

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING WORK SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
June 10, 2013
7:18 p.m.**

Mayor Jeffrey E. Graham Presiding

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

Also Present: Sharon Addison, City Manager

City staff present: Elliott Nelson, Jim Mills, Erin Gardner, Kurt Hauk, Mike Sligar, Gene Hayes

Discussion Items

1. Review of Destination Marketing - Thousand Islands International Tourism Council, Gary DeYoung, Director of Tourism

Mr. DeYoung addressed Council reviewing the 2013 Destination Marketing Proposal (on file in the City Clerk's Office) which he said was based on a similar dollar amount as last year with the exception of a few changes. He handed Council a sample of the brochures and booklets distributed through this program.

Speaking of the program which markets Watertown as part of the 1000 Islands Region, he said the Thousand Islands International Tourism Council continues to use the internet and television to advertise this area in Northern New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Buffalo, Rochester and Ottawa. In addition, the 2014-15 International Travel Guide is distributed through direct mailings and is an official publication in both the New York and Ontario Welcome Centers.

In respect to programs that specifically target Watertown separate from the Thousand Islands, Mr. DeYoung indicated that approximately \$45,000 is hoped to be invested this fall in order to bring Canadian shoppers to Watertown. He showed the tabloid that is published and explained where it will be distributed in Canada indicating that this is an all-print program because television advertising is very expensive in Ottawa. Mr. DeYoung explained a newer program called the Winter Visit campaign which is designed to attract visitors during the toughest part of the year to fill hotel rooms. He mentioned that \$10,000 of the money from the City would be put towards this. Lastly, he discussed the 2013-2014 Seaway Trail "Journey" Magazine in which the City will have a 2/3 page ad.

In summary, he said that this proposal totals \$41,850. He mentioned that hotels continue to come to his agency wanting to do more projects within Watertown such as bidding on conventions, sport tournaments and bus tours. He said that these hotels have requested that next year representatives from the City and the Hospitality Community meet to discuss a larger and more aggressive program.

Council Member Burns said that the City has participated in this for many years and asked if any other municipalities participate. She said she hopes that other townships would help to promote the area as well.

Mr. DeYoung replied that the Town of Alexandria and the Town of Watertown do currently and that places such as Clayton does indirectly through their Chamber of Commerce. He clarified that the Watertown Chamber of Commerce does not directly participate and explained that their assistance is more by working in conjunction on projects.

Council Member Burns mentioned that the media reported that the Town of Leray is looking for ways to spend their bed tax money and she said that it would be nice if some of the neighboring communities would be willing to put some of their bed tax money towards this as well.

Referring to the marketing brochure, Council Member Burns would like to see pictures of the Thompson Park Zoo, Historical Society, Downtown and Black River included as well as highlighting the shopping.

Mr. DeYoung stated that this can be changed but most of the focus was to fill the hotel rooms with shoppers.

Council Member Burns stressed that the City of Watertown is the County Seat as well as the hub of the area and is not just ancillary to the Thousand Islands.

In response to Council Member Butler's inquiry, Mr. DeYoung clarified the circulation of the International Travel Guide, the Shop, Stay and Save tabloid and the Seaway Trail brochure. He mentioned a program used in Green Bay that was very successful during the winter months and would like to implement it here.

Council Member Butler questioned if the Winter Campaign is a waste of money since the City struggles to get people to visit in the winter.

Mr. DeYoung replied that there have been more hotel rooms sold in the last year but it lowers during these winter months so anything that they do would help. He indicated that he receives feedback directly from the hotels but he also explained a program that tracks the occupancy rates.

Council Member Smith asked if they track which events or activities draw the most visitors.

Mr. DeYoung stated that it is difficult to track but mentioned that the DPAO concerts do book some rooms and that Black Friday always sells out.

Council Member Smith suggested that certain events receive additional advertising.

Mr. DeYoung indicated that they try to advertise the whole season and not specific activities. He discussed social media stating that the shopping program was promoted on Facebook. He also told Council of a program targeting the airport using social media.

Council Member Butler reiterated that he questions spending \$10,000 on the Winter Campaign.

Mayor Graham wondered if the expansion of the Syracuse Mall has an impact on the shopping in Watertown.

Mr. DeYoung said that he is not sure if it has helped or not, mentioning that Watertown is still an hour closer for the Canadian shoppers.

Mayor Graham mentioned a water tower visible from Route 81 and wondered if it could be used to promote Watertown. He asked the City Manager to look into this.

