

**ADJOURNED COUNCIL MEETING  
CITY OF WATERTOWN  
June 13, 2005  
7:00 P.M.**

**MAYOR JEFFREY E. GRAHAM PRESIDING**

**PRESENT:**           **COUNCILMAN STEPHEN J. BRADLEY  
COUNCILWOMAN ROXANNE M. BURNS  
COUNCILMAN PETER L. CLOUGH  
COUNCILMAN TIMOTHY R. LABOUF  
MAYOR GRAHAM**

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

Mayor Graham opened the adjourned session.

**C O M M U N I C A T I O N S**

From Watertown Teen Center requesting any financial and/or programming assistance that the City could give and inviting Council to visit the center.

**ABOVE PLACED ON FILE**

**R E S O L U T I O N S**

**MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCILMAN CLOUGH TO TAKE FROM THE TABLE THE RESOLUTION "AUTHORIZING AN APPLICATION TO THE LOCAL WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION PROGRAM- MARKETPLACE CONSTRUCTION"** (Introduced on June 6, 2005; tabled; appears in its entirety on page 101 of the 2005 Minutes Book).

**MOTION WAS SECONDED BY COUNCILMAN BRADLEY AND CARRIED WITH ALL VOTING IN FAVOR THEREOF.**

**COUNCILMAN LABOUF WITHDREW THE INTRODUCTION OF THE RESOLUTION. COUNCILWOMAN BURNS WITHDREW THE SECOND.**

**RESOLUTION WITHDRAWN.**

The following resolution was presented:

**INTRODUCED BY COUNCILMAN PETER L. CLOUGH**

WHEREAS the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York desires to revitalize the Black River waterfront and the City's downtown by improving the connection between them, and

WHEREAS the State of New York has announced that funds are available for implementing a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program through Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Act of 1993,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York that the City Manager, Mary M. Corriveau, is hereby authorized and directed to file an application for funding from the New York State Department of State in accordance with the provisions of Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Act of 1993 to implement the City's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program in an amount not to exceed \$750,000, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager is hereby authorized to act on behalf of the City Council in all matters related to this financial assistance.

**SECONDED BY COUNCILMAN TIMOTHY R. LABOUF AND CARRIED WITH ALL VOTING YEA**

(Rules waived by motion of Councilman Clough, seconded by Councilman Bradley and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolutions, Downtown Development Specialist Christine Hoffman made a presentation to Council, outlining the new proposals designed to enhance the downtown area and access to the Black River. The projects would allow for a connection from Public Square to the Riverwalk as well as improvements for access to the river from the Hole Brothers site near Newell Street and the Route 3 wave off Huntington Street.

Mrs. Hoffman explained that improved access to the river would make it much easier for kayaks to enter the river. She explained that the proposal is to redesign the entire JB Wise lot, including a new street coming from Public Square and a pedestrian walkway across to the Riverwalk. She also explained that the traffic patterns in the lot would be redone. In addition, Mrs. Hoffman also mentioned sources of funding that would be available to help with the City's match.

Mrs. Corriveau referred to the Route 3 wave and the difficulty in accessing it as well as viewing it. She also explained that the funding for the access points to the Riverwalk is already in place.

Mrs. Hoffman advised that Thompson Park Conservancy is looking for funding in the amount of \$250,000 for a River Otter exhibit and already have their matching funds in place.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that by combining the City request and the Conservancy's request, it would make for a stronger grant application. She also advised that we wouldn't have the results until next year.

Councilwoman Burns asked about the NiMo funds.

Mrs. Hoffman explained that under the FERC licensing agreement, funds had to be put away each year. The city would have to apply for them.

Mayor Graham remarked that it sounds as if the City has reworked the project taking into consideration the sentiments of people who attended the meeting last week.

Councilwoman Burns commented that she believes the City has reached a consensus and now we are actually going to see development on the river in the near future and we'll see the fruition of the efforts of many members of the community.

Mayor Graham expressed his concern that as the parking lot is redone, the City should keep in mind the needs of the businesses that face out that way.

In discussing the Route 3 wave, Mrs. Corriveau explained that paperwork has been sent to the Corps of Engineers and the permit should be received later this week.

Councilman LaBouf responded that he feels this trio of projects has the right focus. He also asked about better signage for the Black Water Challenge and better seating for the event.

Councilman Bradley remarked that the seating should really be closer to the water. He explained that last year, people stood on the bridge and couldn't get a good view from there.

Mrs. Corriveau suggested that Council take road trip and physically view the area and talk about the site.

After discussion, Council agreed to meet on June 20<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 a.m. and to invite Advantage Watertown members to join them.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Motion was made by Councilwoman Burns to move into Executive Session to discuss the employment history of a particular individual and that City Clerk Donna M. Dutton be allowed to attend.

Motion was seconded by Councilman Clough and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Council moved into Executive Session at 7:30 p.m.

Council reconvened at 7:38 p.m.

### **Annual Reassessment Plan Proposal**

City Assessor Brian Phelps presented the proposed plan covering the 2006-11 tax roll years. He explained that it would not be as specific as in the past, as to which neighborhoods will be done in which year. It will follow the basic procedures set forth by the State.

Mayor Graham remarked that any attempt to address a certain part of the City would make those residents feel put upon. He stated that his concern is that 1/6 of the City would have a disproportional amount of burden shifted to them.

