

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
June 9, 2014
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Jeffrey E. Graham Presiding

Present: Council Member Roxanne M. Burns
Council Member Joseph M. Butler, Jr.
Council Member Stephen A. Jennings
Mayor Graham

Absent: Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso

Also Present: Sharon Addison, City Manager

City staff present: Deputy Fire Chief Randall, Erin Gardner, Mike Sligar

DISCUSSION

Splash Park Proposal – Watertown Noon Rotary, Rev. Fred Garry and Brian Ashley

Reverend Fred Garry addressed Council giving a brief background of the Rotary organization and mentioned some of the centennial celebration project ideas within the City including an obelisk, zoo improvements, a performing arts pavilion and a splash park. Rev. Garry noted that Rotary, with the City's Planning Department, would like to build a splash park and has agreed to donate \$50,000 toward the project. He added that the group is now looking for the go-ahead to start fundraising and mentioned that there could be some mechanicals involved in the construction. The splash park could be a replacement or an accessory to the existing park pool, he said.

Brian Ashley addressed Council noting that the park is a wonderful attraction to the City and mentioned the pavilion and fitness trail already in place there. He said he spoke with David Winters, President of the Downtown Business Association, who is also on-board with the project. Mr. Ashley noted that he and Rev. Garry are before Council tonight looking for support from Council and the City and that there is a potential grant program to help subsidize the splash park.

Mayor Graham responded that with the closure of the park pool, this would be a nice replacement. He mentioned that he received a call from Dr. Gianfagna because it has been 27 years since the park playground was constructed and it is in need of some updating. Mayor Graham said Dr. Gianfagna offered to lead the charge on the updates, adding that he is unsure of what exactly it will entail. He mentioned that Ms. Gardner would be the point of coordination on both projects. He said he is personally supportive of the splash park and offered to let Council weigh in on the topic.

Council Member Burns dovetailed on what the Mayor said regarding the closure of the Thompson Park pool, which was a difficult decision, made by staff and supported by Council, because quality of life issues are always very important. Adding that she is unsure the pool will ever be reopened, she said Rotary took the onerous decision off of Council by suggesting a splash park. She noted that one of her main goals has always been downtown revitalization and that she considers Thompson Park part of

downtown, which is why she has focused a lot of her training on that area. From that training, she said if there is one thing that brings a community together it is some type of water feature. She wished to commend Rotary for suggesting this unique idea and said she hopes the City will support this because it is good for all parties involved.

Council Member Butler thanked Rev. Garry and Mr. Ashley for coming to the meeting and sharing their ideas. He said it shows great community spirit, adding that he is enthusiastic about the project. These types of endeavors are proactive but noted that he is not giving up on the park pool, and views this as complementary, one more reason why someone would take their family to the park. He mentioned the park's assets including the view, zoo, golf and pool. Council Member Butler said the City needs to take a hard look at the figures to replace the pool or get it back up to speed. With or without the pool, the splash park is a good idea and another way to market the park, he said.

Rev. Garry mentioned that there used to be a very large wading pool in the park and it can be seen in historical photos. He mentioned the synergy between the history of the park and the history of Rotary with the splash pool idea.

Mr. Ashley commented that if there is an effort to rebuild the playground, the Village of Clayton recently had a successful partnership with Fort Drum, as one of the units volunteered their time for a week to restore that park. He suggested contacting the Village's mayor on the topic.

Council Member Jennings said the idea is great and thanked the speakers for bringing it forward. He said it would honor the history of the park in a modern way and diversify the recreational opportunities and enrich the City. He said Council should figure out a way to be able to fund it.

Mayor Graham commented that they have Council's blessing to move ahead and asked that they continue to coordinate with staff. He noted there are some in-kind things that could be done when the time comes, particularly with the mechanicals.

City-Centric Marketing Proposal – Greater Watertown Chamber of Commerce, Lynn Pietroski and Sara Carpenter

Lynn Pietroski, thanked Council for having them. She noted that a while back they met with Ms. Addison regarding some marketing ideas for the City. One of the concerns is that many people look for information on the City and activities therein. After researching, they found there was not a lot of Watertown-specific information so a package was designed that strictly focuses on the City of Watertown. She turned the presentation over to Ms. Carpenter to review the packet then said they would answer questions.

