

**COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
September 25, 2006
7:00 p.m.**

MAYOR JEFFREY E. GRAHAM PRESIDING

PRESENT: **COUNCILMAN STEPHEN J. BRADLEY
COUNCILMAN PETER L. CLOUGH
COUNCILMAN TIMOTHY R. LABOUF
COUNCILMAN JEFFREY M. SMITH
MAYOR GRAHAM**

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

Mayor Graham told Council that a U.S. flag had been sent by the Free Masons of NNY.

Mayor Graham wished to compliment those who made the effort to contain the moose running through Watertown this weekend and was glad no one was hurt.

Presentations:

Watertown Teen Center – Debbie Cavallario, Board President

Mrs. Cavallario thanked Council for inviting the Board to the meeting. She then introduced Jessica Rough, Executive Director of the Teen Center. Ms. Rough then presented a powerpoint presentation to Council outlining the mission statement, statistics and programs available at the Center.

Councilman Clough asked what the average age is for teens attending the Center.

Ms. Rough said teens ages 13-19 and some 8-10 year olds participate in activities there.

Councilman Clough inquired if there was a possibility of losing funding.

Mr. St. Croix said the Center is looking into the possibility of merging with another agency.

Samaritan Medical Center – Thomas H. Carman, President and CEO

Mr. Carman thanked Council for the opportunity to present this evening. He then began a powerpoint presentation highlighting the benefits of the hospital in the community and mission, value and vision statements. He also outlined to Council the plans for expansion and growth in the future.

Mayor Graham asked if the new structure would be a high-rise.

Mr. Carman told Council that it would be a three to four story structure which would allow for a new entrance to the hospital. He added that it may be necessary to build a parking garage as well.

Mayor Graham inquired if the hospital is planning on replacing the 1949 building.

Mr. Carman replied that the hospital cannot afford to do that now but is moving toward doing so in the future. He also said that Samaritan is looking at connecting the Keep Home with the hospital.

Councilman Smith voiced his concerns with the future of the hospital in comparison with the services of the past.

Items for Discussion:

421-f Exemption – Brian Phelps, City Assessor

Mrs. Corriveau told Council that the letter from Mr. Phelps is in response to a letter from Schwerzmann & Wise. The first letter was urging Council to consider an amendment to realign assessment with exemption. The letter from Mr. Phelps explained the conditions of the exemption and the average exempt amount of a property per year.

Mr. Phelps told Council that there are currently no exemptions close to the \$50,000 cap. He added that the state provides information on the exemption and he encourages Codes to send any interested residents to the Assessor's office.

Councilman LaBouf asked how the public is made aware of the exemption.

Mr. Phelps said when people come in to his office asking about how their assessments would change if they do work on their homes, he will explain that the exemption may be applied to what they are working on.

Real Property – Bryan White, Confidential Assistant to the City Manager

Mr. White told Council that Mr. Phelps, Mr. Keenan and he have been working on a grant that would allow the City to place on the Internet tax parcel information. He added that the grant was initiated last year for the first time and the City has a very good chance at being awarded this grant. Mr. White said they are currently in the process of reviewing the grant. He added that a partnership between the State and City would cost between \$1,500 and \$2,000 and that the City can always opt out.

Councilman Bradley asked how this system would tie in with the County.

Mr. Phelps said that the County currently has some assessment data but will not be applying for the grant this year. The City's site would have the same look and feel of some other county's websites.

Watertown Police Dept. Staffing, Statistics and Overview – Joseph Goss, Police Chief

Chief Goss told Council that one of the most prevalent day to day challenges is staffing. He said that the department is currently in the process of hiring two new officers from the Sheriff's Department and is working hard to set up a police academy. He added that arrangements are being made to use the 11th floor of the State Office Building in November for academy purposes. Chief Goss reviewed some of the goals he has for the department over the next year.

Mayor Graham said that he sees two issues with staffing including the number of positions Council sets in place and the training cycle of the new hires.

Chief Goss mentioned that from the day a new officer is hired until they are seen as ready for the street it is almost one year. He added that a test will be offered in December for entry-level police officers.

Mayor Graham asked Chief Goss what he thought of the Canton training facility.

Chief Goss replied that the facilities were very nice but added that the department does not like the fact that they don't get to see their officers for 22 weeks during that training time. He said it is hard to know if any of the officers are struggling in any way and that when they are trained in Watertown that training is based on how things are handled in the City.

