

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2021 – 6:30 p.m.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS – OLEAN MUNICIPAL BUILDING

IN ATTENDANCE WERE: ALDERMEN CRAWFORD, WITTE, PANUS, GONZALEZ, BARNARD, ROBINSON, AND ANASTASIA. OTHERS: MAYOR WILLIAM AIELLO; LENS MARTIAL, CITY CLERK; FRED SARADIN, CITY AUDITOR; BOB RING, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS; TIM RICHARDSON, FIRE CHIEF; RON RICHARDSON, POLICE CHIEF, AND TIFFANY TAYLOR, MANAGERIAL CONFIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY.

Alderman Crawford called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and asked that the record show that all Aldermen were present.

1. PL #64-21: (Aiello) To authorize the transfer of \$12,500 from Water Fund Contingency and \$12,500 from Sewer Fund Contingency to line item 1640.445 for costs associated with the replacement of unleaded and diesel fuel pumps at the City Garage.

Mayor Aiello explained that this has been discussed with both the Council and the Fleet Management Committee. He explained that we need to do something, and so he is asking that the Council authorize the transfer of \$12,500 from each Water Fund and Sewer Fund Contingencies. He explained that the rest of the money would come from the current repair budget at the City Garage. Mayor Aiello explained that these pumps can be used again once the City decides what to do with the City Garage, whether we use the same location or move it. He explained that this will allow us to make sure that we have fuel for our vehicles.

Alderman Crawford explained that his concern with this purchase is that we do not currently have a long-term plan for the City Garage, and he did not want to put money into new fuel pumps that we may not be able to use in a short amount of time. He explained that Mr. Ring explained that the pumps can be moved to a different location, so he is happy to hear that we would not be wasting money. Alderman Witte explained that she is on the Fleet Management Committee where this has been discussed. She explained that even though we are talking about alternate power and electric charging stations, we still need to think about the fuel capabilities for larger vehicles, She explained that this is the way to go right now.

Alderman Robinson explained that he looked over the notes from the Fleet Management Committee meeting and he sees that we have a lot of Fords and we have been having a lot of issues. He asked if it is possible to move away from Fords and start using hybrid and electric vehicles. Alderman Crawford explained that this could be a part of a larger issue. He explained that we still have a need for fuel pumps. Mr. Ring explained that our mechanics are a small division consisting of three employees and one supervisor. He explained that part of their expertise is in Ford, and

they have invested their time and training in Ford, He explained that vehicles change constantly, especially the electric systems, and he knows that Mr. Donahue likes working with Fords. He explained that Fords, though, are still a small portion of the fleet and that Ford does not make the larger vehicles. He explained that we are probably ten or fifteen years off before we convert to electric. HE explained that we need these new fuel pumps. Even when we are ready to transition, the mechanics will need to be trained on these new electric and hybrid vehicles. He explained that the money aspect and incentives just aren't there yet. We are getting there and talking about it, but we aren't there yet.

Alderman Gonzalez asked if the Fords are all that are available on State bid or if all vehicles are available each year. Mr. Ring explained that there are many different bids that we can go with, including New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, as well as county bids. He explained that when a vehicle is needed that he looks at all options and discusses them with the Fleet Management Committee. He explained that options can be limited depending on the time of year.

Alderman Anastasia explained that we are looking at spending \$50,000 on fuel pumps with 20 year lives. HE asked if we are not looking at any alternatives like Wex cards. Mr. Ring explained that he will continue to do his research, but in his initial research he is confident that we still need the fuel facility for heavy equipment and we cannot put ourselves at risk of fuel tanks going down. He explained that we can't really count on the gas stations in Olean either. He explained that Country Fair is really the only place in Olean that a commercial vehicle can be filled, and we can't count on them being open 24/7/365. He explained that these pumps will also be able to be used for a smaller fuel facility in the future at the current garage or at another location. He explained that Mr. Donahue does a lot of research and he noted that although electric and hybrid vehicles are important, he thinks that hydrogen vehicles could be prominent in the future.

