

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
September 10, 2007
7:00 P.M.**

MAYOR JEFFREY E. GRAHAM PRESIDING

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

ABSENT: **COUNCILMAN STEPHEN J. BRADLEY**

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

Arsenal Street Cemetery Beautification Project

Kathy Plante-Hunt, Community Volunteer, presented a video of the cemetery beautification project. Following the presentation, Mrs. Plante-Hunt answered questions posed by Council. She explained the importance of having water available at the cemetery. She also stressed the importance of having a fence put up around the perimeter.

Councilman Clough suggested researching for state and federal grants to help with this project.

Mrs. Corriveau announced that a \$500 check has been received from the Northern New York Foundation for the cemetery project.

Mayor Graham commended Mrs. Plante-Hunt for her work on this project.

Parks and Recreation Program Review

Jayme St. Croix, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, addressed the chair, outlining the various programs which are run by the City such as the playgrounds, softball teams, swimming, midget, grasshopper and t-ball leagues, and skating programs. Mr. St. Croix referred to graphs showing the age of the participants. He also listed the current City inventory of the parks and playgrounds as well as the Northside Athletic Complex, Fairgrounds and River Walk. He outlined the attendance over the previous five year period.

Mr. St. Croix addressed questions posed by Council. He explained that the makeup of neighborhoods change over the years. Children grow up and don't use the playgrounds and then new people move into the neighborhood with young children and the playgrounds are again utilized.

Councilman Smith asked questions concerning the arena roof.

Mr. Hayes addressed the question explaining that they have been spending a great deal of time on how they were going to solve the problem of the roof. He explained that the proposal that was voted for in this year's capital budget will not be done. Instead, they will be coming back to Council during the new budget session to discuss putting on a new roof.

Councilman LaBouf commented that the graphs indicate that the 15-20 age group is participating at a much lower level than the other age groups.

Mr. St. Croix explained that he isn't sure that the City isn't serving this age group. He explained that there are other places that this age group frequents. Many of them have jobs and many have their licenses.

Councilman LaBouf stated that he is hoping the City can put together a plan like Cicero has.

Mr. St. Croix explained that Cicero has the support of three municipalities and the Youth Bureau, as well.

Mayor Graham commented that many times he walks by playgrounds and doesn't see them being utilized and wondered if locations needed to be looked into.

Mr. St. Croix referred to his previous comment about the changes over time in neighborhoods. He said that we have to be very careful about changing locations of the playgrounds.

Councilman Clough asked if the City has reached out to the senior citizens to help participate in playground activities.

Mr. St. Croix explained that they do this and some of the seniors are coaches for the baseball teams.

Councilman LaBouf asked that Mr. St. Croix provide Council with the information on the teen center in Cicero.

Mr. St. Croix provided the informational sheet during the work session. It indicates that the Can Teen (Cicero Teen Center) is funded by the Town of Cicero, Clay & Salina, the Village of North Syracuse, North Syracuse Central School District, NYS Office of Children and Family Services, Friends of the CanTeen and Syracuse Onondaga County Youth Bureau.

Councilman Smith discussed more year-round activities and was glad there is more interest in year-round ice.

Councilman LaBouf remarked that not every youth has the funds or the transportation to participate in these programs.

Councilman Smith asked Councilman LaBouf what type of programs the Cicero teen center has and what they provide to the youth.

Councilman LaBouf responded that he hadn't been there but had been on their website.

Mr. St. Croix advised Council that the Thompson Park pool is not getting any better and it will need to be replaced, repaired or something else put up there.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that they are looking at ways to expand the current programs. The tennis courts have been refurbished and could be used to give tennis lessons on. The City might be able to partner with the Watertown Golf Club and offer youth golf programs.

Mr. St. Croix explained that these types of programs were offered in the past and could be offered again.

Mrs. Corriveau also suggested trail development with walking and cycling trails in the City being connected to those in adjoining communities.

Council thanked Mr. St. Croix for the report.

Dog Park Proposal

Eugene P. Hayes, Superintendent of Public Works, addressed the chair concerning the dog park.

Mayor Graham interrupted the presentation stating that Council has seen this presentation before and remarked that he wanted to know if there was a need for a dog park.

Mr. Hayes responded that there was a need.

Councilman Smith questioned who would maintain the park and who would pick up the waste.

Mr. Hayes explained that historically, dog parks are policed by those using it.

Councilman Smith responded that people that are responsible will pick up the waste. However, people that aren't responsible won't.

Mr. Hayes stated that peer pressure will help with this.

