

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Tuesday, August 21, 2018 – 5:40 p.m.

Police Training Room – Olean Municipal Building

Members: Chairman Gonzalez, Alderman Witte, Alderman Crawford, and Alderman Smith.
Others: Alderman Dougherty; Alderman George; Mayor William Aiello; Nicholas DiCerbo, Jr., City Attorney; Fred Saradin, City Auditor; Bob Ring, Director of Public Works; Bob Bell, Fire Chief; Jeff Rowley, Police Chief, and Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary.

1. Roll Call

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

2. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Committee Meetings (Tuesday, August 7, 2018)

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 7, 2018 meeting was made by Alderman Gonzalez, seconded by Alderman Smith. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

3. Unfinished Business

None

4. New Referrals for Consideration

- a. PL #86-18: (Dougherty) To enact a local ordinance pursuant to the City of Olean Charter Section 2.044 (a) to increase the Council Salary from \$3,500 to \$5,500.
- b. PL #87-18: (Dougherty) To enact a local ordinance pursuant to the City of Olean Charter Section 2.044 (b) to increase the Council President's stipend from \$500 to \$1,000 per annum.
- c. PL #88-18: (Dougherty) To enact a local ordinance pursuant to the City of Olean Charter Section 2.022 to increase the Mayor's salary from \$50,000 to \$80,000.

Alderman Dougherty explained that the City Charter was last revised in 1991, and the revision took effect in 1994. The numbers presented were based on a rounded 2% cost of living adjustment (COLA) from 1994 through today. Alderman Crawford added that the average inflation rate through the past 25 years is 2.24%. A spreadsheet with figures was presented to the Council.

Alderman Dougherty explained that the \$3,500 salary of Aldermen for 1994 is equal to only \$2,057 of purchasing power now.

Alderman Crawford explained that he understands that this is a tough topic, especially since it has not been discussed in 25 years. No politician wants to talk about this. He added that the PL amounts of \$5,500 and \$80,000 reflect less than the amount of inflation. He is not sure what amount makes sense, and that is why this is being opened up for discussion. The PL's were introduced in order to get the ball rolling if nothing else. He understands that there was some shock value for the public.

Alderman Gonzalez expressed that the loss of purchasing power reflected is very compelling.

Mayor Aiello explained that over the past 24 years, he does not feel that City employees have kept up with the inflation rate. He feels that such a large raise would be a slap in the face to them. City employees have taken smaller raises, or even no raises, in addition to giving up things. There have been budget cuts, and the City even had to get a donation in order to keep the Bartlett House open. He sees potential union issues if the Mayor and Aldermen were to see such large wage increases. He has heard a lot of negative feedback from the public regarding this idea, and he feels that this is completely wrong. Mayor Aiello added that he feels that this discussion is being brought up at the wrong time.

Alderman George asked where the public has expressed their displeasure with this idea, and Mayor Aiello responded that it is on Facebook, in emails and calls, and can be heard out and about when speaking with constituents. Alderman Gonzalez stated that he only received one email, which was sent to the entire Council. He did see some mob grumbling on Facebook; however, he expressed that he feels that there is a lot of misinformation out there, and comments are being made before the Council has spoken any words regarding this proposal. He is disgusted that people have made up their minds about this without the Council having any discussion whatsoever, and without knowing the facts.

Alderman Crawford explained that the PL's were referred to this committee in order to allow for a strategic discussion and to determine the long term outlook. He expressed that the longer you kick something like this down the road, the harder the discussion becomes. He added that the increases would not take effect until after each position's next election, and he is not saying that the proposed amounts are the best amounts. His concern is how we get qualified candidates in life after Mayor Aiello. We need incentives for good, quality candidates for Aldermen and Mayor. Eight of the twelve Aldermen's elections through the past five years have gone unopposed. Either the Aldermen are doing an amazing job, or no one else wants to do it.

Alderman Witte explained that, looking at the numbers, she gets that they are all behind. The thing you have to understand is that Olean is losing population. During the National Night Out, the biggest complaint she heard was regarding taxes. She does not agree with this.

