

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Tuesday, July 20, 2021 – 5:50 p.m.

Council Chambers – Olean Municipal Building

Present: Members: Chairman Crawford, Vice Chairman Gonzalez, Alderman Witte, Alderman Barnard and Alderman Robinson. Others: Alderman Panus; Alderman Anastasia; Mayor William Aiello; Fred Saradin, City Auditor; Tim Richardson, Fire Chief; Ron Richardson, Fire Chief, and Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary.

1. Roll Call

Alderman Crawford called the meeting to order at approximately 5:50 p.m. and asked that the record show that all committee members were present.

2. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Committee Meeting (Tuesday, June 15, 2021)

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 15, 2021 committee meeting was made by Alderman Crawford, seconded by Alderman Barnard. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

3. Unfinished Business

None

4. New Referrals for Consideration

a. Discussion Items

i. Transient Occupancy Tax (“Bed Tax”)

Alderman Crawford explained that this is essentially a tax placed on hotels and Airbnb’s for those who are coming from outside the City into the City. He explained that this is something that he asked the Mayor to bring us to get some conversation going.

Mayor Aiello explained that he has been in discussions with our State representatives Joe Giglio and George Borello, and they are both willing to move this forward once the City does a resolution to send to them. He explained that they would take this to the next level, where it has to be approved by the State legislature. He was informed that timing is everything because the Legislature is not currently in session. He has sample legislation from North Castle, NY that Mr. Hart provided for him. He explained that the current bed tax for the County is 5 percent and they get \$75,000 to \$80,000 out of Olean on the bed tax, so if the City was to impose a 5 percent bed tax, there is potential there for more income. He explained that this is not a tax on

our population, but rather a tax on people who come in and use the hotel. In addition, if we do this he would like the money to be used towards economic development in the City.

Mayor Aiello explained that some time ago the Council discussed this, but they did not want to impose the bed tax because they didn't want another tax. He explained that anywhere you go and stay in a hotel, you're paying another tax. What he would like to do, with the Council's permission, is put together a resolution to bring a bed tax forward.

Alderman Witte explained that in 2000-2001, the Council felt that this was another tax on local people that would turn people away. She explained that this is really a tax on people who visit Olean and use our resources, not a tax on our residents. She feels that this is long overdue. The County has been doing this for years and we should get our fair share. She explained that she would like to move forward as soon as possible.

Alderman Crawford agreed and explained that he doesn't want to see us get in the habit of generating revenue for the sake of generating revenue. However, knowing the budget the way that the Council does, he knows that we have to stretch our dollars farther and farther each year. He explained that he agrees with the Mayor as well that revenues should be used not only towards economic development in the City, but also for marketing the City of Olean. He would love to see the money generated from cannabis and bed taxes used to market the City and help make Olean a tourist destination. Alderman Crawford explained that we should look into giving grants for business startups to continue to develop the downtown and everything else that goes along with development and marketing. This is not something that penalizes residents and this isn't about going after our residents, but rather about asking those who come to visit to help contribute towards the City.

Alderman Anastasia explained that he was a County Legislator when they imposed the bed tax, and he thinks that it is a good thing that we are losing out on and we should pursue. Alderman Gonzalez explained that he is in favor of the bed tax. Alderman Panus explained that he has been rolling this around in his head, and a part of the reason that he sits on the Council is because he was tired of all of the taxes being created. He explained that he didn't think about revenues going towards community development, and he would support a bed tax with the caveat that the revenues go towards that. Alderman Crawford explained that he agrees with Alderman Panus, and explained that it seems that generally speaking it seems that the entire Council is in favor of this. He explained to Mayor Aiello that he can work on drawing up the resolution to bring it forward.

- ii. Closure of Cattaraugus County Landfill at Farwell / City Vegetation Collection

Alderman Panus explained that he has had some questions brought to him about the Farwell closure, and he spoke with the Cattaraugus County Legislators in Olean who have indicated that they are getting hit with questions, too. He explained that Farwell used to allow for drop off of vegetation and debris in Ischua. He explained that it was closed due to something involving the DEC, although he hasn't been able to track down anything official to support that. He explained that the City lot has been opened on Saturdays but you can't go in with a truck load of debris as a contractor. He explained that people who are cleaning up someone's yard as a friend or relative have to have a place to take bulk loads of vegetation and debris. Farwell was open a lot of time even after the garbage landfill closed.

