

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
January 18, 2022
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith Presiding

Present: Council Member Patrick J. Hickey
Council Member Clifford G. Olney III
Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce
Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero
Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith

Also Present: Kenneth A. Mix, City Manager
Robert J. Slye, City Attorney

City staff present: Vicky Murphy, Fire Chief Matthew Timerman, Michael Delaney, Scott Weller, Michael Lumbis, James Mills

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Resolution No. 1 - Authorizing Application for US Division of Homeland Security for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant, Fire Department
- Resolution No. 2 - Directing Staff to Prepare Plans for Adding a Third Flag Pole in Front of City Hall
- Resolution No. 3 - Authorizing the Sale of Various Surplus Equipment
- Resolution No. 4 - Accepting Bid for Ductile Iron Pipe, Ferguson Waterworks
- Resolution No. 5 - Re-Adoption of Fiscal Years 2021-22 through 2025-26 Capital Budget
- Resolution No. 6 - Appointment of Commissioner of Deeds
- Resolution No. 7 - Selecting David Grieco as the Artist For the DRI Public Art Project
- Samaritan ARPA Request
- 31st Annual Local Government Conference
- Sales Tax Revenue – December 2021
- Sale of Surplus Hydro-electricity – December 2021

Complete Reports on file in the office of the City Clerk

Meeting opened with a moment of silence and Mayor Smith asked that it be in remembrance of retired Army Colonel Michael Plummer.

Pledge of Allegiance was given.

The reading of the minutes of the regular meeting of January 3, 2022 and work session of January 18, 2022, was dispensed and accepted as written by motion of Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

P R E S E N T A T I O N S

Mayor Smith interrupted the regular course of business to recognize and congratulate the City of Watertown employee team from the Wastewater Treatment Plant, known as the New York Water Environment Association (NYWEA) Central Chapter's Watertown Water Bears. They competed in the

2021 Operations Challenge for Water Environment Federation's Technical Exhibition and Conference (WEFtec) and finished in 1st Place in the Division III Process Control and Laboratory events, with a 2nd Place finish overall for Division III. The employees were: Mark Crandall, Angel French, Seth Foster, Richard Lacey, and Jay Slate.

COMMUNICATIONS

An email was received from Janet Prevost, 155 Flower Avenue East, stating that she is the granddaughter of former Councilman William J. Flynn, and, speaking as a Flynn family member and taxpayer, she said replacing the pool with a recreational facility that could be used by more people for a longer period of time would be a fitting tribute to her grandfather, who always wanted what was best for Watertown and especially the northside.

A letter was received from Ann Abbass, 933 Leray Street, regarding her neighbor, Beverly Dalton, and a trash tote concern.

Above communications were placed on file in the office of the City Clerk.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

David Grieco, 135 N. Windsor Blvd, Los Angeles, CA, addressed Council offering his support of the Public Art Project and offering to answer any questions regarding his submission.

Jason Traynor, 424 Arsenal Street, addressed the new Council members with his concerns regarding the bus system and the legality of the mask mandate. He indicated he had a note from his doctor stating he does not have to wear a mask and feels that corporations such as Walmart should not be permitted to enforce the mask mandate. He also asked the new Council members to perform an outside investigation on public housing. He directed the new members to vote with their own minds.

Amy Horton, 180 Ward Street, addressed Council regarding the Flynn pool. Calling on her experience as a mother of five young children, she commented that the City does not need another pool but needs a recreational outlet that can be used throughout the year. She mentioned the YMCA's new Aquatic Center as already fulfilling the need for a new pool. Ms. Horton also expressed her disappointment with the way staff and independent contractors had been treated during the previous week's work session and specifically called out Council Member Olney for making negative comments on social media. She requested that Council take into consideration public opinion before spending a significant amount of money on a third pool.

Jonathan Phillips, 735 Mill Street, addressed Council regarding the Flynn Pool and how the fifteen people he spoke to wanted it repaired. He also expressed concerns about unshoveled sidewalks, especially on Arsenal Street. He further expressed his concerns about snowmobilers on City streets.

Allen Thompson, 323 Flower Avenue East, addressed Council regarding the SAFER grant proposal and his belief that City employees should be City residents. He said there should be an addendum that states that City firefighters should live in the City of Watertown and commented that this would make a great

for community partnership. Mr. Thompson also indicated that he was not against a third pool but suggested that Council also investigate other types of winter recreational activities.

