

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
February 6, 2023
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith Presiding

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

Absent: Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce

Also Present: Kenneth A. Mix, City Manager
Justin Miller, Interim City Attorney (via teleconference)

City staff present: Michael Delaney, Vicky Murphy, Michael Lumbis, Scott Weller, Matthew Timerman, Geoffrey Urda, Jennifer Voss, James Mills, Michael Kellogg, Logan Eddy

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Resolution No. 1 - Approving Change Order #4 with Power & Construction Group, Inc. for the Public Square Traffic Signal Optimization and Coordination Project - NYSDOT PIN 7807.20
- Resolution No. 2 - Approving Amendment #2 of the GHD Consulting Services Agreement for the Water Treatment Plant Disinfection By-Product Project
- Resolution No. 3 - Approving the Grant Agreement with Transitional Living Services of Northern New York, for CDBG Funding for the 518 Pine Street Single-Room Occupancy (SRO) Program
- Resolution No. 4 - Approving Agreement with North Watertown Cemetery Association for Use of Playground
- Resolution No. 5 - Intent to Declare Lead Agency for the Adoption of an Ordinance Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 310, Zoning (Zoning Ordinance Update)
- Resolution No. 6 - Approving Contract Modification No. 1 to the Agreement for Professional Services with Elan Planning and Design, LLC Related to Preparing an Update to the City of Watertown's Zoning Ordinance
- Resolution No. 7 - Authorizing Application for Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG)
- Ordinance No. 1 - Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 310, Zoning and Repealing Chapter 11, Boards and Commissions, Article I, Planning Commission
- Complete Streets Annual Progress Report – Calendar Year 2022
- Fire Department Staffing Report

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 17, 2023 and special meeting of January 25, 2023, was dispensed and accepted as written by motion of Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey and carried with all present voting in favor thereof.

COMMUNICATIONS

A claim was received from Jeffrey Myers, Carthage, NY seeking reimbursement for damages to his vehicle after hitting a pothole on Arsenal Street on December 21, 2022.

A claim was received from Harold Ouellette, Carthage, NY seeking reimbursement for damages to his vehicle from an unsecured manhole cover on State Street near Ryan Jet Gas on January 15, 2023.

A notice of petition and verified petition was received from John W. and Kathleen A.M. Eisenhauer, 23795 Woodland Drive, Watertown, in regard to a library tax for the Roswell P. Flower Memorial Library on the Watertown School District Election Ballot.

A summons and verified complaint was received from Dealmaker Dodge, LLC, 137 Main Avenue, Watertown, NY in regard to the tax sale certificate for 235 Main Avenue.

A claim was received from Robert W. Fay, Watertown, for injuries he sustained from a dislodged manhole cover that struck his left leg while he was walking on West Main Street on November 19, 2022.
Above claims have been referred to the Board of Audit.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Jason Traynor, 424 Arsenal Street, reviewed the condition of the Watertown Golf Course, as well as the expenses associated with it. He stated that this purchase does not benefit the whole community and only benefits a small population of golfers in the area. He also expressed concerns with Council Member Olney's interest in purchasing a water district outside of the City.

Tammy Higby noted that she was formerly homeless but has now been placed in a home. She thanked all the individuals, including Council Member Olney, involved in helping her obtain a place to live. Lastly, she requested that abandoned homes within the City be renovated to provide shelter for the homeless.

Jonathan Phillips, 735 Mill Street, expressed concerns with the condition of the Watertown Golf Club, in particular the golf carts. He then talked about the bus system, stating that many of the new buses are not in good working order and need repairs. Lastly, he expressed his disappointment with certain Council Members.

Brian Watson addressed the chair concerning the homeless problem and the need for affordable housing. He expressed concern with the police department's response to issues in the City and also suggested that abandoned properties be torn down because they decrease the property values of houses around them.

