

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Tuesday, February 2, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

via Zoom

Present: Members: Chairman Crawford, Vice Chairman Gonzalez, Alderman Witte, and Alderman Robinson. Others: Alderman Panus; Alderman Anastasia; Mayor William Aiello; Bob Ring, Director of Public Works, and Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary.

1. Roll Call

Alderman Crawford called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and asked that the record show that all committee members were present.

2. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Committee Meetings (Tuesday, January 19, 2021)

A motion to approve the minutes of the January 19, 2021 committee meeting was made by Alderman Crawford, seconded by Alderman Witte. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

3. Unfinished Business

None

4. New Referrals for Consideration

a. Discussion – Internet Providers in the City

Mayor Aiello explained that the City does not have a contract for internet providers in the City, and the Spectrum Cable Franchise Agreement is for television only. Alderman Panus explained that this is what he wanted to touch on. He explained that he has seen flyers in the mail and trucks around for a new provider. He explained that he had heard about the contract with Spectrum and he is curious as to how that works, if it only relates to cable, why there is a contract, and what it involves. He wonders if there is anything that we should know about this new company.

Mayor Aiello explained that for years the City has had a contract with the different providers of cable and it is because they run their wires on the poles through the City. He explained that it is not a non-compete but it states that they will provide a certain service to City residents. He noted that the City has no say in the pricing of the service and that it is controlled by the Public Service Commission. He explained that it is getting complicated so there are many new providers popping up. Alderman Panus thanked him and explained that he is out of the loop and wanted to get the conversation going. He noted that he would like to see the contract.

Alderman Crawford explained that from his perspective, his Spectrum internet bill continues to increase. He explained that it would take a large investment, but there are smaller municipalities out there with a municipal internet service for constituents. He explained that this is something that we could possibly look into. Alderman Panus explained that it is at least something that we have to question and know what it takes to do so we know when we should go in this direction, if we should go in this direction.

Alderman Crawford explained that he was pleased to see some competition in the area, but he does not know what the new company is like. He explained that he will have to talk to the Mayor and City Attorney to see if we would want to invite them in for a discussion. He is open to learning more. Alderman Panus explained that there is not much information out there besides that they are coming soon.

Mayor Aiello explained that one of the questions that we need to get answered is if we can regulate internet providers in the City like we do cable. He explained that he will have to have a discussion with the City Attorney about this. He noted that he will get the current cable contract out to the Aldermen.

Alderman Crawford explained that the Olean Times Herald has run an article about Alderman Dougherty's resignation, and he asked if there are any updates on the vacancy. Mayor Aiello explained that he sent out a press release today asking anyone who is interested in filling the Ward 4 vacancy to contact his office before 5 p.m. Monday. He explained that he will then put together interviews and will reach out to some of the Aldermen to sit on the interview committee.

Alderman Crawford asked about the budget timeline. Mayor Aiello explained that the budget will be to the Council by the deadline date of February 15, 2021. He asked that the Council let him know if they want an electronic or hard copy and he will get it to them. He explained that we then have until April 15, 2021 to adopt the budget, and will be having conversations once the budget is turned over to the Aldermen to get a better idea of the timeline.

Alderman Crawford explained that he wants to bring up the guy punch that he thinks that many people in Olean felt today, which was hearing that Siemens Energy will be eliminating more than 500 positions and closing down the manufacturing part of the business here in Olean. He explained that he thinks that this is kind of an all hands on deck scenario. He doesn't know what is possible or even feasible for the Council to do, but he thinks that we need to do something. He provided a list of representatives for New York State for the Aldermen and audience to contact regarding this closing.

Mayor Aiello explained that he received a phone call from Senator Schumer's office advising what was happening. He explained that this is very bad news for our area. He explained that

Schumer's Office has had conversations with the upper management and CEO of Siemens, and they are being told that this is a reality. He noted that 150 white collar jobs will be remaining in the Olean plant, and there is a timeline of about 18 months before they turn the lights off on the manufacturing facility.

Mayor Aiello explained that we are all devastated by this, and we need to keep reaching out to our elected officials. He explained that his heart is telling him that this is a done deal, but we need to put up a fight. He explained that at this time, he doesn't have any more information on the closing than anyone else.

Alderman Crawford explained that he will be calling every one of these people. He sees people already saying that this is a done deal, and he teaches business management so he knows how decisions are made like this but that doesn't mean that we have to just take it. He feels that our job locally is to be the squeaky wheel and not accept it. This is just a sad day.

Alderman Witte explained that it is like what happened with Dal Tile. The facility that they closed was union and they were moving to a new facility with non-union employees. He explained that she fees as bad as everyone else but in their eyes, its business. She explained that we have to prepare. AVX is gone and we couldn't save Olean Wholesale. She explained that this is manufacturing now, and she has driven by Siemens lately wondering how much longer they will be here. She bets that the workers in Wellsville didn't think that this would happen. She explained that we need to roll up our sleeves to work with State and Federal representatives to see what we can do, but at the same time be realistic. She explained that we may need to look at alternatives that could go into the plant. There is not much we can say because we are not the ones cutting deals. We have to talk to representatives and see what they can do.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that he worked at Dresser Rand for 9 years, and he has a lot of friends that still work there. This is devastating beyond words. He doesn't want to give a sense of false hope on this situation, but he has known John Stahley for a number of years. One thing that he has never doubted is that Mr. Stahley wants Olean to be successful. He explained that if we ware at that point here then he really thinks that this is it, because if there was any way to save Siemens in Olean he would be the one to save it.

Alderman Crawford agreed and explained that he thinks that we are just all trying to process what we have learned. He explained that Olean needs to petition to build up our brand. He can't imagine that they would mothball a multi-million dollar facility. He thinks that we need to communicate and at least try to keep the conversation going.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that the good news is that some jobs are staying behind, but Alderman Crawford asked how long this would really be for.

Alderman Panus explained that we need new development and jobs in Olean, and the way he looks at it is that tomorrow can be the best or worst day of our lives. It is up to us to decide what kind of day it will be. We need to push the folks that make the deals with the State if we are going to get industry in here, as we need to have promotions for start-ups. He explained that we have a work force that lacks skill, so we need an investment in that as well. The loudest voices get the attention. We need to ask for an investment in training and incentives for manufacturing to come here again so that it can be better than what we were holding onto.

Alderman Anastasia asked if there is any way to get a resolution drafted that the entire Council can sponsor to send to State and Federal representatives, strongly urging them to do whatever they can to help Siemens. He explained that the County could get into it, as well. We need to let them know that we are asking and pleading for help. We have eighteen months to try to make a deal.

5. Approval of Committee Reports

None

6. Executive Session

A motion to enter into executive session to discuss pending or proposed litigation was made by Alderman Crawford, seconded by Alderman Anastasia. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Executive session began at approximately 6:25 p.m.

A motion to adjourn from executive session was made by Alderman Crawford, seconded by Alderman Robinson. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Executive session adjourned at approximately 6:40 p.m.

7. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Crawford, seconded by Alderman Robinson. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:40 p.m.