

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
October 15, 2024
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Sarah V.C. Pierce Presiding

Present: Council Member Robert O. Kimball
Council Member Clifford G. Olney III
Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero
Council Member Benjamin P. Shoen
Mayor Sarah V.C. Pierce

Also Present: Eric F. Wagenaar, City Manager

City staff present: Vicky Murphy, Jim Scordo, Scott Weller, Thomas Compo, Dana Aikins

DISCUSSION

Disinfectant Byproduct (DBP) Project

Kevin Castro of GHD introduced himself and presented a Power Point status update of the City's disinfection byproduct project (presentation not on file in Clerk's Office). He offered some background on the project and indicated that, at this stage of the project, the focus had been on design, costs and securing funding. He noted that the design was 60% complete. He reminded Council that the City's water is distributed to Fort Drum and surrounding communities as well as City residents.

Regarding funding, Mr. Castro reminded Council that the City had not received the last grant they applied for from the Department of Defense. He explained that GHD had met with representatives from that department who indicated that the City had not shown enough of an essential need to the military base. He commented that would help them prepare the next grant application.

Mr. Castro displayed a chart showing a year's worth of testing on the organic matter and sedimentation. He noted the fluctuations in the levels. He then revealed the design of the new treatment process.

He explained the next steps in the process and noted securing funding was a primary goal. He mentioned that bids are due on December 7 and explained the new projected costs.

Council Member Olney, referring to the slide showing sediment levels, noted that the levels dipped down into levels of compliance and asked how long the City would need to be in compliance before the EPA would no longer require mitigation.

Mr. Castro explained that the levels fluctuate all the time and that, since the City has failed in the past, they would need to redesign the filtration.

Water Superintendent Vicky Murphy clarified that the reason for surveying the levels for an entire year is to allow for those fluctuations and noted that the process will still need to be improved.

In response to Council Member Olney's question on whether the EPA would ever issue the City a report saying the levels were in compliance, Superintendent Murphy said that the City is only ever informed when the levels fail.

Mr. Castro added that the levels have more to do with fluctuations in the water supply than in the treatment process.

In response to Council Member Kimball's inquiry on how often the water is tested, Ms. Murphy replied that it is tested monthly and averaged quarterly.

Discussions of grant funding and clarification on the timing of groundbreaking and applications was discussed.

Council Member Olney asked if anyone looks at grants to determine why they were not awarded.

Mr. Wagenaar confirmed that all applications are reviewed and noted that of the 140 applications the Department of Defense received last year, only 15 were awarded. He also reminded Council that some grant applications cancel out the ability to apply for other grants.

Council Member Olney inquired again about whether the work needed to be done on the process if the City is back in compliance.

Mr. Castro noted that there is not any provision for that and said that the requirement is that the City consistently and reliably meet the standards.

Council Member Shoen noted the City has an uncovered sediment basin and commented that this is unusual.

Council Member Kimball added that water supplies are being investigated at a national level.

Mr. Castro agreed noting the City was not alone with its water issues. He informed Council that the federal government had set aside \$15 billion for lead pipe replacement nationwide.

Snowtown USA

David Daily, Snowtown USA Organizer, appeared before Council with a proposal for the 2025 event. He briefly reviewed the history of the event which ran from 1980 to 1997 before making a comeback in 2013, and noted the complications that weather often causes. He announced the dates of the upcoming event will be January 23 through 26 and mentioned two new events: a kickball tournament and a soup cookoff. He then asked Council to provide, as they have in previous years, ice blocks for the ice sculpture contest and requested that Park Circle be flooded for skating.

Council Member Olney asked if the skating could be held in the Park Pavilion and requested a warming center.

After clarifying what was meant by warming center, Mr. Daily replied that people have nostalgia for the Park Circle being used for ice skating, so organizers were requesting that area.

Council gave unanimous approval.