Donnie Lee Barrigar, 134 Union Street, addressed Council regarding Resolution No. 2, which supports adding a third flagpole in front of City Hall, and he questioned the use of such a pole. He also questioned a staff report and the amount of money that Samaritan requested from the ARPA funding, and he indicated he does not support giving the hospital any of these funds.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 1 - Authorizing Application for US Division of Homeland Security for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant, Fire Department

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the US Division of Homeland Security is accepting applications for the Security Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant, and

WHEREAS the City of Watertown Fire Department wishes to prepare an application that meets the intended purpose of this grant, and

WHEREAS the application is for * ~~\$1,311,000~~ **\$1,358,000** to support five firefighters and requires no matching funds from the applicant, but will require the City to maintain staffing levels for the three-year period,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby authorizes the Fire Department to submit a grant application for the funding of * ~~\$1,311,000~~ **\$1,358,000** to the US Division of Homeland Security for the Security Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Fire Chief Matthew Timerman is hereby authorized and directed to execute the grant application on behalf of the City of Watertown.

Seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Ruggiero thanked the City Manager for providing the information that was requested regarding the savings in overtime. She questioned at what point in staffing level does the City begin to save on overtime.

Council Member Hickey expressed support for the addition of five firefighters, which would allow for the addition of an Administrative Captain.

Council Member Olney advised that this is the best way to eliminate overtime, as well as increase safety and staff morale. He noted the grant will allow the City to save taxpayer money and at the end of the three-year period, many firefighters are eligible for retirement. He expressed his concerns with limiting the new positions to only City residents, as mentioned by Mr. Thompson during Privilege of the Floor, and suggested offering incentive pay to employees if they move into the City.

In regard to limiting the applicants to City employees, Council Member Ruggiero noted there may be issues with Civil Service since a valid list exists and the City must choose from it.

Attorney Slye explained that State law requires that the City cannot mandate where a firefighter lives and the discussion turned to the differences in State law for residency requirements for Police and Fire.

Council Member Pierce said her concerns are with what happens when the grant runs out, but added that she would prefer the option for adding four firefighters.

Mayor Smith pointed out that the grant will not pay for the addition of an Administrative Captain and the City can only apply for firefighter positions.

It was clarified that by applying for five firefighters, the Administrative Captain position can be implemented without shorting the number of firefighters on the line because an additional fifth firefighter will backfill that position.

Council Member Olney noted the benefits of an Administrative Captain in regard to additional opportunities for public fire education. He asked City Comptroller James Mills to confirm that adding four to five firefighters would be the breaking point to saving in overtime.

In response to Mayor Smith's inquiry about the availability for a financial hardship waiver if staffing levels could not be maintained, Fire Chief Matthew Timerman read from the application instructions, which stated that it was not available due to the 100% reimbursement. He replied to Council Member Olney's questions that it would not be looked upon favorably if a request for a financial hardship waiver was put into the application; however, he responded that the additional services provided by the Administrative Captain would look favorably.

Mayor Smith asked for a copy of the completed application as well as the previous application completed by Fire Chief Dale Herman.

Mayor Smith expressed his reasons for not supporting the grant application, stressing that it will increase future costs for the City which he equated to a 5% tax increase or a 5% cut in expenses in year four. He noted that the City needs to look at the minimum manning requirement and compared Watertown to other cities of similar size with lower minimum manning requirements. He also compared the number of calls between the Police Department and Fire Department, noting the Police Department have lower staffing levels and operate with one Police Officer per vehicle whereas the Fire Department requires more staffing and a Captain per vehicle to supervise. Lastly, he pointed out that a majority of the firefighters live outside the City under volunteer fire protection.

Council Member Olney began to counter the Mayor's remarks, but Mayor Smith referred to Rules of Council in regard to the Mayor speaking after all other members of Council have had an opportunity to speak prior to calling the resolution to question.

Motion was made by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero to amend the dollar amount in the 3rd and 4th paragraph of the foregoing resolution to be \$1,358,000. Motion was seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III and carried with all voting yea except Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith voting nay.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yeas except Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith voting nay.