Alderman Panus explained that the Council is trying to get the location reopened but it could be limited to just bags and things like the other Cattaraugus County transfer stations. A lot of times when you get into vegetation removal, it can get bulky quickly. He explained that there should be a pay site somewhere for contractors. He explained that as far as he knows, there is currently no place you can go, even paying, to get rid of bulk vegetation. He feels that this is a problem and at the very least he would like to see this get some attention, and maybe at some point he would like to see some sort of funding for someone to open a pay site. This is needed, and he would like to see if anyone else has had any comments brought to them.

Alderman Witte asked if we have any issue with Casella picking up yard waste. She explained that she has people that just tie up tree branches, and some people take these to the Front Street site. She explained that the Front Street site used to be opened more but was closed because commercial guys were dumping there. Mr. Ring explained that Casella reached out to us after the County landfill closed because that is where they took the yard waste, and that is where the City took leaves. He explained that it was closed because of issues with hogweed. He explained that we now take our leaves to Franklinville to a private resident, which is also where Casella is taking yard waste. He explained that it is possible at some point the resident won't take it anymore, but he believes that right now he takes it for mulch,

Mayor Aiello explained that he has received calls about this and has also spoken with the Legislators about this. He explained that the lot is opened up on Saturday for four hours to residents because the County is now charging to take yard waste bags to them, He explained that it may be a good idea for the City to send a letter to the County asking for them to reopen Farwell. He explained that he also had a conversation with the Department of Public Works Director with the County, and asked why they don't man Farwell if there are issues with illegal dumping. He explained that he was told that it was a cost factor, but every house in the City of Olean pays county taxes and there should be a place where our residents can take large quantities of brush to get rid of it.

Alderman Panus explained that he would like to do something to get their attention. He explained that it was not just the lack of manning, but also poor management of the site that had a lot to do with why it got shut down. He explained that there is a big difference between garbage and vegetation. If people can't find somewhere to take their vegetation, they are going to burn more stuff, more often, in their yards or on land and we are at a point in history where we have to understand that there are problems with that as well. We need to understand that it is a poor decision to encourage that kind of behavior. He explained that he will work up a PL to be directed to the County as such.

Mayor Aiello explained that something that Mr. Ring brought to his attention, that would help us with receiving at Front Street, is that we should look into the purchase of a chipper. Alderman Panus explained that the Front Street lot is pretty small and asked what we do when that is filled up. Mr. Ring explained that it is just about full, and there are old railroad rails and things like that there as well. He explained that it is really to capacity, and he believes that is only a couple acres of land. Alderman Panus explained that the Front Street lot has been there for yard waste for years, and Mr. Ring explained that in the Fall we would take to Farwell or Franklinville, and when storms or whatever happened during the year we would pile the brush there and then rent a chipper or just pile it in the trucks in the Fall to take it away.

Alderman Panus asked if then there is an issue at the Front Street lot with Farwell closed too, and Mr. Ring explained that there is. He explained that we have had to expand our services as they reduced theirs. Mayor Aiello explained that if we had a chipper, we could grind up the yard waste and offer it to those who could use it as a base. Alderman Crawford explained that after the recent storms, he had people ask if the City would be going around picking up limbs. He would imagine that it would be a lot easier to eliminate those limbs if we had our own chipper. He feels that this is a great idea, and he would support it.

iii. Feral Cat Population Spike

Alderman Crawford explained that we have definitely seen a spike in the City of feral cats, and he would like to say that this is tanks in part to COVID. He explained that this really shut down the TNVR and when you go 12 months without tracking or fixing stray cats, you can really see an explosion in the population. He explained that he spoke with the Catnippers today after he found a male and female cat in the backyard of his in-laws house, who had kittens. He explained that the kittens were taken to the SPCA to be fostered out but the adults would need to be fixed and released. He explained that there are always two to three cats that wander his yard, but there are definitely two major colonies in his ward. He had a conversation with the Mayor and he believes that he has received a number of calls as well.