Councilman Clough questioned why this topic was even on the agenda again. The people who want the park already stated that they would raise the money and maintain it. The City won't maintain it.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that the City will maintain the facility as the proposal is for the park to be built on public property.

Councilman Clough asked about the liability issue.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that the liability would be first on the dog owner.

Councilman Clough remarked that he understood that this park was to be done entirely with private donations.

Mrs. Corriveau asked if Council would be willing to put in a “bare bones” dog park if Mr. Gates were able to raise \$100,000.

Mayor Graham explained that if money is raised, it becomes a symbol of support. To say that it might be raised puts Council in a bad position. He stated that there has to be a demonstration of support before Council allows the use of public land for it.

Councilman Smith remarked that this was his understanding also.

Mayor Graham explained that Council is looking to see if there is support for the project.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that her concern is that Mr. Gates is out trying to raise funds and needs to know if there is Council support. She explained that the funds raised will be placed in a Trust & Agency Account with the City Comptroller to be used exclusively for the dog park.

Councilman Clough questioned how the City even got involved in the money part of it.

Mayor Graham explained that in the absence of a 501-C3, donations could be made to the City so they would be tax-deductible.

Councilman Clough remarked that he understands this being done for the cemetery, but not for the dog park.

Councilman Smith questioned what would happen in 2 or 3 years if there are not enough funds to do the park. He stated that there should be a time limit set for meeting the goal.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that Mr. Gates had gone to the Attorney General’s office to see what needed to be done for him to collect funds for the project. They indicated that they need an affirmative type of action from the City.

Mr. Gates addressed the chair explaining that the dog park will receive some of the proceeds from the upcoming Wag-A-Thon.

Mayor Graham responded that in the current climate, he doesn't think anyone will vote to commit City land or City funds and therefore, the Council is not yet ready to commit an affirmative type of action.

Councilman Clough remarked that all of the other fund raisers were for existing City property such as the cemetery and the Flower monument.

Mrs. Corriveau responded that this is an enhancement of public property. She expressed her concerns with Mr. Gates asking for funds for a dog park when Council hasn't truly committed to it.

Mayor Graham told Mr. Gates that he believes he would need a single benefactor to make this work.

Mr. Gates stated that he has someone who has offered to pay for the dog park, if he can have the park named after his dog.

Mayor Graham remarked that this isn't how City facilities are named.

Mr. Gates suggested a plaque instead.

Council concurred that the deadline for raising funds for the dog park is March 31, 2008.

Mr. Hayes asked if Council wanted him to continue with his presentation.

He was told that they did not.

Amendment to City Code - Assessment

Brian Phelps, City Assessor, addressed the chair outlining the amendments to the City Code which would clarify some ambiguities in the language, bring the language into conformance with the NYS Real Property Tax Law and provide a better schedule for assessment, determinations, notifications and challenges. The proposed changes will be subject to Permissive Referendum and would appear on the November 2008 ballot.

Mr. Phelps answered questions posed by the Council concerning the time changes in the grievance procedures.

Council thanked Mr. Phelps for the explanation of the report.

126 Ward Street

Mayor Graham commented on the latest driving arrest for Mr. Moot. He remarked that the aggravated nature of his actions should be noted.

Councilman Smith suggested that Mayor Graham was asking for the City's Counsel to supply an amicus brief to insure that the District Attorney is aware of the aggravated nature of it.

Councilman LaBouf asked if there was an update on the role that the social agencies are playing in Mr. Moot's life at this point.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that while she couldn't give an update at this time, she is aware that Attorney Burrows has been in contact with the social agencies.

Grant Application for Municipal Consolidation

Mayor Graham asked about this.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that she has asked all department heads to look at the informational packet and come back with idea. There is also a training session in October which will be attended by a City employee. A report will be ready for the October work session.

Signs on N. Hamilton

Councilman Smith asked about these.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that they will be installed soon.

Gaffney Drive

Mayor Graham and Councilman Smith asked about the status of this.

Mrs. Corriveau advised that Attorney Slye had a conversation with the attorney for the estate and is hoping to get an answer in the near future.

Mayor Graham referred to the pump station situation and the fact that property owners in that area are being charged by the pump station owner when there is not contractual obligation for those people to have to pay anyone.

Mrs. Corriveau remarked that there is a long standing precedent between the pump station owner and property owners in the area.

Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Army Growth and Force Structure Realignment, August 2007

Council concurred that staff should draft a positive response to this statement.

Work Session ended at 9:28 p.m.

Donna M. Dutton

City Clerk