

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
January 17, 2023
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith Presiding

Present: Council Member Patrick J. Hickey
Council Member Clifford G. Olney III
Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce
Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero
Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith

Also Present: Kenneth A. Mix, City Manager
Justin Miller, Interim City Attorney

City staff present: Michael Delaney, Michael Lumbis, Kyle Meehan

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Resolution No. 1 - Approving Change Order No. 1 with Mattessich Iron LLC for the Alex T. Duffy Fairgrounds Grandstand Steel Repair Project
- Resolution No. 2 - Authorizing the Sale of Various Abandoned Bicycles
- Resolution No. 3 - Accepting Bid for WWTP Boiler Burner and Control System Replacement Project - Trojan Energy Systems
- Resolution No. 4 - Approving Agreement Between the City of Watertown and State of New York, Unified Court System
- Resolution No. 5 - Approving Supplemental Agreement #2 with Fisher Associates for ROW Incidentals and Acquisition, and Additional Design Work for the Pedestrian Signal Improvement Project (PSAP) - NYSDOT PIN 70PS02,
- Resolution No. 6 - Engaging Christina E. Stone, Esq. for Selected Legal Services
- Resolution No. 7 - Adopting the Amendment to the Community Development Block Grant 2019 Annual Action Plan
- Resolution No. 8 - Authorizing the Sale of Surplus Police Vehicles and DPW Equipment
- Resolution No. 9 - Approving the Site Plan for the Construction of a 2,738 square foot Taco Bell Restaurant and Associated Site Improvements at 514, 528 and 540 State Street, Parcel Numbers 12-03-126.000, 12-03-127.000 and 12-03-128.000
- Resolution No. 10 - Directing the City Manager to Investigate with the Intent to Implement a Community Choice Aggregation Program.
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) 2023 Annual Action Plan Public Hearing
- Tax Sale Certificate Assignment Auction
- PILOTs
- Sales Tax Revenue – December 2022
- Sale of Surplus Hydro-electricity – December 2022

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 January 3, 2023 and work session of January 9, 2023, was dispensed and accepted as written by motion of Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

COMMUNICATIONS

An email was received from Vincent and Michele DeGennaro, 208 East Hoard Street, offering a proposal for the property at 214 East Hoard Street, which has a long history of neglect and is in a state of disrepair.

Above communication was placed on file in the office of the City Clerk.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Kathy Burgess, Harris Drive, addressed comments made by Council Member Olney on his Facebook page regarding why she decided not to take the property at 235 Main Avenue through the tax sale certificate process. She clarified that she had already told Council several times at a previous Council meeting that her decision to ask for a refund was not due to the property's possible contamination. She stressed that rumors spread disinformation, which now has become part of a lawsuit. She also read a message that she received from P.J. Simao, which she received after speaking out about this issue.

Jonathan Phillips, 735 Mill Street, expressed disappointment in three members of Council, especially in regard to the deal to purchase the Watertown Golf Club. He noted the City needs to focus more on the streets and sidewalks that are falling apart, as well as the issue with the drinking water.

Greg Maneeley, 1324 Richards Drive, informed Council of a long-time drainage issue that affects his house and many others within his neighborhood. He also mentioned the truck that picks up leaves needed repairs, so it was taken out of service. He said Council should be addressing issues like these, but their main focus has been the Park and Watertown Golf Club instead of focusing on infrastructure. He also questioned how the City would staff the Golf Course when it cannot fill the current vacancies among the City departments.

Tammy Higby, spoke about the homeless issue in the City, stating that she had lived in her car for several months. She asked the Council to address getting more low-income housing and develop rehab programs for those that need it. She spoke of the most recent shelter that was opened on Main Avenue and expressed frustration with it being closed.

Laura Chapin, stated that she has been helping to care for the homeless and she suggested using the Children's Home or the Globe Mini Mall for a permanent shelter. She noted there could be separate areas for men and women and they are both on the bus route and near the services that are needed. She said some of the homeless individuals were housed in Carthage, but now they are not near the services that they need. Lastly, she said the City does not need three pools and should put the funding towards the homeless issue.

Robert Kimball, 927 Ives Street, thanked the previous speakers for bringing the homelessness issue to light and said it is a multifactorial problem, which the City needs to help address. He also thanked Ms.