Resolution No. 2 - Directing Staff to Prepare Plans for Adding a Third Flag Pole in Front of City Hall

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS it is the desire of City Council to add a third flagpole in front of City Hall,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby directs staff to prepare plans for the installation of a third flagpole in front of City Hall, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that staff shall evaluate moving the flagpole near the Children's Playground in Thompson Park to City Hall as the third flagpole.

Seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Pierce wondered what was to be accomplished by installing a third flagpole.

Council Member Hickey explained his request for this, stating he would like to see the Canadian flag flown along with the American, New York State and POW flags. He further explained that it can be used for any organizations who wish to have their flag flown in front of City Hall. He noted there was a conflict last year when the Juneteenth flag and LGBTQ flag requests were for the same day.

Council Member Pierce advised there should be criteria for determining which flag requests should be honored, noting that the Supreme Court is hearing a case regarding the denial to hang a Christian flag. She said she is worried the third flagpole may bring on more requests and the City may get in a difficult situation.

Council Member Olney said that he supports diversity but agreed that the City should be able to deny a request if the group is completely against what the Council supports.

Council Member Pierce stated that she supports diversity as well but has concerns stating yes to one group and no to another group, providing the example of a 2nd Amendment flag or a Pro-life flag request. She said this could put the City in a precarious situation.

Council Member Olney disagreed that a third flagpole would cause this, noting that these requests could come in now without the third flagpole.

Mayor Smith pointed out that the initial request from Council Member Hickey was to move the flagpole in Thompson Park down to City Hall and noted that it is much larger than the two flagpoles already at City Hall. He questioned the cost of installation and the need for a third flagpole, stressing that over the past few years the City has only received seven requests which might have involved 14 to 15 days in which an additional flag was flown. He added that the conflict that occurred last year has already been worked out for this year.

Council Member Ruggiero indicated that she has received comments from people upset that another flag flew on the same pole as the American flag.

Mayor Smith remarked that the additional flag is not hung on the pole that the American flag is flown from, and he also suggested using the flagpole that is installed between the Library and City Hall for these requests.

The visibility of the flagpole between the Library and City Hall as well as guidance from Attorney Slye regarding the separation of church and State was discussed.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea except Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith voting nay.

Resolution No. 3 - Authorizing the Sale of Various Surplus Equipment

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown has various surplus equipment, the description of which is attached and made a part of this resolution, and

WHEREAS this equipment may have some value best determined by on-line auction,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, that it hereby authorizes the sale, by on-line auction, of the various surplus equipment as described in the attached listing, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that final acceptance of such bids shall constitute acceptance of the same by the City Council.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 4 - Accepting Bid for Ductile Iron Pipe, Ferguson Waterworks

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City Purchasing Department has advertised and received sealed bids for Ductile Iron Pipe in Watertown, New York, as per City specifications, and

WHEREAS bid invitations were also issued to qualified bidders with three (3) sealed bids submitted to the Purchasing Department, and

WHEREAS on Thursday, January 6, 2022, at 11:00 a.m., the bids received were publicly opened and read, and

WHEREAS City Purchasing Manager Dale Morrow reviewed the bids received with the Engineering Department, and it is their recommendation that the City Council accept the bid submitted by Ferguson Waterworks,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown accepts the bid of Ferguson Waterworks in the amount of \$393,957.20, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager is hereby authorized and directed to sign all contracts associated with implementing the award to Ferguson Waterworks.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 5 - Re-Adoption of Fiscal Years 2021-22 through 2025-26 Capital Budget

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS on May 24, 2021 the City Council adopted the Fiscal Years 2021-22 through 2025-26 Capital Budget, and

WHEREAS the re-adopted Fiscal Year 2021-22 Capital Fund Budget did not contain funding to design and rehabilitate the Flynn pool and bathhouse,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby amends the Fiscal Years 2021-22 through 2025-26 Capital Budget to add the design and renovation of the Flynn pool and bathhouse at an estimated cost of \$750,000 to the FY 2021-22 Capital Budget.

Seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Mr. Mix replied to Council Member Ruggiero's questions regarding picking an engineering firm to do the design of the Flynn pool repairs. He noted that it was professional services, which did not require the formal bid process, and that Brian Fraser had suggested an engineering firm that specializes in pools, but nothing had been decided yet.

In response to Council Member Olney's inquiry of the cost of building a new pool, City Engineer Michael Delaney said that he cannot give him that figure until they open it up, noting that it will be exploratory, but he thinks the number will go up.

