

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
CITY OF WATERTOWN  
July 26, 2021  
7:00 p.m.**

**Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith Presiding**

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

**Also Present:** Kenneth A. Mix, City Manager

**City staff present:** Patrick Keenan, Pete Monaco, Geoffrey Urda, James Mills

**DISCUSSION**

**Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Grant – Black River Trail Extension**

City Manager Kenneth Mix began the discussion by explaining some background on the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). He said that the City would like to make an application to the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for extending the Black River Trail easterly from Watertown to Fort Drum. The issues that were raised included the fact that there are no sponsors or applicants that have been identified and there are property ownership issues. Mr. Mix suggested that if this option does not work then the grant could possibly be used to go westerly from the trail into the City of Watertown. He noted the only issue would be to clear up some title issues on a paper street. He informed Council that writing grant applications qualifies as a planning task under the Watertown-Jefferson County Area Transportation Council (WJCTC), and it is under contract with Barton & Loguidice, who were given the go ahead to write the TAP Grant Application at the meeting held on July 15, 2021. He told Council that a plan was put together to suggest connecting Marble Street Park to Sewall's Island and possibly beyond to Factory Square Park. He stated that the MPO agreed to put in the applications and in return, he told the MPO he would present the ideas to Council.

Mr. Mix explained to Council that a TAP Grant would fund 80% of the total project cost with a 20% local match requirement. He noted it is also in a Qualified Census Tract, which makes it eligible for funding under the American Rescue Plan Act. He further explained that TAP is a reimbursement program, under which the City would front the cost of the entire project and then NYS DOT would reimburse the City 80% of the total cost. He added it can also be covered under CBDG. He then pointed out that staff is working on a cost estimate and hope to have it ready for Monday's meeting.

Council Member Ruggiero requested a cost estimate.

Mr. Mix said between \$1.5 million and \$1.8 million and with the 20% match bringing the total to \$300,000 to \$360,000.

Council Member Henry-Wilkinson indicated he likes the proposal.

In response to Council Member Spaziani's inquiry as to whether any of this money would come out of the General Fund, Mr. Mix said it would not.

Council Member Pierce suggested the idea makes sense, especially if the City can get a DOT Grant.

Council Member Ruggerio asked if this would complete the trail project.

Mr. Mix informed Council there is still more to do with a long-term goal of going all the way to Dexter, among other places

Mayor Smith said he thinks it is a great idea, especially since it will not affect the General Fund.

Mr. Mix stated he will prepare the resolutions for a future meeting.

### **Refuse and Recycling Single Stream Transition**

Superintendent of Public Works Patrick Keenan began the presentation by presenting Council with a handout (on file in the City Clerk's Office). He also introduced Pete Monaco, Assistant Superintendent of Public Works, who would be advising during the presentation. He drew Council's attention to a slideshow he prepared and stressed that the number one appeal to single stream recycling is customer convenience. Noting that there will be one bin versus five bins, he suggested that it would improve collection efficiency by the City crews and hopefully increase customer participation. He stressed that the diversion of waste taken to the landfill will lengthen the life span of the facility and will result in lower costs down the road for all users.

Mr. Keenan then summarized the current DPW solid waste management residential collection operations, which consist of weekly refuse collection staffed by eight full-time employees, bi-weekly source-separated recycling collection, seasonal brush and green waste collection, seasonal on-demand bulk item pick up and Code Enforcement response. He then discussed at length the scale of the operation, noting that refuse and recycling services are available to the City's 8,000 potential residential customers. He said he estimates approximately 3,000 customers based on collection data, with 1,600+ active tote customers and the balance comprised of sticker users. He highlighted that in 2020-2021 the City collected 3,280 tons of refuse and 530 tons of source-separated recycling product. He then summarized the program statistics through 2020 by referring to the handout which contained statistics from 2015- 2020.

Mr. Keenan then drew Council's attention to the current refuse and recycling disposal operation. He informed Council that, currently, both refuse and recycling are taken to the Jefferson County Solid Waste Facility in Pamela, and he explained that Jefferson County charges \$70/ton to load, transport and dispose of the City's refuse at the regional landfill in Rodman. He pointed out there is no charge for recycling, which is delivered pre-sorted by customers to the County facility, and yard waste collection is offered to all residents regardless of participation with the refuse program. He then referred Council to a snapshot of the typical daily collection route from GPS Data, noting there are two trucks used daily on the refuse route with two employees. He then addressed Council, asking what is next and how does the City change. He stated there are two basic questions: How is the City going to make the change to single-stream recycling? And how much will it cost? He stressed that maintaining a sustainable, reliable service for the community is paramount to any proposed changes. He then summarized that, in regard to

recycling, the main considerations are collection, how and where to dispose of the single-stream product, and the budget implications if the City continues to haul to the County facility in Pamela versus a direct haul to Rodman. He told Council that the only facility currently accepting single-stream recycling is located in Syracuse. He recommended two options to Council - the first option would be establishing a City-owned/operated recycling transfer facility to consolidate loads for transfer to Syracuse and the second option would be to procure new collection vehicles with increased payload and direct haul to Syracuse.

Mr. Keenan spoke at great length about the mileage and labor comparisons, potential options and cost, rates, increased debt service, and revenue/expense options. He noted another favorable option could be partnering with Fort Drum and using their existing transfer facility through an Intergovernmental Support Agreement (IGSA) or apply for a Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP) Grant to fund construction of a recycling transfer facility in conjunction with Fort Drum. He informed Council that the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC) had not officially released findings from their study to determine the feasibility of establishing a material recovery facility in the tri-county region. He noted that transporting single-stream recycling to their Harrisville facility is currently not an option.

Council Member Spaziani asked about tipping fees.

Mr. Keenan replied there will be more information after his meeting with Recycle America on Wednesday.

Council Member Spaziani expressed concern over the cost of the trucks and incidentals that could happen.

Council Member Ruggerio inquired about a potential rebate from DANC.

Mayor Smith explained that DANC offers a \$10 dollar rebate for single-stream recycling because it saves the life of the landfill. He explained DANC anticipates the recycling amount will go up 15%. He went on to explain that, since the City is a partner in the landfill, it is to the City's advantage to increase the life of the landfill.

Council Member Spaziani told Council he does not understand why this should be the City's responsibility once the site is closed.

Mayor Smith reminded Council Member Spaziani that the City is a partner in the landfill and any funds will eventually run out.

Council Member Spaziani and Mayor Smith debated over the pros and cons of the City's partnering in the landfill.

The Mayor and Council discussed at great length the benefits of single-stream recycling as opposed to the cons.

Council Member Spaziani said he would not support moving forward.

Council Member Ruggerio said she wants more information from Fort Drum and Recycle America before she makes any decisions.

Council Member Pierce said she is ready to move forward and have more discussions with Fort Drum and Recycle America.

Council Member Henry-Wilkinson wants to move forward with more discussions with Fort Drum.

Mayor Smith indicated there are three votes to move ahead and two Council Members that are not ready.

Mr. Mix told Council and the Mayor he will be letting them know what information he obtains at the Recycle America meeting on Wednesday.

Work session ended at 8:15 p.m.

*Margaret M. Puccia*  
Deputy City Clerk