Mayor Aiello explained that we have started talking to the SPCA and we are in negotiations right now on a new contract that would include cats. He explained that he will be bringing that forward to the Council in a week or two for consideration. We are getting a spike in calls. In his neighborhood several new cats have popped up. He explained that we were getting a handle on it and then COVID set us back. We were on a five to ten year plan, but we will have to start that again. He explained that we will be working with the SPCA and they are willing to help.

Mayor Aiello explained that the SPCA does not want to be the animal control officer for the City anymore so we may need to secure the employment of someone to be the City's animal control officer. He explained that per the Ag and Markets Law, the City needs to have an animal control officer. There are not a lot of them around so we will have to decide what to do in that aspect. He explained that recommendations will be coming to the Council regarding that as well. Mayor Aiello noted that there is a very serious dog bite in litigation now and we actually used a County Deputy as our animal control officer for that matter.

Alderman Crawford explained that this could definitely be another topic for another conversation. He explained that he wants to follow up on the feral cat strategy. He explained that he has reached out to the SPCA regarding catching adult cats, and they are filled to the brim and could not help him get the cats in his in-laws yard to Operation Pets to be spayed or neutered for a couple weeks. He explained that Catnippers were able to pick up the two cats in a couple of days. He would like to set up a meeting with himself, the Mayor, the SPCA and the Catnippers to create a strategy to determine how we all help each other to ultimately try to reel in the feral cat population.

Alderman Crawford explained that there were also a lot of people who got pets during COVID, and some of these people are now letting these pets loose. He explained that they are just let out into yards and are not fixed and are having kittens and piling onto the issue. He explained that he would like to work with Codes, the Police Department, and whoever else to stop people who are just letting animals go.

Alderman Anastasia explained that he has received some emails about feral cats that he has shared with the Mayor. Alderman Witte explained that she has not received calls recently, but she feels that we need to be educating people. She explained that people don't realize that they need to be registering their dogs, and we need to publicize that. She asked if Catnippers are helping, and Alderman Crawford explained that they are doing what they can with the very little staff that they have. He explained that they need volunteers to step up and help out. He explained that this is why he thinks that we need to have a meeting, in order to strategize.

Mayor Aiello explained that one thing that is interesting is that at the last Chamber meeting of the Board of Directors, it was brought up that the City used to have a welcome wagon so new

people in the community would be taken information. He explained that there is discussion about resurrecting that, and this goes along with people who don't know they need to register their dog. He explained that the street sweeper schedule and plowing ordinances could be given out as well. He explained that the Board is very interested in getting this going again. Alderman Witte explained that she used to be a part of this, and it makes a big difference. It helps make new people feel welcome and it gives them information that we take for granted. She explained that if we want to attract young people we need to be friendlier and give them information.

Alderman Crawford explained that this would go along with the marketing aspect that we were talking about before. Having plans in place to work with Community Development to put a program together is something we can work with the Chamber on. He explained that reaching out to new residents would be a great idea.

Alderman Crawford asked if the animal control officer would help enforce the registration of dogs, and Mayor Aiello explained that they would. Alderman Crawford explained that maybe 20 to 30 percent of people register, but it is difficult to enforce. Mayor Aiello explained that this person could be our employee or could be a contracted service.

iv. TAP Grant Application

Mr. Ring explained that a funding opportunity has come up from the New York State Department of Transportation through the Transportation Alternatives Program. He explained that this partially funded Walkable Olean Phases II and III, and provides up to 80 percent of funding for a project. He explained that he feels that we are a really strong contender for this funding. He explained that this grant is meant for shared use projects that improve walkability and bikeability.

Mr. Ring explained that the City would partner with Olean High School, InTandem and the YMCA for a shared use path on Wayne Street. He explained that the YMCA has had numerous requests for a flashing beacon crossing from their daycare to their main building, and they are willing to write a letter of support for the grant. He explained that he feels that the new Hampton Inn would be a supporter of the project as well. He noted that the Urban Renewal Agency actually has a project behind Country Fair where the trail ends to build a trailhead. Mr. Ring explained that the Council has been discussing a lot about a bike network, and this potential project would be a good next step and has a lot of supporters. He explained that this could also be a Safe Routes to Schools project.