Robert (no last name given), Watertown, read from a prepared statement regarding two proposals that he has for the City. He said his first proposal is for a Purchasing to Greatness Agreement, which he termed as PGA, and stated that it would be a written policy in place for the City to follow prior to purchasing any property. He advised that his second proposal was for the City of Watertown Golf Course, which he termed as COWGC, and it provided options for what the City could now do with the property. He stated that he provided Council Members a written detail of each proposal.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 1 - Approving Change Order #4 with Power & Construction Group, Inc. for the Public Square Traffic Signal Optimization and Coordination Project - NYSDOT PIN 7807.20 -

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City desires to reduce traffic congestion through the Public Square corridor, and

WHEREAS on June 21, 2021, City accepted the bid of Power & Construction Group, Inc. in the amount of \$416,287.17 for installation of equipment for the Traffic Signal Optimization and Coordination project, and

WHEREAS the City entered into Agreement with Fisher Associates for the construction inspection and management of the Project, and

WHEREAS additional equipment and utility work to meet current Electric Code is necessary at the intersections of Arsenal St. and Sherman St. and Arsenal and Public Square, and

WHEREAS three previous change orders brought the current Contract amount to \$426,463.31, and

WHEREAS Fisher Associates along with the City Engineering Department recommends the additional work, and it is their recommendation that the City Council accept the agreed upon price of \$55,939.74, and

WHEREAS the City is financing this project using Federal and State Aid,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby approves Change Order #4 from Power & Construction Group in the amount of \$55,939.74, for a Contract total of \$482,403.05, 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 commented that Fisher is no longer a tenant in her building, therefore she will not be abstaining from the vote.

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

Resolution No. 2 - Approving Amendment #2 of the GHD Consulting Services Agreement for the Water Treatment Plant Disinfection By-Product Project

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS GHD Consulting Services Inc., and the City of Watertown entered into an Agreement dated April 5, 2022 to perform engineering services to design a disinfection by-products system to reduce TTHM's and HAA5's, in the amount of \$43,900.00; and

WHEREAS the solution required pilot testing to demonstrate turbidity removal and filter run length in addition to DBP precursor removal; and

WHEREAS The City amended the agreement with GHD to include the additional pilot rental/commissioning, analyses, sampling, and reporting services and increased the contract by \$663,000; and

WHEREAS the City has requested that GHD assist with seeking funding for the Project to include a funding schedule, an interim report, SEQR assistance, WIIA/IMG funding assistance, DCIP funding assistance, and additional services; and

WHEREAS all the design work from the original April 5, 2022 agreement is to be suspended with work invoiced to date totaling \$4,805.00; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby approves Amendment #2 of the GHD agreement, a copy of which is attached and made part of this resolution, to include the additional services with a net increase of \$20,405.00, bringing the contract total \$727,305.00, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager, Kenneth A. Mix, is hereby authorized and directed to execute Amendment #2 on behalf of the City of Watertown.

Seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Olney asked if the City will be applying for the grant through the Department of Defense.

Water Superintendent Vicky Murphy explained the City is doing a pilot study as phase one and during phase two, they should have enough information to apply for the grant.

Mr. Mix explained the City is going at the pace, with phases, needed in order to apply for the grant. He said the grant will reduce water rates for the individual users in the City, as well as the outside users.

Mayor Smith noted that this is not the first time the City has needed to address this problem. He said the issue is that the compliance standards change and what was once compliant now no longer meets the standards. He stated that there will be a work session to address this topic and provide an update. He added that he has spoken to Congresswomen Tenney, in hopes for her assistance in receiving funding.

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

Resolution No. 3 - Approving the Grant Agreement with Transitional Living Services of Northern New York, for CDBG Funding for the 518 Pine Street Single-Room Occupancy (SRO) Program

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Annual Action Plan for program year 2022 includes funding to support the Single-Room Occupancy Program at 518 Pine Street, and

WHEREAS the Action Plan identifies the 518 Pine Street Single-Room Occupancy Program to be \$15,000 in funding to help support a Case Manager salary to provide supportive services to individuals experiencing homelessness, and

WHEREAS the recipient of funds for the 518 Pine Street Single-Room Occupancy Program will be Transitional Living Services of Northern New York, and

WHEREAS a Grant Agreement between the City of Watertown and Transitional Living Services of Northern New York for the CDBG funds has been drafted,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown that it hereby approves the Grant Agreement with Transitional Living Services of Northern New York, a copy of which is attached and made part of this resolution, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager, Kenneth A. Mix, is hereby authorized and directed to sign the Grant Agreement and all contracts associated with implementing the award to Transitional Living Services of Northern New York for the 2022, 518 Pine Street Single-Room Occupancy Program.

Seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Mayor Smith mentioned that it states this will pay for a portion of salaries and wondered if there are any measurables in terms of success.

Planning and Community Development Director Michael Lumbis explained that Transitional Living Services of Northern New York will report to the City the number of people that have been helped by this and this information will then be relayed to HUD. He confirmed for Council Member Ruggiero that they were planning an opening date in the beginning of February.

Council Member Olney expressed his support for this, noting that it will help with the homelessness problem.

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

Resolution No. 4 - Approving Agreement with North Watertown Cemetery Association for Use of Playground

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS North Star Playground, which is maintained by the City of Watertown is located on property owned by North Watertown Cemetery Association, and

WHEREAS the City Council wishes to continue to maintain a playground on Cemetery property,
and

WHEREAS a lease for the use of the playground property has been drafted,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby approves the lease with North Watertown Cemetery Association, 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 lease, 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 asked if this playground had been updated recently.

Parks and Recreation Superintendent Scott Weller confirmed that it had been in the last few years.

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

Resolution No. 5 - Intent to Declare Lead Agency for the Adoption of an Ordinance Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 310, Zoning (Zoning Ordinance Update)

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown City Council must evaluate all proposed actions submitted for its consideration in light of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), and the regulations promulgated pursuant thereto, and

WHEREAS 6NYCRR Part 617 of the SEQRA requires that a Lead Agency be established for conducting environmental review of projects in accordance with local and state environmental law, and

WHEREAS the SEQRA specifies that for actions governed by local environmental review, the Lead Agency shall be that agency which has primary responsibility to undertake, fund or approve the action, and

WHEREAS the City Council is considering the adoption of an Ordinance Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 310, Zoning and Adopting a new Zoning Map, and

WHEREAS the proposed Ordinance is a Type I Action pursuant to (SEQRA), and

WHEREAS there are no other involved agencies for SEQRA review as that term is defined in 6NYCRR Section 617.2 (t),

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Watertown City Council declares its intent to act as Lead Agency in Environmental Review of the proposed adoption of an Ordinance Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 310, Zoning and Adopting a new Zoning Map.

Seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey and carried with all voting yea.

Resolution No. 6 - Approving Contract Modification No. 1 to the Agreement for Professional Services with Elan Planning and Design, LLC Related to Preparing an Update to the City of Watertown's Zoning Ordinance

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City Council approved a Professional Services Agreement with Elan Planning and Design, LLC, on April 20, 2020, to completely update the City's Zoning Ordinance, and

WHEREAS additional tasks beyond the original scope of work have been completed, and

WHEREAS Elan Planning has requested to increase the total project expenses by \$18,000 to cover the additional work, bringing the new project budget to \$167,000, and

WHEREAS the \$18,000 increase will pay for expenses related to two (2) additional public open houses and City Council work sessions as well as additional time for edits and revisions, as detailed in "Scope of Services" in the attached documentation,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council approves Contract Modification No. 1 to the Agreement for Professional Services with Elan Planning and Design LLC in the amount of \$18,000, a copy of which is attached and made part of this resolution and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager, Kenneth A. Mix, is hereby authorized and directed to execute said Amendment on behalf of the City of Watertown.

Seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Mayor Smith mentioned that the increase will be covered by CDBG funds.

