

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
June 7, 2021
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith Presiding

Present: Council Member Sarah V. C. Pierce
Council Member Ryan J. Henry-Wilkinson
Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero
Council Member Leonard G. Spaziani
Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith

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

City staff present: Michael Lumbis, Scott Weller

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Resolution No. 1 - Accepting Donation for Bench in Memory of Terence M. O'Brien
- Resolution No. 2 - Accepting Bid for WTP Insertion Valve, Core & Main
- Resolution No. 3 - Authorizing Agreement with National Grid to Allow Usage of Convenience Outlets for Farm and Craft Market Vendors
- Resolution No. 4 - Authorizing Donation of Lawn Mower to Thompson Park Conservancy
- Resolution No. 5 - Approving Pivot Employee Assistance Services Contract
- Public Hearing - Proposed Amendment to the City's 2020 Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan
- Pool Admission Fees
- Increased Funding for the City's 2021 Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan
- Board and Commission Appointments

Complete Reports on file in the office of the City Clerk

Meeting opened with a moment of silence.

Pledge of Allegiance was given.

The reading of the minutes of the regular meeting of May 17, 2021, adjourned meeting of May 24, 2021, and work session of May 24, 2021, was dispensed and accepted as written by motion of Council Member Ryan J. Henry-Wilkinson, seconded by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

COMMUNICATIONS

No communications.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Patricia Whalen, 11 Public Square, addressed Council regarding the need for a covered bench at the bus stop at Walmart, the need for speed limit signs in the City and her concerns for pedestrian safety at the crosswalk in the downtown area. She also requested that the bus schedule be updated to the new route times.

Donnie Lee Barrigar, 134 Union Street, announced to Council that he will be standing post guarding the flagpole in front of City Hall beginning June 8 until June 19.

Jason Traynor, 142 Mechanic Street, requested the bus hours be extended until 10:00 p.m. and that the bus map and schedule be updated.

Terrance Jackson, 12 Franklin Street, also requested that the bus hours be extended and that the routes extend to outside the City to include areas such as Brownville.

Kevin Miller, 306 North Rutland Street, requested Council extend the hours of the bus system and offer routes outside the City. He also commented that the City should have three pools and reviewed his proposal for pool fees.

Sylvia Buduson, 108 Katherine Street, spoke in opposition to the closing of the Flynn and Alteri pools and said she disagrees with charging to use the City pools. She stated the northside of the City needs more than a splash pad.

Debbie Dermady, 118 Seymour Street, spoke in opposition of closing the neighborhood pools. Mentioning that she was a strong advocate for building the Thompson Park pool, she said she would not have pushed so hard if she knew it would lead to closing another pool. She requested Council to reconsider this as well as the idea of charging to use the pool. She mentioned that the City should use some of the \$23 million additional federal funding and the \$2.3 million infrastructure funding that was awarded to repair the other pools. She also stated that the northside need more than a splash pad.

Seth Labarge, 121 Jefferson Street, addressed Council regarding speeding on Jefferson Street, stating his car mirror has been damaged many times due to it. He explained he must park on the street because his property only has room for one car and when he parks on the street, if his tires are on the sidewalk, he has been ticketed. He also asked Council to pave a City-owned vacant lot on Jefferson Street for the residents of the street to park.

Sheila Barney-Pullus, 414 Lincoln Street, thanked Council for investing the money into studying the repair of the Route 3 wave because it used to bring a lot of people into the area. In regard to the pool, she suggested that the City ask companies to sponsor the pool or buy tickets for kids to use the pool.

Patricia Whalen, 11 Public Square, spoke again stating the sidewalk in front of the Morgan Stanley Building and Library needs to be repaired.

Jonathan Phillips, 735 Mill Street, stated he is opposed to pool fees because the pools should be paid for through taxes. He commented that he feels the City is not safe even though he knows the Police are doing their best, but he thinks Watertown is still not safe. He wants Council to take action, stating that people feel that Council is not listening. Lastly, he discussed the benefits of solar panels and suggested installing them on top of the pool buildings.

Kevin Miller, 306 North Rutland Street, spoke again stating that City residents should not be charged to use the pools but resident from outside of the City should be charged.

Terrance Jackson, 12 Franklin Street, spoke again asking why the City does not have a Neighborhood Watch Program.

Mayor Smith pointed out Mr. Hickey in the audience and said that he is currently heading up the Neighborhood Watch Program.

Bill Dermady, 118 Seymour Street, spoke in opposition to charging City residents to use the pool, noting there is a high poverty level in the City. Stating that he did not agree with a splash pad for the northside, he asked Council to reconsider keeping all three pools open.

Cliff Olney, 847 Washington Street, stated that he supports spending money to study the Route 3 wave. He noted, for the record, that he is speaking as a City resident and not as a candidate running for office. He discussed his thoughts about expanding the bus system and offering incentives for usage. He also noted that there should be better signage for the bus stops. Lastly, he commented that he thinks the City should spend the money to repair the pools and that he does not support charging pool fees.

PUBLIC HEARING

At 7:15 p.m. Mayor Smith asked the City Clerk to read the notice of Public Hearing concerning Proposed Amendment to the City's 2020 Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan.

