

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
November 9, 2020
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith Presiding

Present: Council Member Sarah V. Compo
Council Member Ryan J. Henry-Wilkinson
Council Member Jesse C.P. Roshia
Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero
Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith

Also Present: Kenneth A. Mix, City Manager

City staff present: Michael Delaney, Vicky Murphy, Scott Weller

DISCUSSION

International Development Hockey League

City Manager Kenneth Mix started the discussion by explaining to Council that the Watertown Wolves were asking for an amendment to their contract. Mr. Mix said that owner Andreas Johansson told him that he wanted to meet with the Mayor and Council to discuss the changes.

Mayor Smith told Council that he talked to Mr. Johansson last evening about the changes and informed Council that one of his requests is out of the City's control. He informed Council that he told Mr. Johansson he would have to get in touch with Governor Cuomo's office to obtain information about how many people will be allowed in the Ice Arena. He said that the latest update he has heard is that there is a Hockey Mom working on obtaining as much information as possible and is trying to nail down information on what exactly will be allowed at the Arena. One sample question is will all skating and hockey be allowed or will it be pinpointed more for just youth hockey or figure skating. He noted that currently in some states, he knows that only one or two parents are allowed to attend games. He stressed the importance of finding answers to these questions since leagues like the Watertown Wolves and Syracuse Crunch rely on attendance to survive. He told Council that Mr. Johansson said that if a 50% capacity is allowed, he will lose money but that would be workable. He further noted that Mr. Johansson stated that anything less than that, he would not be able to maintain the contract. Mayor Smith expressed that he understands Mr. Johansson's predicament but at this point he does not have the answers.

Mayor Smith then told Council that the second question Mr. Johansson had was if the City would be willing to extend the ice season to the second week in May. Mayor Smith explained why Mr. Johansson thought this would help offset the downsizing of attendance, noting that Mr. Johansson also suggested starting games earlier than 7:30 and reducing practice fees. Mayor Smith drew Council's attention to the fact that extending the season would have an impact on the Garage Sale and the Home Show which are held at the Ice Arena in May. He indicated that contact was made to the organizers of the Home Show and, though they were not excited about the idea, they were willing to make some compromise.

Mr. Mix told Council that there were two other items that Mr. Johansson was concerned about. He had Scott Weller Assistant Superintendent of Parks and Recreation discuss these concerns with Council.

Mr. Weller reiterated to Council that, through several emails and phone calls, Mr. Johansson wanted to talk about the possibility of extending the ice season into May and starting the games earlier. Mr. Weller explained that this could conflict with other events that take place in the Arena.

Mayor Smith said in regard to starting the games earlier, Mr. Johansson would have to take into account start times for the other leagues. He then listed the different options that could be made to obtain this goal. He also pointed out that he thinks the \$80 fee is a good rate and it should stay.

Council Member Ruggiero said that she agrees it is a good rate and if they change it for him, then others will want their fees reduced also.

Council Member Compo agreed with Mayor Smith and hopes that an agreement with other leagues can be made to start the games earlier.

Council Member Henry Wilkinson agreed that the Arena is a great asset to the area and hopes a compromise can be made that helps everyone.

Mr. Weller told Council that he did reach out to the Minor Hockey and Figure Skating leagues for feedback and indicated that they are not interested in giving up any time, but would be willing to adjust their schedules if it would help.

Council Member Roshia asked Mr. Weller about the the effects on the non-skating events scheduled to be held at the Arena.

Mr. Weller replied that he spoke to Phil Reed for feedback about rearranging the events. He said that Mr. Reed pointed out they always try to have most of the events in early spring but is willing to talk about some other options. He said he hopes that they can have an answer for Mr. Johansson soon and that everyone can work together during this time and come up with a solution that works for everyone.

Mayor Smith told Mr. Weller that he also hopes everyone will work together but restated that has no plans to change the practice fees.

Micro Hydro

City Engineer Michael Delaney and Water Superintendent Vicki Murphy addressed Council with a general overview of Micro Hydro and what they feel is viable and what is not, along with a discussion of cost versus benefit.

Mr. Delaney explained that his initial thoughts were that if they moved forward, it would be with a micro turbine at the hydro plant because the infrasturce is already in place.

Ms. Murphy said she just read the report and discussed the different options that are at the site and explained the different types of intake pipes, noting there is still a lot of research that needs to be done.

Mayor Smith added that in exploring the different ideas, Mr. Delaney had suggested flow meters might be a less expensive option.

Mr. Delaney and Ms. Murphy discussed that the flow meters are a less expensive options while still being effective at gauging what they take back in and also how much debris flows through the area.

Ms. Murphy pointed out that it is important to understand that the current contract ends in 2030 and power is supposed to come from hydro.

Mayor Smith said the City has the ability to produce more power under the current agreement.

Ms. Murphy said this is true, however, that is through hydro.

Attorney Slye summarized what is in the current contract, noting that at the time it was implemented, it was made under what could be afforded at the time.

Mayor Smith and Mr. Delaney discussed some more options that could be possible.

Mayor Smith inquired what a possible benefit could be if it was to be placed at the Water Treatment Plant.

Mr. Delaney said that any extra energy could possibly be sold.

Mr. Slye clarified and informed Council of the legal repercussions that could follow amending the contract.

Mr. Delaney explained that, in his opinion, from the cost infrastructure standpoint, it is the best financially. He explained that by putting a unit close to the facility, it utilizes that energy. He added that the challenge with the Hydro Plant is licensing and expressed concern that it would stir up issues with Government agencies like the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). He told Council that he will have to do a lot of research on the subject especially with the DEC and Fish and Wildlife agencies.

Work session ended at 7:24 p.m.

Motion was made by Council Member Ryan J. Henry-Wilkinson to move into Executive Session to discuss employment history of certain individuals.

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

Council moved into Executive Session at 7:25 p.m.

Council reconvened at 8:47 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 8:47 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.

Margaret M. Puccia
Deputy City Clerk