

## PUBLIC SAFETY

Tuesday, November 2, 2021 – 6:30 p.m.  
Council Chambers – Olean Municipal Building

Present: Members: Chairman Robinson, Alderman Witte, Alderman Panus, Alderman Gonzalez, Alderman Crawford, and Alderman Anastasia. Others: Mayor William Aiello; Fred Saradin, City Auditor; Bob Ring, Director of Public Works; Brad Camp, Water and Sewer Superintendent; Tim Richardson, Fire Chief, and Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary.

### 1. Roll Call

Alderman Robinson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and asked that the record show that all committee members were present except Alderman Barnard, who was excused.

### 2. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Committee Meetings (Tuesday, October 5, 2021)

A motion to approve the minutes of the previous committee meeting was made by Alderman Robinson, seconded by Alderman Anastasia. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

### 3. Unfinished Business

None

### 4. New Referrals for Consideration

#### a. No Parking – West Greene Street (one side)

Alderman Crawford explained that items a and b on the agenda go together. He explained that he was incorrect, that it should be South 7<sup>th</sup> Street, not South 4<sup>th</sup>. He explained that residents around that area were spoiled recently with no parking along that end of West Greene Street. He explained that construction vehicles were going in and out of there, and there were no parking signs. He explained that residents have called him and have explained that it has helped, because people have been parking right up to the intersection. He explained that it is a funky 90 degree intersection with no sign. He explained that other residents are very vocal and concerned about people who like to whip around the corner, and personally he has seen cars cross over the line going over that corner. He explained that a couple of years ago, DPW put in striping that helped a bit to indicate where the lanes are. He explained that this is why the STOP signs have been requested. He wanted to bring this up and get Mr. Ring's opinion, as well as the Police Chief's.

Mr. Ring explained that during the project being completed by the DEC, there was no parking on the south side of West Greene Street from South 13<sup>th</sup> Street to South 5<sup>th</sup> Street to allow for larger trucks to be able to navigate these side streets. He explained when he gets request like this, and we get a number of requests like this, he thinks that what is most important is that when people drive through residential neighborhoods, they need to drive slow and streets are designed in this way. He explained that STOP signs shouldn't be used to slow down drivers.

Mr. Ring explained that between striping, crossing signs, street design and bump outs, when he sees things like this, the change would actually speed up cars because having parking on both sides actually slows vehicles down. HE explained that no parking on the south side of that street will allow for faster travel through that corridor, and we are talking about a STOP sign to slow people down and he thinks that these are the things that we need to avoid. He explained that he wants to get the point across that we want people to drive slowly through our neighborhoods. He explained that as speed goes up, the likelihood of an injury is higher.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that on West Greene Street from South 4<sup>th</sup> Street to South Union Street there is no parking on the south side of the street, but he would argue that this section of West Greene Street is considerably narrower, more densely populated, and homes are closer to the street. He explained that he agrees with Mr. Ring's assessment that there is no need for no parking on one side. He explained that everyone asks for things in the name of safety and we support doing things as safe as we can, but a lot of people will be affected and he does not think that this area has a tremendous track record of accidents. He explained that cars parked on both sides could act to slow people down more, and opening up the street will make people more inclined to speed. He explained that more often than not, when we put in a STOP sign somewhere people lose their minds and we get ten times as many complaints about the sign than we got requests for it.

Alderman Witte explained that in her ward, a STOP sign was placed at the corner of VanBuren and Sunrise. She explained that no one stops for it, and it was put there for someone to be able to back out of their driveway. She explained that this is a prime example. There are some places that we just don't want STOP signs. She explained that she feels Mr. Ring makes a very good point. We have so many signs around the City and there are many that are ignored and outdated. She explained that with a STOP sign, she think that we really need to be careful and exhibit restraint when making decisions.

Alderman Crawford explained that he respects the opinion of the Council and Mr. Ring. He explained that we kind of have a strategy that rather than just putting up a sign when someone complains, we reach out and ask for Mr. Ring's thoughts, as well as the Police Chief's. He explained that he would like to see if there is a record of accidents in this area. Mayor Aiello explained that he will get that.