Blevins for legally challenging the purchase of the Watertown Golf Club, stating that he is opposed to it at this “inflated price.”

Scott Garrabrant, 140 Flower Avenue East, thanked the Mayor and Council Member Pierce for standing up for the taxpayer in regard to the purchase of the Watertown Golf Club. He said he feels that the upcoming election will be a reflection of this decision and will bring more people out to vote.

Jeff Kimball, 267 Ward Street, remarked that he hoped the City would adopt a social media policy, mentioning that a Council Member has posted cartoons degrading other members of Council. He stated that there have been comments deleted and people blocked from this Facebook account, which is a violation of the First Amendment. He also offered to volunteer for an advisory committee for the Watertown Golf Club, noting his past experience with it.

Robert Avallone, Watertown, stated that he provided Council with a page of information (on file in the City Clerk’s Office) regarding the Revere Senior Center and Warming Center. He said there is a benefit to opening a senior center in Watertown, which could be combined with a warming center to make it a 24-hour facility. He also congratulated Council Member Pierce for her decision to stay on Council instead of taking the position offered by the County Legislature.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 1 - Approving Change Order No. 1 with Mattessich Iron LLC for the Alex T. Duffy Fairgrounds Grandstand Steel Repair Project

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City Engineering Department has received Change Order #1 for the Alex T. Duffy Fairgrounds Grandstand Steel Repair Project from Mattessich Iron LLC, known as the Contractor, and

WHEREAS the Contractor’s Original Contract Price of **\$100,985.00** has been increased by **\$18,545.00** due to an increase in the scope of work, and

WHEREAS City Engineer, Michael Delaney reviewed the Project Change Quote received with the Engineering Department, and it is their recommendation that the City Council accept the Project Change Quote submitted by Mattessich Iron LLC,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown accepts the revised Contract Agreement in the amount of **\$119,530.00**, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager is hereby authorized and directed to execute Change Order No. 1 with Mattessich Iron LLC.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 2 - Authorizing the Sale of Various Abandoned Bicycles

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown has acquired several abandoned bicycles, the listing of which is attached and made a part of this resolution, and

WHEREAS the bicycles may have some value best determined by on-line auction,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, that it hereby authorizes the sale, by on-line auction, of the abandoned bicycles, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that final acceptance of such bids shall constitute acceptance of the same by the City Council.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Olney questioned whether the City is doing everything it can to find out who the bicycles were stolen from. He also wondered if the City could give the bicycles to children that cannot afford one.

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

Resolution No. 3 - Accepting Bid for WWTP Boiler Burner and Control System Replacement Project - Trojan Energy Systems

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City desires to replace the current dual gas burner at the Wastewater Treatment Plant as it is not functioning and repair parts are obsolete, and

WHEREAS the Purchasing Department advertised and received two (2) sealed bids for the WWTP Boiler Burner and Control System Replacement Project, and

WHEREAS on December 22, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. the bids received were publicly opened and read, and

WHEREAS Purchasing Manager, Tina Bartlett-Bearup reviewed the bids received with the Engineering and Water Departments and it is their recommendation that the City Council accept the lowest responsive responsible bid submitted by Trojan Energy Systems,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby accepts the bid received from Trojan Energy Systems in the amount of \$67,892.00, and

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

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 4 - Approving Agreement Between the City of Watertown and State of New York, Unified Court System

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown is required by law to furnish and maintain adequate court facilities for use by Trial Courts of the State of New York, and

WHEREAS Chapter 686 of the Laws of 1996 was enacted to invest the State of New York with the fiscal responsibility of managing the interior cleaning of court facilities and performance of minor repairs therein, and with the ability to cover the cost thereof, and

WHEREAS Chapter 686 of the Laws of 1996 requires the State of New York to contract with political subdivisions of the State for the cleaning of court facilities, as well as minor emergency repairs thereof,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Manager is hereby authorized and directed to execute this Agreement and the budget incorporated as Appendix B on behalf of the City of Watertown.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 5 - Approving Supplemental Agreement #2 with Fisher Associates for ROW Incidentals and Acquisition, and Additional Design Work for the Pedestrian Signal Improvement Project (PSAP) - NYSDOT PIN 70PS02.

