

**ADJOURNED COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN**

May 26, 2009

6:00 P.M.

MAYOR JEFFREY E. GRAHAM PRESIDING

PRESENT: **COUNCIL MEMBER ROXANNE M. BURNS**
 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH M. BUTLER, JR.
 COUNCIL MEMBER PETER L. CLOUGH
 COUNCIL MEMBER JEFFREY M. SMITH
 MAYOR GRAHAM

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

Mayor Graham opened the adjourned session.

Fiscal Year 2009-10 Budget Update

Council reviewed Mrs. Corriveau's report concerning this. She explained that going into the meeting this evening and with the modifications made, the new tax levy increase is \$274,112 or 3.85% higher than fiscal year 2008-09, and the proposed tax rate is \$7.449 per \$1,000 of assessed value which is a 3.05% increase from the current fiscal year. She also explained that there were two changes that needed to be made to the Capital Budget for fiscal year 2009-10. The first was to remove the \$240,000 Brownfield project for the Ogilvie Site, as the City has been notified that we will not receive funding for this. The second was to add the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act projects for Washington and Arsenal Streets.

Mayor Graham advised that he had received a letter from NYS DOT indicating that five other projects submitted for stimulus funding were not approved because the state felt that they were not shovel ready.

Interest Revenue

Mr. Mills remarked that he still believed that the number he put in for this is a realistic number based on the current rates being offered by local banks. He explained that he had spoken with and had various discussions with representatives from the Watertown Trust and DANC. These agencies don't have to operate under the same rules as a municipality in New York State. We can only do business with banks that Council has designated and CDs have to be with banks authorized to do business in New York State. He advised that as the budget discussions conclude, he would like to ladder out some of the funds. He remarked that he doesn't propose putting any more into the revenue line right now.

Council Member Butler responded that while the advantages today may not be that great, there will come a day when we can go out long term.

Mr. Mills remarked that he doesn't disagree with that.

Council Member Butler advised that we might have bigger banks in the Syracuse, Rochester or Albany areas that could be used in the future.

Capital Budget Review

Mrs. Corriveau advised that the plan is ½ the size of last year's plan.

Mayor Graham referred to the yard waste collection vehicles.

Council Member Clough asked if the City still had the compost pile.

Mr. Hayes explained that we do. However, because we don't have a chopper or screen, we can't allow residents to use the compost. It is taken out to the quarry after it has been composted.

Council Member Clough remarked that they compost at the correctional facility and it is not a huge expense.

Mayor Graham asked why it isn't taken out to the quarry after it has been picked up from the residences.

Mr. Hayes explained that there needs to be a reduction in volume first. He explained that the City had to stop letting residents use the material after the DEC told them to stop. Many times there are a lot more things in the bags than just lawn waste. The crews find garbage as well as plastic, etc. The compost was being used by one of the cemeteries and there was a complaint from visitors about some plastic pieces in the product. The DEC became involved and wouldn't let the City give it away any longer. We are only allowed to use it on City property.

Mr. White advised that there are grants available to apply for screeners and grinders. He also remarked that putting lawn waste in plastic bags is a bad practice. He explained that there will be information coming to Council for the use of brown paper bags for yard waste.

Council Member Burns asked if putting yard waste in a bucket was acceptable, as you can see exactly what is in the bucket.

Mr. Hayes explained that paper bags are more expensive than plastic. He also explained that buckets could prove to be much heavier as they could pack the bucket. In addition, not everyone has 33 gallon buckets to use.

Council Member Clough asked if the City is looking into a grant for a screener and grinder.

Mr. Hayes stated that they were not.

Mr. White stated that if Council wants staff to look into a grant, they could.

Mr. Hayes remarked that they tried to give compost away years ago and it is not that popular a product.

Council Member Clough remarked that the yard waste service is one of the few things still provided free of charge for the taxpayers.

Council Member Burns remarked that these vehicles were in the capital budget two years ago and were removed at that time. She remarked that they need to stay in the budget this year and didn't think that the issue was up for debate.

Council Members concurred.

Page 252: Council Member Butler remarked that the Marble Street Park Trail should be eliminated.

Council Member Smith responded that he agreed, but felt that the sidewalk program should continue.

Discussion was held concerning the cost of the City's subsidy to the program.

Mr. Hauk explained that it is close to a 50—50 split.

Mrs. Corriveau also advised that there are other costs that the City doesn't charge to the program. She advised that the City hires employees each year to do the sidewalk program.

Council Member Smith commented that we should keep the sidewalk program but perhaps not as aggressive and should focus on the worst areas in the City.