Sara Carpenter addressed Council and gave a background of her credentials, noting she has a degree in Graphic Design. Ms. Carpenter reviewed the packet beginning with the Walking Tour Brochure, noting its layout and content. She mentioned organizations that have shown interest in the City and recreational information, including Fort Drum which includes an FRG group of roughly 160 people. In that group, Ms. Carpenter said the organizer hopes to take the participants shopping, dining and to visit the library along with following the brochure. She added that it reinforces the need for the return of a brochure of that nature. Ms. Carpenter mentioned the re-creation of a bike/walking trail brochure, in the same set up

as the walking tour map. There is a huge need for good photography of the City, she said, which could be utilized for City proposals. She suggested the City have its own database of photos to distribute to the media. Ms. Carpenter mentioned she has a photographer in mind to take updated photos of the City. Also included in the packet is the WWNY TV 7 television and texting package, which would run for four months, for a local audience to keep people aware of what is going on in the area. The texting program would include a QR code on all of the marketing materials (brochures) which would allow people to sign up for text alerts including upcoming events, deals and trivia contests. With information collected for the texting package, future free marketing campaigns could be run using an individual's email or home addresses. The idea is to promote the "stay-cation" theme, she said. Ms. Carpenter mentioned that a website utilized for City marketing is very out of date and needs to be updated to represent the City. The update would improve the search engine optimization, putting the City at the top of the search list and the website would have new, tagged photos of Watertown.

Mayor Graham asked if this website would be in addition to the City's current site.

Ms. Carpenter replied that the site could be completely redone, referring to www.visitwatertown.com.

Ms. Pietroski added that the hope is to do more with the website and maintain it to make sure it is continually current.

Mayor Graham said he agrees and it is good to keep all forms of media involved at some level and include the effective use of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram in the digital age.

Council Member Butler inquired about the website mentioned and asked who owns it.

Ms. Addison noted this is not the City government website.

Ms. Carpenter noted it is under the T.I. Travel Council.

Ms. Pietroski noted they cannot speak to the ownership but said they would like to find out who owns it so they can use that domain and keep it updated.

Council Member Burns said she does not wish to put the Chamber on the hot-seat, but would like to ask the City Manager if that was created and supposedly supported by the Thousand Islands Tourism Council, as the City allocates bed tax funds to them.

Ms. Addison said she will check into it.

Council Member Butler commented that there have been many proposals from the Tourism Council in the past and he does not recall much money being spent on a website, as most of it went to brochures and maps. He asked how the website would be linked.

Ms. Carpenter said the Watertown DBA would include it on their site and it would include a calendar of events.

Mayor Graham commented that most people would want to look at a walking tour map on their smart phone, rather than a brochure.

Ms. Carpenter agreed and utilizing that medium would be the next step, she said, to make websites interactive and compatible for mobile devices.

Mayor Graham said he would like to see the City start the process of getting those digital mediums in use.

Council Member Butler said he is less enthused about the brochure idea but would like to see a better web representation of the City, which is a feature he utilizes for other cities when he travels with his family.

Ms. Carpenter discussed what types of things people were interested in when requesting information about the City.

Ms. Pietroski noted the ultimate goal is to have the City seen in a positive light as a recognizable brand, with positive things for people to do. She stressed the importance of having everything accurate and user friendly.

Mayor Graham said every year the travel package is approved with ads for different communities, and noted the look of it is antiquated and questioned if people actually use it to plan vacations.

Ms. Pietroski replied that it covers a larger region and there is a need to highlight the City itself.

Ms. Carpenter mentioned the Visual Identity Guideline book, which should be utilized more.

Mayor Graham said he supports the concept but does not know how interested he is in the brochures and television packages, and is keeping an open mind to it. Digitally, he said the City is way behind the curve.

Ms. Carpenter mentioned she had an order from the New York State info center requesting 3,000 brochures, as they get thousands of requests for Watertown.

Mayor Graham asked if staff could work with the Chamber on specifics. He commented that the kiosks downtown are never updated and rarely have interesting information in them. He suggested having staff condense the information, as long as everyone is in agreement.

Council Member Burns said there has not been discussion on this proposal, as this is the first time it has come before Council. She said it was a good presentation but it has raised several questions and she is not ready to appropriate \$21,400 on a matter that has not been discussed. She asked how smaller communities such as Clayton and Cape Vincent are able to have such a strong marketing presence but the City does not and if this is something that has to be turned over to the Chamber of Commerce without knowing if there is talent in-house to do similar projects. In reference to web design and support, she asked if the Chamber is the best entity to do that or should the City have a web master. She noted that the City has an I.T. Department with a new department head who is very good. Regarding photography, she questioned if it is fair to allocate money to have the Chamber choose a photographer, who may have good credentials, but noted there are other established photographers in the community who have been here for many years that may do the work in-kind for recognition. Perhaps Public Health

would be willing to take on an endeavor as they have in the past regarding a walking or hiking trail brochure and partner with the City, she said. In addition, she said it is a lot to take on in one night and make a decision.

Council Member Butler said those are good points and noted the City has committed some tourism fund dollars to the Chamber as opposed to the scaled-back funds to the T.I. Tourism Council. He asked about the cost of the walking tour brochure.