Introduced by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce

WHEREAS at its November 5, 2018 meeting the City Council approved an Agreement with Fisher Associates for the design of six ADA accessible intersections in the City, and

WHEREAS at the July 20, 2020 Council Meeting the City approved Supplemental Agreement #1 for design, ROW incidentals and acquisition services, with Fisher Associates, and

WHEREAS during ROW acquisition clear title for an easement for 403 Washington St. (First Presbyterian Church) could not be obtained without going through the condemnation process, and

WHEREAS churches are subject to the Religious Corporations Law, and

WHEREAS under the Law the acquisition must be filed in the Supreme Court under Eminent Domain Procedure Law (EDPL), and

WHEREAS the City has undertaken a resurfacing project with funds from the NYSDOT and National Highway System for Massey Street, Coffeen Street and the Court St. Bridge PIN 775362, and

WHEREAS during the design process for the Massey, Coffeen, Court Street Bridge Project clear title could not be obtained for easements at 501 Coffeen St., 736 Coffeen St. and 268 Arsenal St. in a timely manner, and

WHEREAS to not hold up the Massey Coffeen Court St Bridge Project, PIN 775362 NYSDOT required the City to move the three (3) ADA improvements on the Massey Coffeen Court project to the Pedestrian Signal Improvement Project PIN 70PS02, and

WHEREAS in support of this project, Supplemental Agreement #2 with Fisher Associates for the design, ROW Incidental and ROW acquisition services for the Pedestrian Signal Improvement Project, PIN 70PS02 in the amount of \$30,000 has been prepared,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby approves the Supplemental Agreement #2 between the City of Watertown and Fisher Associates, a copy of which is attached and made a part of this resolution, and

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

Seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Ruggiero indicated that she will abstain from voting because Fisher Associates rents space in her office building.

At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea except for Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero abstaining.

Resolution No. 6 - Engaging Christina E. Stone, Esq. for Selected Legal Services

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City Council has selected Harris Beach PLLC as City Attorney to serve on an interim basis, and

WHEREAS, however, the City Council feels that it is efficient and cost effective to continue to have Christina E. Stone, Esq., provide selected legal services that she has been providing as an employee of Slye Law Office, and

WHEREAS those selected legal services include City Court, Code Enforcement, ZBA, and Planning Board matters, and

WHEREAS Ms. Stone has presented a Letter of Engagement for those selected services,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby engages Christina E. Stone, Esq. for City Court, Code Enforcement, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Planning Board legal matters, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager is hereby authorized and directed to execute the Letter of Engagement with Christina E. Stone, Esq., a copy of which is attached and made part of this resolution, on behalf of the City of Watertown.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 7 - Adopting the Amendment to the Community Development Block Grant 2019 Annual Action Plan

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS on May 20, 2019, the City Council adopted a resolution approving the City's Annual Action Plan for Program Year 2019 for its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, and

WHEREAS the approved plan included various projects including an owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program, a homebuyer program, a sidewalk project, a demolition project, a bus shelter installation project, a point-in-time outreach and education initiative, as well as a planning activity that paid for part of the City's Zoning Re-Write, and

WHEREAS three of the projects came in under budget that necessitate amending the plan to reflect the various adjustments, which will be used to add a new project to the budget, and

WHEREAS Staff conducted outreach efforts with local constituency groups and the City Council held a public hearing on January 3, 2023, to solicit public comments regarding the proposed amendment, and

WHEREAS the draft amendment to the 2019 Annual Action Plan was completed and published on December 14, 2022, and was made available to the public for review and placed in various offices at City Hall, at the Roswell P. Flower Memorial Library, at the Watertown Housing Authority offices and on the City's website, and

WHEREAS a 30-day public comment period for the draft amendment to the 2019 Annual Action Plan was held between December 14 2022 and January 14, 2023, after a notice of the comment period was published in the *Watertown Daily Times*,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council hereby adopts the Amendment to the City of Watertown's CDBG Program Annual Action Plan for Program Year 2019, a copy of which is attached and made part of this resolution and authorizes the submission of the amendment to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 8 - Authorizing the Sale of Surplus Police Vehicles and DPW Equipment