Council Member Olney confirmed that he would like to see a proposal for both repairing the pool and replacing the pool, stressing not to include the bathhouse, so that Council can determine which is the best course of action. He noted that maintenance has not been done through the years on many of the City's facilities, which has caused the cost of repairs to escalate. Stating this is more than a campaign promise, he said he agrees there should be more opportunities for recreation in the community and he supports allocating money to do so.

Mentioning that she has seen many comments on social media not supporting the Flynn pool, Council Member Ruggiero said they are from people that either do not live on the northside or they have access to their own pool. She stressed that she has spoken to many northsiders that want the Flynn pool opened. She agreed with Council Member Olney in regard to maintenance and said the City should implement a preventative maintenance program for its facilities. Lastly, she spoke of the process for determining the demolition of the Alteri pool, noting that she was against it at the time.

Mr. Mix confirmed that the proposal for the engineering design firm will be to determine the minimum of what needs to be done compared to a complete rebuild, and then, Council can make a decision as to which way to proceed.

Council Member Olney said he feels the last election was a referendum on the pools, noting that the candidates that ran on having three pools won. In regard to low attendance at the northside pool, he advised that the City needs to do better marketing.

Mayor Smith noted that the resolution does not mention the work needed for the design and wondered if more money should be added for the preliminary review.

Mr. Mix replied that it could be covered within the amount listed and once the final figures are determined, Council can readopt the budget again. He confirmed for Council Member Hickey that ARPA funds could be used for the pool because it falls under the governmental services category.

Council Member Pierce said she sees this as a missed opportunity to provide something with a larger benefit to the community for a longer period of time through the year. She thinks the focus on pools is misguided and compared the City to other cities of similar size with less pools.

Council Member Ruggiero pointed out that at the last work session there was support for Council Member Pierce's idea of a splashpad/skating rink combination and that it could be in addition to the pool.

Council Member Olney noted that sales tax revenue and hydro revenue was up significantly from what was budgeted, so funding is available. Stating that they need to send the message that Council is listening, he said there is an opportunity to do some things for Thompson Park and he still plans to support more road projects as well as the pools.

Mayor Smith expressed his opposition to the resolution, stating they need to look at standards and needs of the community and noted the national standard is one pool for every 20,000 people. He compared the City to other cities of this size with less pools and stressed that the pools are only utilized 10 to 12 weeks per year. He added that it was decided to open the Thompson Park pool for four additional weeks for weekends only starting in May and that it will cost the City \$14,000. Noting that the times have changed, he reminded Council of the maps provided at the work session showing the various pools in homeowners yards throughout the City. He discussed maintenance costs noting that it is estimated to cost half million dollars over the next decade. Noting that the ARPA funds is a bubble of money which will go away, he discussed the burden to the taxpayers in the future and that future budgets will not support it without raising taxes or cutting expenses.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea except Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith voting nay.

Resolution No. 6 - Appointment of Commissioner of Deeds

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS Commissioner of Deeds in the cities of this state shall be appointed by the common councils of such cities, and

WHEREAS Commissioner of Deeds shall hold the term of two years, and

WHEREAS any person who resides in or maintains an office or other place of business in any such city and who resides in the county in which said city is situated shall be eligible to appointment,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the following individuals are hereby appointed Commissioner of Deeds for the term expiring December 31, 2022.

City Employee - Police Department

Lucas C. Clark
Joshua P. Deline
Sydney G. Hunter
Austin G. Kellogg
Miranda J. Kolb
Lindsey M. Landphere
Joseph C. Lees
Pearce A. Parsons
Connor J. Pinsonneault

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 7 - Selecting David Grieco as the Artist For the DRI Public Art Project

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown was awarded \$155,000 through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) to create a Public Art project in Public Square, and

WHEREAS the City published a Call for Artists on September 15, 2021 and shared it with local artists and artist groups across the North Country region, as well as national and international artist groups, and

WHEREAS the Call for Artists resulted in 15 submissions, which the Project Review Committee narrowed to five finalists, based on artistic excellence, design intent, completeness of their submissions and compatibility with the intent and vision of the project, and

WHEREAS the five finalists were placed in an online survey, which was then shared with the public, and

WHEREAS the survey received 3,648 responses, of which nearly 50% were for artist David Grieco and his proposed artwork, and

WHEREAS based on the response from the survey and review of the overall concept, which includes many details of the City's history, the Project Review Committee is recommending that Piece #1, created by David Grieco, be chosen for the DRI Public Art Project,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown selects David Grieco as the artist and his proposal concept design for the sculpture to be placed in Public Square for the DRI Art Project.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Mayor Smith thanked David Grieco for coming from Los Angeles to attend, as well as for his proposal submission.