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

Resolution No. 7 - Authorizing Application for Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG)

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown Fire Department is seeking City Council approval to apply for grant funding under FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program, and

WHEREAS the purpose of this program is for critically needed resources necessary for protecting the public and emergency personnel from fire and related hazards, and

WHEREAS the application, in an amount not to exceed \$145,454.00, with the City's share not to exceed \$14,545.00, for total project cost not to exceed \$160,000.00, would provide funding to cover equipment, labor and training expenses related to CPR, for both City employees and the Community,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby authorizes the Fire Department to submit a grant application under FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Fire Chief Matthew Timmerman is hereby authorized and directed to execute the grant application on behalf of the City of Watertown and for City Manager Kenneth A. Mix to approve the grant if awarded.

Seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Mayor Smith commented that this will be for bringing current equipment up to date and for training.

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

ORDINANCES

Ordinance No. 1 - Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 310, Zoning and Repealing Chapter 11, Boards and Commissions, Article I, Planning Commission

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City of Watertown's current Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1959 and is extremely outdated, and

WHEREAS the City's Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 2019, identified the development of a new Zoning Ordinance as a priority project, and

WHEREAS, numerous comments were received during the development of the Comprehensive Plan related to the City's outdated Zoning Ordinance and the need to update it, and

WHEREAS the City Council has proposed amending Chapter 310, Zoning, of the Code of the City of Watertown, and

WHEREAS the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite Committee, appointed by the City Council on July 20, 2020, has worked with Elan Planning and Design, and City Staff, meeting numerous times over the course of the last three years to develop a new Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map for the City, and

WHEREAS four public open houses and three City Council work sessions were held throughout the development of the new Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map to solicit public input and comments, and

WHEREAS the Planning Board of the City of Watertown reviewed the proposed Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map at its January 19, 2023, meeting and adopted a motion unanimously recommending that City Council approve the proposed Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map, and

WHEREAS the proposed Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map was referred to the Jefferson County Planning Board, pursuant to New York State General Municipal Law Section 239-m, and

WHEREAS a public hearing was held on the proposed Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map on February 21, 2023, after due public notice, and

WHEREAS the City Council has determined, pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), that there will not be any significant environmental impacts caused by the adoption of this ordinance and has made a declaration of negative findings of the impacts of the proposed amendment according to the requirements of SEQRA, and

WHEREAS the City Council deems it in the best interest of the citizens of the City of Watertown to approve the proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of the City of Watertown that the following documents, titled “City of Watertown Zoning Ordinance Update” dated January 31, 2023 and “City of Watertown, New York Proposed Zoning Map”, dated January 31, 2023, which are attached and made part of this ordinance, are hereby adopted and replace the current Chapter 310, Zoning, of the Code of the City of Watertown in its entirety, and

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that Chapter 11, Boards and Commissions, Article I, Planning Commission, of the Code of the City of Watertown is hereby repealed in its entirety, and

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED these Amendments to the Code of the City of Watertown shall take effect as soon as they are published once in the official newspaper of the City of Watertown, or otherwise printed as the City Manager directs.

Seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey

Motion was made by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero to schedule a Public Hearing on the foregoing ordinance for Tuesday, February 21, 2023 at 7:15 p.m. Motion was seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey and carried with all present voting in favor thereof.

STAFF REPORTS

Complete Streets Annual Progress Report – Calendar Year 2022

A report outlining the activities of the Complete Streets Committee for 2022 was available for Council to review. It described the improvements that will result from the review of eleven upcoming transportation projects. It also included data from the policy’s prescribed performance measures for physical improvements implemented in Calendar Year 2022. City Planner Geoffrey Urda was available for questions.

Mayor Smith stated that, like always, he hopes that as the committee looks at streets to review, they notify the property owners along the street for possible input or concerns.

City Planner Geoffrey Urda confirmed that this would continue to be done.

Fire Department Staffing Report

A report was available from the Fire Chief explaining the overtime expenditures of current staffing levels and potential savings to the City at various potential staffing levels. He also advocated for the

continuation of an Administrative Captain and the benefits this position provides to the department and community.

Council Member Hickey asked how many firefighters were planning to retire.

Chief Timerman said there are sometimes surprise retirements but there was one retirement in the next month and one in November.

Council Member Ruggiero mentioned that a firefighter also retired a month or two ago so the department was down two firefighters, so they were currently at 64 personnel.