2. Snow Dump Improvement Discussion - Kurt W. Hauk, City Engineer

Mr. Hauk explained that there is a north and south side to the snow dump and that the north side is currently down to a single lane which will continue to deteriorate to the point that it will be unusable. The issue with the south side, he said, is that there is not enough sun to melt the snow so it builds up making it harder to use. He told Council that other municipalities and private haulers use the snow dump as well so this will impact them too. He mentioned that 31 permits were issued last year. He outlined the project and informed Council of the next steps if this project is to continue.

Eugene Hayes, Department of Public Works Superintendent further explained the dump sites and the issues concerning the buildup of snow on the south side. He said that one of the aprons on the north side has failed so the ability to use this side area is currently reduced to 50%.

Council Member Butler asked how much the City receives in tipping fees.

Mr. Hayes estimated that approximately \$9,000 was received mentioning that the outside users only use this as a last resort. He advised Council of the fee structure for the permits and the history leading up to these fees. If nothing is done to repair the site, he said there will be a problem during a heavy winter in which case the City will need to close it off to outside users. Therefore, those haulers' businesses will be affected as well as the businesses that they service. He discussed alternative sites stressing that hauling costs would increase significantly, therefore, costing the City more over the years.

Council Member Macaluso asked where the State dumps snow.

Mr. Hayes replied that the State hires Jefferson County to haul their snow which the County unloads at the City's snow dump. He advised that the current snow dump location is good in that it is close to Public Square and at the center of everything. He reiterated that if snow is hauled to a different location such as the landfill, then the hauling costs will well exceed the repair costs over the years. He explained the snow removal operations procedure stating that the trick is to have the correct number of dump trucks in line waiting to be filled, in transit with snow and unloading at the snow dump.

Council Member Butler commented that he has argued against this in the past because the snow is dumped downhill and it is gravity fed down the slope. He said that it does not need to be a clean smooth slab.

Mr. Hauk pointed out that the half that is shut down is not because of the slab but because of a bank failure so a portion of the ramp is gone. He stressed that if nothing is done to stabilize this, it will continue to deteriorate and eventually both sides of the ramp will need to be closed.

Council Member Smith stated he has voted against this in the past because the City will spend \$100,000 just to dump snow. He noted there are better projects to spend this money on and wondered if this is the best location for this.

Mr. Hayes explained some of the restrictions by the EPA regarding run-off and said that the City will not want to proceed until there is approval from the regulating authorities. In response to Council Member Macaluso's question, Mr. Hayes indicated that this project would be done all at once.

Council Member Butler suggested piling the snow in an empty lot somewhere such as the Armory on Massey Street.

Mr. Hayes advised that the trucks dump all night so the sounds of the trucks and back-up beeping would be disturbing to residents.

Council Member Burns remarked that a pile of snow would cause issues similar to the salt pile. She said that this is a lot of money but believes that it is a safety issue that cannot be put off any longer. She indicated that she will support this.

Council Member Macaluso and Mayor Graham agreed with Council Member Burns.

3. Letter from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development

Mayor Graham mentioned that the City received a letter announcing that the City of Watertown is eligible as an entitlement community. He asked that Mr. Mix explain the impact of this at a future meeting.

4. Community Fluoride Program - Javanth V. Kumar, DDS, MPH, Bureau of Dental Health, NYS Department of Health

Dr. Kumar introduced himself, his qualifications and his role in the NYS Department of Health (DOH) and told Council that his slide show (on File in the City Clerk's Office) is focused on providing the resources available in order to make an informed decision about an important public health problem which is the prevention of tooth decay. He discussed the Prevention Agenda 2013-2017 released by the DOH in which a top priority is the prevention of tooth decay. He told Council that cavities matter because they affect a large portion of the population and are four times more common than asthma. He noted that cavities can cause infection, extreme pain, difficulty in chewing, poor weight gain, difficulty concentrating, missed school hours, loss of work, several social consequences as well as is very costly to society. He explained that over the years there have been many strategies to improve dental hygiene but the best one was to improve the resistance of the tooth by adding fluoride in the water and it does not rely on individual compliance. He told Council of the independent taskforce that was created by Congress to promote health and their website so that Council could see the systematic unbiased reviews that were done on this topic. He highlighted several studies, recommendations and opinions from US Surgeon Generals, EAPD, AAFP, Mayo Clinic, American Academy of Pediatrics, APHA, AMA, ADHA, ADA, World Health Organization, US Public Health Service and CDC in support of fluoridation. Reviewing fluoridation in New York State, he commented that approximately 71.4% of public water supplies receive fluoridated water and the target goal is for 78.5% by 2017.