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown has various surplus police vehicles and DPW equipment, the description of which is attached and made a part of this resolution, and

WHEREAS these vehicles and equipment may have some value best determined by on-line auction,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, that it hereby authorizes the sale, by on-line auction, of the various surplus police vehicles and DPW equipment as described in the attached listing, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that final acceptance of such bids shall constitute acceptance of the same by the City Council.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 9 - Approving the Site Plan for the Construction of a 2,738 square foot Taco Bell Restaurant and Associated Site Improvements at 514, 528 and 540 State Street, Parcel Numbers 12-03-126.000, 12-03-127.000 and 12-03-128.000

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS Stephanie Albright, P.E. of APD Engineering and Architecture on behalf of Hospitality Syracuse, has submitted an application for Site Plan Approval for a 2,738 sq. ft. Taco Bell restaurant and associated site improvements at 514, 528 and 540 State Street, Parcel Numbers 12-03-126.000, 12-03-127.000 and 12-03-128.000, and

WHEREAS the Planning Board of the City of Watertown reviewed the site plan at its meeting held on January 3, 2023, and voted to recommend that the City Council of the City of Watertown approve the site plan with the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall combine the lots prior to the issuance of a building permit by way of a new metes and bounds description that is filed with the County Clerk.
2. The applicant shall install grass in the margin area where the driveway aprons are proposed for removal.
3. The applicant shall revise the landscaping plan to the satisfaction of City Staff to include one large deciduous tree planted approximately every 40' or one small to medium deciduous tree planted approximately every twenty feet with planting beds in between the trees in the areas along the street rights-of-way.
4. The applicant shall revise the landscaping plan to the satisfaction of City Staff to include one large deciduous tree planted every 40' or one small to medium deciduous tree planted every 20' or one large coniferous tree planted every 20' along the eastern property line and along the southern site boundary to adequately buffer the residentially zoned areas.
5. The applicant shall coordinate with and obtain permission from National Grid for the proposed street light relocation.
6. The applicant shall reduce the size of the snow storage area by approximately 10' on the west, south and east sides to provide a larger landscaped buffer more suitable for the long-term survival of the plant material placed there and to reduce the amount of impervious area on the site.
7. The applicant must obtain the following permits, minimally, prior to demolition and construction: Demolition Permit, Building Permit, General City Permit (for work within the right-of-way), Sanitary Sewer Connection Permit, Water Supply Permit, and a Zoning Compliance Certificate.

And,

WHEREAS the City Council previously considered the “whole action” pursuant to SEQRA, and adopted a Resolution on December 5, 2022, finding that the project, as submitted, is an Unlisted Action and will not have a significant effect on the environment,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that it is an express condition of this Site Plan Approval that the applicant provide the City Engineer with a copy of any change in stamped plans forming the basis for this approval at the same time such plans are provided to the contractor. If plans are not provided as required by this condition of site plan approval, the City Code Enforcement Officer shall direct that work on the project site shall immediately cease until such time as the City Engineer is provided with the revised stamped plans. Additionally, any change in the approved plan, which, in the opinion of the City Engineer, would require Amended Site Plan Approval, will result in immediate cessation of the affected portion of the project work until such time as the amended site plan is approved. The City Code Enforcement Officer is directed to periodically review on-site plans to determine whether the City Engineer has been provided with plans as required by this approval, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown that Site Plan Approval is hereby granted to Stephanie Albright, P.E. of APD Engineering and Architecture on behalf of Hospitality Syracuse for Site Plan Approval for the construction of a 2,738 sq. ft. Taco Bell restaurant and associated site improvements at 514, 528 and 540 State Street, Parcel Numbers 12-03-126.000, 12-03-127.000 and 12-03-128.000, as depicted on the site plan submitted to the City Planning and Community Development Department on December 20, 2022, contingent upon the applicant meeting the conditions listed above.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 10 - Directing the City Manager to Investigate with the Intent to Implement a Community Choice Aggregation Program.