Mr. Hauk advised that it is very difficult to get people for temporary work. If they know that it is for an even shorter period of time, he doesn't know how we would keep a crew intact.

Council Member Burns remarked that she tends to agree with Council Members Butler and Smith.

Page 257: Referring to this, Mrs. Corriveau explained that staff is concerned that we have not adjusted the rate since the beginning of the sidewalk program. She explained that what happens is the rest of the taxpayers pick up a larger share of the expense and this has been happening over the years. She explained that this year's program will run through the rest of the construction season. It will be done with our employees and our temporary employees.

Council Member Smith remarked that we should leave the money in this budget so that we can plan for next summer.

Mr. Hauk commented that if it is going to start next season, it should start with the construction season.

Council Member Butler agreed that the hiring should be done in April.

Mr. Mills advised that the Marble Park Trail was going to be funded by bonding and the debt service would have been for 2010-11.

Mayor Graham remarked that the idea of cutting Marble Street Park Trail would be to save money, not necessarily to spend the money some place else.

Council Member Butler responded that the infrastructure has been neglected and that is why the City is having problems now.

Mayor Graham remarked that sidewalks are ultimately the homeowner's responsibility.

Discussion was held concerning lack of enforcement.

Council Member Smith commented that he would rather invest in existing sidewalks than in the park trail. He said while that would be nice, we don't need it.

Mayor Graham advised that at some point, Council should pass as resolution not accepting the grant for the Marble Park Trail. He asked what would happen if the City refused the grant.

Mr. Mix responded that he wouldn't expect any future grants.

Council Member Smith responded that he had to believe that there are lots of cities throughout the state that don't have the extra funds to match with these grants.

MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER SMITH TO ELIMINATE THE \$330,000 MARBLE PARK TRAIL AND DIRECTING STAFF TO CONTINUE THE SIDEWALK PROGRAM WITH THE CITY'S SHARE BEING \$50,000 WHICH WILL BE 50% OF THE PROJECT. REMAINING FUNDS, NOT FOUND BY CUTTING IN THE PROPOSED BUDGET, WOULD BE TAKEN FROM THE FUND BALANCE.

MOTION WAS SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER BUTLER.

Council Member Clough remarked that this could be a slippery slope and he would like to see where Council Member Smith is proposing cuts before voting on the motion.

Council Member Burns commented that she is not proposing extending the sidewalk program for five years. She is just talking about finishing this season.

Mayor Graham said that Council Member Smith is asking for a similar sidewalk program for next year.

Council Member Clough commented that the only money that we have saved this evening at this point is the \$5,000 EDZ funds. Adding \$50,000 and subtracting the \$5,000, leaves it at \$45,000. He asked how much of that would be taken from the fund balance.

Council Member Smith responded that he would show Council Members where he is proposing other cuts.

MOTION AND SECOND WERE WITHDRAWN BY COUNCIL MEMBERS SMITH AND BUTLER.

Council Member Burns commented that while she understands Mr. Mix's concerns about rejecting the grant, the City does have a good track record over the years.

Mayor Graham remarked that there should be a resolution at the next meeting turning the grant down.

Page 253: Council Member Smith advised that he was against buying this because there has to be a buy-in from downtown business owners on keeping their sidewalks clear of snow.

Council Member Burns asked Mr. Hayes if this was used in the downtown area year around.

Mr. Hayes explained that it is used in the downtown for clear snow. It is used for mowing in large areas during the rest of the year. He explained that it is a very versatile piece of equipment that is used year around.

Council Member Burns remarked that while she doesn't disagree with Council Member Smith, she does support keeping the machine in the Capital Budget.

Page 258: Referring to the Washington Street Sidewalk project, Mrs. Corriveau advised that the cost of this has gone up based on new numbers. However, they don't anticipate it going higher than \$96,000.

Mr. Hauk explained that the original amount of \$32,000 was based on it being done in-house. However, the scope of the project indicated that it needed to be bid out and the cost has gone up over the last three years.

Mayor Graham asked when the traffic light was going in.

Mr. Hayes explained that the contractor will be on site next week. The poles will go up in about 2-3 weeks.

Council took a short recess.

When Council reconvened, Mrs. Corriveau advised that Mr. Hayes had suggested instead of looking at an April, May and June sidewalk project this year and then a July through October project for the next fiscal year, we should look at an abbreviated project that spans two fiscal years – mid May through August. The program would use college students and would be done during the prime construction season.

Council Member Burns remarked that staff could work out the details.