City of Watertown Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting Celebration

Scott Weller, Superintendent of the Parks and Recreation Department, informed Council this year the Parade was being organized by his department instead of the Planning Department. He noted the Parade would follow the same route as last year's and would run from Green Street, down Washington Street and end on Stone Street. He explained that the route was changed in 2023 from the traditional Public Square loop to make the route longer and allow for more participation. He commented this alteration had resulted in 40 floats appearing in last year's parade, up from 23 in 2022. Referring to a Power Point presentation (not on file in the City Clerk's office), he informed Council of the steps in planning and preparation required for the parade.

Council Member Kimball asked if any thought had been given to the construction taking place along Washington Street at First Presbyterian Church and the State Office Building and wondered if those projects would be completed before December.

Mr. Weller stated that had been considered and that staff is keeping an eye on it and anticipating work will be complete.

In response to Council Member Olney's question on whether floats are judged, Mr. Weller indicated they are not, but they could be in the future.

Mayor Pierce confirmed that anyone wanting to participate in the Parade could email the Parks and Rec Department.

City Hall Renovation Project

City Engineer Tom Compo introduced Scott Soules from GYMO and presented a Power Point (on file in the City Clerk's Office) showing the proposed renovations to the first floor of City Hall. He explained that this project had been in development since 2013, and that City Hall has only ever had minor renovations since its construction in 1964. He reminded Council that a resolution had passed in 2019 for a \$6 million bond to cover the expense. He pointed out some of the differences including the parking lot entrance to Court and the secured screening area at the Sterling Street entrance.

Council Member Kimball asked if everyone entering City Hall would be screened.

Code Enforcement Supervisor Dana Aikins confirmed that to be true.

In response to Mayor Pierce's question of whether staff would have a security badge to avoid screening, Mr. Aikins explained that a secure employee entrance will remain at the back of City Hall.

Mr. Soules described the alterations to the first floor which included the reconfiguration of Codes, changes in lobby acoustics to cut down noise, lower and upper roof replacement, removal of marble tiles on exterior and all new insulation and windows.

In response to City Manager Eric Wagenaar's question, Mr. Soules confirmed that there would be no work done on the second and third floors.

Council Member Kimball asked at what point in this reconstruction the \$6 million bond would run out.

Mr. Soules indicated that the current estimate of cost is around \$7.2 million.

Council Member Ruggiero questioned if all the exterior marble tiles would be removed.

Mr. Soules explained that only the first floor was being renovated at this point, but the new tile product would complement the existing tile. He distributed samples to Council members so they could see what it looked like.

In response to Council Member Shoen's question about the projected cost to insulate and replace the tile on the entire building, Mr. Aikins said the original total for the building was \$10 million.

City Manager Wagenaar informed Council Member Shoen that he could get him the proposed numbers.

Council Member Shoen asked if any thought had been given to the potential of adding solar panels or other renewable energy sources to the newer part of City Hall, since the roof was being replaced and wondered if the roof ballasts would support that.

City Engineer Compo said staff could look into that.

Mr. Soules confirmed that the roof could support that and added that, because of the construction of City Hall, none of the exterior walls are load bearing.

Council Member Kimball asked for and received clarification that the entire roof to all of City Hall was being reconstructed.

In response to Mayor Pierce's question about the timeline for construction, Mr. Soules indicated that construction could begin in March or April.

Council Member Olney asked if there was any other office space available in the City, rather than taking on this reconstruction, and suggested reimagining City Hall for other purposes.

Council Member Olney expressed concern on how the public was going to react to being screened at the entrance of the building.

Mayor Pierce indicated that it was her understanding that the State Court system would be providing the security at the door as a courtesy to the City.

Council Member Shoen, noting his resistance to change orders, asked if consideration had been given to bumping out the roof in advance.

Mr. Soules indicated the roof concerns were taken into account.

Concerns about the capabilities of the HVAC system were discussed.

Mr. Aikins noted that the rooftop air handler was at the end of its life and that it would be addressed in the next phase of reconstruction.

City Manager's Update

City Manager Wagenaar informed Council that a new City Assessor had been hired to replace Brian Phelps, who is retiring. He noted it was a familiar face as it is Kimberli Johnston from the Assessment Department and confirmed for Mayor Pierce that the City would be hiring for her position.

Work session ended at 8:40 p.m.

Lisa M. Carr

Deputy City Clerk

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