

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING WORK SESSION  
CITY OF WATERTOWN  
December 9, 2013  
7:00 p.m.**

**Mayor Jeffrey E. Graham Presiding**

**Present:** Council Member Roxanne M. Burns  
Council Member Joseph M. Butler, Jr.  
Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso  
Council Member Jeffrey M. Smith  
Mayor Graham

**Also Present:** Sharon Addison, City Manager

**City staff present:** Ken Mix, Brian Phelps, Erin Gardner

**DISCUSSION**

**Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting**

Mayor Graham commended City staff for a successful event and was pleased with the turnout.

**Start-up New York**

Mayor Graham stated that he and the City Manager attended a meeting at the College regarding the Governor's new initiative on economic development in conjunction with the State University System.

**Lawsuit with Mr. Frazier**

Mayor Graham mentioned that Judge McClusky awarded approximately \$72,000 as a result of the demolition of the burned down High Street property.

**Shapiro Award**

Mayor Graham said that the Chamber of Commerce will announce the Shapiro Award tomorrow.

**Arena Rehabilitation Project Update**

Mayor Graham said that he thought it was important to get Council involved now instead of waiting until a final product was out so that is why he suggested this topic be added to the work session.

Kurt Hauk, City Engineer reviewed the series of events leading up until now and presented Council with the first draft of the preliminary design. He stressed that this is not the finished product and it will need to be tweaked until there is a final scope in which everyone is happy with. He advised that Stantec will do a presentation to Council in January. He explained that the work done by Bernier and Carr five or six years ago prioritized a series of projects that were needed, but it was not at the level of what is presented now. He further explained that the figure of approximately \$3.5 million arose from putting together the pieces from the Bernier and Carr study. He pointed out that now the City is looking at an RFP in which there are not just updates to the pieces and parts but is a complete rework of the arena space itself. Referring to the spreadsheet, Mr. Hauk indicated that he listed the cost of a new built building so there is a better comparison.

Council Member Butler asked how much the square footage is for the current building.

Council Member Macaluso asked if the new build figures include the demolition cost of the old building.

Mr. Hauk answered that the current square footage is about 47,000 and the new build numbers do not include demolition. He explained that the average cost per square footage for the renovation is approximately \$200/sq ft. He further pointed out the differences between a renovation project versus a new build project for items such as the flooring and roofing. He added that he thought the figures were realistic.

Council Member Macaluso asked how long this project would take.

Mr. Hauk replied that a new build would be easier and quicker which could be done in a season. As for the renovation, he advised that it would start after the completion of the 2015 ice season and the main functional pieces of the facility would be up and running by the fall of the next ice season. He noted that work on the office spaces may continue past that though.

The age of the current building and changes done throughout the years were discussed.

Council Member Burns asked if there were any environmental concerns relating to a demolition if a new build was chosen.

Mr. Hauk advised that the only area of concern would be near the location of the new small pavilion. Otherwise, he is not aware of any other concerns but assured Council that clearance regarding this would be part of the final design.

In response to Mayor Graham's inquiry, Mr. Hauk said that the current building is tied into the pool. He reviewed option 1 in which the proposed locker rooms for the arena would not be utilized by the pool, but there would be a connecting hallway with a door in case additional locker room space is needed. He also stated that an outside connection to the restrooms is needed during the summertime for the fields.

Mayor Graham asked how much of the \$9 million cost is for things, such as the roof that would need to be done anyways for a building this old.

Mr. Hauk estimated that approximately \$1 million would be for the roof, fire suspension and trusses repair.

Mayor Graham pointed out the energy consumption of this building and commented that the changes need to be made with energy inefficiency in mind.

Mr. Hauk explained options for items such as the lighting and cooling systems that would be more efficient and stressed that there are a lot of opportunities for saving energy.

Council Member Smith mentioned some of the projects that have been budgeted in the Capital Budget in the past but were not completed. He asked how much has been budgeted but never spent.

James Mills, Comptroller responded that even though it is budgeted, until the city either issues debt or transfers money out of the General Year Fund, the multi-year plan that is done every year is the most recent forward looking plan.

In response to Council Member Butler's question, Mr. Hauk explained the Soft Costs, stressing that he

thought 15% for the furnishings, fixtures, and equipment was high. He said that until he and Ms. Gardner sit down to discuss this further he would not know the exact cost because some of the current items can be reused.

