

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
January 14, 2013
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Jeffrey E. Graham Presiding

Present: Council Member Joseph M. Butler, Jr.
Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso
Council Member Jeffrey M. Smith
Mayor Graham

Not Present: Council Member Roxanne M. Burns

Also Present: Sharon Addison, City Manager

City staff present: Kurt Hauk, Erin Gardner, Justin Wood, Beth Morris

DISCUSSIONS

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

A memo explaining City Attorney Slye's recommendation to not pursue this grant opportunity because it conflicts with the New York State Constitution was available for Council to review.

Thompson Park Zoo Pavilion

Kurt Hauk, City Engineer presented Council with the updated plans and cost estimates explaining that he has recent pricing from contractors and the recent Marble Street project and stressed that the real cost will be determined by the bid process. He stated that this is a pretty straight forward project and mentioned the details that need to be finalized.

Mayor Graham asked if the plans are based on the discussions with the zoo and their needs.

Mr. Hauk confirmed that everything discussed in the meetings was included and said that there will be an alternate bid for a cedar shake roof as well. He noted that a cedar shake roof would require more maintenance and upkeep.

Council Member Smith remarked that for a 50' x 50' building, this is quite costly especially being an open air building. He asked for an explanation of the Maintenance and Protection of Traffic line item for \$11,665.18.

For this project, Mr. Hauk explained that this cost should be low and that it entails any repair work needed to the access road. In other projects, he explained that this line item would account for flagmen needed to direct traffic. He pointed out that the pavilion has to be built using the prevailing wage rate which is incorporated in the estimate of \$202,000 because it includes installation.

Council Member Smith asked if the private sector would be included in the bid.

Mr. Hauk replied that he provided a baseline for the bid which was configured using the similar pavilion that was placed in the J.B. Wise Parking Lot. He stated that a contractor could use a different structure

but they would have to prove that it is equal. In regards to demolition, he included it in the bid so that he does not have to rely on DPW's availability if this project is time sensitive. He reminded Council that he had submitted a memo during the last bid process of items that could be done in house to cut cost.

Council Member Macaluso asked if it would save money to put the pavilion in a different location because then the aviary could be taken down by the City not in conjunction with this construction.

Mayor Graham advised that the ultimate question is cost verses the perceived benefit to the community. He said that people will either be for it or against but there will always be complaints that the money should be spent on other projects such as street improvements.

Council Member Butler reminded Council that \$320,000 was budgeted for this project and that the City should be able to get a nice Pavilion for that price. He said he is committed to this project but wants a good value and does not want to waste tax payers' money.

Mr. Hauk clarified for Council Member Butler that the cost of \$202,000 for the base pavilion includes the building and installation. He further explained that the design, building and shipping is approximately \$145,000 and the remaining amount would be labor which includes the prevailing wage rate. He pointed out that the additions such as the stone veneer comes from different companies. In regards to the Stakeout, Engineering line item, he explained that a survey firm would be hired to lay everything out and that the estimate is based a percentage of the total. He addressed the difference in price for stamped concrete verses regular concrete and detailed the electrical work needed explaining that the kiosk would hide the electrical panel. In place of a stage, he said that there would be a partial wall that can be projected onto for presentations. He confirmed that there will be no bathroom facilities and no water in the building but there is a water service nearby in case they want to connect to it in the future.

Regarding maintenance, Mr. Hauk advised that the metal would need to be repainted at some point but the metal roof should last approximately 50 years and the concrete would need to be sealed but overall the maintenance would be low.

On the subject of a different location, Mr. Hauk explained that there would be different site costs in regards to re-grading and patchwork of the area and that it could possibly be cheaper in a different location.

Mayor Graham pointed out that this was driven by the heritage of the building which would be tough to replicate in a different location.

John Wright, Executive Director of the Thompson Park Zoo indicated that he was surprised by the cost as well and mentioned that he is willing to consider a smaller building or deleting the stamped concrete.

Mr. Hauk reiterated that the size of the building and the stone veneer are the factors driving the cost.

Mayor Graham reviewed the history of the building and the events in 2006 and 2009 that led to replacing the aviary with another structure and wondered if this pavilion is what the zoo wants or is just the result a haphazard process over the years.

Mr. Wright explained that the location right outside the concession area is logistically a good spot and that the weather is a challenge when holding outdoor events so a covered area would help achieve some of the goals for these events. In response to Mayor Graham's question of whether this might enhance private sector fundraising to do other improvements, Mr. Wright stated that whenever an organization adds a new wow factor, there is a positive good feeling within the community and ultimate support. He reiterated that the challenge to holding large events is that the zoo does not have a large covered area. He added that currently the zoo does not have a place to hold educational activities for the regular visitors to the zoo and the covered area would allow the zoo to have a place to do programs with animals for these guests.

Council Member Smith stated that he is committed to the zoo but that does not mean a blank check and led the discussion of what is the real need for the zoo because the process started by wanting an enclosed heated year-round educational facility with bathrooms and a small kitchen and ended with a open air pavilion which cannot be used in the winter.

Mr. Wright indicated that the need is for an educational facility but it was not cost effective to have a year-round indoor facility so they are willing to compromise and work with the City.

Referring to the 2009, **Bob Gorman**, President of the Thompson Park Conservancy clarified that the Conservancy requested that the aviary be removed and use the concrete pad for a shed to be utilized for other activities outside the educational room. He stressed the goal was to turn a dormant space into something that could be used to generate more revenue for the zoo. He said the design changed once it came to the City and Council wanted to keep the iconic structure while creating an educational center. From there, he said building codes drove the project into something bigger with bathrooms. He advised that the Conservancy just wants to turn that space into something that can be used for outdoor events and is not interested in having it ornate but wants it to compliment the visitors' center.