Mayor Smith declared the hearing open at 7:15 p.m.

Cliff Olney, 847 Washington Street, addressed the chair asking if street repairs would be included in the plan.

Mayor Smith explained that proposed amendment and how the additional money will be used.

Mr. Olney remarked that he agreed with these uses but wished that in the future, the City would focus on small improvements to streets throughout the City instead of focusing on one street receiving major improvements.

Debbie Dermady, 118 Seymour Street, asked if any of this money was going to be used for the summer recreation program.

Mayor Smith responded that it could not be used for that purpose.

Mayor Smith declared the hearing closed at 7:19 p.m.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 1 - Accepting Donation for Bench in Memory of Terence M. O'Brien

Introduced by Council Member Ryan J. Henry-Wilkinson

WHEREAS friends of the O'Brien family would like to donate funds to place a bench in Thompson Park in memory of Terence M. O'Brien, and

WHEREAS the City of Watertown accepts this donation with the intent of using the funds for the specific purpose of ordering, assembling and installing this bench in an area to be chosen in Thompson Park,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby accepts the financial donation from the friends of the O'Brien family in the amount of approximately \$450 for a bench to be placed in Thompson Park in Memory of Terence M. O'Brien, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Parks and Recreation Department has specifically earmarked the funds to be used for this item as mentioned above.

Seconded by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 2 - Accepting Bid for WTP Insertion Valve, Core & Main

Introduced by Council Member Ryan J. Henry-Wilkinson

WHEREAS the City Purchasing Department has advertised and received sealed bids for WTP Insertion Valve, 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, May 6, 2021, at 2:00 p.m., the bids received were publicly opened and read, and

WHEREAS City Purchasing Manager Dale Morrow reviewed the bid received with the Water Department, and it is their recommendation that the City Council accept the bid submitted by Core & Main,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown accepts the bid of Core & Main in the amount of \$47,615 for WTP Insertion Valve as the lowest qualified bidder meeting our specifications, and

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

Seconded by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 3 - Authorizing Agreement with National Grid to Allow Usage of Convenience Outlets for Farm and Craft Market Vendors

Introduced by Council Member Ryan J. Henry-Wilkinson

WHEREAS the City of Watertown grants authorization each year for the Greater Watertown Chamber of Commerce to use the City's public right-of-way for the purpose of the Farm and Craft Market, and

WHEREAS the Greater Watertown Chamber of Commerce desires to allow their vendors who participate and pay for space at the annual Farm and Craft Market to gain access to National Grid's convenience outlets for electrical supply, and

WHEREAS the City of Watertown and National Grid have agreed to allow this electrical usage for the public benefit and in the best interest of its citizens,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby authorizes the attached Convenience Outlet License Agreement between the City of Watertown and National Grid, a copy of which is attached and made part of this resolution, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager is hereby authorized and directed to execute said Agreement on behalf of the City of Watertown.

Seconded by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Mayor Smith explained this is for the Farmers Market vendors to plug into the utility poles.

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

Resolution No. 4 - Authorizing Donation of Lawn Mower to Thompson Park Conservancy

Introduced by Council Member Ryan J. Henry-Wilkinson

WHEREAS the lease for the zoo between the City of Watertown and Thompson Park Conservancy, Inc., requires the City to mow large areas, and

WHEREAS the Conservancy is willing to take on some of the large area mowing duty, if they had a larger riding mower, and

WHEREAS the City of Watertown has a Gravely ProMaster PM260 Z-turn lawn mower which is considered surplus and no longer of use or value,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council hereby declares that the Gravely ProMaster PM260 Z-turn lawn mower is surplus, and authorizes donating it to Thompson Park Conservancy, Inc., and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Public Works shall make the transfer as its earliest convenience.

Seconded by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 5 - Approving Pivot Employee Assistance Services Contract

Introduced by Council Member Ryan J. Henry-Wilkinson

WHEREAS Employee Assistance Programs are designed to assist employees and their families with difficult issues related to finances, stress at home and in the workplace, substance abuse, and other issues related to the well-being of employees, and

WHEREAS an Employee Assistance Program is an effective and supportive management tool aimed at helping employees cope with life's many challenges, and

WHEREAS the City wishes to provide such a program for its employees and their families in compliance with NYS DOT and FTA requirements, and

WHEREAS the City of Watertown wishes to enter into a Service Agreement with Pivot, 167 Polk Street, Watertown, New York, for one year,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby approves the Pivot Employee Assistance Services Contract between the City of Watertown and Pivot (formerly Northern Employee Assistance Services), a copy of which is attached and made part of this resolution, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager is hereby authorized and directed to execute the Contract on behalf of the City.

Seconded by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero and carried with all voting yea.

STAFF REPORTS

Pool Admission Fees

Regarding proposed pool fees, Mayor Smith stated that this had been brought up during budget sessions and he does not support this currently, nor has he ever supported it in the past. He noted that last year \$13,000 was spent for a bus shuttle from the neighborhood pools to Thompson Park pool that served one rider. He explained that money was placed in the budget for just one pool because of the Covid-19 restrictions that were in place at the time the budget was completed. He clarified that none of the proposed fees for the pool were Mr. Weller's idea, but he was making this report and proposal to Council at the request of the other Council Members.