Regarding risks, Dr. Kumar indicated that the National Research Council (NRC) Report (2006) listed the three toxicity end points as severe enamel fluorosis, skeletal fluorosis, and bone fracture but cited John Doull, Chairman of the NRC Committee as stating “I do not believe there is any valid scientific reason for fearing adverse health conditions from the consumption of water fluoridated at the optimal level.” He discussed each of the toxicity end points in detail stressing that there is strong evidence of low prevalence at water fluoride concentrations below 2 mg/L. Locally, he said fluorosis is not significant in Watertown. He debated other claims of why fluoride is bad citing studies and facts discrediting each claim.

In summary, Dr. Kumar explained that water fluoridation benefits all members of the community regardless of age, race, SES and access to dental care. He further explained that it offers a great return on its investment for the taxpayers because for every \$1 invested in fluoridation, approximately \$38 is saved as shown in the study done on Medicaid claims.

Mayor Graham commented that fluoridation was controversial when it first started in the City back in 1962 and it still remains to create differing opinions. He wondered why this chemical continues to generate such a debate.

Dr. Kumar responded that this is because there is not a state mandate in NYS and the authority to make the decision is given to municipalities. With any community based intervention, he said there can be a lot of opposition.

Mayor Graham questioned why NYS does not pass legislation to mandate this if it is so beneficial.

Dr. Kumar answered that it is because of the way the constitution is here with the Home Rule.

Council Member Macaluso commented that fluoride is excreted 99% through the kidney and 1% stays in the bones. She said there are conflicting schools of thought about the amount left in the bone. She stated that for every beneficial comment that Dr. Kumar makes, she can find literature that goes against it. She noted that she has not made up her mind and that she is trying to explore this more.

Dr. Kumar pointed out that you should never trust individual reports and only rely on committee reports such as the guidance from the National Research Council where experts from both sides debated for 3 ½ years. Referring to the independent taskforce appointed by Congress, he said the unbiased resources are available to make an informed decision.

Stating that she is a registered nurse, Council Member Macaluso advised that as a healthcare provider it is unethical to force medication onto someone.

Dr. Kumar reminded Council that the practice of public health is different from the practice of clinical medicine. He advised that there is a responsibility to the community within public health and all the special taskforces state fluoridation of water is safe, economical and effective.

Council Member Smith remarked that there is well-intention and debate on both sides and asked if there is a recommended type of fluoride to be used.

Dr. Kumar stated that there is no difference and told Council what is commonly used due to cost. In regard to toothpaste, he said that the concern is with the concentration of fluoride so that is why ingestion is not recommended.

Council Member Smith argued that studies such as the ones on HealthNY.gov do not show a significant reduction in dental caries among fluoridated communities verses non-fluoridated communities.

Dr. Kumar disputed that prevalence is not a good measure of effectiveness and that a better indicator is the number of cavities prevented which is what was tested in the study that he discussed earlier using the Medicaid claims. He cited other studies in which this was measured and explained in detail how the indicators measured are important. He summarized that there is nothing in these studies that does not prove that fluoride is beneficial.

Council Member Butler read a quote from a study issued by Dr. Kumar that was emailed to him in opposition and asked if his opinion has changed.

Dr. Kumar replied that his position has not changed and explained that it was the social economical characteristics of the population that changed so the two communities were no longer comparable at the later date that he restudied them. Therefore, the conclusion of the studies was changed to account for the disparity within the individual communities.

Dr. Kumar answered other questions regarding some of his studies explaining that there were differences in dosing by fluoride tablets and the introduction of fluoride toothpaste. He said that over fluoridation comes more by other sources than by the water.

Council Member Butler concluded that Dr. Kumar feels any negative consequences are overridden by the advantage of stronger teeth. He also summarized that fluoridation is really for the individuals that are noncompliant with dental health and done from a public health perspective. He pointed out that he has spoken to local dentists and they are not seeing fluorosis in the area. He asked Dr. Kumar if he had ever written an article that would have given people the impression that fluoridation is not good.

Dr. Kumar said he had not, however, he said that he advised dentists to know the fluoride level in the drinking water prior to prescribing fluoride tablets.

Council Member Macaluso asked if there is a blood test that will show fluoride toxicity.

Dr. Kumar explained that fluoride will show in circulating blood but the question is whether fluoride causes toxicity. He reiterated the results of prior studies discussed in his presentation.

Work Session ended at 9:45 p.m.

Ann M. Saunders, City Clerk