MARY M. CORRIVEAU

Council Member Clough opened the Budget Session.

Mrs. Corriveau updated Council on the mill and fill work to be done on Clinton Street. She detailed the \$99,000 cost which includes only surface work and not replacement of water lines or sanitary or storm sewer lines.

Council Member Smith said the mill and fill work should be done this year.

Kurt Hauk, City Engineer, told Council he believes Clinton Street can be smoothed out for a few years but is beyond the tipping point for reconstruction.

Eugene Hayes, DPW Superintendent, explained to Council the process in which the work would have to be completed.

Council Member Burns noted that it would not be prudent if the City considers doing work on one portion of Clinton Street and not the other. She added that Clinton Street is a combination of residential and commercial structures and is highly traveled.

Council Member Clough commented that there are so many streets in the City that are in need of top to bottom work.

Mrs. Corriveau wanted to make Council aware that if the City spends the money to mill and fill Clinton Street now, in the next several years that work would have to be ripped up in order to replace the utilities under the street. She reminded Council that Barben Avenue has been in the capital budget for the last five to ten years and keeps getting moved out.

Council Member Burns stated she will not go against the recommendation of staff but questioned if at least the potholes could be repaired.

Mr. Hayes said they could be fixed.

Council Member Butler inquired if the work could be moved up to be completed in the next two to three years. He noted that there are other blocks on Sherman Street that are just as bad if not worse.

Budget Changes

Mrs. Corriveau reviewed with Council some of the changes in the Budget that have been made to date including modifications in the Travel and Training line items.

Animal Control

Mrs. Corriveau and Council reviewed the report on historical costs of providing Animal Control by City Staff. She noted that the City stopped providing animal control in 1999.

Asphalt Spray Injection Equipment

Council Member Smith asked staff about the availability of emulsion and the conditions in which it would work best.

Mr. Hayes replied that they are still tracking that down but hoping for availability in the Syracuse area. He added that Josh Carlsson, Sr. Engineer Tech., spoke with people in various states who use this equipment who are trying innovative ways to repair roads.

Council Member Smith suggested leasing the equipment for one month in the spring to see how it works before spending \$150,000 on purchasing one.

Council Member Burns asked if the \$9,000 spent on leasing the equipment would go toward the purchase.

Mr. Hayes said that it would not and that \$9,000 is expensive to try something new.

Council Member Clough suggested postponing this purchase for another year.

Council Member Butler stated that maintenance on City streets is currently inadequate and that this piece of equipment would improve street maintenance.

Mr. Hayes explained to Council that maintaining the streets in winter is problematic, especially if the proper material cannot be obtained. He added that this machine is the answer to that problem as it would provide better quality patch work.

Council Member Burns said she feels there are too many unanswered questions about this piece of equipment and that she cannot support spending \$9,000 to rent it. She did suggest that Mr. Hayes do an in depth study and come back to Council next year. Council Member Burns said that the streets do need attention and would like to see this item as a high priority next year.

Council Member Clough asked if there are any of these machines in New York.

Mr. Hayes said there are not but suggested traveling to Minnesota or South Dakota, both of which have similar Winter climates as Watertown.

Council Member Burns stated that if no one closer than Minnesota has one, she is more apprehensive of purchasing such an item.

Mrs. Corriveau mentioned the possibility of talking to the County about a partnership in purchasing and using such a machine.

Council Member Butler asked if the South Dakota unit had a heated storage tank.

Mr. Hayes replied that they kept it indoors at night and circulating.

Council Member Clough stated that he could live with a one month lease of that equipment.

Mrs. Corriveau said the funds would be taken out of CHIPS which has no budgetary impact.

Council Member Butler said he supported that idea.

Council further reviewed budget items for DPW and Police beginning on page 255.

CHIPS Projects

Council Member Smith asked if curbs would be added to Marra Drive.

Mr. Hayes replied that the priority is to install curbs where they are not going to impact water runoff.

Fairgrounds Improvements

Council Member Smith inquired about the walkway between Rand Drive and WT Wiley Drive at the Fairgrounds (p. 259). He noted that there is a significant slope or drop off on one side of the pedestrian connection.

Mrs. Corriveau reminded Council that the project is still being designed.

Mr. Hayes showed Council an aerial view of the walkway location. He noted that curbs in this area would be problematic during fair week as pedestrians and vendors would not be expecting curbs.

Council Member Butler stated that he could do without this project as he believes it is not a used walkway.

Mrs. Corriveau told Council that there are students from Jefferson Community College who walk there and it will eventually lead to Bicentennial Park.

Council Member Clough commented that he agrees with Council Member Butler and the walkway is something that leads to nothing. He said he would rather see the money used along the river.

Mrs. Corriveau replied that the walkway from Bicentennial Park to JCC is along the river.

Council Member Burns said she sees the walkway as a connector in that area.

Council Member Butler said the walkway would make the area more cohesive but it is not in his top ten projects.

Mr. Hayes and Council reviewed parking lot projects in that area.

Mrs. Corriveau suggested installing a \$50,000 parking lot and later expanding it if needed.

Mayor Graham said he agreed with that plan.

Council and staff agreed that the parking lot will be constructed in lieu of the walkway.