Alderman Crawford explained that he values Alderman Anastasia's input, but that while something that has a license plate on it can pull into Country Fair, what do we do about the back hoes and lawnmowers and all of the other things that DPW uses? Alderman Robinson explained that National Grid also uses Wex cards for their large trucks. He explained that the fuel pump station was removed in Olean because of local gas stations, and there have been no issues to his knowledge. In fact, he explained, when there are storms there are a lot of National Grid trucks using fuel here so the local gas station should be able to handle the City's trucks.

Alderman Panus asked if there is backup power in the case of an outage. Mr. Ring explained that there are currently only small generators at the City Garage, and portable ones can be used to use the fuel facility if they are needed. He explained that he admits that this is not ideal but we are currently seeking grants to correct this. Alderman Panus asked if there are any cost benefits to having our own fuel facility versus using a local gas station. Mr. Ring explained that we can buy fuel tax free on state bid. He explained that he is currently researching the additional cost with the Wex program.

A motion to approve PL #64-21 was made by Alderman Witte, seconded by Alderman Panus. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Referred to Regular Meeting for Resolution.

2. Discussion – Bond Refinancing

Mr. Saradin explained that similar to what people have done in the past when it comes to refinancing their home and mortgage when interest rates come down, we are seeking refinancing for a Bond. He explained that we have a 2012 Bond that was taken out 10 years ago and we have been alerted to the fact that because interest rates have decreased significantly, we could have the Bond taken out to market to see if we can have it refinanced. He explained that Municipal Solutions took it to market and there were three bidders. He explained that it is estimated that over the next 11 years that the City would be able to save over \$450,000 in interest costs.

Alderman Crawford asked if there are any fees associated with this. Mr. Saradin explained that the estimated savings is net all of the fees. He explained that there will be a charge from Municipal Solutions for their service but he is unsure what this will be at this time. He explained that there will be a formal resolution introduced during the regular meeting to authorize this refinancing.

Alderman Crawford explained that unfortunately not all of the City's bonds qualify for refinancing because they are not all callable. He thanked Mr. Saradin for doing this legwork for the City.

3. Discussion – Electric Vehicle Charging Station Grants and Incentives

Alderman Crawford explained that he received an email the other day from National Grid asking if the City would be interested in electric vehicle charging stations, and explaining that there are ways to add them with a low cost to the City's bottom line. He explained that National Grid has a grant coordinator out of Buffalo and he has gotten a bunch of information from her to share with the Council and Mayor. He explained that we know that this is the future and the way that vehicles are going. He explained that we are now seeing Teslas in Western New York, and more and more vehicles are going to zero emissions.

Alderman Crawford explained that recently the new governor signed legislation mandating that any and all vehicles have non-combustion engines by 2035 and as part of the new regulation an increase in trucks in Western New York will be zero emissions, with new heavy and medium duty trucks being zero emissions by 2045. He explained that we all know that this is coming, but the fact is that the demand for electric vehicles is here. He explained that electric vehicles has an annual growth rate of 50 percent per year. Although electric vehicles may be a small proportion of all vehicles, no other type of vehicle is growing like this.

Alderman Crawford explained that there are currently four electric vehicle charging stations in Olean, three of which are at hotels and one at Kohls. He explained that a part of the application for the West State Street project is for electric vehicle charging stations along West State Street. He explained that hopefully we get awarded this RAISE grant, but right now that is uncertain.

Alderman Crawford explained that a charging station on average costs between \$5,000 and \$10,000 and that the grant is looking at Level 2, quick charging stations. He explained that many municipalities have these in public parking areas, and right now National Grid has a Make-Ready program that would cover up to 90% of the infrastructure installation costs. He explained that we would qualify for this if the stations are for public use.

Alderman Gonzalez asked about the Level 2 designation, and Alderman Crawford explained that these are quick charging. He explained that a Level 1 station is comparable to plugging the vehicle into the garage. He explained that the Level 2 can charge a vehicle in a couple of hours.

Alderman Crawford explained that he has reviewed the list of National Grid's recommended contractors and that there are four or five in Western New York that come highly recommended by the project manager of National Grid. He explained that this grant does not cover the costs of the charging stations themselves, and for this there is a secondary grant available through the Department of Environmental Conservation. He explained that the deadline for this application is October 29th and that it can be used for equipment costs. He noted that the grants can be leveraged with one another.

