

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**  
**CITY OF WATERTOWN**  
**August 9, 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:** James Mills, Geoffrey Urda, Patrick Keenan, Mike Delaney, Mike Lumbis

**DISCUSSION**

**Complete Streets Design Guidelines**

Geoffrey Urda, Planner, began the presentation by presenting a handout to Council (on file in the City Clerk's office) along with a slideshow. He informed that Council the Complete Streets Committee consists of himself, City Engineer Michael Delaney, Superintendent of Public Works Patrick Keenan, Police Chief Charles Donoghue and Human Resources Manager Matthew Roy. He informed Council that on January 17, 2017, the City Council adopted a Complete Streets Policy for the City of Watertown. He said that this policy formalized the City's intent to design, provide and maintain a safe, accessible and well-connected multimodal surface transportation network that meets the needs of all users. He explained that over the last few months, the Committee has worked to classify all the City's streets into eight different classifications and to establish benchmark recommended cross sections for each classification.

Mr. Urda provided details for each of the following Street Classifications:

- **Low Volume Residential** primarily serve the residents living on them. The streets are not intended for through traffic, and the design should calm traffic and encourage slower vehicular speeds to enhance bicyclist and pedestrian comfort. He noted that these streets carry the greatest potential for children playing outside. He summarized the minimum requirements for sidewalk width along with tree planting guidelines.
- **School Safety Corridor** are the streets immediately adjacent to school campuses. He stressed that these are high in vehicular volume at peak drop off and pick up times and there is also a high pedestrian volume at those peak times. He explained in detail that given the high volume of vehicular traffic and parallel parked cars, a 28-foot width with two 14-foot travel lanes is recommended with a slightly wider crossing distance, among other suggestions.
- **Neighborhood Connector** streets tend to be medium volume. They act as connectors that carry residents between their Low Volume Residential streets to higher volume Radial Streets that connect them to the rest of City and region. He told Council that these streets generally run perpendicular to Radial Streets and taken as a group, tend to form concentric circles around the City Center.
- **Radial Collector and Radial Arterial** are the two classes of Radial streets. He explained in great detail the difference between Radial Collector and Radial Arterial and pointed out Radial

Collectors tend to run parallel to higher volume Radial Arterials, which makes them appealing alternatives to bicyclists seeking to avoid busier streets. He provided the example of a biker being more willing to use Academy Street instead of using the busier State Street. He summarized curb widths along with the capability of on-street parking.

- **Downtown Core** streets are designed to provide access in and out of downtown as well as provide for short distance pedestrian trips within the downtown business and entertainment district. He mentioned that Downtown Streets will see significantly increased pedestrian activity compared to the rest of the City. He drew Council's attention to the slideshow and noted the extra wide sidewalks, which are used for more than just accommodating pedestrian trips. He added that they provide space for outdoor tables and furniture and activate downtown as a dining entertainment destination.
- **Rural Gateway/Rural Transition** are streets that carry traffic in and out of the City and have significantly less development than other streets with the City. He added that these streets take on rural character despite still being within the City limits. He expressed concern that these types of streets are tempting motorists to exceed the speed limit because they give the feeling of being in the country.
- **State-Maintained Arterial** streets are maintained by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT). Mr. Urda clarified that the City does not have direct design control over these streets, but typically has the opportunity to provide input prior to NYSDOT projects. He informed Council that Arsenal Street has the highest Average Annual Daily Trips (AADT) of any street in the City.

Mr. Urda and Council then discussed at great length the pros and cons to the different streets in the City.

Council Member Henry-Wilkinson suggested Holcomb Street would be better labeled as a Radial Collector or a Neighborhood Connector and expressed concern about snow storage on the street. He noted there are very few trees and told Council that more families have begun moving onto the street.

Mr. Urda said they have gone back and forth with this, and it could be a Radial Connector if that is the direction Council would like to take.

Council Member Pierce asked if daycares could be part of the School Safety Corridor. She noted that she has received feedback from parents of children attending New Day Daycare saying that during peak hours there is a high volume of traffic and pedestrians.

Mr. Urda said that it was great point and it should be easy enough for the GIS Department to add that layer. He stated it was a great suggestion.

Mayor Smith said he likes the concepts but still has concerns about on-street parking. He also suggested getting together with some biking groups for their input.

Mr. Urda said that after obtaining Council's feedback and input the Committee plans to draft a formal Complete Streets Design Guidelines document for adoption by resolution at a future City Council Meeting.

### **ARPA Funding-City Projects**

City Manager Ken Mix started the presentation by distributing a handout (on file in the City Clerk's office) and a slideshow of potential water and sewer projects. He drew Council's attention to the handout and explained the Corona Virus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (CLFRF), which was established by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), will be providing the City of Watertown \$22,265,728. He noted that the City has received half of the money. The use of the funds is governed by the Act and the Interim Final Rule issued by the U.S. Department of Treasury. He summarized what is eligible and what is not, along with the general categories of eligible expenses. He said that the FAQ continues to be updated and what is eligible is still far from clear in many cases. He highlighted that if the Treasury determined at a later time that money was spent on an ineligible activity, then they can take the money back. Mr. Mix discussed at length that the clearest eligible activities are investments in infrastructure. He drew Council's attention to a list of water and sewer projects which are eligible under the "Clean Water State Revolving Fund." He noted that the list is still a work in progress and added that the total so far is \$41 million for some projects that have justifications. He recommends that the Water Distribution projects be given the highest priority because they represent the highest liability to the City. He suggested that stormwater projects be given second priority because their cost comes out of the General Fund. He then discussed other projects that have been suggested and if Council is interested in considering them, staff can try to determine whether they are eligible. He explained that some projects which are identified on the list are already in the budget, so staff is moving forward with them. He said the budget will have to be amended to include the other projects Council wants to do.

Mr. Mix, Mayor Smith and Council discussed at length the Water Distribution Projects, Water Source and Purification Projects, Sanitary Sewer Projects, Sewage Treatment Projects and Stormwater Sewer Projects and some other projects that have been put on the table.

Mayor Smith questioned if the City should use funds on more affordable housing, noting that he believes there is plenty of low-to-moderate income housing. He added that the City needs more market-rate housing and he is not in favor of obtaining more low-to-moderate housing.

Council Member Spaziani asked what percentage of these projects would be done in-house.

Mr. Mix said with this high number of projects, most will be bid out and stressed that the City just does not have the manpower.

Council Member Spaziani drew Council's attention to a list of projects and estimated costs he suggested. He told Council they are smaller projects but feels they are ones that could be done and be over with. He expressed concern that there may not be eligible workers next year due to Covid-19.

Mr. Mix pointed out that they did add in three projects at budget time for \$1.1 million.

Mayor Smith advised that when picking the projects, they should go with staff's recommendation as to what the priorities are.

Council Member Spaziani expressed concern that some of the street's pipes do not have enough water pressure for fire protection.

Council Member Ruggiero agreed with Council Member Spaziani and expressed concern about the safety of those on the affected streets. She said she would like to see those pipes addressed sooner rather than later.

Mayor Smith recommended some sort of split in cost for the backflow preventers with the homeowner.

Council Member Henry-Wilkinson said he feels the backflow prevention program will be important in the next few years.

Mayor Smith said he has been in touch with Senator Schumer's office regarding police cameras.

Mr. Mix pointed out that it is important to know exactly which funds can be used for police cameras.

### **Tennis Courts Unveiling**

Mayor Smith addressed Council, asking if they are available to do an unveiling of the Tennis Courts on September 13<sup>th</sup> at 6pm.

Work session ended at 8:45 p.m.

*Margaret M. Puccia*  
Deputy City Clerk