Ms. Carpenter answered it is for shipping and distribution of 10,000 brochures.

Ms. Pietroski added that some tourism centers charge a fee to have the brochures displayed.

Council Member Butler asked for six locations that would be located on the walking tour.

Ms. Carpenter referred to the previous brochure and listed several locations throughout downtown that would be on the map, including the Paddock Mansion, Woolworth Building, Empsall's and the Flower Library. The idea is that there is written history about each location on the tour, she said.

Mayor Graham noted there will be a lot more to see over the next five years with these projects. Somehow the projects and developments need to get out to the broader audience, he said.

Council Member Butler mentioned areas such as the park, the Black River and Lake Ontario that draw a lot of people to the area and are more attractive than a walking tour. He suggested a visitor's guide to the area with places to go and as an insert have a walking tour option.

Ms. Addison said a portion of this project is to collect the information and to house it in order to prepare for an app so anyone can see the highlights of the City and know where to go.

Ms. Carpenter explained there is an entity called Historypin and it allows a complete walking tour with historical before and after photos of various locations.

Ms. Pietroski reiterated that they are looking to build a foundation to brand the City.

Council Member Butler noted the library has its own brochure and asked how many requests come in for zoo information.

Ms. Carpenter said the television advertising was going to focus on the zoo.

Council Member Jennings inquired if the proposal is a transition project to get the City to the digital age.

Ms. Carpenter replied that none of the information would expire, each piece would transition into the next step.

After further discussion regarding merchandising and marketing, Council Member Butler said he would like to have more spent on the website and less on some of the more traditional items.

Ms. Addison remarked that the original proposal was pared down by about half.

Mayor Graham said the digital portion is something the Council Members are interested in, more so than the other avenues. Some things, like photography, could be looked at on an as needed basis.

Ms. Pietroski noted that they are willing to do whatever the City wants and will help to promote it.

Mayor Graham asked if a refined proposal was needed.

Council Member Burns said this is a perfect topic for a work session, as this is a very important topic and Council should have more time to deliberate and discuss the matter. There needs to be a long range plan and added she would like to have an entire work session dedicated to this topic. She asked several questions including how to move forward promotionally and how will the City get the most out of its bed tax dollars as the direction with the T. I. Council is not how the City wants to continue.

Mayor Graham mentioned it would be nice to have some visual examples of some of these technologies. He also asked the City Manager to investigate if there are any staff members with expertise that can be utilized in this proposal.

Council Member Butler questioned how success is measured in these areas.

Websites can be measured by who visited, what platform they used and other demographics, Ms. Carpenter said. Digital mediums can be measured by 'likes,' comments and shares. The QR code placed on brochures can also be measured and the number of requests placed from brochures can be quantified.

Mayor Graham said he appreciated the presentation.

Fairgrounds Arena Events

Council Member Butler mentioned that he received a call from County Legislator Phil Reed who organizes the Home Show at the Fairgrounds in early April. Assuming the arena moves forward with renovations, once the ice is down there are no events until the project is complete, he said. The Home Show is a big show and organizers have expressed their hope that they would still be able to do it for the coming year and that the City would entertain postponing the beginning of the renovations. There is another show that has been running for years in the first week of April, he said.

Mayor Graham noted that the scope is unknown at this point, until the plans come back and said if possible the City would want to work with the groups.

Council Member Butler said to work with these groups it would entail delaying the project about ten days.

Ms. Gardner, Parks and Recreation Superintendent, noted that without the scope, Stantec plans on doing the exterior work in January, the east addition will start in February, west addition in March, and the interior work will commence March 30th, with a completion date of September 11, 2015. If it is postponed two weeks, it will not be completed until two weeks later. This year, she said, the last event in the arena is September 17th and the ice will start to be put in on September 18th in order for it to be ready for the October 1st contracts.

Council Member Jennings asked if there was another site possible for the Home Show, such as JCC.

Council Member Butler suggested it could be in Clayton as well, and added that Mr. Reed spoke very highly of Ms. Gardner and everyone at Parks & Recreation and that it is a pleasure to work with everyone there on the Home Show. In addition, he said Mr. Reed commented that he likes that tradition and is comfortable with it and does not want to start in a new facility outside of Watertown.

Ms. Gardner replied it will be hard to say yes right now before knowing what is going to go in to the renovations.

Mayor Graham inquired about the dinosaur show this past weekend.

Ms. Gardner replied that a lot of people attended.

Council Member Butler asked about any criticisms.

Ms. Gardner said the only complaint was that it was expensive to get in and that once in, there were other things to spend money on in order to participate in everything they had to offer.

Work session ended at 8:03 p.m.

Amanda C. Lewis
Deputy City Clerk