

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF WATERTOWN
July 3, 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
H. Todd Bullard, Esq. Harris Beach PLLC, Interim City Attorney
(via videoconference)

City staff present: James Mills, Michael Delaney, Michael Lumbis, James Scordo, Logan Eddy

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Resolution No. 1 - Readopting Fiscal Year 2022-23 and 2023-24 Capital Fund Budgets and Fiscal Year 2023-24 General Fund Budget – American Rescue Plan Act Funded Projects
- Resolution No. 2 - Approving Change Order No. 1 with Luck Bros., Inc. for the Academy, High, Mill Streets Pavement Rehabilitation & ADA Ramps Project
- Resolution No. 3 - Approving Changes to Annual City Fees and Charges Schedule – Pool Rental Fees
- Ordinance No. 1 - Amending City Municipal Code §293-58, Schedule X: Stop Intersections
- Ordinance No. 2 - Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, §301-28 Bulk Water Charges
- Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) Streetscape Parking Alternatives
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program
- Town of Watertown Fire District Inquiry
- Thompson Park Hours

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 June 19, 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

A letter was received from Northern Credit Union, 120 Factory Street, requesting that parking be removed near the entrances of 120 and 138 Factory Street due to visibility and safety concerns.

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

PROCLAMATION

Mayor Smith interrupted the regular course of business to proclaim July 3, 2023, as Carl A. McLaughlin Day in the City of Watertown, New York, in gratitude of his efforts in organizing the Concert in the Park series and he urged all citizens to join him in thankful appreciation.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

S. G. Gates, 157 Dorsey Street, informed Council that he did not get a letter informing him that his voting place had changed. He expressed concerns with the following: the Mayor's comments during the last meeting regarding bonding for the pool, the need for Council to now move forward in making the Golf Course successful, City Council candidate Maryellen Blevins refusing to comment on whether the Mayor donated to her suit against the City regarding the Golf Course purchase, and Ms. Blevins being appointed to the Planning Commission. He went on to talk about his proposal for a dog park and his fundraising efforts. He asked that Council adopt a resolution at the next Council meeting approving the location across from the Gotham Street lookout in the Park as the site for his proposed dog park.

Robert (no last name given), resident of Watertown, provided a recap of the meeting for the proposed senior center and explained the services that the center could provide. He assured Council that funding for the center would not be requested from the City and reviewed the fundraising efforts seeking donations from local businesses, which senior citizens patronize. He announced that the next meeting would be held at the Flower Memorial Library on July 11, at 1:00 p.m.

Jonathan Phillips, 735 Mill Street, commended the City for the work that has been done in Thompson Park and informed Council that many people have told him that they want the third pool on the north side of the City, but it does not need to be that big. He suggested the City reconsider bonding for the pool so that funds could be used for more street repairs. Lastly, he discussed the construction that is occurring downtown, stating that he is opposed to the new flower beds, the removal of parking, the bump-outs and the proposed parking on Stone Street, and that this will cause delays in the bus schedules.

Michele and Vincent Degennaro, 208 East Hoard Street, addressed the chair concerning 214 East Hoard Street, and submitted a petition with 32 signatures (on file in the City Clerk's Office) opposing the rehabilitation by the Vacant Homes Redevelopment Initiative of the City-owned structure at 214 East Hoard Street. They discussed concerns that they and the surrounding neighbors have had with this property and requested that it be removed from the redevelopment program and demolished. They indicated that once this house is demolished, they would like to purchase it from the City and build a garage on it.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 1 - Readopting Fiscal Year 2022-23 and 2023-24 Capital Fund Budgets and Fiscal Year 2023-24 General Fund Budget– American Rescue Plan Act Funded Projects

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS on June 6, 2022, the City Council adopted the Fiscal Years 2022-23 through 2026-27 Capital Budget, and

WHEREAS on June 5, 2023, the City Council adopted the Fiscal Years 2023-24 through 2027-28 Capital Budget as well as the Fiscal Year 2023-24 General Fund Budget, and

WHEREAS the Capital Budgets included projects to be funded with American Rescue Plan Act funds, and

WHEREAS the City does not have enough American Rescue Plan Act funds to finance all the projects identified as American Rescue Plan Act projects, and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby re-adopts the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Capital Budget to delete or reduce the following projects due to lack of available American Rescue Plan funds:

