

CITY OPERATIONS

Tuesday, July 30, 2019 – 5:30 p.m.

Council Chambers – Olean Municipal Building

Present: Members: Chairman Smith, Vice Chairman Witte, Alderman Dougherty, Alderman Crawford, and Alderman George. Others: Alderman Andreano; Alderman Gonzalez; Mayor William Aiello; Lens Martial, City Clerk; Fred Saradin, City Auditor; Bob Ring, Director of Public Works; Keri Stephen, Community Development Program Coordinator; Bob Bell, Fire Chief, and Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary.

1. Roll Call

Alderman Smith called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and asked that the record show that all committee members were present.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Committee Meeting (Tuesday, July 16, 2019)

A motion to approve the minutes of the July 16, 2019 meeting was made by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman George. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

3. Unfinished Business

None

4. New Referrals for Consideration

a. City of Olean Deer Population - Presentation by DEC

Alderman Smith introduced Ryan Rockefeller, a Deer Biologist with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Region 9.

Mr. Rockefeller explained that it seems that concerns and issues regarding the City's deer population have been discussed among the Council, and Alderman Witte replied that the issues include traffic accidents, landscaping destruction, and an increased presence of ticks. Alderman Smith noted that he has received a lot of landscaping and vegetation complaints.

Mr. Rockefeller explained that deer are an important resource in New York State, and that over 10 million pounds of venison are consumed each year. He explained that deer have also caused \$60 million in agricultural damage and \$750 million in damage to vehicles as a result of collisions. He explained that deer can also impact the health of forests. Through protections against hunting in the state, the deer population has rebounded.

Mr. Rockefeller explained that two deer can equal 40 deer in seven years, and that in order to keep the population stable, 30 to 40% of the population must die each year. He explained that there are so many deer because of the changed public culture and attitude towards hunting, reduced predation of the deer, and a shift in human land use patterns. He explained that fewer people are hunting and consuming venison, and when humans are the number one predators for healthy adult deer, this can cause a rise in the population. He added that in the last 50 years, populations on the outskirts of cities has grown and suburbia is a deer haven due to the edged habitat, brush, and shrubbery.

Mr. Rockefeller explained that the NYS Environmental Conservation Law 11-0303 directs the DEC to maintain deer population numbers. He explained that deer hunting is deer management, and deer management's silver bullet is the deer hunter. He explained that statewide, hunters take about a quarter million deer off the landscape. He explained that if hunters participate in all seasons, they are guaranteed three tags, and could receive one to four more for antlerless deer.

Mr. Rockefeller explained that many Americans still support hunting for the right reasons. He explained that hunting is safe and getting safer, and that in New York state, there are only 4.3 incidents per 100,000 hunters, most of which are self-inflicted or an accidental incident involving friends or family hurting another. He explained that there are laws in New York State that limit landowner liability as well if they allow others to hunt on the property they own.

Mr. Rockefeller explained that it is inhumane for cars to hit deer, as it is unsafe, wasteful and uncontrolled, while suburban deer management is safe, humane, purposeful, low cost, and controlled. He explained that there are four types of suburban deer management: traditional hunting, which is the cheapest, simplest, and most efficient; controlled hunting, which can take place within the State's parameter hunting season or out; culls and sharpshooting, which can occur when an area is unsafe for traditional hunting and can also involve capturing and euthanasia; and surgical sterilization, which is costly and difficult. He explained that the City can take a progressive approach, which involves modifying the behavior of human and deer by changing speed limits, constructing fencing, and enforcing a deeding ban. The City can also address the City's municipal discharge ordinances, if there is one, to facilitate lawful hunting. The City can also identify areas for targeted management through culling. He noted that the deer that are removed through culling would typically be different than those that are removed through traditional hunting.

Mr. Rockefeller explained that Deer Management Assistance Program permits can also be issued, although they are typically issued to landowners. He explained that the City could have a lottery system under which these permits are filtered down to residents, who can then remove deer from City land that is large enough, such as parks when they are not in use. He

added that any resident which has a piece of property which is large enough would also be able to apply for these permits.

Mr. Rockefeller explained that controlled hunts can fit within the current parameters of the deer hunting seasons, and would not require permission from the DEC to do so, as it is within the City's rights and abilities. He explained that controlled hunts can also occur outside of the regular season; however, the City would need to set this up prior to the hunt with the DEC. He explained that this would probably provide the City with the greatest relief the fastest. He noted that deer are usually donated and distributed to food banks, and that processors offer a reduced price to cut the deer. He explained that typically this cost is covered by the municipality.

Mr. Rockefeller explained that fertility control is experimental, and would require a scientific research license. He explained that it is also expensive and really has not been proven effective. He noted that it also is usually done in conjunction with some sort of deer removal.

