

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
October 10, 2023
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

City staff present: Scott Weller, Logan Eddy, Geoffrey Urda, Michael Lumbis, Patrick Keenan

DISCUSSION

Snowtown USA Festival 2024 - David J. Daily, Coordinator, Snowtown USA

Mayor Smith introduced David Daily, who provided Council with an update on the proposed events that will tentatively take place January 26 - February 4, 2024. He noted that the changes from last year's festival would be to hold the Park Circle Freeze for two weeks, instead of one week, and to obtain the National Snow Sculpting Designation, which will allow the winner of the competition to qualify for the Nationals held in Wisconsin. He discussed the success of last year's events and requested the City close the Park Circle to vehicular traffic, assist in freezing the Park Circle for ice skating and provide the snow blocks for the sculpting.

Stating that he thinks skating in the Park Circle is a good idea, Mayor Smith said that this had been done in the past for many years, although it is weather dependent.

Superintendent of Parks and Recreation Scott Weller confirmed that everything went well last year during the festival events and stressed that the only issue may be from Mother Nature.

Council Member Olney asked if there were porta-potties in place last year around the skating area and suggested installing a shack to serve hot cocoa.

Mr. Daily mentioned that they are considering having a food truck in the area of the ice skating.

Council expressed support for providing the requested assistance.

Thompson Park Priority Project - Philip Sprague, President of Friends of Thompson Park, Brian Ashley, Vice President of Friends of Thompson Park and Kenneth A. Mix, City Manager

Philip Sprague introduced himself and Brian Ashley as the President and Vice President of the Friends of Thompson Park and thanked the City Council and staff for their commitment to Thompson Park and its improvements. He advised that the Friends of Thompson Park recently passed a resolution advocating for a paved trail from the Gotham Street entrance to the Rotary Fitness Trail and noted the

Gotham Street Entrance is the most heavily used entrance. He discussed the importance of connecting this area of the Park to the current network of trails, stressing that the master plan listed the top three activities of the Park as walking, dog walking and hiking.

Mr. Ashley discussed the safety aspects of adding this paved walkway and mentioned the heavy traffic for events such as the Fourth of July Concert and Fireworks in the Park. He noted that there are other elements of the master plan for the Park which would benefit from the pathway being developed. He provided examples of future projects from the master plan, stressing the natural beauty of the area and nature trails, and pointed out that the pathway would provide better handicap accessibility.

Council Member Olney asked if there is a plan to light the pathway and install benches along it.

Mr. Mix explained that benches would not be a problem as the western area of the Park is expanded and he noted that conduit would be installed for future lighting. He pointed out that this would connect the western portion of the Park to the northern, central and eastern parts of it. He replied to Council Member Olney's and Council Member Pierce's questions about the pathways, whether paved or nature trails, connecting to the sidewalks from Thompson Boulevard and Gotham Street.

Handicap accessibility within the Park was discussed further, as well as the traffic patterns of the roads of the Park. Signage of the trails, materials that could be used for the pathway and the potential costs of the project were talked about. Mr. Mix mentioned that a portion of the project could be funded by ARPA funds and responded to Council Member Olney's questions about possible grant funding.

Mentioning the Inflation Reduction Act, which has billions of dollars available, Mayor Smith advised that parks and open-air space projects would qualify.

Further proposed master plan projects and potential costs of each were discussed, as well as the expansion phases and possible grant opportunities.

Mayor Smith mentioned the original budget amount of \$636,000 of ARPA funding for a project in Thompson Park and suggested they try to stay in budget by using stone dust to create more pathways then research grants to proceed with the future paving.

Council agreed to Mayor Smith's suggestion.

Burlington Street Reconstruction Design - Geoffrey Urda, Planner and Matthew R Morgia, PE, Aubertine and Currier PLLC

City Planner Geoffrey Urda introduced Matthew R Morgia, from Aubertine and Currier PLLC, who would explain the more technical parts of the three different design concepts for the reconstruction of Burlington Street. Mr. Urda explained the challenges of the current condition of Burlington Street, such as a running slope, cross slope, sidewalk gaps, lack of existing curbs, stairs in the sidewalk, other ADA issues, and the age of the sewer and catch basins. He also reviewed the funding sources and timeline for the project. Noting there was an open house which residents from Burlington Street were invited to, he advised that the attendees of the open house overwhelming supported Concept 2, which converts the street to one-way traffic.

Mr. Morgia explained the current elevation changes throughout the street and the challenges that these present in the design of the street. He reviewed in detail the three concepts that have been proposed for the reconstruction project and the necessary changes to the sewer lines. He advised that Concept 2, with the one-way traffic, was well-received by the residents because the street is not heavily travelled and the resident would still have designated on-street parking.

Mayor Smith commented that Concept 2 is the one the City should go with since the residents prefer it, and it seems quite straightforward. He asked if there were any reasons from staff that Concept 2 should not be used.

Mr. Urda confirmed that Concept 2 was preferred by the Planning and Public Works staff.

Council Member Olney questioned whether the owners of the zombie homes in that area were contacted for their input, and he wondered if there would be some redevelopment of these homes due to the reconstruction of the street. He pointed out that one house had been abandoned for years and he wondered if the City could negotiate with the property owner to take the house and make a park on the parcel.

When asked by Council Member Olney for his agreement, Mayor Smith said he does not think it is the role of the City to take people's property.

Council Member Hickey asked for more information regarding the utility poles in Concept 2.

Mr. Morgia replied that there are utility issues in all of the concepts, mentioning some concerns with National Grid regarding moving the utilities.

Addressing Council Member Olney's earlier question, Mr. Urda explained the outreach done with the property owners prior to the open house.

Noting that there have been recent issues with National Grid on other projects, Mayor Smith reminded Council that National Grid's right-of-way agreement expires in seven years and the City can ask them to remove their poles from the public right-of-way.

Mayor Smith also noted, for the record, that he has a nephew named Matt Morgia, but it is not the same Matthew Morgia presenting this evening. He added that he also has another nephew that works for Aubertine and Currier.

Mr. Urda reviewed the remaining steps to the project and the funding sources.

Work session ended at 7:52 p.m.

Ann M. Saunders
City Clerk