Chief Timerman agreed this was true and recommended over-hiring to account for the upcoming retirements. He noted that the savings listed in his report will not kick in right away but will be a long-term savings.

In response to Council Member Hickey's question about how long it would be before the department would know if they might receive a SAFER grant, Chief Timerman indicated it could be as long as 18 months.

Council Member Olney asked what the Administrative Captain's duties were and Chief Timerman listed them.

Noting that public education was one of the Administrative Captain's duties, Council Member Ruggiero asked if any of that public education had been in senior or low-income housing.

Chief Timerman indicated that of the 12,000 people the department reached with public education, 3,953 were in housing.

Council Member Ruggiero also noted that prior to there being an Administrative Captain, there had been a gap in the public education outreach programs.

Council Member Olney asked City Comptroller Mills to comment on the fact that 80% of the Fire Department's overtime budget had been used in only 58% of the fiscal year.

Mr. Mills agreed that was correct.

In response to Council Member Olney suggesting that it costs \$84,000 to add a new firefighter, Mr. Mills noted that it was closer to \$100,000, adding it depended on whether they take single or family insurance.

Council Member Olney did some calculations and suggested that adding five new firefighters would still cost less than paying for overtime.

Mr. Mills indicated that overtime was the unknown, adding that it could be more or less and that predicting it is not an exact science.

Council Member Olney noted he supported applying for the SAFER grants and added that he knows that FEMA likes to hire in multiples of four.

Mayor Smith asked Chief Timerman for the exact number of staff he was requesting.

Chief Timerman said the ideal number was 72 line personnel and 4 administrators for a grand total of 76.

Mayor Smith and Chief Timerman debated the consequences of having one less firefighter available per shift.

Mayor Smith suggested that these additional hires were going to increase costs to the City's insurance plan.

Mr. Mix noted that the new hires would be paying in at the new rates.

There was a lengthy debate on whether or not health insurance costs would rise due to the addition of these positions.

Mayor Smith suggested that some of the duties now performed by the Administrative Captain could be performed by line personnel.

Chief Timerman countered that if a member of the line personnel were sent to a public education meeting, it would be the same as taking one company off the shift, since the company would be down a member. He added that is why it has been so useful to have one dedicated captain to handle such situations.

The Council was polled, and Council Member Hickey, Council Member Olney and Council Member Ruggiero all agreed to add two additional firefighters and to overhire to get the staff number to 68. They also all agreed to pursue an application for the SAFER grant.

NEW BUSINESS

Brian Watson's Privilege of the Floor Comments

Mayor Smith addressed Brian Watson's suggestion that the City use abandoned buildings throughout the City to house the homeless by noting that the City cannot do anything with those properties as they are owned by individuals, banks and mortgage companies. He also countered Mr. Watson's suggestion that there is no place to build in the City by noting numerous empty lots like on North Pleasant Street and on the corner of Keyes Avenue and Washington Street.

Mr. Watson interjected that no one wants to build because the police do not respond to damage at current properties.

Mayor Smith asked Mr. Mix what the status was of Mr. Bonner's complaints from the previous meeting.

Mr. Mix indicated that he believed that an investigation had led to an arrest.

Council Member Olney asked who decided whether someone would be arrested and wondered whether that was the District Attorney.

Mr. Watson said no one had been arrested for damaging his property.

After receiving clarification as to what property he was referring to, Mayor Smith asked Mr. Mix to look into the damages at 525 Mundy Street.

Upcoming Meetings and Events

Council Member Hickey listed some upcoming meetings including a City Planning Board meeting and Local Waterfront Revitalization Program on February 7, Advantage Watertown and Eclipse meeting on February 9 and a Starr Whitehouse Thompson Park Master Plan meeting and GHD Consulting meeting on disinfection byproducts on February 13.

Decriminalizing Controlled Substances

Council Member Hickey expressed his opposition to a bill before the Senate which would decriminalize the possession of controlled substances.

Utility Bills

Council Member Hickey informed Council that the NYS Public Service Commission had approved paying off \$672 million in overdue utility bills.