Mr. Rockefeller summarized that the City can aid in the control of the deer population by facilitating access to private and public lands, implementing controlled hunts, augmenting controlled hunts with Deer Management Permits, and advocating for legislation to enhance suburban deer management. He explained that it will take more than just removing deer, and that the public must be educated. He noted that once numbers are down, hunters may be able to control the population.

Alderman Smith asked how much a culling would cost the City, and Mr. Rockefeller explained that there is no charge, He explained that the City would apply for and receive approval from the DEC, and in order to receive approval, the City must have a Deer Management Plan in place. He explained that the DEC would like to see the City identify what issues are, and then see the City try to set up a framework to control the population over time. For example, Amherst records all deer and vehicle collisions year by year in order to prove that what they are doing is working. Alderman Smith asked if Mr. Rockefeller could assist with the Plan, and he replied that he can. Mr. Rockefeller explained that he could provide examples, and that the City would need to compile their data.

Alderman Smith asked if there is a deadline for culling, and Mr. Rockefeller replied that there is not. He explained that it is usually done in January, February, and early March, after hunting season but before parks and public land are being heavily utilized, He explained that there are certain conditions that have to be worked with as well, such as shooting from a safe trajectory and how the carcass is removed and utilized.

Alderman Dougherty explained that deer ticks carry Lyme disease, and asked about the correlation of the disease spreading with the increased population. Mr. Rockefeller explained

that deer do not carry Lyme disease, although they are one of the best sources for the tick's blood meal. He explained that it has been shown that a higher deer density results in a higher tick population, and that although deer do not increase the number of ticks that carry Lyme disease, they can help it spread.

Alderman Crawford asked about cities that have controlled hunts, and Mr. Rockefeller explained that Ithaca has been trying different things, and a suburb of Rochester has found that will culling and permits that over time the population has lessened.

Alderman Crawford explained that the purpose is to try to create a program which is as sustainable as possible.

Alderman Smith noted that controlled hunts had an August 1st deadline for application to the DEC, and Mr. Rockefeller explained that this is not the deadline for Deer Management Permits. He explained that they could be tied to a controlled hunt, but they do not have to be. He explained that it is also the deadline for landowners to get additional antlerless tags.

Alderman Witte asked if a controlled hunt should be publicized after it is set up, and Mr. Rockefeller explained that education and informing the public should be at the forefront of the process. He explained that it can be very controversial.

b. East State Street / South Union Street DRI Projects

i. Alta Presentation to Council

Wade Walker and Kristie Di Cocco, Architects, and Emily Condon and Chloe Weigle, Designers, from Alta Planning and Design presented a tentative plan for the East State Street and South Union Street DRI Projects.

Mr. Walker explained that Alta Planning and Design is a planning, engineering, landscaping, and architectural firm which works strictly in active transportation. He explained that the City has already had a very good experience with North Union Street, and that it is one of the best projects that they have seen in the state as far as the level of aesthetics and the inclusion of different complete street features.

Mr. Walker explained that with the current bicycle lanes on North Union Street, there are some concerns regarding riding so close to traffic, and it is highly unlikely that parents will ride in these lanes with their children. He explained that with the proposed designs for East State Street and South Union Street, the goal was to provide facilities for all ages and preferences, and to look at bicycle lanes versus shared use lanes, and separate facilities and raised bike paths.

Ms. Di Cocco explained that from a safety perspective, there are less severe crashes on roadways with roundabouts than on those with standard four corner intersections. She explained that roundabouts also act as a place making element, and that when you are traveling into Olean from Route 16, the first roundabout you see seems to act as an “entrance” to the City where you can see down North Union Street. She noted that roundabouts also slow traffic, and that bicycles and pedestrians can easily be worked into a design that will make a roadway with roundabouts safer and easier for both.

Ms. Di Cocco noted that it appears that the North Union Complete Street Project has aided in providing an economic boom for the City. He explained that the firm is proposing continuing the Complete Street concept on South Union Street from East State Street to Green Street, and on East State Street to the bridge. She explained that the project objective is to build on North Union Street’s success and to create a better connection for neighborhoods, downtown, and from War Vets Park to Franchot Park. She explained that they would also like to create an aesthetically pleasing corridor and gateways to Olean.

Ms. Di Cocco explained that her group met with City Officials and the local CEO Alliance to gain input on what they would like, and what they would like to see changed. She then presented drafts of the proposed changes for the Council to review.

Ms. Di Cocco explained that South Union Street’s proposed plan is for a roundabout at Green Street and South Union Street, as well as a median along the roadway similar to that on North Union Street. She explained that the difference would be a two way cycle track that would be separated from the roadway on the east side of the street. In addition, they would like to add some green in the sea of blacktop that is at Ried’s Food Barn. She asked that the committee please be mindful that this is a draft concept and that not all details have been worked out.