Alderman Robinson asked if there is anything else that we can do for the corner, and Mr. Ring explained that we can repaint the center line again to place the expectation to stay on your side of the road. He explained that this way if there is an accident, the person at fault could be blamed because they crossed the center line.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that he feels that the traffic studies that we do are an extremely valuable resource, but that every single time that we do one, it shows that the average speed is below the speed limit and outliers are few and far between. Alderman Crawford explained that it is powerful data to have and take back to the constituents.

b. STOP Sign – West Greene Street and South 4<sup>th</sup> Street

Discussed previously.

c. Do Not Block Drive – West State Street (Don's Tavern)

Alderman Crawford explained that he is speaking on behalf of Alderman Barnard. He explained that There is a narrow, difficult to see alleyway that is a driveway between Don's and Clark's Sub Shop. He explained that patrons have been parking in front of the driveway and blocking it, and Alderman Barnard will be putting forward a resolution requesting signs to not block the driveway.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that we should consider painting the roadway as well so that people can more easily see that it is not a parking space. Mr. Ring explained that we did the same thing at Acne, but he believes that there are signs as well as striping. Alderman Crawford explained that the tenants who live above the property cannot access the parking behind the building when this driveway is blocked. Mayor Aiello explained that he is often asked about this from a constituent who lives there.

d. Tree Issues on Private Property

Alderman Panus explained that he has a current issue that he is trying to work through with Code Enforcement, and this is not the first time he has encountered it. He explained that trees on private property is high in the number of issues that he has dealt with. He explained that trees are usually not maintained and fall and damage other property. He explained that he has sent out an email explaining that Codes does allow us to enforce dead, dying trees on private property, and we need to put some pressure on this enforcement. He explained that he thinks that people in general are changing through the decades. HE explained that younger people don't look at a dying tree like older generations did. He explained that the cost of dealing with these trees has increased at a high rate and people can't believe the cost. He explained that he wanted to bring this up and get the Council's input to see if we can get some pressure on Codes

to maybe have these looked at and the Code enforced when issues come up. He explained that these trees have a potential of falling and hurting someone. We also have to look out for the value of property in the City as well. He explained that we kind of brush off issues when they are on private property, but that should not be the case.

Alderman Witte explained that she spoke with Chief Richardson and Alderman Panus before the meeting, and that Alderman Panus is correct that this is an expensive issue. She explained that there is a tree on private property in her ward that hangs over the street and would take out electric lines if it ever falls as well as falling into traffic. She explained that this is a public safety issue and we have to hold people accountable and help in some way. Alderman Gonzalez explained that there is even a shortage of qualified people to handle these trees.

Alderman Robinson asked if the Tree Program is specifically for trees in the subway, and Alderman Crawford explained that it is. Alderman Robinson asked if we perhaps increased the funding and allowed for financial assistance for trees on private property. He asked if this would help offset the cost. Alderman Crawford explained that the Tree Program not only helps maintain subway trees, but also helps with all of the issues that the City has with trees on our own property and in parks. He explained that we have extended a branch to residents to say that we understand that the City right of way is essentially shared between the homeowner and the City, so we put forward a policy to try to share cost in order to soften the blow. He explained that he thinks that it is a slippery slope if we decided to do this on private property. He explained that he appreciates the thought but he would like to see a long-term strategy, to see what we will do to fix our own trees all over the place.

Alderman Witte asked if there could be a presentation on the City's tree survey so that we are all on the same page, and Mayor Aiello explained that he could arrange that. Alderman Anastasia explained that he agrees with Alderman Panus, that he has an issue recently with a tree on private property but that if we allow Codes to do their jobs and allow them to go after hazardous and dangerous trees, things can be done. He explained that they went by the books, and the tree was eventually removed by the property owner. Alderman Gonzalez asked how we have given Codes direction to not do their jobs, since we haven't. Alderman Anastasia explained that he thinks that they were afraid because the tree was on private property and they didn't know how to handle the issue. He explained that he found the section of the Code that addresses this but he thinks that they were being told internally to back off because the tree was on private property. He explained that maybe we should get the City Forester to inspect trees even if they are on private property.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that he thinks that this is an internal issue to be handled by Code Enforcement and that it does not require Council intervention. Mayor Aiello agreed. Alderman Crawford asked what process Code Enforcement uses to do its job. He asked how much time is

given to remedy dangerous trees, and that he sees that after notice is given, that it just sits there and nothing is done. He explained that it is his understanding that we can remedy the issue and then bill the homeowner. If we can understand the process and work with Chief Richardson and Code Enforcement to make the process more efficient, then we can expedite these types of concerns.