Mayor Graham asked what the long-term plan, in terms of programming, would be for this facility and wondered if spending \$9 million would improve this plan or just provide an updated, more energy inefficient version of the same thing. He questioned if the City would be able to do more than it does now and offer better services. He stressed that this is a building owned by the people of Watertown for their benefit and not for organizations to hold events which are continually not charged. He wondered if there is a sufficient demand for programs in order to commit this much money and he discussed the impact this would have on the tax levy. He said that he does not agree with having offices on the second floor causing the need for an elevator.

Erin Gardner, Parks and Recreation Superintendent remarked that over the last year, programs have increased dramatically. She explained that these programs take place in the party room and there is not sufficient space in there. She indicated that the increased locker room space is needed as well because during hockey tournaments, kids are changing in the lobby and hallways.

Council Member Smith noted that the arena is the City's Community Center and is the most utilized City facility. He mentioned that it may be able to run more efficiently, therefore generating more revenue, especially looking at the list of activities that are held there. He also stressed that it is easier to charge fees for outside users when it is a nicer facility.

Mayor Graham reiterated that Council needs to be cognizant of the fact that there is a value to using the facility even for those that see the facility as a way to generate a profit for a laudable cause. He also mentioned that this could increase the tax levy by 7-9% and it could cause other projects within the City to be deferred.

Council Member Smith commented that he thought this estimated cost was high and stated that he has researched other facilities that have done rehabilitations.

Mayor Graham said the offices should be more consumer friendly and he does not like the idea of second floor offices because by isolating management, it is anti-consumer friendly. In addition, he said the second floor adds to the cost by needing an elevator. He did note that he liked the mezzanine but would like the whole layout to be more simplified. He stressed that he did not think that administrative offices for a department that is supposed to be in contact with the public should be upstairs. He mentioned that he liked the idea of the restrooms having access from the outside and would like updates to the concession stand.

In regards to the seating access from the second floor, Mr. Hauk explained that the benefit is the separation of the public from the team entrance, therefore limiting the co-mingling of players with the spectators. He further explained the additional storage space available under the bleachers and that the press box will be on the opposite side of the rink.

Council Member Butler did not see the need for a video arcade, aerobics room and additional showers at the other end of the second floor.

Ms. Gardner agreed there are a lot of things in the report that are not necessary but would be nice to have. She explained that the showers in question would be used by employees that have worked on the fields all day and need to clean up prior to an evening concert event.

Mayor Graham remarked that in the limited instances when this is needed, the additional locker rooms on the first floor could be used.

Council Member Butler agreed that there are plenty of locker rooms that could be used for this and mentioned the referee's shower room.

In regards to parking, Mr. Hauk reviewed the proposed parking layout showing the additional parking lots and a smaller drop-off zone.

Mayor Graham asked if constructing a new building would change the length of time that the debt service could be financed.

Mr. Mills advised that if the final design was of a more fire resistant nature, then it could be financed over 25 years instead of 15 years.

Council Member Butler expressed his concerns with doubling the debt service during such a challenging time. He commented that this may be one of the biggest financial decisions that this Council makes. He noted that the upgrades are needed but is not sure if the City can afford it. He listed the priorities should be the roof, office space, locker rooms and the rest rooms, and not the arcade, aerobics room, and additional shower rooms.

Council Member Macaluso agreed that is it a lot to ask but also agreed that the building is in need of help. She commented that the \$3 million was planned for so she would like to see how far the plan can be cut back by doing some of the necessary rehabilitation to the major issues.

Council Member Burns stated that she is sure that Ms. Gardner and her staff as well as Mr. Hauk can tone down this plan. She said that she agrees with Council Member Butler and Council Member Macaluso and the roof needs to be addressed. She talked about how the events held there bring tourism dollars into the community.

Mr. Hauk told Council that this was a necessary step that needed to be done in order to figure what scope items are really needed. The next step, he said is to start carving out what needs to be included and what items can wait. He discussed green energy options further. Finally, he said that the design will need to be tweaked and Stantec will be in attendance at the January work session to do a full presentation.

Mayor Graham asked if they could include more renderings so that Council can get a better feel for the project.

Work session ended at 8:09 p.m.

*Ann M. Saunders,*  
City Clerk