Alderman Gonzalez asked if a ten foot multi use path would be like the one on Main Street, and Mr. Ring responded that it would be. Alderman Gonzalez explained that he thinks that this is a great idea. Alderman Panus asked if the project will use concrete or blacktop and Mr. Ring

responded that it depends on the funding that we receive, but he would like to use concrete. Alderman Crawford explained that Wayne Street was just repaved, and Mr. Ring explained that we would not be repaving Wayne but rather would just extend the curb in front of the Credit Union and the YMCA. He explained that there would be some curb changes to help with crossing distances, and he has provided the Council with a quick markup of the project. He noted that this is a part of the Allegheny River Valley Trail, and he feels that they would support the application as well.

Alderman Crawford explained that he supports this and like it or not, this is the way that the City is going. He explained that he wants people to ride their bikes and walk to school safely. The YMCA is in his ward and he has been talking to them for years now about a flashing beacon so that they can get the children across Wayne Street safely. He explained that there are signs there but it is still a street that people travel pretty quickly. HE explained that he thinks that the City should reach out to Siemens as well because although they might not be there very long, this could still be a safe route to whoever will be there. He explained that this could be a safe route for workers who could be coming in from across the City.

Alderman Witte explained that when she worked at the County building she always wanted a way to connect the City Trail on Constitution Avenue to InTandem. She explained that at lunch time a lot of people from the County Building walk and have to walk on the side of the road to reach the trail. She explained that if you loop the County Building into the trail that it would be great, and noted that this is not far from the intersection where the hotel is so they could be included in the project as well.

Alderman Anastasia asked if the street would be narrowed, and Mr. Ring explained that the curb will be extended to where the bike lane is. He explained that the project would not affect the size of the driving lanes. Alderman Panus explained that Wayne Street is wide open and he thinks that this is why people drive so fast. He explained that when you want people to slow down, you make it seem like there isn't so much space. He explained that he feels that this is an opportunity. Mr. Ring explained that Main Street appears narrow but it isn't. He explained that we want the appearance of a narrow street so that people slow down. It is not really narrow but it seems like it is. He explained that the less pavement that the less pavement that the City has to maintain the better. He explained that they spend more money on pavement, salt, and repairing blacktop than on anything else in DPW.

Alderman Witte explained that she talked to the neighbors on Main Street about the changes towards Front Street. She explained that they are also interested in looking at a bike lane along the gold course. She explained that Main Street is a wide street and people use it as a raceway. She explained that the narrower looking roadway does help calm traffic, although it's a change

that people have to get used to. She explained that it's about a community, and that the Council isn't there for cars, they are there for people.

Alderman Crawford explained that one would hope that as we provide the infrastructure and facility like this that people would have less of a need to drive. He explained that they could walk, ride scooters, or bike. He explained that people won't have to worry about having four lanes of traffic and getting from Point A to Point B as soon as possible. He explained that people would be able to slow down.

v. WQIP Grant Application

Mr. Ring explained that annually the Consolidated Funding Application comes out, which includes state funding. He explained that this comes out all at once except for programs like TAP and WIIA. He explained that we applied for this two years ago, and there was no program last year due to COVID. He explained that he would like to apply again and explained that a lot of time, we have more success with the second time applying for funding.

Mr. Ring explained that this is really the next priority project for sewer. He explained that there is a gravity syphon under the river that picks up everything on the south side of the river and carries it to South Union Street to the Fourth Street Pump Station. He explained that they want to build a pump station and pump the sewage across the bridge. He explained that on the Sewer Master Plan this is the next priority project. This is about a \$1 million project which he believes could be 60% funded. He explained that if we do not get this round of funding, we need to seriously discuss funding this project outright.

