

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
October 13, 2009
7:00 P.M.**

MAYOR JEFFREY E. GRAHAM PRESIDING

PRESENT: **COUNCIL MEMBER ROXANNE M. BURNS
COUNCIL MEMBER JASON R. BURTO
COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH M. BUTLER, JR.
COUNCIL MEMBER JEFFREY M. SMITH
MAYOR GRAHAM**

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

Mayor Graham opened the work session.

Property Transferred to Thousand Islands Area Habitat for Humanity

Council reviewed the memo from Mrs. Corriveau concerning the property at 525-531 Main Street East which had been transferred to Habitat for Humanity. Habitat found that the property is a very difficult site based on size and under lying rock conditions near the ground surface. Habitat felt that their options were limited to selling the property as a fundraiser for other upcoming projects or returning the property to the City, for them to sell at auction.

Mr. Brian Drappo, representing Habitat, was present at the meeting. He asked for Council's opinion on this.

Mayor Graham remarked that it should come back to the City for the next auction since it was not used for the purpose that was intended.

Council Member Burns remarked that she agreed with the Mayor. She asked about any interest from the abutting property owners.

Mayor Graham commented that it is probably not just a rock issue, but also the set back requirements.

Council concurred that the property should be put in the next City auction.

Mayor Graham thanked Mr. Drappo and Habitat for all they do in the community.

Jefferson County Board of Elections

Jerry Eaton, Republican Commissioner and Sean Hennessey, Democratic Commissioner were in attendance to answer questions posed by Council concerning the consolidation and moving of polling places in the City.

Mayor Graham commented that the polling places have been moving around. He also mentioned that the State Office Building is kind of difficult due to lack of parking. He advised that he had spoken with Mr. Fralick and he had agreed with the option of moving the voting back into the high school.

Mr. Hennessey explained that the Board of Elections is looking for opportunities to stream line by narrowing the number of polling sites throughout the county. He explained that they have downsized from 60 to 51 sites in the county and down to 9 sites in the city.

Mr. Eaton advised that there is a lack of good polling sites in District 12. He also mentioned the fact that the fire station is not a good polling site.

Council Member Burns commented that she votes at the fire station and handicap voters might have a problem with the site because of the lack of parking. Also, there would be an issue if there was a fire on election day.

Mayor Graham asked about the plans for consolidating into fewer sites in each of the quarters of the city.

Mr. Hennessey remarked that four sites throughout the city would be nice. However, District 12 doesn't lend itself for the availability of polling sites.

Discussion was held concerning Meadowbrook and Midtown Tower sites. It was explained that Midtown does have some privacy issues since voting is done in the hallway.

Mayor Graham remarked that the Commissioners would have to sit down with Mr. Fralick to discuss a move to the high school.

Council Member Smith asked what the problem was with voting in the schools.

Mr. Hennessey explained that there were security issues.

Council Member Smith asked why the schools were used for school board elections.

Mr. Hennessey responded that the Board of Elections has nothing to do with school board elections.

Mr. Eaton explained that in regards to schools, there could be a bomb threat or a lock down. Polling places can't be locked down.

In answering questions concerning redistricting, Mr. Eaton advised that redistricting will begin in 2012.

Council Member Butler asked what data was collected to determine the polling sites. He also commented that he votes at the fire station and thinks it is a good site.

Both Commissioners indicated that there were many polling sites and it became a matter of expense. Condensing the sites was a no-brainer and was based on common sense decisions. In addition, a layout of the districts based on population concentration was studied. Some of the decisions were issue based and some were access based.

Council Member Smith asked how the Board was intending to correct the fact that some voters have to pass one site to get to another site so they can vote. He asked if they could vote at a site closer to them.

Mayor Graham commented that they have to vote in their own district. He remarked that he agreed with Council Member Butler that the fire station was great in terms of neighborhood proximity.

Mr. Eaton remarked that the Church of the Nazarene is a great site. It has ample parking and is large enough to hold more voting machines.

Council Member Butler stated that Council is looking for long term consistency and equilibrium across the districts.

Council Member Busto advised that Mr. St. Croix had phoned him about the need to keep the Midtown site.

Mayor Graham thanked Mr. Eaton and Mr. Hennessey for attending and listening to Council's concerns.

2009-2001 Proposed Sidewalk Replacement Program

Council reviewed the memo from the City Engineer.

It was explained that District #5 is the remainder of what was left over from last time. District #6 is as a result of comments from citizens about the sidewalks in that area.

Council Member Butler asked if the GIS street evaluation system was used to evaluate the areas.

Mr. Hauk responded that it was. However, comments from the public were also used.

Council Member Butler, referring to District #6, asked if the church had been contacted since there are so many blocks.

Mr. Hauk explained that they will be contacting the property owners if Council approves the sidewalk program. It won't happen if the City doesn't have a sidewalk program next year. If there is a program, property owners will receive a letter and Sean O'Connor will meet with them. There will also be a public hearing.