Alderman Crawford explained that part of the program is to provide the public with free charging, since the cost of the charging stations is subsidized. He explained that the grant would even cover up to two years of electricity costs for these charging stations, in addition to site preparation. He explained that this program has different levels of local matches, and after speaking with Ms. Kerper it looks like we would qualify for 100% funding since the median income in our area is \$41,742. He explained that there is a maximum on the project of \$250,000 in one location or facility, and the maximum grant per municipality is \$500,000. HE explained that both of these grants are for charging stations for public use only.

Alderman Crawford explained that if we are interested in pursuing this, his recommendation is that we reach out and speak with the approved contractors so that they could come in and put together a proposal so we can get an idea for where we want to roll this out. He explained that the contractor could put together the site plan and estimated costs, and once we have this information we could move forward with the work on the grants. He explained that the money would be reimbursed after it is spent and the construction is finished. He explained that he wants to know if we think this is the right time and if the Council is interested in pursuing this further. He explained that we also need to consider what location to do this in, and that Ms. Kerper's suggestion is to choose one area rather than to target different areas because there needs to be separate applications with the DEC for each location.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that he feels that this is a great idea, and that when we are considering a location, we should consider that when people are passing through with electric vehicles that they are following a charging network. He explained that more people will be driving electric vehicles in the next 10 to 15 years and we want a place where they can charge their vehicles

and while they are waiting, they can walk and spend money in the downtown. Alderman Crawford explained that you never know the customers you never have, and when you look at the charging network most are at hotels and none are really public. He asked how many people will be actually coming off of I86, especially five years from now. He explained that we get slaughtered for being reactionary as a Council and he would like to be more proactive. He explained that this would help with the increase in demand. He explained that someone could park their vehicle to charge it and go to the shops on North Union Street and in the downtown.

Alderman Crawford explained that it is interesting that the project manager for National Grid explained that this program is running like gangbusters, but that there have been few applications in Western New York. He explained that we are the progressive city of chaos and he thinks that this is a great opportunity to take advantage of. Alderman Witte explained that she thinks that we will see this demand grow over time, and we should look at areas that will bring people to the downtown to spend time. Alderman Gonzalez explained that South Street and Lincoln Park are an idea, and Mayor Aiello agreed. He explained that another spot would be the lot at the City Building.

Alderman Robinson explained that he has wanted to see one of these in Olean for a while. He explained that he wonders how many people we are missing out on coming to town because we have no place to charge an electric vehicle. He explained that he wants to see the City put this into place.

Alderman Crawford explained that of the two grants available, National Grid really seems to be subordinate to the DEC grant. He explained that Mr. Ring and Ms. Kerper are very busy so he is willing to help work on the grants and work with the Mayor to see if we can get this done. Mayor Aiello explained that he really thinks that we can work together and get this done. Alderman Crawford explained that he has a resolution drafted that we can move on tonight if everyone supports the idea. He explained that once the resolution is passed, he thinks that the next step is to reach out to the contractors. He explained that he will work with Mayor Aiello and lead this charge in any way that he can. He explained that the individual with National Grid is tasked with getting 16,000 of these put into place in Western New York. The preferred contractors know what they are doing so we should reach out to them and see how they can assist us.

Alderman Crawford explained that he is in agreeance that we should choose an area in the vicinity of North Union Street and the downtown to push people to spend time in the downtown region. Alderman Panus asked about the cost for one of the charging stations, and Alderman Crawford explained that the average is \$8,000 for a station with two plugs, one on either side. He explained that he asked if there is a specific number that was applied for with the West State Street project, and it was a blanket number of a cost that was asked for. Mr. Ring explained that the cost would cover four to six stations at three different locations.

Alderman Witte asked if infrastructure money could be used if we do not get the grant. Mayor Aiello explained that he has not come across this yet but he can look into it.

Alderman Panus explained that his thought is that these should be put somewhere that needs the additional investment. He explained that the City lot behind Rite Aid does not get much use and this would put people close to the downtown. Alderman Crawford explained that this is a great point and that the area can be highlighted in the wayfinding for the downtown. He explained that this would be a good opportunity to put in 10 to 20 of these stations and get the parking lot utilized. Alderman Panus noted that if we move forward with this, that the parking lot itself would need some upgrades as well.

4. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Crawford, seconded by Alderman Gonzalez. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:15 p.m.