Mayor Graham agreed that Council wants its appearance to be consistent with the ambiance of the park. He remarked that he would like to move ahead in order to get it done and functional for the summer.

Council Member Butler noted that it would still meet the needs of the zoo if the stone veneer and stamp concrete were deleted.

Mayor Graham suggested doing alternate bids for the stone veneer and stamped concrete.

Council Member Macaluso commented that she thinks they all support it but that they all were surprised at the cost and would like to see the price decrease before approving it. She agreed with Council Member Smith in that it needs to be decided on which aspects are really needed because Council needs to answer to the constituents.

In response to Council Member Smith's question, Mr. Hauk explained that if DPW demolished the building now, a temporary electrical panel would need to be put in place because the aviary's electrical panel is in a series with the rest of the zoo.

Mayor Graham pointed out that there is still a cost to when City employees are used to complete a project.

Council concurred that Mr. Hauk should look for ways to cut costs and bid out the base pavilion with alternates for some of the extras such as stamped concrete and stone veneer.

Human Resource Position

Ms. Addison presented Council with a slide show (on file in the City Clerk's Office) explaining the need for this position. She drew Council's attention to the existing shortfalls highlighting the inconsistent application of policies and regulations, outdated or non-existent policies, lack of annual training and lack of an Employee Handbook. She indicated that this position would work under the direction of the City Manager and will guide and manage the overall provision of Human Resources services, policies and programs to prosper the development and retention of the City's workforce. She mentioned that a key area of focus would be to plan for organizational succession because a lot of knowledge leaves as senior employees leave. She noted that the individual would orient new employees, maintain HR policies and manuals, establish recruiting, hiring and evaluation processes, oversee employee safety and welfare, standardize training and professional development, research HR concerns and maintain essential personnel files. She indicated that this position would not replace the Civil Service Commission but will work in conjunction with it. She advised Council of the salary requirement and asked for Council's endorsement.

Council discussed the retirement tier this position would fall under and the contribution that would be required.

Mayor Graham mentioned that all the personnel items such as training and policies were handled by the former City Manager and her office and that for an organization this size, there was never a traditional way of managing employees. He asked if there are a lot of problems with employees not understanding policies and whether employees are briefed on them.

Ms. Addison stated that there is inconsistent application and that just this week there was an incident in which employees were abusing the use of a City vehicle. She said that she feels this happens often and has drawn it to the attention of the supervisor.

Referring to an Employee Handbook, Council Member Butler stated that an organization this size should have one.

Ms. Addison indicated that it is not a small project and she can spend her time either building a budget and strategic plan or write an employee handbook.

Council Member Smith noted that he has always been concerned with the use of cell phones.

Council Member Butler commented that with his corporation, the IT policy is four to five pages and lists what is permissible and what is not. He said that this should all be in writing and there should be an orientation upon hiring to view policies such as cell phone use, sexual harassment, handling of money, dress code and an employee handbook. In regards to the budget, he stated that when more is added it becomes more difficult to keep a balanced budget. He suggested hiring a college graduate for the summer to help write an employee handbook and put some of these things in place to determine how much work actually needs to be done.

Mayor Graham said that money is always an issue and once you add the benefit package to the salary, \$100,000 is added to the operating budget of the City. He added that Council needs to decide on what is important to include in this budget whether it be this position or arena improvements, etc. and where cuts can be made to account for these items. He stated that he thinks it is a good idea and trusts the City Manager's judgment.

Council Member Smith concurred that he does not have a problem with the idea but he needs to know where the City can save in order include this in the budget.

Council Member Macaluso asked if any of these duties such as writing an Employee Handbook could be performed by Elliott Nelson. She also commented that she does not think there is a huge turnover of staff. She mentioned that she was a nurse for 20 years and updating policies were done yearly which did not take a lot of time. As far as the daily issues, she mentioned that they could be handled by Mr. Nelson who then would report to the City Manager.

Ms. Addison responded that would work if Mr. Nelson did not have everything else to do.

Council Member Macaluso stated that by developing a whole position or department, she knows it will be expanded down the road and noted that a salary of \$45,000 really costs the City approximately \$70,000 – \$80,000 with benefits. She wondered if this needs to be a full-time position.

Ms. Addison stated her intent is to consolidate HR activities across the board which includes payroll and fringe benefits. She said that she feels this is a full-time job.

In response to Council Member Butler's question, **Erin Gardner**, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation indicated that she has 45 part-time seasonal employees in her department and that there is not a formal orientation or policies and procedures.

Council Member Butler stated that it is very unusual to have an organization this size without a person to handle HR.

Ms. Addison pointed out some incidents such as City vehicles seen at a Coffee Shop having breakfast and City employees seen not wearing seat belts.

Mayor Graham stated that he supports her recommendation but she needs to find some dichotomy somewhere.

Ms. Addison clarified for Council Member Butler that the Employee Assistance Program is more counseling based and this position would not replace that program.

Council concurred that in order to implement this there needs to be cuts somewhere else and it should be discussed more during the February work session when determining the priorities for this year's budget.

Ms. Addison indicated that the two major budget areas to be discussed in February are the Fairgrounds Arena and the Department of Public Works.

Jefferson County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Ms. Addison asked whether she should prepare a resolution endorsing this plan for the next Council Meeting. She mentioned that Council supported the last plan five years ago.

Mayor Graham said to list it on the agenda as a discussion item.

The meeting ended at 8:44 p.m.

Ann M. Saunders
City Clerk