Council Member Butler commented that the City needs to find out first from the church.

Mayor Graham remarked that Council Member Butler raises a good point. He remarked that he didn't see anything wrong with a letter being sent to the church first.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that letters will go out when a special assessment district is established. Property owners will be invited to attend a meeting. She also advised that District #6 will not happen until the budget is adopted in June. She explained that staff would like to bring District #5 to the Council quickly in an effort to hold a public hearing and get the notices out. Then, we would be ready to go in the spring.

Council Member Smith remarked that he would take the Engineering Department's recommendation.

Council Member Butler responded that he thinks we should call both the church and the synagogue. He stated that he would be willing to call.

Mr. Hauk explained that contacting the property owners is part of the normal process.

Council Member Butler responded that this would be too late.

Mr. Hauk explained that under the special assessment district rules and regulations, these are the steps that the City has to go through.

Mayor Graham asked about the church being cited since the sidewalks have now been inspected.

Mrs. Corriveau responded that they had not been cited.

Mr. Hauk explained that this program is completely different than Codes citing them. To cite them through Codes would take a formal notification.

Council Member Smith commented that if someone became injured on the sidewalk, the City would be liable because the City was aware of it.

Mr. Hauk responded that in talking with Attorney Slye, he indicated that the City is liable only with prior written notice.

Council Member Burns remarked that this proposed sidewalk project gives more credence to the fact that we have inspected the sidewalk and know that it is in disrepair. She commented that it is important to have safe, walkable sidewalks for churches and schools.

Mrs. Corriveau remarked that they would do outreach to the churches.

Health Officer

Mayor Graham congratulated Dr. Kasulke on his new assignment as head of the Army Reserve Medical Command. He referred to the New York State Health Code's section on having to submit monthly reports. He remarked that it seems that no one is interested and no one wants to

do reports. He suggested that the City seek legislative relief in Albany on the requirement for a health officer.

Council Member Smith questioned what happens since the RFP was sent out and no one was interested, but the state says we have to fill the position.

Mrs. Corriveau advised that the state may be able to give us some recommendations.

Mayor Graham requested a copy of the relevant statute and what the requirements are.

Council Member Burns remarked that in a perfect world, we'd have an arrangement with a medical professional or a medical facility. However, we were paying for a service that we didn't utilize.

Mayor Graham remarked that he doesn't believe the position is needed in its present form.

Council Member Smith commented that the intent of the statute was for a completely different period of time.

Mrs. Corriveau remarked that the requirements may be more than a public health officer. She questioned how the Codes Department would carry out the health requirements.

Mayor Graham asked how they would do that now.

Council Member Smith questioned the Codes authority stemming from a health officer. He mentioned that a physician isn't going to have knowledge on safe building structures. He remarked that it is obsolete legislation.

Mrs. Corriveau responded that there are areas of Code enforcement that rely on a public health officer.

Council Member Smith remarked that he agreed with Mayor Graham about sending a letter to Albany.

Status of National Grid Payment of Gross Receipt Taxes

Council reviewed the City Manager's memo concerning this. Mrs. Corriveau advised Council that the budget figure for last year's gross receipt tax was \$460,000 and is \$385,000 in this year's budget. NYCOM is still working to get National Grid to compensate municipalities for the underpayment of the GRT that began in November 2008 and which is being reflected in significantly lower GRT payments from National Grid to cities and villages in their territory.

Sales Tax Revenue Update – September 2009

Council reviewed the City Manager's report. In comparison to September 2008, the September 2009 sales tax numbers are up \$276,505 or 18.08%, actual to actual. Last year at this time, the monthly amount for September was down approximately 17% from the prior year receipts. Looking at quarterly numbers, we are down \$102,413 compared to this same time last year.

Mayor Graham asked about the number of positions that have been held vacant.

Mrs. Corriveau responded that at some point, it costs more to pay overtime than it does to fill the vacancy.

Mayor Graham remarked that the vacancies help to hold down costs.

Mrs. Corriveau advised that some of the positions have been left vacant for a short period. However, the work load has not changed.

Mrs. Corriveau advised that the next test for Fire Chief and Deputy Chief will be held in January.

Street Lighting Contract

Council Member Smith requested a copy of the street lighting contract with National Grid. He also commented that two poles have been down and capped on Washington Street for over a year. He remarked that using a box or a cone is not maintenance. He also commented that there is a new head on a pole on William Street, but the bulb is out.

Council Member Butler asked if the City was going to paint the poles as they look terrible.

Mrs. Corriveau advised that the City isn't going to paint because the system belongs to National Grid. She will bring it to their attention.

Elected and Appointed Officials, NYS Retirement System

Mrs. Corriveau referred to her report on this. There will be new regulations for reporting requirements. The new reports will be filed with the City Clerk.

Work session ended at 8:38 p.m.

Donna M. Dutton

City Clerk