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS Amber Energy US, Inc. identified selling electricity to residential consumers through NYSERDA’s Community Choice Aggregation program as a potential revenue source in their May 3, 2022, report entitled Watertown Hydro-Electric Project Revenue Options, and

WHEREAS the City Council wishes to pursue this revenue source,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby directs the City Manager to investigate and determine the actions needed to implement a Community Choice Aggregation program within the City of Watertown.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Mr. Mix explained, upon the request of Council Member Olney, that the City could buy energy on the wholesale market and sell it to its residents. He added that it is an opportunity for the City to gain revenue while offering residents electricity at a reduced rate.

Mayor Smith noted that this was a finding of the Hydro Committee and noted that it does not affect distribution. He said it is a benefit to the residents of the City and the City can generate revenue from it.

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

STAFF REPORTS

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) 2023 Annual Action Plan Public Hearing

A report from Planning and Community Development Director Michael Lumbis explained that staff is beginning the process of developing the City's 2023 Annual Action Plan for the CDBG Program and the next step is to schedule a public hearing.

Motion was made by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero to schedule a Public Hearing to hear public input on the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) 2023 Annual Action Plan for Tuesday, February 21, 2023, at 7:15 p.m. Motion was seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Tax Sale Certificate Assignment Auction

A report was provided by the City Comptroller James Mills, indicating that no bids were received for the tax sale certificate for 235 Main Avenue at the auction held on January 10.

PILOTs

A report was provided at the request of Council Member Hickey, showing the current Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTs).

Sales Tax Revenue – December 2022

A report was available for Council's review.

Sale of Surplus Hydro-electricity – December 2022

A report was available for Council's review.

NEW BUSINESS

Privilege of the Floor Comments – Richards Drive Drainage Issue

Mayor Smith asked if staff could look at the drainage issues on Richards Drive and provide Council with a report.

Privilege of the Floor Comments – Homelessness

In regard to locations suggested for a homeless shelter, Mayor Smith noted that the Children's Home is owned by the County, so the City has no jurisdiction over it and the Globe Mini Mall is privately owned by a developer turning it into rental units. He said that no one denies that there is a homeless issue in the City of Watertown, but the City does not have a department with the expertise to deal with it. He advised that the County has a department dedicated to providing these services as well as the resources and funding. He added that County Legislator Doldo, County Legislator Chairman Johnson and County Administrator Hagemann have been working on this problem.

Watertown Golf Club Court Decision

Mayor Smith announced that Judge McClusky ruled today that the purchase of the Watertown Golf Club can move forward.

Upcoming Meetings

Council Member Hickey announced the following meetings and events: Transportation Commission meeting on January 18, City Planning Board meeting on January 19, Watertown Local Development meeting on January 26, Friends of Thompson Park meeting on January 26, Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America on January 30 – February 2, Black History Month in February and Snowtown Events on February 2 – February 5.

Housing Study for DANC

Council Member Hickey noted that Newmark Valuation and Advisory did a housing study for the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC) in October of 2022 and found that Watertown lacks affordable rental units. He said that it concluded that the City needs 731 low-cost apartments and 186 units for seniors.

Downtown Block Party

Council Member Hickey announced that the block parties will be held this summer on the following Fridays: June 30, July 28 and August 25.

CDBG Public Hearing

Council Member Hickey noted that a public hearing will be held on February 21 for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program for both the Annual Action Plan and the 5-year Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report. He provided details of this program and what the funding has been used for in the past.

Overdose Deaths/ Drug Problem

Council Member Hickey reported that there were 32 drug overdose deaths in 2021 in Jefferson County, and for 2022, there are 21 with another 8 pending toxicology. He said most of these were opioid and fentanyl related, and he stressed the importance of more education and the availability of harm reduction kits. He also provided statistics on the drug seizures done by the Drug Enforcement Administration in 2021.

DEC Annual Spring Seedling Sale

Council Member Hickey advised that the Department of Environment Conservation (DEC) is holding their annual spring seedling sale and information can be found on their website. He added that there are also free seedlings available for Youth Education Through the School Seeding Program and applications are available through March 31.

Privilege of the Floor Comments – Richards Drive Drainage Issue

Council Member Olney thanked Mr. Maneeley for bringing this issue forward and said he will try to elevate the problem. He added that more positions were added to the budget in order to get more done.

Privilege of the Floor Comments – Infrastructure and Drinking Water

Council Member Olney responded to Mr. Phillips comments, stating that funding for more projects is in the budget to address the infrastructure repairs and the drinking water issue. He asked the City Manager to provide more details.