Mr. Hauk explained that they had programmed a little larger portion in the budget to cover the comptroller billing schedule. He remarked that the figure is probably a little smaller than \$100,000. He explained that they also did retaining walls, not just sidewalks.

MOTION WAS MADE BY COUNCIL MEMBER BUTLER TO FUND THE SIDEWALK PROGRAM WITH AN ADDITIONAL \$25,000 FROM THE GENERAL FUND WITH DETAILS BEING WORKED OUT BY CITY STAFF.

MOTION WAS SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER SMITH AND CARRIED WITH ALL VOTING YEA EXCEPT MAYOR GRAHAM VOTING NAY.

General Fund Budget Discussion

Page 137: Council Member Clough asked to have the \$5,000 removed from the A6989 Economic Development line. All members agreed.

Mayor Graham asked about the A6410 Publicity account. Mrs. Corriveau explained that this line is for expenses associated with repairs, installation and removal of Christmas decorations and other publicity functions such as the banners that hang in the downtown.

Mayor Graham also asked about the cost for putting public notices in the paper. He suggested that it could be done just as well by putting the notices on the City's website.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that, under law, these notices have to be placed in the official newspaper of the City.

Mayor Graham asked if the City's website could be designated the official site.

It was explained that, also under law, a municipality has to designate an official newspaper.

Council Member Clough asked about the changes in the amounts allocated on the A8010 Zoning line.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that the amounts are driven by the numbers and types of projects that come before the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Mr. Mix explained that the fee is for public notices and a court stenographer. The number of applications and how long the meetings last determine the fees that are charged to the account. He explained that there are 2 meetings left.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that they saw the trend going down, so they lowered the amount, but they didn't want to lower it too much.

Council Member Butler remarked that, at some point, he would like to know how much we have used for zoning this year.

Page 212: Council Member Smith referred to the fuel oil cost of \$120,000. He asked if Mr. Sligar was still utilizing the methane procedure use when gas prices were high.

Mr. Hauk explained that when the gas prices came down, Mr. Sligar stopped the procedure. He isn't sure if he has re-started it yet.

Council Member Smith asked why it wasn't kept going in an effort to use less fuel oil.

Mr. Hauk explained that there is a tipping point when Mr. Sligar keeps the digesters dormant and the cost goes up to keep them dormant.

Page 18: Council Member Smith asked that \$53,000 be removed from the Contingent account.

Mayor Graham remarked that the contingent account is to provide buffers for unanticipated shortfalls.

Council Member Clough asked if this would be cutting us too short.

Mrs. Corriveau responded that she didn't have a good answer at this time.

A majority of the Council agreed to the cut.

Council Member Smith asked that management raises be cut from 2 ½ % to 2%, thus cutting \$12,000 from the budget.

Council Member Butler remarked that he was fine with that, but would go to 1 ½ %.

Council Member Clough asked what CSEA received.

Mrs. Corriveau responded that they were given 2 ½%.

Mayor Graham commented that the CSEA contract was negotiated over a period of time that was different from now.

Council Member Clough responded that he has seen years when the unions got raises and management received nothing.

Council Member Butler remarked that we cut staff this year and he has a problem giving the raises.

Council Member Clough commented that we didn't cut staff – we just didn't replace three positions. He commented that we are now asking staff to do more work with less people.

Council Member Clough asked what was in the budget for Council and the Mayor. He was advised that it was 2 ½%. He stated that he wouldn't vote for it.

Council Member Smith suggested 2% for Council and the Mayor.

Council Member Burns remarked that she supported Council Member Smith with 2%.

Council Member Clough asked why Council just didn't give up this year's raise.

Council Members Butler and Smith stated that they would be willing to do so.

Mayor Graham remarked that there is a problem with that. It should continue to flow just as the County Legislature raises do. It is a sound policy.

Page 22: Council Member Butler asked about the travel and training and membership dues lines.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that the travel and training has been used by Council Members in the past. She explained that NYCOM dues are in the Mayor's budget. The majority of the Council's budget for dues is for AUSA memberships for each Council Member.

Council Member Butler remarked that if it is not being used, it should be taken out.

Mrs. Corriveau presented the revised calculation of the property tax rate to the Council.

ADJOURNMENT

AT THE CALL OF THE CHAIR MEETING WAS DULY ADJOURNED AT 8:27 P.M. UNTIL MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2009 AT 6:45 P.M. BY MOTION OF COUNCIL MEMBER CLOUGH, SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER SMITH AND CARRIED WITH ALL VOTING IN FAVOR THEREOF.

Donna M. Dutton
City Clerk