Mentioning that she served on this committee, Council Member Pierce explained the process and noted that Mr. Grieco's was the only submission that incorporated the history of the City. She also noted that this will be funded by DRI money.

Council Member Ruggiero read from an email between her and Mr. Grieco in which he agreed to make minor changes to reflect more history. She also mentioned that there would be a legend to the sculpture which would describe the design and the significance to the City's history.

Senior City Planner Jennifer Voss informed Council of the next steps of the process if Council was to approve it this evening and pointed that a ribbon cutting would be planned for later in the year.

Mayor Smith noted that Mr. Grieco grew up in the City and pointed out his family's ties to the community.

Council Member Olney thanked the Planning Department for their work and the time put into the project. He mentioned how hard it is to judge artwork and he hopes this would create a "wow factor" to the community. He also said he would favor setting a yearly amount to be allocated towards more artwork in various locations of the City.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea.

STAFF REPORTS

Samaritan ARPA Request

A report outlining Samaritan's request for ARPA funds was available for Council.

In regard to not-for-profit agency requests, Council Member Ruggiero suggested giving \$500,000 of ARPA funds to Northern New York Community Foundation (NNYCF) and let them decide which not-for-profit agencies should be awarded. She said this would be similar to what the City did for private businesses.

In response to Council Member Olney's questions, Mayor Smith explained the process for the Small Business Emergency Relief Program, in which the Watertown Local Development Corporation (WLDC) assisted with the application process. He said there was criteria set by Council that businesses needed to meet in order to qualify for a set amount of money.

Council Member Olney agreed there needs to be parameters but would prefer a more hands-on approach in determining which not-for-profits agencies would be awarded.

Council Member Ruggiero informed Council that she received a phone call from Thomas Carman, President and CEO of Samaritan Medical Center, regarding this request and if Council supports it, he will submit a more formal request. Again, she suggested having the NNYCF run the program since they

know the needs of the community and are assisting Jefferson County with a similar program funded with \$1 million.

Council Member Pierce advised that Council may want to wait until the State budget is released because the Governor is looking into providing more funding for hospitals.

Mayor Smith argued that every dollar of ARPA funds given away results in less that will be done for the taxpayers. He added that Council has a fiduciary responsibility to determine how to distribute funds and decide who might receive it, and should not use NNYCF to decide. He indicated that all not-for-profit agencies do great work so how does Council pick winners and losers.

Council Member Ruggiero suggested Council could set the criteria for eligibility or use similar criteria that the County is using.

Mayor Smith warned that if an agency does not spend ARPA funds for what it's intended purpose is, then the City is responsible for paying the money back, not the agency. He also reiterated that elected officials should decide how the ARPA funds are used and not an outside agency, such as NNYCF.

A lengthy discussion and debate occurred regarding the use of these funds and whether a program should be set up to award it to not-for-profit agencies, and if so, how the program should be set up.

Council Member Olney said he liked Council Member Ruggiero's idea but there should be more discussion on the parameters to determine who would be awarded.

Mayor Smith reviewed the parameters that were used for the CARES funding with the Small Business Emergency Relief Program and suggested scheduling a work session to continue this topic. He added that the previous Council had adopted a resolution setting the policy that the ARPA funds will be spent on City improvements, so if it is the will of this Council to establish a program for not-for-profit requests then that resolution must be repealed.

Mr. Mix reminded Council that the use of the money requested by the non-for-profit must meet the guidelines for the ARPA funds. He reviewed those guidelines, noting the significance of loss of revenue. He also informed Council that he had received other letters requesting the funds last year.

31st Annual Local Government Conference

A report was available for Council's review, and it was noted that this conference normally has been held in Watertown at Jefferson Community College but will be at Turning Stone this year.

Sales Tax Revenue – December 2021

A report was available for Council's review.

Sale of Surplus Hydro-electricity – December 2021

A report was available for Council's review.