Culture & Recreation – p. 142

Council reviewed the expenses.

Mrs. Corriveau said that 18 trash receptacles will be added and a \$30,000 restroom rehabilitation is also projected.

Council and staff reviewed Goals and Objectives (p. 145).

Council Member Burns stated that she supports the remodeling of existing facilities at the park and suggested initiating discussions with the Conservancy.

Mayor Graham commented that it would be best to fix what is there and to get working on the plans so work can be started in 2009.

Council Member Clough requested details on the utility vehicle on page 157.

Mr. Hayes said that is similar to a Gator Unit and would have to be bid out.

Council reviewed pages 158-163.

Swimming Pools – p. 163

Mayor Graham asked about the status of pools in the City.

Mrs. Corriveau reviewed the five year plan for area pools and mentioned installing a spray pool

in Thompson Park as an alternative to traditional pools. She added that this feature would not require bathing suits but rather children could run through it with their street clothes on.

Council Member Smith asked about the age of City pools.

Mr. Hayes said the Flynn and Alteri pools were constructed in the mid-1970s and the Thompson Park pool is approximately 50 years old. He added that the park pool liner system is leaking as it has shifted over the last 50 years but the filtration system has been updated.

Mrs. Corriveau commented that for a community of our size and climate the City has a lot of pools.

Council Member Smith said he has no problem with downsizing to two pools but suggests eliminating either the Fairgrounds or North Side pool.

Council Member Burns asked for statistics on pool usage.

Mr. Hayes replied that there were times when the park pool has been the most visited. He commented that once the new housing is complete, the Flynn pool will likely be most visited.

Council Member Burns requested figures on the cost of repairing the pool and the cost of the spray feature. She also suggested getting the input of the Conservancy.

Mrs. Corriveau directed Council's attention to page 252 to review work to be done on pools in the future.

Department of Public Works – page 59

Mrs. Corriveau told Council the 'Welcome to Watertown' sign, page 72, was cut as it is a nonessential item.

Mayor Graham commented that in a highly commercial area it would be more bombastic to have an arch similar to what Alexandria Bay has.

Council Member Burns said she supported the manager's recommendation to cut it and questioned its aesthetics in that area.

Council and staff discuss road salt, deicers and abrasives (page 80).

Council and staff discuss refuse sticker costs and revenue.

Council Member Smith asked how much biodegradable bags would cost for lawn waste.

Bryan White, Assistant to City Manager, said that the bags are not that expensive.

Sewer Operations – page 210

Council and staff discussed sewer rates.

Council agreed to support a flat increase in rates rather than a certain percentage.

Council discussed vehicle replacement (p. 219).

Mr. Hauk said the department needs a vehicle that allows the operator to haul equipment.

Mayor Graham stated that asking for a ¼ ton truck is contrary to being ‘more green.’

Mrs. Corriveau said the department is looking for a two wheel drive vehicle and can look for a hybrid.

Council Member Smith discussed utilizing methane gas.

Mr. Hauk reminded Council that methane generation fluctuates greatly.

Council Member Burns suggested discussing such issues during a work session since it does not relate to the current budget.

Mrs. Corriveau commented that discussing this topic at the sewage treatment plant would be beneficial.

Council Member Smith asked if the rate increase for water would be a percentage or flat amount.

Mayor Graham suggested moving toward a flat increase.

Mrs. Corriveau said the rate increase will be different depending on how much you consume.

Council and staff further discussed water rates.

Water Fund – p. 179

Council and staff reviewed page 308.

Mayor Graham asked about the status of the radio read water meters.

Gary Pilon, Water Superintendent, told Council 300 radio read meters were installed in the last year including at Starwood and some 801 buildings. He added that the battery lasts 15 years.

Council Member Smith commented on the amount of water that leaks out of the system.

Mr. Pilon replied that it is not metered water but rather that used for firefighting and street cleaning.

Council Member Clough suggested staggering the purchase of new vehicles for the department. Council and staff review future plans for vehicle purchases.

Mrs. Corriveau said Council can authorize Mr. Pilon to purchase one truck now and one in the 2008-2009 budget.

Mr. Pilon told Council about the deterioration of the department's vehicles.

Council Member Smith asked if any of the new vehicles would be hybrids.

Mrs. Corriveau said the meter reader car may be a hybrid.

Council discussed the feasibility of a compressed gas facility.

Mr. Pilon mentioned that there is a company in Arizona that manufactures hybrid pick-up trucks.

Mayor Graham asked how essential the GPS device is for the department (p. 198).

Mr. Pilon explained that there is one in Engineering and that the Water department is trying to get all utilities plotted on a virtual map. He said the sewer system is nearly complete. Mr. Pilon added that the second system would be used to locate fire hydrants and water mains.

Mrs. Corriveau stated that the City also applied for a grant for this piece of equipment for the GIS system. She mentioned that even without the grant the City still needs to buy it to get utilities mapped.

Tax Levy

Mayor Graham suggested holding the levy increase to 3% and appropriating \$110,000 out of the fund balance to do so.

Mrs. Corriveau voiced some concern with taking money out of the fund balance.

Budget session ended at 9:05 p.m.

Amanda C. Lewis
Deputy City Clerk

