

**COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
October 24, 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
ATTORNEY ROBERT J. SLYE**

Presentations:

Empire Zone Boundary Amendments

Michael N'dolo, Senior Economic Development Specialist, Camoin Associates and Kenneth Mix, Planning & Community Development Coordinator, presented to the Council and members of the Town Board of the Town of Watertown the proposed plans for the boundary amendments due by December 31st. Mr. N'dolo explained that the Local Law that was introduced during the adjourned meeting is different than this boundary amendment. This amendment is being imposed by the State and requires that we recapture all of the acreage and then it must be redistributed into three sections. It was explained that the outside businesses, such as Crowley Foods, will remain certified and this amendment will not affect currently certified businesses. Mr. N'dolo also explained that under certain conditions, businesses not in the zone would be able to be certified. These businesses would include manufacturing business that would add at least 50 jobs; biotech and high tech businesses adding at least 20 positions and insurance/financial type business.

City Council and Town Board members reviewed the map that had been prepared by Mr. Mix and discussed other areas that might be looked at for inclusion into the zone.

Councilwoman Burns asked what would happen if someone came forward at the public hearing with a compelling reason for changing the zone.

Attorney Slye explained that it would only require an additional public hearing if the change was a drastic one.

After discussion, it was agreed to schedule a joint public hearing on this amendment.

Medicare Part D and It's Impact on the City

Bonnie Robbe, Fringe Benefits Manager, presented Council with information concerning this upcoming program. She explained the importance of active and retired city employees **NOT** signing up for the program. Mrs. Robbe will be sending out notices to all former and present employees and will also be holding seminars for them, which will explain the program and the benefits of staying with the City's prescription plan.

Community Information Guide

Donna Dutton, City Clerk presented Council with a proposal for having a community information guide published. She explained that this would be at no cost to the City taxpayers. The publication of guide would be made possible through sponsorship advertising that the publisher would secure. The guide would be a great tool in marketing our local businesses and would provide needed phone numbers and information for people moving into our community. A letter would be sent on City Clerk's Office letterhead advising businesses of this opportunity.

Council concurred that this would be a good project and authorized Mrs. Dutton to send out the necessary paperwork to the publisher.

Senior Citizen Real Property Tax Exemption

Brian Phelps, City Assessor presented a report on the potential changes to the Senior Exemption and answered questions posed the Council.

Councilwoman Burns commented that the City should follow the County's lead on this since we are seeing rising assessments. She commented that while we are seeing the benefits of an active real estate market, the effect of this market is also pushing seniors out of their homes.

Councilman LaBouf remarked that he agrees with Councilwoman Burns that this year will be a difficult one, especially for seniors.

Mayor Graham asked that the necessary paperwork be drawn up for the next Council meeting.

Councilwoman Burns asked about the legislation for 421-F exemptions that Council enacted about four years ago.

Mr. Phelps explained that this exemption is available. However, he feels that it hasn't been properly advertised.

Kayak Event Update and North Shore Access

Christine Hoffman, Downtown Development Specialist, presented an update to Council regarding the 2004 event compared to the 2005 event. She advised that next year's event would be held on the second weekend in September. Mrs. Hoffman discussed the EPF grant application, which involves Hole Brothers, the Route 3 Wave and the Downtown connection of Public Square to the river. She explained that the grant would be awarded in the spring and that would make it too late for construction. She asked if the Council would consider having the City pay for the design process now instead of waiting until the results of the grant are known in the spring. Mrs. Hoffman explained that preliminary discussions have indicated that the grant is being looked on favorably. The costs for the design would be approximately \$20,000 to \$25,000 and would not include an engineering study of the bridge.

Mrs. Corriveau advised Council that the tourism account could be used to help pay for the design costs.

Mrs. Hoffman also mentioned that Brascan is willing to entertain an application to tap into those funds for this as well.

Councilman Clough remarked that the City needs to move forward with this project.

Council concurred to move forward with the design phase.

Disclosure

In looking over the map that was in the packet for Council members concerning the EDZ boundaries, Mayor Graham disclosed that his property located at 557 Pearl Street was in the zone before the amendment and will still be in the zone as to be amended. He also explained that there are two very small portions of land between his property and the corner. The City owns one and he owns the other one. Both of these properties will be included in the new zone boundaries.

Turf Field

Mayor Graham commented that over the years many improvements have been made to the fairgrounds. He asked the status of discussions concerning a turf field.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that the last discussions were part of a countywide recreation committee that stopped about four years ago. She questioned if there was a need for such a field at the school and also on city property. She commented that staff could look into this, if Council desires.

Mayor Graham remarked that it would seem to make more sense to charge a flat fee to the school districts to pay for use of this type of field instead of charging for parking and per game fees.

Mrs. Corriveau commented that she would speak with Mr. Hayes and Mr. St. Croix about getting the documents of the committee when it was working together.

Mrs. Corriveau also mentioned that she feels it is important to see if there is a demand for a second sheet of ice before the City starts looking into do that. She explained that there have been indications that participation in some of the ice programs has dwindled.

Petition for Annexation

Mrs. Corriveau advised Council that the petition for annexation for land in the Town of Pamela into the City of Watertown was received today.

Mayor Graham asked that arrangements be made for a joint public hearing and cautioned Council members to stay focused on this particular request only during discussions.

Police Chief Exam

Mrs. Corriveau referred to her report concerning this. Based on the response from the State, Mrs. Corriveau has indicated that Council should wait until March 2006 to offer the exam.

Work Session ended at 8:55 p.m.

Donna M. Dutton

City Clerk