

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Tuesday, September 18, 2018 – 6:05 p.m.

Police Training Room – Olean Municipal Building

Present: Members: Chairman Gonzalez, Vice Chairman Andreano, Alderman Witte, and Alderman Crawford. Others: Alderman Dougherty; Alderman George; Mayor William Aiello; Nicholas DiCerbo, Jr., City Attorney; Fred Saradin, City Auditor; Bob Ring, Director of Public Works; Keri Kerper, Community Development Program Coordinator; Kris Shewairy, Youth & Recreation Director; Jeff Rowley, Police Chief; Bob Bell, Fire Chief; Ed Jennings, Code Enforcement Supervisor, and Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary.

1. Roll Call

Alderman Gonzalez called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and asked that the record show that all committee members were present except Alderman Smith, who was excused.

2. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Committee Meetings (Tuesday, September 4, 2018)

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 4, 2018 meeting was made by Alderman Gonzalez, seconded by Alderman Andreano. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

3. Unfinished Business

None

4. New Referrals for Consideration

a. Discussion – City of Buffalo’s Operation Slumlord

Alderman Gonzalez explained that a constituent brought to his attention an action that the Buffalo Common Council has taken to combat blight in the City. A piece of legislation was passed allowing Code Enforcement liens to be levied onto the taxes of a property. Mr. DiCerbo mentioned that an issue that the City has is that the City of Buffalo is their own tax foreclosure agency, while the City of Olean uses Cattaraugus County. Historically, Cattaraugus County has only reimbursed the City for unpaid water and sewer bills. The tax foreclosure wipes out any other liens on the property.

Mr. DiCerbo continued that the City would not need to front a lot of money in order to take over the foreclosures; however, the problem that the City would run into is that they would have to front all of the school taxes and reimburse the school district for what they are owed prior to the foreclosure. If the City would like to pursue making a change it is possible, and it is a

long term project that would need to be discussed with the County. However, the City would need a couple of million dollars to front the money owed to the school.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that the City of Buffalo has also begun “slumlord shaming”. The worst of the worst properties have signs put into their yards with the property owner’s names and addresses. There is a process to determine if a house is “eligible” for a sign. There is also correspondence and attempted contact with the property owner before any sign is placed.

Alderman Crawford asked where the sign is placed, and Alderman Gonzalez responded that he is unsure. Alderman Dougherty mentioned that the New York State Fire Code allows the City to placard buildings, even if we do not own them.

Alderman Witte asked if we could get into contact with the City of Buffalo’s legal department, and Mr. DiCerbo responded that we have already been in contact with them. He believes that this is doable in the City, but would recommend probably putting the signage in the subway. Other municipalities also take out ads in the paper where the owner of a home resides, and this has been met with some success. Alderman Gonzalez added that this is something that we should all think about.

Mr. Barnett, who brought the article to Alderman Gonzalez’s attention, explained that he pays a lot of taxes in the City. He feels that these blighted homes are a health and safety issue, and they reflect upon the entire City. He asked if this is what the Council wants to see in their communities. The Council wants to upgrade the City, and it would take little to shame these slumlords. This is one more inducement that the City can use in its arsenal. He commends everyone on the Council, as in the last couple of years they have made some great strides.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that he wants culture to shift in a positive direction. The City may need to take some unorthodox risks in order to get where we want to go.

Alderman Witte questioned if the Land Bank pays back taxes when they take a property, and Mr. DiCerbo responded that they do. Alderman Dougherty reminded the committee that the Land Bank is a non taxed entity, and Mr. DiCerbo responded that the City receives reimbursement up until the point that the Land Bank takes possession of the property.

Mr. Barnett added that the City needs to do what it can to attract and retain people.

b. Recreation Center Funding

Mr. Ring explained that the work for the most part is completed at the Recreation Center, and there is additional funding leftover from the project. He is trying to prioritize work and put back into the project what was originally cut out. Working with Mr. Shewairy, and John Andhor, four items were found where funding could be used.

Mr. Ring explained that funding could be used first for staircase improvements on the wooden bleachers. Last year, a woman fell, and the steps are not ADA compliant. He would like to cut them to an ADA compliant width, as well as install handrails. The total cost for this portion of the project is approximately \$23,000.

Mr. Ring continued that the electric service is original to the building when it was constructed in the 1970's. It needs to be replaced. The electric has been unreliable, and this is a good opportunity to replace it. The cost for the new panels and to run the new service would be approximately \$50,000.

Mr. Ring explained that the doors entering into the lobby are not ADA compliant, and he would like to see them brought up to compliance. Roughly \$20,000 would allow for 6 doors to be replaced and brought up to compliance.

Alderman Andreano asked if the funding could be used for this purpose, and Mr. Ring replied that it can be as long as it is in the original scope of the project. Mr. DiCerbo explained that these items were a part of the scope of the project at the beginning. Alderman Witte added that the funding can be used to pay down the debt incurred for the project, or it could be used for additional items related to the scope of the project.

Mr. Ring explained that the fourth item would consist of a concession stand in the lobby. Alderman Gonzalez remarked that he thought that the concession stand was closed and cut from the budget, and that the City would save money using vending machines. Mayor Aiello responded that the City has received a lot of complaints regarding the vending machines. The City is only looking to install the facility, but not to run it. An outside group would run the concession area. Mr. Ring added that the cost for this is approximately \$25,000.

Alderman Witte asked how much money from the project would be left when these items are complete, and Mr. Ring responded that it will be almost completely used.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that the Council has an option to hammer down the debt by a small amount, or do the upgrades. He doesn't feel that these upgrades would be done in the future if not a part of the project now, so he feels that we should do the additional four projects and get the entire complex done to the next degree. Alderman Dougherty agreed that the projects should be done and gotten out of the way.

A PL and Resolution will be introduced at the next regular Council meeting.

5. Approval of Committee Reports

None

6. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Gonzalez, seconded by Alderman Witte. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:25 p.m.