Mrs. Corriveau told Council that the Canton academy is only offered once a year and the City needs as many officers on the force as we can get. She added that there are times when we can use Canton and times when we can use in-house training.

Chief Goss said the department is actively recruiting and has an attractive option for veterans who choose to become police officers.

Mrs. Corriveau said the current requirement for taking the Civil Service test is that the applicant has to reside in the City limits for three months prior to the test. She said that sometimes people move outside the City shortly after the test but their name remains on the list.

Mayor Graham commented that that requirement should change so the person who applies must remain a resident of the City.

Mrs. Corriveau told Council that the resident list must be fully exhausted before going to the open list and the City is now looking to the open list to fill positions.

Councilman Smith said that at budget time a traffic control device was discussed and asked what the status was of that.

Chief Goss replied that there are representatives coming in October so the department can see the devices and will ordering them as soon as possible.

Mayor Graham asked about a school resource officer.

Chief Goss told Council that a resource officer would be a teacher and mentor for students. He added that officers spend a considerable amount of time at schools now responding to calls and if an officer is posted at some schools it would eliminate sending the regular patrols. Chief Goss said that Mr. Fralick, Watertown City School Superintendent, is in favor of this option.

Councilman LaBouf commented that those with evil intentions are gaining a hold in the community and thugs are targeting our children.

Televising City of Watertown Meetings – Bryan White, Confidential Assistant to the City Manager

Councilman Smith asked about utilizing PBS to broadcast the Council meetings.

Councilman Bradley said that he would like to hear the advantage of using Mr. Weed's services.

Mr. Weed said that Time Warner has to supply a channel for government access. He said that if the City chooses not to contract him then commercials would be added to the meeting which would make it ineligible to be run on public access. He added that there are restrictions on the hours that it would be run.

Councilman Bradley said this option is not limiting the City to just Time Warner as copies of the meeting could be sent to people out of state.

Mayor Graham asked Mr. Weed what would happen if he loses interest in recording the meetings.

Mr. Weed said if that happens then an educational value could be added if students or interns would videotape and edit the meetings.

Mrs. Corriveau told Council that the more people know, the easier our jobs are. She suggested looking at a combination of contracting Mr. Weed and purchasing a camera and tripod to record other meetings held in Council Chambers.

Mayor Graham commented that there is no production value of a set camera in the back of the room. He asked what Council members thought of this idea.

Councilman LaBouf said that Mr. Weed has provided a valuable service over the last several months and an increase in communication with residents is better for the community.

Councilman Smith said he is not sure about the contract. He said he thinks Mr. Weed does a great job but thinks perhaps the one-time cost of a camera and tripod would be better.

Mrs. Corriveau told Council that lapel-clip microphones are needed for Mr. Weed's system or a new system because the audio is hard to pick up.

Mayor Graham said it is a good idea to record the meetings and has no problem utilizing Mr. Weed's services but suggests looking at using a single camera for other meetings.

Mr. Weed suggested using one camera for the next Council meeting to see how it would look.

Councilman LaBouf asked Council to consider contracting for six months and after that review the feedback and numbers from websites.

Councilman Bradley said he would recommend using the six-month trial of Mr. Weed's services.

Councilman Clough replied that he doesn't see the need to hire someone when a single camera would be sufficient.

Mr. Weed said he did not start with the intention to make money but Council asked him to submit a proposal so he did.

Councilman LaBouf commented that he is not afraid of any criticism regarding his views on this matter.

Mrs. Corriveau said she would work on a contract negotiation with Mr. Weed.

NIMS Training – Bryan White, Confidential Assistant to the City Manager

Mrs. Corriveau reminded Council that they need to have this training completed by the end of the month.

Mr. White said he would download a copy of the questions after the meeting.

Dedication Ceremony

Mrs. Corriveau said Council had received an invitation to a dedication ceremony at the new transit garage at DPW.

Summit Woods

There will be a joint City/Town Planning Board meeting at 2:00 on Tuesday to discuss Summit Woods.

Kayak Event

Mrs. Corriveau said broadcasts of the annual kayak event can be seen on the Outdoor Life Network on October 21 at 2:00 p.m., October 25 at 2:00 a.m., and on October 26 at 3:00 p.m.

Water Rates

Councilman Smith asked about the progress on the water rates.

Mrs. Corriveau said that information would be ready for the next meeting.

Work session ended at 10:26 p.m.

Amanda Lewis
Deputy City Clerk