Mr. Mix explained that the City is running a pilot program for the disinfection by-products, which was required by the Department of Health. He advised that the capital project for \$3 million in the budget is to be funded by borrowing funds, so no money has been set aside for it. He gave a quick update of the project and noted that GHD will be presenting to Council in the near future.

Council Member Olney added that the City plans to apply for grant funding through the Department of Defense for this project as well.

As far as the number of street projects in the budget, Mr. Mix agreed that there are more street and water projects, which will be paid for with ARPA funds.

Council Member Olney noted that positions have been added to the budget to help get this additional work done.

Privilege of the Floor Comments – Homelessness

Council Member Olney thanked Ms. Higby for speaking tonight and said that he wants to address the homelessness issue. He said there needs to be a permanent solution because this is a City problem and not just a County problem. He mentioned there will be a steering committee meeting tomorrow.

Privilege of the Floor Comments – Facebook Comments

Council Member Olney addressed Mr. Kimball's comments about social media, stating that he did delete disparaging comments made, in particular about the homeless. He added that he then blocked those individual because he will not allow these types of remarks.

Watertown Golf Course Purchase

Council Member Olney advised that he made a mistake about the number of tournaments that had been booked for the upcoming season and noted that there have been no commitments due to the pending litigation. He stressed that he has seen financial information which indicates the City can be successful with this.

Privilege of the Floor Comments – 235 Main Avenue Tax Sale Certificate

Regarding Ms. Burgess' comments, Council Member Olney explained that he is not concerned with the reason why she did not want the property because he was more concerned with Council not being the one to decide to return her money.

Social Media Meme

Council Member Olney mentioned the recent controversial meme he posted on social media featuring Council Member Pierce. In an effort to defend himself, he displayed several campaign memes used at the National level, some featuring puppets. He said this is routinely done at the National level. He added that the campaign for the next election has already started but he feels the right people are already on Council, so he will support candidates who have similar ideals as he does.

Council Member Pierce countered that she felt most people were sick of the divisiveness in National politics and expressed hope that this Council would be above that sort of behavior. She noted that she had always treated the other Council Members with respect and found it unfortunate to not be treated in the same manner.

Solar Eclipse Meeting

Council Member Pierce announced that the next meeting will be held on February 12.

Parking on Barben Avenue

Council Member Pierce stated that she has received complaints about cars parking along the side of the Kinney Drugs' building on Barben Avenue. She said there is a concern for safety and that it is causing a hazardous situation.

Privilege of the Floor Comments – Social Media Policy

Council Member Pierce asked for the attorney's guidance on a social media policy, mentioning that the City of Ogdensburg recently had a lawsuit brought against them stating there was a violation of the First Amendment rights.

Privilege of the Floor Comments – Senior Center

Council Member Ruggiero informed Mr. Avallone that the Flower Memorial Library does offer events and activities for seniors.

Recent Press Release Regarding Disinformation/Watertown Golf Club Purchase

Council Member Pierce mentioned a press release issued by Council Members Hickey, Olney and Ruggiero on Friday that accused her of spreading disinformation. She asked the three Council Members to provide her with a specific example of the disinformation she had given to the public.

The Council Members were reluctant to respond. This then led to a lengthy, heated discussion which included accusations of disinformation to the public, lying, rumors and other possible impropriety on various Council Members' parts. Judge McClusky's ruling was discussed, as well as the details of the asset agreement. Each side of this issue defended themselves and their position, which flowed into the New Business of Council Member Ruggiero and Mayor Smith.

At the end of Council Member Ruggiero's comments, she noted that this has been the most divisive topic on Council, and said now that the decision has been made, she hoped Council could come together to make it successful and move on to other issues.

Mayor Smith discussed the expenses associated with this purchase, as well as the operating costs, and he mentioned other costly projects that the City should be addressing. He added, for the record, his concern of excuses, if this is not successful after the first season.

Motion was made by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero to move into Executive Session to discuss proposed, pending, or current litigation and to discuss collective bargaining.

Motion was seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Council moved into Executive Session at 8:42 p.m.

Council reconvened at 10:12 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 10:12 p.m. by motion of Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Ann M. Saunders
City Clerk