Ms. Di Cocco explained that East State Street’s proposed plan includes a roundabout at East State Street and South Barry Street, as well as maintaining or increasing the current parking along the roadway. She explained that the roundabout is tricky, as it is a tight intersection, and that is one of the details that definitely needs to be worked out. She explained that this is a residential area that is tighter than South Union Street, so there is a proposed shared use path rather than a cycle track. She explained that there could also possibly be a flashing crossing beacon at one of the crosswalks because of the amount of users and types of users on this section of roadway.

Ms. DiCocco continued that Lincoln Park is a unique place that allows the City the opportunity to do something special with it. She proposed a concept plan for a more welcoming entrance to the park at the State Street and Union Street intersection with a sign similar to the one recently constructed along East State Street.

Ms. Di Cocco explained that the next step is for her group to refine their concept based on the review and input from the Council, and to advance the concept to 10% design. She explained that they will need to work through details and ensure that the projects, as proposed, are viable.

ii. Council Q&A

Alderman Smith asked if the intersection at Henley Street and South Union Street will remain signalized, and Ms. Di Cocco explained that it would. Alderman Crawford asked why Green Street was chosen for the roundabout, and Ms. Di Cocco explained that the intersection could be treated as a gateway to the downtown. She explained that if the roundabout is not constructed at Green Street and changes are not made at the intersection, the first thing people will notice when approaching the downtown is the sea of blacktop that is Ried's, rather than something that has a "wow" factor. She added that East Henley Street also has some grade complications that prevent the installation of a roundabout.

Alderman Gonzalez asked if there has been consideration of making the Henley Street to South Union Street intersections right turn only, and Ms. Di Cocco responded that it was considered, and that there is nothing in the design that precludes that from occurring. She explained that they would need to consider traffic flow and if the right turn only would make sense.

Alderman Crawford explained that a great job was done on this plan, and he wants to make sure that it was captured that they feel that North Union Street is one of the best Complete Street projects that they've seen in the state. Mr. Walter explained that the street is very nice, aesthetically pleasing, and it is where people want to spend time. He explained that it also checks a lot of boxes for a Complete Street where other projects only check a few.

Alderman Crawford explained that he thinks that the proposed family friendly bike ability is amazing, and he thinks that this concept is incredible. Ms. Di Cocco responded that roundabouts can be tricky for bicyclists, and that shared use paths have their own dedicated space.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that he loves the protection for cyclists and pedestrians, unlike North Union Street where the lane is between the roadway and parking. Alderman Andreano asked how the three types of lanes would merge, and Ms. Di Cocco explained that it is tricky, and that the transition needs to be worked out.

Alderman Witte asked if the bike lane on South Union Street goes to Green Street or the bridge, and Ms. Di Cocco responded that it ends at Green Street, as funding was not received to go farther south. She noted that the project could go on forever, but that the City can do a little at a time as they can.

Alderman Crawford explained that he likes the idea of having similar entryways to all of the parks and creating a synergy. He feels that this will add a great deal of value. Mr. Walter explained that there are very inexpensive ways to elevate War Vets Park and low cost ways to elevate the character in the City and create gateways.

iii. Public Comment

Jeff Belt thanked the Council for their service and encouraged them to keep up the good work.

c. Discussion – North 7th Street City-Owned Property

Alderman Crawford explained that he is following up regarding comments or ideas regarding the sidewalk at the property that was demolished that is non-existent and barricaded. He explained that the sidewalk is in dire need of TLC. Mayor Aiello explained that he has asked Mr. Ring to look into this, and he has had a couple of discussions with him regarding the issue. He explained that one idea is a temporary wooden structure that can be put in place until a permanent solution is found. He explained that he believes that Mr. Ring is looking into this now, and that the City crews will be working on cleaning up the property this week.

Alderman George asked if the temporary wooden structure would act as a sort of bridge, and Mayor Aiello explained that it would, with a railing. He explained that it would take a retaining wall and a lot of funding to permanently fix this situation.

Alderman Crawford explained that he thinks this is a fabulous idea, and that it provides safety and stability. He explained that he feels that it will alleviate neighborhood concerns that an action plan has been put in place.

Mayor Aiello explained that the other option is to permanently block off this section of sidewalk, although the roadway is difficult to cross in the winter. Alderman Witte asked if the work will be done before school starts, and Mayor Aiello responded that he hopes that it is, and he will be meeting with Mr. Ring to find out the cost factor for the proposed “bridge”.

5. Approval of Committee Reports

None

6. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman Witte. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m.