Alderman Witte continued that, when the City went from a part time to a full time mayor, the first full time mayors kept their other jobs as backup. She does think that \$50,000 is low, but a 60% increase is an insult to taxpayers. The Council could consider a gradual increase, instead of it all at once. The Mayor also gets benefits. She feels that this is a good starting point, but the Council needs to have some discussion on this and consider the opinions of the public.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that there was a lot of public outcry. The project took a lot of sacrifice and courage, and everything worked out. It all comes down to, how we can attract the next Mayor of Olean. There was previous discussion about a part time mayor and a city manager, but that is not a \$50,000 job. A city manager is a six figure job, or at least closer to \$80,000 than \$50,000. This increase would help the City get to that level. The City has had good luck in the past, and need to plan for the future.

Alderman Witte expressed that it is a great argument that the Council needs to look down the road. However, the Council also needs to consider what they are willing to cut, and what they are willing to increase in terms of taxes. This is a huge amount.

Alderman Gonzalez responded that they have mathematical calculations that show where these proposed amounts came from and why they make sense. Alderman Dougherty added that if you keep kicking the can down the road, the increase will only get worse.

Alderman Crawford explained that it is the fault of the founders of the Charter that this needs to be dealt with. Most municipalities have a Charter Commission that reevaluates wages every four to six years. He feels that \$80,000 is too much, but \$50,000 is too low. The raise is also not impacting anybody today. It is setting up the mayors and Council of the next 25 years. He thinks that the public gets a great deal, if wages only change every 25 years. He urged the committee to keep in mind comparables and the back and forth discussion to determine what makes sense.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that two years ago, the Council and City pulled \$150,000 from surplus for the budget, and this budget uses nothing from the surplus. Cuts were made to fund other things.

Alderman Witte explained that it has been discussed to cut the number of Aldermen down from seven to five. As the population has gone down, it makes sense to decrease the number of Aldermen. It also makes more sense to increase the Council's pay when the number of Council members are decreased. She feels that this should be a talking point for conversations.

Alderman Smith explained that he has thought a lot about this, and he feels that it is a balancing act. This is not a private business, but rather a public service, so you have to decide if pay is based on time put in, or if time is put in for one's civic duty. There is a fine line. He always felt that the Mayor's salary has been low, especially with the amount of time that he puts in. He will err on the more modest side for increases. He feels that his civic duty outweighs in this situation.

Alderman Gonzalez asked if this means that the only people who run for mayor should be independently wealthy. Alderman Smith disagreed, that there are many good candidates out there who would be able to take this position and the pay that comes with it. Alderman Witte added that the pay increase should be gradual. We should not be trying to make up for 25 years overnight. Taxpayers can't and shouldn't take the burden of a 60% raise. She suggested having a committee to look into this so that it is not up to the seven members of the Council. The discussion should be had by people who will not play politics. Alderman Crawford reminded that the final vote still comes before the Council.

Mayor Aiello agreed that it should be an independent committee of people in the community in order to remove politics from the equation.

Alderman Witte mentioned that Olean cannot compare itself to Jamestown (as shown in a salary comparison table), as populations between the two are very different.

Alderman Smith explained that he feels that if we do not increase the mayor's salary, that we should go back to a part time mayor. The full time mayor's position disincentives the position for any middle aged person with a job because they will not want to leave a permanent position to take a temporary mayor's position.

Mr. DiCerbo pointed out that it states nowhere in the Charter that the Mayor needs to work forty hours a week. Alderman Dougherty stated that there would be a lot of empty shoe space without a full time mayor. Alderman Witte explained that department heads run their departments and then bring issues forward to the Mayor.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that someone could be mayor, spend the entire day at their other job, and then collect the Mayor's salary, if this logic is correct. In all reality, this is a full time job. Department Heads need some form of centralized leadership.

Mayor Aiello explained that you could be a Tuesday legislator, or you could do the job right.

Mr. Saradin expressed that he feels that you would be taking a step backwards if you went back to a part time mayor. Mayor Aiello added that a city manager would cost more, on top of a part time mayor.

Alderman Crawford explained that this will be an ongoing discussion, and certainly no decisions can be made in only one day regarding something such as this.

A motion to postpone PL's 86, 87, and 88 to the next Strategic Planning committee meeting was made by Alderman Gonzalez, seconded by Alderman Crawford. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

5. Approval of Committee Reports

None

6. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Gonzalez, seconded by Alderman Smith. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:10 p.m.