Sidewalk Program	\$ 2,134,060
City Hall 2nd Floor Reconfiguration	220,000
Bus Relocation Design	20,000
DPW Facility Design	200,000
Thompson Park Renovation	3,000,000
Zoo Phase 1	1,000,000
Black River Parks & Trails - Factory Square Park to Factory Street	<u>100,000</u>
Total	\$ 6,674,060

And,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby re-adopts the Fiscal Year 2023-24 Capital Budget to delete or reduce the following projects due to lack of available American Rescue Plan funds:

Fire Station Front Apron Replacement	\$ 120,000
Thompson Park Golf Cart Storage Building	<u>350,000</u>
Total	\$ 470,000

And,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby re-adopts the Fiscal Year 2023-24 General Fund Budget to provide partial funding for the City Hall 2nd floor reconfiguration:

A.0000.0909 Appropriated Fund Balance	\$ 20,000
A.1620.0460 Municipal Building – Materials and Supplies	\$ 20,000

And,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby re-adopts the Fiscal Year 2023-24 General Fund Budget to reduce the following project due to lack of available American Rescue Plan funds:

A.0000.4960 Federal Aid – Disaster Assistance (\$ 50,000)

A.7110.0430 Parks and Playgrounds Maintenance
– Contracted Services (River Parks Vegetation Management) (\$ 50,000)

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

Resolution No. 2 - Approving Change Order No. 1 with Luck Bros., Inc. for the Academy, High, Mill Streets Pavement Rehabilitation & ADA Ramps Project

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS the City is rehabilitating Academy, High, and Mill Streets including paving and reconstructing sidewalk corner ramps to comply with current ADA guidelines, and

WHEREAS on October 3, 2022, City Council approved a Contract with Luck Bros., Inc. in the amount of \$969,319 for the construction of Academy, High, Mill Streets Pavement Rehabilitation & ADA Ramps, and

WHEREAS to make the sidewalk corner ramps ADA compliant, additional sidewalk adjacent to the street corners was required to be removed and lowered, and

WHEREAS Luck Bros., Inc. has submitted Change Order No. 1 in the amount of \$69,942.25 for the additional sidewalk,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby approves Contract Change Order No. 1 in the amount of \$69,942.25, between the City of Watertown and Luck Bros., Inc. a copy of which is attached and made a part of this resolution, bringing the total of the project to \$1,039,261.25 and

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

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Mr. Mix responded to Mayor Smith's question regarding the need for the change order. He explained there needed to be additional sidewalk work in order to match the slope of the new ramp.

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

Resolution No. 3 - Approving Changes to Annual City Fees and Charges Schedule – Pool Rental Fees

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

WHEREAS City Council established a City Fees and Charges Schedule for the City of Watertown, as authorized by Local Law No. 2 of 2016, and

WHEREAS the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 City Fees and Charges Schedule was adopted by City Council on June 5, 2023, when the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget was adopted, and

WHEREAS the City Council wishes to rent the swimming pools for group activities,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby authorizes the below changes to the City Fees and Charges Schedule:

Pool Rental (Groups of 25 or less)	\$150 per hour for one or two hours
Larger Groups	\$25 added per hour per lifeguard

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

ORDINANCES

Ordinance No. 1 - Amending City Municipal Code §293-58, Schedule X: Stop Intersections

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

BE IT ORDAINED that Section 293-58, Schedule X: Stop Intersections of the City Code of the City of Watertown is amended to add the following:

§ A293-58. Schedule X: Stop Intersections.

Stop Sign on	Direction of Travel	At Intersection of
Meadow St. N.	North	Newell St.

and,

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that this amendment shall take effect as soon as it is published once in the official newspaper of the City of Watertown, or printed as the City Manager directs.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce

Motion for unanimous consent moved by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

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

Ordinance No. 2 - Amending the Code of the City of Watertown, §301-28 Bulk Water Charges

Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero

BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council that Chapter 301 of the Code of the City of Watertown is hereby amended by deleting Section 301-28 approved on June 5, 2023, and

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED by the City Council that the Code of the City of Watertown, Chapter 301 is hereby amended by adding thereto new Section 301-28 as follows:

301-28. Bulk Water Charges.

A. The charge for water obtained from the bulk fill station at the Water Treatment Plant, 1707 Huntington Street shall be as follows:

(1) \$8.50 per 1,000 gallons

And,

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that this ordinance shall take effect on July 3, 2023, after it has been published once in the official newspaper of the City of Watertown, or as the City Manager directs.

Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce

Motion for unanimous consent moved by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

In response to Mayor Smith's inquiry, Mr. Mix explained that the bulk rate was increased last year, and when the ordinance to increase water rates was presented at the last meeting, it incorrectly listed the bulk rate as an older rate.

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

STAFF REPORTS

Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) Streetscape Parking Alternatives

Mayor Smith explained the history of this project and noted that the plans had been presented to the previous owner of the Key Bank building and he stated this building now has new owners, who have concerns about losing the parking spots in front of their building. He reviewed both options to rectify this issue, which are listed in the staff report.

Council Member Olney asked if the two options have been presented to the new owners. Planning and Community Development Director Michael Lumbis indicated that he has talked to Mr. Ferris, one of the owners.

Council Member Olney stated that he thinks there is room for the new parking spots on Stone Street but also indicated there is a parking lot behind the building that leads to an entrance at the back of the building. In response to Mr. Lumbis noting that the project was already under construction when the new owners bought the building, Council Member Olney said the new owners should have done their due diligence to determine what was planned for the front of the building. He wondered if the new owners would pay the additional costs if the City decides to choose the higher cost option. He added that he appreciates everything Mr. Ferris and Mr. Johnson have done downtown in regard to development but wonders if changing the design could be considered favoritism to one developer. He confirmed for Mayor Smith that he supports the first option.

Council Member Hickey stated that he like both options but expressed concern with the parallel ADA spots if a van needs to get a wheelchair out of the side of the vehicle and where the ramp to the sidewalk would be.

Council Member Pierce indicated that she was more in favor of option 2 and said it is important to have more parking and safe ADA parking spots.

Attorney Bullard warned that Council might be designing this plan to accommodate an individual owner and that this might set a precedent.

Stating she understood Attorney Bullard's comments, Council Member Ruggiero said she has heard that many people do not like the new flower planters and noted that downtown business owners have lost parking with this current and previous streetscape projects. She indicated that she supports option 2.

Referring to Council Member Olney's suggestion that the new building owners might be willing to contribute to the cost of the redesign, Mayor Smith asked if staff could speak to the building owners about this.

Possible additional parking along Stone Street was discussed and Council decided it would wait for more information before making a final determination.

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program

A report was available for Council to review about potential grant opportunities and Council agreed to have staff proceed with the application process.

Town of Watertown Fire District Inquiry

Council Member Hickey advised that he analyzed the call volume and reviewed several statistics regarding the type of calls responded to by the Town of Watertown Fire Department. He posed various questions that should be addressed when considering whether the City should contract with the Town of Watertown for fire protection coverage.

Mr. Mix indicated that the intent of this memo is to determine if there is interest from Council prior to staff spending time analyzing this. He added that there are a number of issues, some already pointed out by Council Member Hickey, that need to be addressed. In particular, he noted this will require discussion with the fire union.

Council Member Olney said he sees this as an opportunity, but it needs to be a win/win situation. He indicated that he is in favor of opening the discussion with the Town of Watertown.

Council Member Pierce commented that she is in favor of looking into this, but noted there are a lot of questions to be answered.

Council Member Ruggiero agreed but expressed concerns with liability and union issues.

Mayor Smith said that Council Member Hickey brought up some good points. He said he is not opposed to looking into this, but the cost needs to be covered by the Town and the City needs to be protected from liability.

Thompson Park Hours

Council Member Hickey expressed support for the proposed closed hours of 11 p.m. to 5 a.m.

Council Member Olney stated he feels the hours should be expanded and in places there is lighting, should be open at all times. He noted, however, that he has heard the Police Department is short-handed so there are concerns with patrolling the Park.

Council Member Pierce said she supported the proposed hours.

Council Member Ruggiero indicated she is concerned this might put a strain on the Police Department and asked for Chief Donoghue's opinion.

Regarding comments about the patrons of the golf course and restaurant, Mr. Mix explained that the golf course is now part of Thompson Park, so it needs to follow the rules of the Park and if patrons of the golf course are there after 9 p.m., they would be in violation of the ordinance. He indicated that Chief Donoghue preferred a closing time of 11 p.m. versus anything later.

Mayor Smith agrees that hours should be longer during the summer when it stays lighter longer and the golf course is open, but wondered if the Park needs to stay open until 11 p.m. during the winter months.

Further discussion ensued, guidance was provided by the attorney and Council agreed to Mr. Mix's suggestion of writing the ordinance with hours of operation based on the season.

NEW BUSINESS

Response to Privilege of the Floor Comments – Mr. Gates

In response to Mr. Gates not receiving information about polling locations changing, Mayor Smith commented that Mr. Gates should address this with the County since this is the responsibility of the County Board of Elections and not the City.