NEW BUSINESS

Work Session Topics – January 24, 2022

Mr. Mix advised Council of the changes to the work session schedule, noting that next week's topics are the Sewall's Island Hydro Redevelopment, Industrial Park Second Access and Stormwater Management System.

Council Member Olney's Hydro Revenue Plan

Mentioning that Council Member Olney has spoken of a proposal during the previous year for the hydro plant which could produce \$15 million, Mayor Smith asked the Councilman to present his proposal at the February 14th work session so the rest of Council can evaluate the cost versus revenue analysis. He also said he would like him to present it to the Hydro Committee as well.

Council Member Olney was reluctant, stating it is similar to the plan that was submitted with the FERC license in 1995 and that Council Members could look at that to get a preview.

Mayor Smith urged Council Member Olney to present it, but Council Member Olney said he preferred to wait and see what the Mayor's Hydro Committee came up with first.

Council Member Pierce advised that there is a Hydro Committee meeting on Thursday, January 20 at 6 p.m. and reminded Council that the meetings are open to the public, encouraging them to attend.

Further discussion occurred on the status of the work done by the Hydro Committee's consultant, and it was confirmed that the recommendations will be presented to Council.

Congratulations to Jason Traynor

Council Member Hickey congratulated Jason and Ellys Traynor on their recent marriage.

Alliance for Better Communities Meeting

Council Member Hickey indicated there had been an Alliance for Better Communities meeting with a presentation on vaping and e-cigarettes and noted that Case Middle School has put sensors in their bathrooms to identify their use. He also stated that there was an announcement at that meeting that harm reduction kits can now be obtained from all Police vehicles and the Public Safety Building, between 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and those kits, which contains a fentanyl test strip, can be distributed with no questions asked.

Transportation Commission Meeting

Council Member Hickey announced there would be a meeting of the Transportation Commission at the CitiBus building on Wednesday, at 3 p.m.

Proposed Warming Center

Council Member Hickey advised that there would be a Zoom meeting at 6 p.m. on Wednesday regarding the proposed Watertown Warming Center.

Hydro Committee Meeting

Council Member Hickey announced the Hydro Committee will meet January 20 at 6 p.m.

Tax Stabilization Fund

Council Member Hickey offered his concerns about the City Manager's proposal to move \$4 million in funds to a contingency and tax stabilization reserve fund and suggested instead shifting it to a fund to improve City buildings and their energy consumption.

Climate Smart Communities

Council Member Hickey proposed a new committee to look into the DEC Climate Smart Communities and noted they do have grants to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Council Member Pierce noted there was a Climate Smart Committee that Jen Voss provided a synopsis for and offered to forward it on to other Council Members.

Council Member Ruggiero added that there is a member of the public who wants to be on that particular committee.

Sidewalk Snow Removal Complaints

Council Member Hickey indicated he had heard from several residents complaining about sidewalk snow removal. He mentioned that Ithaca had a point system rewarding residents for keeping walks clean and residents could win gift cards.

Animal Control

Council Member Hickey said a resident contacted him asking how the City handled animals kept outside during inclement weather.

Free At-Home COVID Test Program

Council Member Hickey mentioned a Watertown Daily Times story which informed readers that at-home Covid test kits were available and could be delivered in 4-6 weeks.

Council Member Pierce added that she had ordered some and it was a very simple process.

Snowplow/Sidewalk Concerns

Council Member Olney asked if there was any way to keep snowplows from throwing snow into the sidewalks.

Mr. Mix stated that unfortunately it happens, especially when the street margins are narrow.

Ice Rink In Thompson Park Pavilion

Council Member Olney suggested that the Thompson Park Pavilion be turned into an ice rink and requested staff investigate how that could be converted. He noted this might involve altering the Park ordinance and extending the hours until 10 p.m. He mentioned that he had an overwhelming public response on social media regarding this.

Council Member Ruggiero said she liked the idea but commented she did not think the hours would need to be changed from 9 p.m., which it is currently. She went on to suggest that maybe the downtown businesses could offer specials to lure people to their establishments after the park closed at 9 p.m.