Alderman Panus explained that the Code does overlap with DPW because the section in the Code puts the responsibility for dangerous trees on DPW. He explained that he can imagine that the process would go back and forth a bit. Chief Richardson explained that a big issue of concern is that a lot of times we can take a tree down and make the situation safe, and then lien the property. In theory, we could get the money back, but we have to ask what happens if we don't. He explained that he knows that public safety is paramount but we have to determine how far we are willing to go and how much money we are supposed to spend. He explained that he wishes that this was black and white but maybe this is something we need to figure out and go from there.

Alderman Witte explained that the Tree Committee can sit down with Mr. Ring, Chief Richardson and Ms. Cooper to see about putting more teeth into the Codes. She explained that even if we just have some of the dead branches cut, it would help. She explained that her concern is the public safety issue and making sure that nobody or nothing gets hurt. Chief Richardson explained that he thinks that we need to have a united front moving forward, and Alderman Panus explained that as a City, if we put pressure on people to clean up their act then we need to get it together and get a plan in place. Alderman Robinson explained that he thinks that the update on the tree survey will help explain a lot.

e. Crosswalk – North Union Street

Alderman Anastasia explained that constituents on North Union Street near the St. John's school want the crossing to be more visible and have requested the green line stripes down the sign posts. Mr. Ring explained that he is hoping that we can discuss this more. He explained that these are not regulatory signs so there are no resolutions or Codes needed, but he would like to let the Council know his philosophy. He explained that these light up the signs but not pedestrians. He explained that he is not a huge fan of these because the State has started using them, but there is no data to show that they improve safety. He explained that if they did improve safety, he would be using them regularly. He explained that he would rather start with additional lighting, a crosswalk or advance signage.

Alderman Anastasia asked how we can find out if there is data regarding the safety of the sign stripes, and Mr. Ring responded that he would hope that the Council would reply on his expertise on decisions for warning signs.

Alderman Crawford explained that we have to try to think that we have to be the voices of reason. He explained that we get concerns and complaints all the time, and it is easy to quiet constituents to put in this sign and that sign. He explained that we have to rely on the experts. He explained that he understands the concern, but he is wondering what is making this crossing not safe. He asked what is causing the concern.

Alderman Anastasia explained that there is a visibility issue with part of a tree hiding a sign. He explained that it is also a long stretch of traffic so people drive probably 35 to 40 miles per hour here. Alderman Crawford explained that this may be another site to put in for a traffic study. Alderman Robinson asked if the road is marked with striping for the crosswalk, and Alderman Anastasia explained that it is. He explained that they are just asking for a green line down the crossing signs to make them more visible.

Alderman Panus explained that when a building burnt down on Buffalo Street, we discussed the issues with landlords not having insurance on their property. He explained that landlords that are running low-cost rental units in the City tend not to have insurance. Alderman Crawford explained that Mr. Dougherty was working on this, and the Council was discussing a requirement for landlords to have insurance in order to obtain a Certificate of Occupancy. He explained that he is still 100% behind that. Alderman Crawford asked if we have collected anything for the property that burnt down on Buffalo Street, and Mayor Aiello explained that Mr. Hart has been working on this. Alderman Crawford explained that we could possibly eminent domain the property to put in a park there. He explained that taxpayers are getting stiffed with a slumlord's inability to take care of their property. Alderman Panus explained that he will be rekindling the efforts on requiring insurance for landlords.

#### 5. Approval of Committee Reports

None

#### 6. Adjournment

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