Groundbreaking for the Flynn Pool

Mayor Smith noted he had a conflict on the date chosen for the groundbreaking ceremony. He suggested other dates but said if the original date chosen works for the majority of Council, he will not ask for it to be rescheduled. He pointed out that a change to the date of the groundbreaking ceremony would not affect the date that construction is to begin.

Various dates and other member conflicts were mentioned, and Council decided to discuss it further offline to determine a date.

214 East Hoard Street

Mayor Smith stressed that he had been in favor of demolishing this property in the past, stating that the City cannot expect property owners to keep their property up to code when a City-owned property is not in compliance.

Council Member Olney agreed that it is an eyesore and wondered if CDBG funds could pay for the demolition of it.

Mr. Lumbis explained that CDBG funding could be used but the budget for this year is allocated to a Cooper Street project. He said that this property has been discussed with Council at two meeting and the direction given to staff was to send it through the RFP process, which was done already. He added that there was an individual interested in developing the property to live in it since his children attend the school on that street. He confirmed that the proposals from the RFP are due back July 19.

Council Member Ruggiero remarked that she sees both sides and would rather wait to see if someone submits a proposal. She said she is in favor of keeping the property on the tax roll.

Mayor Smith polled the rest of Council and Council Members Hickey, Olney, Pierce, and himself supported demolishing the property and selling it to the Degennaros.

Mr. Lumbis asked how Council wanted to pay for the demolition.

In response to Mayor Smith's question of whether there is money in the budget for demolitions, City Comptroller James Mills explained that those funds are for non-City-owned property so Council would have to readopt the budget.

Meeting and Events - Council Member Hickey

Council Member Hickey announced the following upcoming events: 7th Anniversary of the End of Watch for Trooper Joel Davis on July 9; City Council Work Session on July 10; Senior Center Meeting, Groundbreaking for Flynn Pool, City Planning Commission Meeting, and Jefferson County Fair Fire Parade on July 11; Advantage Watertown Meeting on July 12; Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America International Conference (CADCA), which he will be attending, begins on July 15; and Thompson Park Workday on July 15.

Voter Appreciation

Council Member Hickey thanked the voters for their support of him in 2021 and 2023.

Social Construct/Future of the City

Council Member Olney explained the concept of "Social Construct" to Council and offered his opinion on the future of the City based on the beliefs of its people, stressing his own personal belief that anything is possible. He said he sees the City as growing and advised that more could be done if everyone works together, although he is mindful of the conservative views. He commented that he hopes whoever prevails in the next election comes with the same view as he does and is wanting to get things done.

Construction on Barben Avenue

Council Member Pierce explained that she was contacted by a resident on Barben Avenue with concerns that traffic is traveling too fast through the construction zone in the evening once it is opened to traffic. She suggested putting better signage indicating the work zone.

Traffic Island on Route 11 on the North Side of the City

Acknowledging that the NYS Department of Transportation is responsible for this traffic island outside the City limits, Council Member Pierce requested the City contact them to cleanup the area. She said she has received complaints of it being overgrown with weeds and noted that it is at the entrance of the City.

Public Use of Watertown City School District Pool

Council Member Pierce explained that there was informal discussion with the Watertown School District Superintendent about opening the school pool for public use. She said that he was willing to open it to the public three days a week for three hours per day if the City would pay for the lifeguard. She wondered if there was a consensus of Council to have staff work on this arrangement.

Mayor Smith added that this model is done in other school districts, mentioning Indian River School District, and advised the schedule could be flexible and only posted for one month at a time.

Council agreed to have staff work with the school district on this.

Meeting and Events - Council Member Ruggiero

Council Member Ruggiero indicated that she attended the Mount Carmel Feast, Diane Woodhouse's retirement from Hospice ceremony, and the Fire Department's Academy Graduation ceremony. She also noted that longtime community member Julie Gorri passed away recently at the age of 101, mentioning that the City had formally recognized her 100th birthday. Lastly, she announced the next Senior Center Meeting would be on July 11 at the Flower Memorial Library and advised a survey will be sent out soon.

July 4th Independence Day

Mayor Smith noted the significance of tomorrow being July 4th and wished everyone a happy and safe Independence Day holiday.

A D J O U R N M E N T

At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at 8:50 p.m. until Thursday, July 6, 2023, at 2:00p.m. by motion of Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

Ann M. Saunders
City Clerk