Mr. Weller explained that the fees were determined based on surveying similar municipalities and considering the fees charged to use the municipal arena for public skating.

Council Member Henry-Wilkinson informed Council that he does not mind charging non-City residents a fee but does not support charging City residents.

Council Member Pierce stated that she agreed with considering charging fees when Council was in the budget process but noted that now she only supports charging fees to large groups that are being bused in from other areas.

Council Member Ruggiero mentioned she had heard from many people regarding this fee but felt that more information was needed on who was using the pool before fees were implemented.

Council Member Spaziani pointed out that it was his suggestion and no one else's to charge a fee. He noted that when he grew up, there was a fee and he paid it even though he was poor. He stated that pools were a luxury and should be treated as such – not by taxpayers footing the bill.

Mayor Smith summarized that there was no consensus on charging City residents but there was a consensus to consider charging non-City residents. He suggested that this could be implemented next year.

City Manager Mix suggested waiting to see how many non-City residents were actually using the pool.

Council agreed to wait until next year.

Increased Funding for the City's 2021 Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan

Mayor Smith explained the memo and the details that will soon be announced regarding the economic development component of the funding program.

Board and Commission Appointments

Mayor Smith noted the vacancies in the Board of Assessment Review and the Transportation Board and asked Council to forward their recommendations on to the City Manager's Office.

NEW BUSINESS

Speed Limit Signs

Council Member Henry-Wilkinson asked why speed limit signs are not posted and wondered if that was more of an aesthetic decision.

City Manager Mix stated State law sets the City speed limit at 30 mph, adding that since all streets are the same speed limit it is not really necessary to post that everywhere. He added that the only place speed limit signs are required are in zones where the limit is reduced, such as school zones or where there is a hazard.

Transportation and NPO Work Session

Council Member Henry-Wilkinson proposed a work session to discuss transportation and the MPO so the public could be briefed about the various rules and regulations that the City must work under.

Council Member Ruggiero agreed that this would be useful, adding that she understood why members of the public were frustrated.

City Manager Mix noted the biggest hurdle to all of the various improvements in transportation that have been proposed to Council is that there has to be a regional entity willing to take on the responsibility of making these changes. He noted that many of the proposals are not within the City's jurisdiction.

Mayor Smith further noted that the City taxpayers should not be incurring the costs for improvements outside the City as the City is already providing the method of transportation.

In response to Council Member Spaziani suggesting the County should step up to make some of these improvements, Mayor Smith reminded him that the County would have to provide a County-wide transportation system for that to be possible.

Council Member Pierce's Marriage

Council Member Ruggiero offered her congratulations to Council Member Pierce (formerly Compo) on her recent wedding and wished her many years of happiness.

Memorial Day Services

Council Member Ruggiero noted that very nice ceremonies had been held for Memorial Day at the VFW and the American Legion Post 61.

Arcade Street Pedestrian Crossing

Council Member Spaziani inquired as to what was being done about the pedestrian crossing that Mrs. Whalen expressed her concerns about during Privilege of the Floor, reminding Council that he supports changing the direction of traffic flow on Arcade Street.

Mayor Smith said that this area was being looked at as part of the overall traffic study.

City Manager Mix noted that reversing the direction of Arcade Street had been done multiple times during his tenure and stated the current arrangement works well with the buses. He said these concerns could be added to the July work session.

Speed Bumps and Signs on Jefferson Street

Mayor Smith addressed the suggestion made during Privilege of the Floor about adding signage and speed bumps on Jefferson Street by stating that there are very strict regulations with the State regarding streets and he did not think they would be allowed.

City Manager Mix added that the street is very narrow and there is no easy solution. In response to the suggestion that the City offer parking on the empty lot, he noted it was not a good idea for the City to get involved in offering 3-car parking lots.

City Property Auction

In response to Council Member Ruggiero's question as to when the next auction would be held, Mr. Mix said that it was overdue and so would hopefully be soon.

COVID-19 Dollars/American Rescue Plan

Mayor Smith reminded Council and the public that there are extreme restrictions on the usage and that most of the ideas that came up during Privilege of the Floor would not qualify. He stated that the funds could be used for water and sewer. He also suggested that some areas of tourism might also qualify.

Northside vs Southside

Mayor Smith noted that his ancestors came from the northside, and it bothers him when people suggest the northside is being neglected. He mentioned huge projects such as Tilden Street as an example of the fair distribution of projects and funds. He added that he never thinks of the City as northside versus southside but always considers the City as a whole.

Motion was made by Council Member Ryan J. Henry-Wilkinson to move into Executive Session to discuss collective bargaining.

Motion was seconded by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Council moved into Executive Session at 8:19 p.m.

Council reconvened at 8:57 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 8:57 p.m. by motion of Council Member Ryan J. Henry-Wilkinson, seconded by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Ann M. Saunders
City Clerk