Alderman Witte asked where the pump station would be located, and Mr. Ring explained that it would be similar to the Hoop Street pump station and would be near the South Union Street boat launch. He explained that we applied for an engineering grant three years ago that we were awarded, so we have a plan in place that a consultant prepared. Alderman Panus asked what we would be doing. Mr. Ring explained that we would eliminate the under river syphon line and all sewage would be pumped under the bridge. He explained that a tank on the other side of the river builds pressure that forces the sewage through the line under the river. He explained that this was built in the 30's when this portion of Olean was developed. There are currently two pipes under the river and he wants to eliminate these and have a pipe hanging under the bridge.

vi. Refuse Contract

Mr. Ring explained that we have opened the bids for the refuse and recycling hauling contract. He explained that there are some things that we need to accomplish, not necessarily right away but he wants to bring this up for discussion. He explained that we will need to award the

contract and potentially change the Code to allow for an exclusive agreement. He explained that when we previously discussed the contract, we had discussed giving the awarded company exclusive rights.

Mr. Ring explained that the low bidder was Casella, and Beichner was the other bidder. He explained that our current contract is with Casella. He explained that Beichner currently does provide some service in the City, but with two companies there are two sets of heavy trucks driving on City roads. He explained that before we sign with Casella we will want to change the code to enforce the exclusive contract rights. He explained that nothing was changed in terms of the services, and that there is still zero short recycling, a sticker system and yard waste pickup. He explained that the additional option of a monthly cost to have a tote was included as well. He explained that this would be provided by Casella and they would handle billing so that the user doesn't have to handle stickers anymore.

Mr. Ring explained that there is around a ten percent increase in cost. He explained that he expected costs to go up. A 64 gallon tote would be \$16 a month, and 30 gallon would be \$8 a month. He explained that he didn't think that we would ever fully eliminate the sticker system, but even the hauling company is moving towards totes more.

Alderman Crawford asked how long the contract would be, and Mr. Ring explained that it would be a four year contract with two three year extensions if both parties are agreeable. Alderman Crawford asked what is provided in the Contract in terms of increases. Mr. Ring explained that they have an option to propose a cost of living increase, and he believes that they use the national inflation cost. He noted that the current numbers have not changed since 2018, so they do not always take advantage of this.

Alderman Witte asked when the monthly tote system would start if we move forward. Mr. Ring explained that he is not 100 percent sure how long it would take to get the system up and rolling. He explained that we would need to communicate with Casella regarding this. Mr. Ring explained that he would like to have a contract in place by 8/30 but this is not necessarily the drop dead date, and we will have to discuss this again.

Alderman Panus asked about the \$50,000 cost per month, and Mr. Ring explained that this is the estimated cost to the community per month. He explained that we have a close estimation of how many stickers are sold per month and we figure an estimate to how much the overall expense to the City would be. Alderman Panus asked if this means that there is no monthly cost to the City of Olean, and Mr. Ring explained that we actually get revenue for the refuse contract.

Alderman Panus explained that when he talked about Farwell, it was mentioned that Casella used this site. Mr. Ring explained that it would be up to the hauler to find a suitable site for yard waste.

Alderman Crawford explained that he has never had a problem with Casella so he is glad that they are the low bidder. HE explained that he is glad no services would change, and although the ten percent increase is a negative the company usually doesn't ask for increases. He hopes that we continue on this trend. He explained that he is also happy to continue to see zero sort recycling. Garbage pickup is not something he gets complaints about from constituents unless they are running late. He explained that Casella is easy to get a hold of and responsible.

Alderman Panus asked how far off Beichner was, and Alderman Crawford explained that they were about 50% higher in cost. Mayor Aiello explained that he will be encouraging people to get totes so that there are less garbage bags on the side of the road that stray cats and animals can get into. Alderman Crawford explained that he has had residents ask if he is putting through legislation that requires that rentals have totes, but explained that he is not fully on board with this yet. He explained that we will have to address exclusivity. He explained that maybe himself. The Mayor, and the City Attorney could draft something. Mayor Aiello noted that this is only for residential properties, not commercial. He asked if he has the permission of the Council to move forward with the next steps with Jack and the Council agreed that he does.

5. Approval of Committee Reports

None

6. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Crawford, seconded by Alderman Gonzalez. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:50 p.m.