Homeless during Recent Cold Snap

Council Member Hickey noted that during the weekend's extreme cold, he had been informed there were numerous options for food and shelter for the City's homeless.

Drug Seizure and Arrest

Council Member Hickey informed Council that a resident of Syracuse had been arrested in St. Lawrence County with 500 bags of heroin and Oxycodone.

Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary

Council Member Hickey mentioned the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration was looking for public input for their proposed sanctuary. He noted there would be a public meeting on March 2 at JCC and written requests should be received by March 20, 2023.

RFPs

Council Member Hickey noted the deadlines for requests for proposals were due on February 21 for grant writing services and on March 2 for food and beverage concession services.

Proposed Legislation in U.S. and NYS Senate and Assemblies

Council Member Hickey read a lengthy list of proposed legislations that could affect the City of Watertown.

Hydro Proposal for Sewall's Island

Council Member Hickey mentioned that he had received word from FERC that a preliminary permit application had been submitted by Brian McArthur of Link Past Solutions, Clark, N.J., on February 3,

2023 to develop Sewall's Island. The proposal includes two generating buildings, removal of a dam and a white-water training area.

Golf Course Purchase

Council Member Olney suggested that the narrative needs to change from "Council purchased a golf course with some land attached" to "Council purchased some land that happened to also have a golf course." He informed Council and the public that he would be hosting a meeting on his Facebook Live on Wednesday evening to explain all the details of the sale. He went on to note that this was a unique opportunity to acquire land in the Park that would benefit the City of Watertown forever.

Electrical Issues at the Watertown Golf Club

Council Member Olney stated that the media report about the supposed electrical problems in the Clubhouse were exaggerated and added that, since he had wired three houses and a business himself, he could make all the repairs. He noted there were missing junction box and breaker box covers, which were no big deal. He commented that he had been fine with no inspections being done before the sale and expressed dismay with the politicizing of the non-issue of electrical problems. He described the media report of the issues as causing "intentional uncertainty" which could potentially discourage groups from booking tournaments at the course. He explained that Mr. Lundy would make all necessary repairs.

Response to Privilege of the Floor

Council Member Olney acknowledged each person who spoke and noted that he wakes up every day trying to think of ways to make Watertown a better place.

Watertown Golf Club Lease

Council Member Olney informed Council that he had researched the lease agreements at the Watertown Golf Club all the way back to 1965 and found that the club had been given a below-market lease for years. He explained that this amounted to subsidizing a business and suggested all the money that should have been charged to the Club could have allowed the Thompson Park pool to remain open and avoided all the controversy with reopening that pool.

Mayor Smith noted that no money was given to the Club and, in fact, lease money had been paid to the City as well as taxes.

Wear Red Day – American Heart Association (AHA)

Council Member Ruggiero thanked the AHA for an event last Friday in which Mayor Smith read a proclamation and speakers had shared their stories.

Converting the Watertown Golf Club to Parkland

Council Member Ruggiero asked Mr. Mix what the process would be to convert the Club to parkland.

Mr. Mix explained that the Resolution Council passed stated that it would be parkland but he could prepare a specific Resolution to call it that.

Council Member Ruggiero indicated that once it was officially parkland the City could look into getting grants.

Mr. Mix noted most grant applications were due in the early summer.

Council Member Ruggiero compared this to the situation at the YMCA located on the Fairgrounds property, which was also parkland. She wondered if additional parking could be given to the YMCA since the City is declaring additional parkland within the City.

Arena Costs and Revenues

Council Member Ruggiero asked Parks and Recreation Superintendent Scott Weller if Council could be provided with a spreadsheet showing the costs for the Fairgrounds Arena with true income and expenses. She clarified that she did not need the bond payments or bed tax payments included in the analysis.