Mr. Phelps explained that this would not happen under his proposal. The plan addresses every property. Those that are not revalued would be trended. He explained that one of the benefits the City has is that there are a lot of sales.

Mayor Graham referred to a recent high sale on the North side of the City.

Mr. Phelps explained that they check to make sure they have the correct property information and if there was another reason rather than the market increase for the sale price.

Councilwoman Burns commented that one sale doesn't make the market. There are sales of citywide properties that are higher than their assessments.

Councilman Clough discussed the fact that over the years, the single property owner has taken on the burden since there has been a decline in commercial property.

Mr. Phelps explained that as benefits continue to be given to businesses, there would be a lower commercial tax base.

Mrs. Corriveau commented that there is much commercial development being planned, some of which, as in the case of the Donegan development, is not under 485 benefits.

Mr. Phelps explained that in the case of commercials, they would do individual appraisals on each one or by each type.

Councilwoman Burns suggested that the City might have to do a little better job of disseminating information about tax assessments from City Hall, as education is the key. She also remarked that if we had no exemptions and everyone paid their fair share, we'd all pay a lot lower taxes.

Mrs. Corriveau suggested doing mailings and holding community meetings.

Councilman Clough asked if the process wasn't an ongoing one.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that it is ongoing. However, it was done for five years prior to 2005 and then was not done for 2005. Now, the staff would like to get back into the State plan.

Councilman LaBouf commented that he supports the need for education. He also remarked that senior citizens are concerned that their assessments have increased when no physical inspection has been done. He asked when these inspections would be done.

Mr. Phelps explained that 1/6 would be done each year. He also explained that he would be willing to make a physical inspection if there was a difference in the property than what was listed for information on the property in the Assessment Department.

Councilwoman Burns commented that the Star program that was set up by the State offers an aged exemption. She also advised that the County is looking at increasing the income level for this exemption.

Mayor Graham commented that the Star program creates a ruse in that the money is not being spent. When, in fact, it is only collected differently.

Councilman LaBouf commented that he is in favor of the Star program for seniors.

Mayor Graham remarked that he is skeptical about the reassessment plan because it is such a volatile market now.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that the importance of the plan is to get everyone at 100% and that everyone is treated fairly.

Mr. Phelps also advised that a plan like this gives an opportunity to move with the market.

Councilman Clough remarked that we had previously been on a five-year plan. He questioned how we could be off from 100% and down to 95% after just a year away from the plan.

Answering questions concerning physical inspections, Mr. Phelps explained that these inspections are done from the public right of way, not by entering the home. He stated that if the property owner disputed the assessment and was able to show the inaccuracies in the assessment, he would make an interior inspection, if the owner allowed him to do so.

Councilman Clough questioned how the assessments on properties in the two areas being discussed could be at 80%.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that it is happening in the market and not something created by staff.

Mayor Graham stated that the system is inherently unfair.

Mrs. Corriveau commented that there is the Board of Assessment Review for property owners to grieve their assessment. She also explained that a resolution would have to be put before the City Council to accept the proposal for the plan.

Councilwoman Burns suggested that it might be a good idea to have state representatives come up to answer questions concerning this.

Councilman LaBouf commented that he would like to see potential impact numbers.

Mr. Phelps explained that the big question mark is the commercial properties. He stated that he is sending out commercial questionnaires and is waiting for their replies. He commented that he would be afraid that the information would not be accurate at this point.

Council concurred that state representatives be invited to attend the first meeting in July.

### **Front Yard Parking**

This topic was held over until the next Council meeting.

### **Animal Waste Problem**

Council reviewed Mr. Hayes memo relative to this. Council agreed with ideas proposed by Mr. Hayes to deal with this problem.

### **Bike Auction**

Council agreed that in the future, the bikes should be donated. Councilman LaBouf suggested that they be donated to the Urban Mission.

### **NiMo Street Lighting**

Memo was reviewed.

### **Spring Cleanup Program**

Memo was reviewed.

### **99<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration**

Mayor Graham advised Council that a 99<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration would be held tomorrow at 1:15 p.m. at the Henry Keep Apartments in honor of Mrs. Mecomonaco.

### **Flag Day**

Mayor Graham advised that tomorrow is Flag Day. He commented that quite often the flag in front of the Emma Taylor Fire Station is not displayed.

Councilman LaBouf commented that he received an email concerning the fact that there are certain days when the flags should be flown at half-staff and that the City flags sometimes aren't.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that during the week the building staff is responsible for the flags and on the weekends, we tend to rely on the Police Department. However, she explained that the City only does the half-staff ones that are authorized under the law.

### **Turning Lane**

Councilman Clough requested that NYS DOT be contacted regarding the feasibility of putting a turning lane on Arsenal Street from Willow Street to Bellew Avenue Extension.

Discussion was held relative to the already narrow frontage on the properties in that area.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**AT THE CALL OF THE CHAIR MEETING WAS DULY ADJOURNED AT 8:58 P.M. BY MOTION OF COUNCILMAN LABOUF, SECONDED BY COUNCILWOMAN BURNS AND CARRIED WITH ALL VOTING IN FAVOR THEREOF.**

***Donna M. Dutton***

City Clerk