Mayor Smith added that when he was a kid, there were numerous outdoor rinks, but noted previous Councils had tried several times in the past to get these back up and running at various locations. He

said it never proved feasible due to increasing temperatures. He indicated he never recalled an ice rink in the pavilion, but that the Park Circle had been used. He also informed Council that the City was still in possession of the old ice skating boards, which are in good shape, and the old bathhouse in the Park could be used as a warming center. He suggested there would have to be some sort of coolant used to maintain the ice surface since the air temperatures are not consistent enough to keep the rink sustainable.

Council Member Olney suggested that the roof could keep the rink shaded. He suggested that this could instill some sense of camaraderie in the community similar to what was achieved with the summer firework display.

Total Solar Eclipse 2024

Council Member Olney suggested that the City provide an event to coincide with the total solar eclipse two years from now.

Council Member Pierce supported this idea and said that this had been discussed by the previous Council and the formation of a committee was suggested, but was pushed aside due to the pandemic. She offered to serve on the committee.

Council Member Ruggiero agreed.

Mayor Smith commented that this could be handled through Superintendent of Parks and Recreation Scott Weller and his department.

Council Member Olney suggested having musicians involved.

Public Parking Lot Near Watertown Golf Club

Council Member Olney asked Mr. Mix if there had been a phase 2 environmental study done on the parking lot in Thompson Park near the golf course after the various encroachments were attended to.

Mr. Mix said there was not.

Flower Memorial Library Survey

Council Member Pierce informed Council that the Flower Memorial Library is doing a short survey to determine services the library offers and encouraged people to weigh in.

Fees for Use of Pools

Council Member Ruggiero inquired if Mr. Weller had looked into a device to accept payments.

Mr. Weller noted that the department was already set up for that but would need a tablet or computer at each location.

City Clerk Saunders asked for clarification, for the record and for the public, as to what type of charges Council Member Ruggiero was referring to.

Council Member Ruggiero stated that there was a suggestion to charge County residents to use the pools.

Mayor Smith asked for further clarification, wondering if Council Member Ruggiero meant non-City residents, since City residents are County residents.

Council Member Ruggiero clarified that she meant non-City residents. She further noted that other communities charge fees for their splash pads.

Council Member Olney suggested approaching the County to see if they would voluntarily contribute to the costs of pools since it is a regional facility.

Mayor Smith indicated that if Council Member Olney wanted to do this, the request should come through the Mayor's office or the City Manager's office, and if there is a majority of Council's support, he is willing to draft a letter.

Council agreed.

Jefferson Street Plowing Issue

Mayor Smith stated that he received an email from a Jefferson Street resident complaining of the lack of snow removal during the last storm. He commented that the DPW staff did a great job with snow removal in general, but perhaps staff could just check to make sure Jefferson Street had been attended to.

Potential Conflict of Interest

Mayor Smith asked Attorney Slye if there was a conflict of interest issue regarding Council Member Hickey having a financial liability to the owner of a billboard on his campaign financial disclosure report and voting on topics regarding that billboard. He noted that he was always under the impression that this would be something that should be disclosed by the voting party.

Attorney Slye said this was not a prohibitive conflict but was a perception conflict. He stated it is always best to disclose.

Mayor Smith requested clarification on what would be prohibitive.

Attorney Slye informed Council that it would be a prohibitive conflict if there was a contract in place with the municipality.

Mayor Smith suggested former Council Member Simmons and his ownership of Aamco, as an example.

Attorney Slye agreed with that comparison, adding that Aamco had a contract to repair City Police vehicle transmissions, which makes it a prohibitive conflict. He suggested though that it is better to disclose when in question, stating "Sunshine is the best remedy."

For the record, Council Member Hickey disclosed that the financial record filed with the State was in error and has been corrected, noting it was not a loan, it was an in-kind transaction. He explained that it was regarding advertising during the campaign and that he had approached the Watertown Daily Times for banner space on a page and, since a block of time had already been purchased, he contacted the buyer and asked to swap places but no money changed hands. Council Member Hickey said he later paid

for an additional banner and this is where the in-kind transaction occurred. He stated there was no loan involved at all.

Mayor Smith asked for clarification that it was Mr. Simao who was running all the banner ads in the Watertown Daily Times.

Council Member Hickey indicated this was correct.

Work Session – January 24

Mr. Mix announced the addition work session scheduled for next Monday, January 24, will cover the Sewall's Island hydro plans, the dual entrance to the industrial park and stormwater management system.

ADJOURNMENT

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 9:56 p.m. by motion of Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Ann M. Saunders
City Clerk