Disgruntled Employee, Inspections and the Electrical Issues at the Golf Club

Council Member Ruggiero suggested that there were only a finite number of people who had toured the Golf Club and saw the electrical issues in the Clubhouse, so it must have been a disgruntled employee that tipped off the media. She asked if speaking to the media without permission was a violation of the employee handbook and wondered if it was a punishable offense. She noted that the controversy has caused one or two tournaments to consider cancelling. She suggested that now that the deal was done, she had been hoping that the City would work together to make the Golf Course successful. She added that Jeff Kimball, who had spoken against the purchase, had now offered to be part of a committee to run the course. She noted that Mr. Lundy was going to fix the issues at the Golf Club, so this was a non-issue.

Mr. Mix noted that in order for Mr. Lundy to fix property that now belonged to the City of Watertown, there would have to be an access agreement in place to allow him to perform the work.

There was some discussion of who had toured the facility and what sort of inspections of the property had been done.

Council Member Ruggiero noted that the previous City Attorney had never recommended any conditions be added to the purchase agreement.

She questioned why Codes and Engineering had not been present when City staff had toured the buildings.

Mr. Mix clarified that Codes does not do electrical inspections.

City Engineer Michael Delaney noted that Codes would inspect electrical during a project's construction but not during a tour of an existing building. He noted however, that both he, as a licensed engineer, and members of Codes could have done an inspection but were not directed to by Council.

Snowtown USA

Mayor Smith thanked the Parks and Recreation Department and all of the organizers of Snowtown for a successful event. He noted he had heard nothing but positive comments about the Park Circle being frozen for ice skating.

Golf Course Inspections

Mayor Smith renewed his objections to the Golf Club purchase being completed without inspections. He noted that it is customary when purchasing property to have building, electrical and HVAC inspections. He asked if the City's electrical department had said anything prior to the purchase about concerns with the electrical at the Clubhouse. He asked if the Clubhouse would be able to be opened today as it currently stands. He mentioned the City currently has an RFP for food and concessions and potential contractors would need to know if they had a working commercial kitchen. Mayor Smith suggested that an inspection be done immediately to get an idea what needs to be done.

Mr. Mix noted that Mr. Lundy has until April 1 to make repairs.

Mayor Smith asked if Council would be willing to hire an inspector.

Council Member Ruggiero stated that it made more sense to wait and see if Mr. Lundy made the repairs.

Mayor Smith called for a resolution for the next meeting on having an inspection of the clubhouse with the scope being to be able to open the building for public use.

Council Member Ruggiero noted the various electrical problems are in the basement, not in public areas.

Mayor Smith asked for a list of items that Mr. Lundy is going to attend to before April 1.

Mr. Mix said that equipment was to be serviced, irrigation installed around the ninth green, a pump replaced and golf carts were to be in good condition.

Watertown Golf Club Lease (Continued)

Mayor Smith commented that what has been referred to as a "below-market lease" generated revenue as the City made money from the deal. He noted that now the City will not make any money from that land. He also mentioned that the City was sued regarding this lease by a developer who put the price of shutting down nine golf holes at \$675,000. He stated that the Supreme Court had sided with the City of Watertown and the Appellate Court upheld that decision. He further noted that the City, through the recent Golf Club purchase, had just paid the same developer \$850,000 to shut down the same nine holes of a golf course that were already closed. He asked if anyone had an explanation.

Golf Course Expenses/Golf Course Purchase

Mayor Smith asked Mr. Mills to prepare spreadsheet of expenses and revenue for the Golf Course similar to the one Council Member Ruggiero requested for the Arena.

There was some debate about the difference between what Mayor Smith was requesting versus what Council Member Ruggiero wanted.

Mayor Smith commented that there had been an utter lack of transparency regarding this sale and that, now that the sale was completed, the City had to make the best of what they had. He noted this included facing the electrical issues and trying to determine how the City was going to run a golf course.

Motion was made by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero to move into Executive Session to discuss the employment history of particular individuals.

Motion was seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey and carried with all present voting in favor thereof.

Council moved into Executive Session at 10:05 p.m.

Council reconvened at 10:25 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 10:25 p.m. by motion of Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Olney and carried with all present voting in favor thereof.

Lisa M. Carr

Deputy City Clerk